BURIED

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"BURIED"

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 screams, though it's clear from the sound that his mouth is covered by something.

After attempting to sit up, he immediately bangs his head against something. It's terribly warm and his breaths are labored.

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.

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

Finally, we see him, lit by the flame of the Zippo he holds in his hands, which are bound together in front of him with rope. A rolled-up, dirty rag is tied tightly around his head, stretched across his mouth. Dried blood stains his hair and forehead.

We see that he is lying in an old fashioned, wooden coffin. Nothing more than a few rotted-out planks of wood nailed together. Realizing the same, Paul is struck by an overwhelming, instant panic.

With great difficulty, and while still holding the lit Zippo, Paul removes the muzzle from his mouth.

PAUL
What...? What is this?

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

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

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

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, as well as a small gap that exists between one of the coffin's broken wooden planks.

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 37 years old. Unshaven and physically unremarkable, he embodies the blue-collar American everyman.

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

His eyes widen a bit upon seeing an exposed, rusty nail. He tries desperately to use the nail to cut through the old, frayed ropes that bind his hands. Doing so is no easy task. The incredibly tight quarters makes his every action nearly impossible.

After a lengthy struggle, the rope snaps. Paul quickly frees his hands. A small victory. Very small.

The heat is unbearable. Paul takes off his button-down shirt, leaving him in a T-shirt. His body battles against the walls and the ceiling of the coffin with every move he makes.

He tosses his button-down shirt down by his feet. 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.

Close to his head, on the corner of the floor, we see there's another broken plank. A small hole.

He closes his cigarette lighter, extinguishing the flame. In total darkness, 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 subtle buzzing sound. The muted sight of strange, blueish light flickers in the coffin, by Paul's feet. He is extremely startled.

The buzzing continues, as does the minimal splashing of light. It's coming from underneath his discarded button-down shirt, down near his feet.

He lights the Zippo to get a better look.

Pulling the shirt away, he realizes that what he is hearing and seeing is the vibrating ring and display 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. He uses his feet to search for the phone. After some trouble finding it, 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 flips open the phone and 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. While the numbers and display screen icons are familiar to Americans, all the words are in Arabic.

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.

He wedges the lit Zippo into sand, which is compacted against a small hole in the wall of the coffin.

Paul reaches into his pants pocket, frantically searching for something. He hastily removes a prescription pill bottle and a small, metal flask. Both are not what he was looking for.

He then reaches to his back pocket and removes his wallet. It's empty. 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 all 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. His frenzied maneuvering puts out the flame of the Zippo.

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!

Paul accidentally bangs the cap of the Zippo against the coffin wall, putting out the flame.

She quickly returns.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
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. After a few sparks, the Zippo is re-lit.

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
Sir --

PAUL
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. 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 and --

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 underst...
(giving up)
...forget it.

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

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 Provence, in Baqubah.
(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
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. 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...

Hearing himself say those last words gives him pause. The gravity of the situation fully takes hold.

PAUL (CONT'D)
...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 notices the flickering light of the Zippo. It, too, appears to be using up small amounts of oxygen. He closes the lid, extinguishing the flame.

Total darkness. Silence, save for Paul's increasingly heavy breaths.

He begins to hyperventilate. He knows that preserving oxygen is paramount, so he does his best to calm himself. The healthy swig he takes from his flask helps.

He flips open the cell phone. The light of the display screen partially illuminates his face and some of the coffin with a blueish hue. Paul 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.

Paul reaches for his button-down shirt. Fishes for pens stashed in his lapel pocket, while keeping the phone pressed to his ear with his shoulder.

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.

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...

Paul writes the digits of the phone number on the top of the coffin with his pen. But, after the first three numbers, the pen stops working. He hurriedly reaches back into his shirt pocket to remove the other pen, which is actually a click-up pencil. Click-click-click-click. He writes the last seven digits, followed by the word "FBI."

AUTOMATED MESSAGE (CONT'D)
...can be connected for an additional charge of twenty-five cents by pressing the number one.

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
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
May 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)
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!
(after a breath, calmer)
I don't know. I was way in the back of the convoy. I must have 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 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, I don't fucking know -- 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
Sir, you're going to have to stop shouting if --

PAUL
I'm shouting because you're not listening! I need you to help me! Please!!

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS
Hmmm...

Paul takes a moment to center himself.

PAUL
Can you trace my call? GPS or something?

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

PAUL
I have no idea. 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 desert! 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. Paul lights the Zippo to help him see the cell phone screen. 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).

He closes the lid of the Zippo, extinguishing the flame.

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
Somebody, I need to talk to someone right away. It's an emergency.

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
Davenport? Who's that?

CRT OPERATOR
Director of Personnel. Please hold.

PAUL
Personnel? No, I need to talk --

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 Provence. 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 drops the phone to his side, the screen still emitting its glow.

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. His animalistic outburst causes the phone to close.

The coffin returns to pitch black.

After a long beat, Paul lights the Zippo, which remains wedged in the sand compacted against the small hole in the wall of the coffin.

Paul takes a few moments to catch his breath. He looks again at the cell phone. 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, which is all written in Arabic, until he reaches what appears to be the Text Message option. Opening it, he sees a series of ten numbers.

Using his click-up pencil, he scribbles the numbers onto the top of the coffin. Next to the number, he writes the word "HELP?" 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. 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 -- but 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 Arabic-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.

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
American can breathe no breathe?

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

JABIR
Get out?

PAUL
Yes, please get me out. Help me.

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.

Despair falls upon Paul. It becomes clear that Jabir is responsible for all of this. As such, Paul crosses out the word "HELP?" Closes the lid of the Zippo, leaving only the cell phone display screen to illuminate his face.

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. Physically spent, the cell phone falls from his hands and onto the floor. The display screen casts a dim light throughout the coffin.

FADE TO:

INT. COFFIN - MOMENTS LATER

The Zippo lights. Paul holds it in his hand, using it to illuminate the inside of the coffin. He attempts to push it into its now customary resting place, but the sand has loosened, making it difficult for the Zippo to stay in place. It almost falls to the floor.

Looking around, Paul sees there is a crack between two planks, located on the opposite wall of the coffin. He wedges the lit Zippo into the crack.

With his hands now free, 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 he's thinking of. He notices that the flame of the Zippo flickers, indicating its use of his much-needed oxygen. Paul closes the lid, extinguishing the flame.

A second later, we see him, lit by the cell phone display screen. He 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 and name on the top 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 checks the battery life -- still at one and a half bars.

DONNA eventually answers.

DONNA
Hello?

Hearing her voice, Paul hurriedly places the phone to his ear.

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 sixty-nine 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
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 --

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...State Department. It's 202-134-4750.

PAUL
202-134-4750?

DONNA
Yeah.

Paul writes the number on the top of the coffin, beneath the man others. He writes the initials "S.D." next to it.

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.

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
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
Or else he'll bring me to Sea World. What do you think, lady?

Even faced with Paul's sarcasm, Rebecca remains stolid. Professional.

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 desert!

REBECCA
I understand your frustration --

PAUL
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. The idea of being alone again scares him terribly.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hello?

Worried, Paul lights the Zippo. The reflection of the flame dances on his frightened eyes.

REBECCA
I'm here.

Momentary relief. After a beat:

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

REBECCA
What's the number on the phone you're calling from?

PAUL
I don't know. Did it come up on your end?

REBECCA
No. It's listed as unavailable. Do this -- take down this number.

Paul takes out his pen.

PAUL
Go ahead.

REBECCA
410-195-5453.

Paul writes the number onto the top of the coffin.

PAUL
Who's that?

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

Paul writes “D. BRENNER” next to Dan’s phone number.

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
Did you write down the number?

PAUL
Yeah.

REBECCA
Good. Hold on, I’ll connect you with him now. 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 only complicate things further and threaten your chances of rescue.

Paul doesn’t buy it.

PAUL
That’s bullshit. You’re just covering your ass.

REBECCA
No, I’m covering yours. Everyone who needs to know about this does.

PAUL
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.

REBECCA
I'm transferring you now.

Rebecca's gone. Paul waits. Several beeps sound as he's being transferred.

Paul hears a faint sound coming from behind him, outside the coffin. While the beeps continue to sound, he lights the Zippo, circumspectly looking behind him. He doesn't see anything.

With the Zippo still lit, Paul takes a deep, centering breath, followed by another.

A few more long beeps pass before a ring is heard. After two rings, 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. Is the ringer set on a sound or vibrate?

PAUL
Vibrate.

DAN
Press and hold down the asterisk key to change it to a ring tone. It will use less power.

PAUL
What about my Zippo?

DAN
You have a lighter?

PAUL
Yeah.

DAN
Use it to look around for markings, a logo -- whatever you can find.

PAUL
Won't it use up oxygen?

DAN
Not much. Don't worry about that now. Try to find --

PAUL
It's really dark in here without it.

DAN
I understand, Paul. Try to find anything in there that might indicate where that coffin was made.

PAUL
You guys have to hurry.

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
That's still unclear at this point.

PAUL
I just wanted to do right by my family. That's all.
(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
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 top 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
Take the call. Now.

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

PAUL
Hello.

JABIR
Two hour, six minute.

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 you 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 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.

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 doesn't see anything.

PAUL
Where? I don't see --

JABIR
Near foot. Read note inside box.

Paul repositions his legs as best he can. He can vaguely see the corner of a small metal box, partially sticking out of a broken plank on the bottom of the coffin.

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 protruding corner of 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 closes the lid of the Zippo. Removes the stick.

Looking into the small box again, he finds several other items: a small, disused flashlight; a second, unlit glow stick; a jackknife; and lastly, 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. He remembers something.

PAUL
Shit.

Paul presses and holds down the shortcut button on the phone that changes the ringer from vibrate to an audible tone.

The glow stick begins to slowly fade.

Paul dials Dan Brenner.

After a few rings, Dan answers.

DAN
Paul?

PAUL
Here's his number...

Paul presses the green key, bringing up the last numbers dialed and received.

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. 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
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
No, you're not. All you people understand are your secret plans and your back room politics.
(MORE)

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

DAN
I need you to stay focused, Paul.

PAUL
Fuck you.

Dan's heard enough.

DAN
Paul, listen to me: finding you is our primary concern. Bottom line. And we're searching just as hard as we would be for a four-star general, so don't literally waste your breath suggesting otherwise.

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 writes “MARK WHITE” on the top of the coffin, below the list of phone numbers. He circles the name.

PAUL
You remember his name.

DAN
I remember all their names.

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

The glow stick begins to fade.

DAN
Yeah. Yeah, Paul, he’s alive.

Hearing this affords Paul some semblance of relief.

Paul shakes the glow stick, returning it to its full strength.

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
Okay.

DAN
Is your Zippo still lit.

PAUL
Not now.

DAN
Good.

PAUL
I feel nauseous.

DAN
You have to calm down.

PAUL
I'm trying.

DAN
And you need to save that battery. We're expecting some intel in about ten minutes. Call me back then.

PAUL
Okay.

DAN
Just hang in there, Paul.

The glow stick begins to slowly fade. Paul shakes it, causing it to brighten only momentarily before dimming again.

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 scrolls through the menu options. Everything is written in Arabic. He eventually comes across an icon with a movie camera -- the video function. He turns it on. Looks at himself though the viewfinder.

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

The glow stick fades out almost completely, offering very little light. Paul shakes it, but with no change to its brightness. Moments later, it dies. Paul tries the flashlight. Click-click. Click-click. Nothing.

He bangs it a few times with his hand. The white light turns on, but quickly turns back off. He twists the top, which causes the flashlight to switch bulbs. A red beam emits momentarily. Paul twists the top again and gives the flashlight a few good whacks.

It turns on. White light shines dimly on his face.

He takes a breath.

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 his 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 pull from the flask.

He sits and waits. Nothing is happening, except that his extremely limited time keeps passing.

After a moment, Paul picks up the cell phone. He holds it in front of him, hesitant to make a call. After some consideration, he dials.

After a few rings, a NURSING HOME NURSE answers.

NURSING HOME NURSE
Mountain View Nursing Home.

PAUL
I was hoping I could speak with Maryanne Conroy, please.

NURSING HOME NURSE
Um...okay. Ah...let me bring the cordless phone to her room. Hold on a moment, please.

We hear the Nurse walk down the tiled corridor floor. She soon reaches Paul's mother's room.

NURSING HOME NURSE (CONT'D)
Misses Conroy, you have a telephone call, dear. Here, you can use this phone.

Paul's mother, MARYANNE, answers. Her voice is pleasant but confused. It's clear that she suffers from advanced stages of Alzheimer's Disease.

MARYANNE
Hello?

PAUL
Mom...it's Paul.

MARYANNE
Who?

PAUL
It's Paul, Mom. Your son.

MARYANNE
My son?

PAUL
It's okay, Mom. How are you?

MARYANNE
I'm fine.

PAUL
That's good.

MARYANNE
Who are you?

PAUL
It's your son, Mom. It's Paulie.

MARYANNE
Paulie?

PAUL
Yeah. Remember? We lived over on Colfax Street, in the duplex. Remember?

MARYANNE
(remembering slightly)
Paulie?

PAUL
That's right, Mom.

MARYANNE
Is this Paulie?

PAUL
It is, Mom. It's Paulie. How's everything at the home?

MARYANNE
Very nice. Your father and I have been playing gin rummy every night.

It's almost too much for Paul to take. He cries silent tears over a heartbroken smile.

PAUL
Yeah...I don't think Pop's there with you, Mom.

MARYANNE
How are you doing, sweetie?

PAUL
Not very good. This...uh, this may be the last time I talk to you.

MARYANNE
That's nice, honey.

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
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 rings. Decidedly different than his past reactions to an incoming call, Paul seems hopelessly disinterested. The ring is maddening.

He mindlessly presses the shortcut button, resetting the ring to vibrate mode.

He eventually picks up the phone, 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 what appears to be 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 begins his desperate 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 one. 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 minute 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 flashlight 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 flashlight 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. 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 flashlight goes out. Paul continues speaking in the darkness. After a few quick smacks, the flashlight turns back on.

PAUL (CONT'D)
...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 displays an icon confirming the video has been 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. We hear the sound of Paul slowly awaking, followed the sight of Zippo sparks.

It doesn't catch. The second glow stick is snapped, illuminating the coffin with a fluorescent green hue.

Paul starts to move, but suddenly freezes. His eyes widen. His pupils dilate. Something is clearly very wrong, though we cannot see what.

His eyes slowly shift downward, as if watching something move down his body. Beads of sweat form across his brow. His measured breaths are held for as long as they can be.

Moving excruciatingly slow, Paul lowers the glow stick toward what he is looking at.

A shape moves across his stomach, underneath his T-shirt. Paul's eyes are fixed on whatever it may be. He cautiously, slowly, moves the glow stick even closer.

The shape disappears just as the light of the glow stick shines on whatever it may be. Still, Paul does not dare make any sudden move.

Paul's pant leg moves slightly, starting at the top, slowly undulating toward his cuff.

Paul leans the glow stick in further. And further. Carefully. Moving a millimeter at a time. He shifts the position of his head slightly, charily, to see next to his feet.

He leans in even closer with the glow stick. But then --

-- his wary movement comes to immediate stop.

It's a snake. A two-foot, saw-scaled viper. It has positioned itself in the corner of the coffin, inches from Paul's feet.

His terror evident, Paul very slowly pulls his feet back toward his upper body, away from the snake. The confined space offers little room for safety.

The snake turns its muscled neck to face Paul. Their eyes meet for the first time. The snake hisses, poised to strike at any moment. Paul raises his foot. Steels himself. Prepares to preempt the snake with a solid stomp.

A more sensible plan soon prevails. After lowering his foot, Paul cautiously removes the flask from his pocket. Slowly unscrews the top. Splashes a small amount of alcohol on the floor, close to the snake.

The snake recoils slightly, but then menacingly twists itself into a new posture, ready to attack. Paul lowers the Zippo to the small puddle of alcohol. After a few sparks --

-- it lights. A flash-fire. The snake flails and hisses wildly at the other side of a small fire wall.

The flame soon goes out. Paul moves fast. Throws more alcohol, this time some of it lands on the snake itself. He places the already lit Zippo against the puddle of alcohol near the snake.

Another flash-fire, this time burning the snake. It hisses loudly. Threateningly. It swings back and forth, challenging the small wall of fire.

The fire soon extinguishes. The snake burrows into the hole from where it likely entered the coffin, disappearing into it with haste.

Paul hurriedly stuffs the hole with his discarded button-down shirt. He then pours a small amount of alcohol over the shirt and temporarily puts the flask on the ground, but does not screw the cap on securely. He then wedges the lit Zippo between a small space between two wooden planks.

With the snake situation handled, Paul finally lets out a sigh of relief. Rubs his eyes. Tries to regain his faculties. Looks over the list of phone numbers written above him.

Suddenly, the cell phone vibrates. Paul frenziedly searches for it, but he cannot find it. He then notices it has fallen into the small hole near his feet, out of his reach.

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

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 inadvertently kicks the Zippo from the side of the coffin -- landing it on the floor, up against the glow stick -- and knocks over the flask.

We see that the flame of the Zippo slowly melts the plastic glow stick, causing it to dim slightly.

Worst still, and completely unbeknownst to Paul, a stream of alcohol slowly makes its way from the flask and toward the flame of the lighter, threatening to set the coffin ablaze. Inch by inch, the flammable spirit gets closer.

Still in the midst of his repositioning, Paul looks back and sees the alcohol nearing the flame. In a panic, he attempts to reach and grab the Zippo. But, he finds himself stuck in the middle of the coffin. He can't budge either way.

PAUL
No, no, no!!

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

The phone stops ringing. He has missed the call.

He tries blowing at the flame, but his head is too far away and his breath is not strong enough to do much more than cause it 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. The mere inch of leg room this creates allows him to slide his leg out from under him.

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

-- but Paul deftly maneuvers his body just in time to awkwardly kick the Zippo out of the way and close the lid.

Paul breaths an enormous sigh of relief as he sits in the dim light of the damaged glow stick. He notices another hole in the coffin. As a precaution, he stuffs it with the cloth that had previously been used to gag him.

Just as he 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. The light of the glow stick dims further.

Paul then opens his phone. Sees that he missed Jabir's call.

He starts to call Jabir back, but stops. He instead navigates through the various display menus. He soon reaches what appears to be the Tools Menu, though it's difficult to tell because everything is written in Arabic. He becomes frustrated as he fails to find what he is looking for.

On the verge of mental surrender, he sees something that gives him pause. 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 a listing of languages. He scrolls past many -- "FRANCAIS, DETSCHE, ESPANOL" -- stopping at "ENGLISH." Presses the button, instantly making all the text on the screen readable.

He quickly navigates to the Tools menu. Scrolls down. Locates the number of the cell phone he is using.

He scribbles the number onto the top of the coffin. Then a second pass, making it bolder than the others.

Paul then 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. You have to use the international calling code first.
(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
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.

Paul grabs the glow stick. But, because it was partially melted to the floor, the stick snaps in two. Liquid oozes out of the small portion of the stick that remains stuck the floor.

PAUL
Son of a...

Paul grabs the flashlight. Turns it on. It works for a second, but then goes out. Shaking it only produces intermittent beams of light.

He turns the top, switching to the red bulb. It works. The coffin fills with a reddish hue, but then it, too, goes out.

Growing incensed, Paul switches back to the white bulb. It works.

He returns his attention to the coffin. 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.

The flashlight turns off. After a good shaking, it turns back on, emitting white light.

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 rings.

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. 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 blade of the knife, reflecting off the beam of the flashlight.

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

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 neck, where the blade of the knife rests, ready to open his vein.

After a great deal of consideration, Paul throws the knife to the foot of the coffin.

He can't do it.

The flashlight falls from Paul's chest. It turns off upon landing on the floor of the coffin.

Paul sits in darkness. His breaths echo off the coffin walls.

After a beat, he turns on the flashlight. It turns off after less than two seconds. This time, however, he does not shake it, nor does he hit it.

A moment later, we hear a click, followed by the sight of a red light beam emitting from the flashlight. It holds steady.

Paul shines it onto the names and phone numbers written on the top of the coffin. He stops at "MARK WHITE."

After a beat, he lowers the flashlight to his side.

He picks up the phone and dials Brenner. After one ring, Brenner answers. He's clearly not pleased. Paul, however, is surprisingly calm. Detached. Almost disturbingly so.

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 <u>do</u> 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.

PAUL
I found out the number to this phone.

DAN
How?

PAUL
I found a way to change the display language. I figured that out, and you didn't. Why?

DAN
Because I didn't. 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?

After a beat:

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 doesn't answer at first.

DAN (CONT'D)
Paul.

After a beat:

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. 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.
(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
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. 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. He grunts and screams loudly, using what little strength he has left to keep the top from caving.

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

In efforts to prevent the sand from filling the coffin any faster, Paul removes the button-down shirt from the hole and stuffs into the area where it enters with the greatest volume. He removes the balled-up cloth from the other hole and does the same with it. Both offer very little help.

The flashlight falls to the floor. The red light beam turns off. Darkness. The sound of sand steadily pouring down.

PAUL
(exhausted)
Oh no...no...

Paul clicks the flashlight to a different setting. White light shines, but then goes out. He shakes the flashlight and it stays on, shining its normal white beam.

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 menu shows an icon of a phone with a line through it -- 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.

The flashlight goes dead. He hits it, shakes it. It turns back on. The brightness is diminished.

Still the sand continues to fall, drowning him deeper and deeper in a pool of granules.

Then, very surprisingly, the cell phone rings. Paul answers right away.

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 on 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
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
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?

The flashlight goes out. Paul hits it a few times and it turns back on.

PAUL
No.

ALAN DAVENPORT
That's good. It needs to stay that way. 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. I think this situation is pretty contained.

ALAN DAVENPORT
I know you're upset --

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

ALAN DAVENPORT
I know you're upset. And, from what I've been told, steps are being taken to get you out of there. So, hopefully it won't be much longer.

PAUL
Thank God.

ALAN DAVENPORT
Yes, thank God.
(beat)
I'm going to switch on a recorder right now. Just a second...

Paul's visage expresses his confusion.

A click is heard in the b.g. of Alan's phone, followed by a low, steady hum.

Alan's speech becomes very laconic. His questions are clearly being read from a Human Resources handbook of some kind.

ALAN DAVENPORT (CONT'D)
This is Alan Davenport, Personnel Director for Crestin, Roland and Thomas, Incorporated. The date is October 23, 2006. I am speaking with Paul Conroy. Mister Conroy, are you aware that I'm recording this conversation?

PAUL
What...?

ALAN DAVENPORT
Please answer the question.

The flashlight goes out again.

PAUL
Shit.

Paul hits it, but it does not catch. He sits in darkness.

ALAN DAVENPORT
Mister Conroy?

PAUL
Yes. Yes!

ALAN DAVENPORT
And do I have your permission to do so?

PAUL
Why do you need my permission? What is all this?

ALAN DAVENPORT
I need you to answer yes or no, please.

PAUL
Yes. Alright? Yes!

Paul hits the flashlight. It turns back on.

ALAN DAVENPORT
Thank you. Now, Mister Conroy, when were you hired by CRT?

PAUL
About nine months ago. Around January of 2005. Why are you wasting time with this?

ALAN DAVENPORT
I have your official date of hire as January 4th, 2005. Is that correct?

PAUL
Who cares? This is fucking crazy --

ALAN DAVENPORT
January 4th, 2005. Is that correct?

PAUL
Yes!

ALAN DAVENPORT
And during your initial training, before being sent to Iraq, were you 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?

The flashlight dims. Paul angrily shakes it, returning it to full strength.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You mean when you told us that things were safer than ever over here? Is that when I was made aware?

ALAN DAVENPORT
I need you to answer yes or no, please.

PAUL
(beat)
Yes.

The flashlight begins to slowly dim.

ALAN DAVENPORT
During that time, did you also receive and sign an employment contract with CRT, which thoroughly explained company policy as it pertained to your specific terms of employment?

PAUL
Yeah, I signed a bunch of things.

ALAN DAVENPORT
Yes or no.

PAUL
Yes. I signed the contract. Yes!

ALAN DAVENPORT
It's our understanding that you were taken hostage in Iraq two hours ago, is that also correct?

PAUL
Yes. That's completely correct. What is the point of all this?

Alan breaks from the H.R. handbook script, though his tone remains just as matter-of-fact. The flashlight continues its steady, slow dim.

ALAN DAVENPORT
Our legal department requires that we obtain a sworn affidavit from employees, confirming that they understand the reasons for their forced separation from the company. As of this morning, your employment with CRT was officially terminated.

PAUL
Wait, wait, wait --

The flashlight dims even more.

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
Our records indicate differently.

PAUL
This is bullshit.

ALAN DAVENPORT
We're also legally required to inform you that because you were technically no longer under the employ of CRT at the time of your abduction, we cannot be held accountable for any injury that may befall upon you after your official date and time of termination. Therefore, in your case, that includes this incident or any consequences that may result from it.

Paul sees where Alan is going with this. He's thunderstruck.

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

ALAN DAVENPORT
Given that you were alive up until the time of your termination --

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

ALAN DAVENPORT
Do you understand everything --

PAUL
You can't do this!

Alan takes a second before trying again.

ALAN DAVENPORT
Do you understand everything you've been told, Mister Conroy?

Paul does not answer.

ALAN DAVENPORT (CONT'D)
Mister Conroy?

After a long beat:

PAUL
Go to hell.

ALAN DAVENPORT
That concludes our interview with Paul Conroy. I am now turning off the recorder.

A click is heard. The humming ceases.

PAUL
You people can't just wash your hands of this. You bastards put me here.

ALAN DAVENPORT
I'm sorry.

Alan ends the call.

Paul 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 8:31pm.

The flashlight bulb dims until it goes out completely. Only the light of the cell phone display lights the coffin.

PAUL
Come on...

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. While he waits through the many rings, he tries relighting the Zippo. Spark...spark...it catches.

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
(desperate, exhausted)
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 crack has split Jabir's written phone number in half.

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 Zippo flame tells of the diminished amount of oxygen.

Paul attempts to control his breathing, realizing full well that there are not many more breaths 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?

The Zippo flame flutters. Weakens.

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
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?

After a long beat:

DAN
No.

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

DAN (CONT'D)
Yeah.

The flame of the Zippo becomes smaller. It clearly has little life left.

PAUL
What should I do?

DAN
I don't know.

PAUL
That's right -- just like everyone else on the planet, there are some things you know and some things you don't.

DAN
I wish this could have gone differently.

PAUL
Yeah...me too.

After a long beat, 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 3/19/68. 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, staring at the almost completely extinguished Zippo flame, as the sand continues to rain on him.

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

The Zippo flame goes out. Paul sits in the darkness, resigned to what apparently will be his fate.

Hold on black for several seconds...until --

-- suddenly, from inside Paul's pocket, he hears a faint vibration. It's the cell phone. He looks at the number of who is calling him. Shines the light of the cell phone on the list of numbers written on the top of the coffin. He can't believe what he's seeing.

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.

Paul tries to turn on the flashlight. It doesn't work.

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.

Paul shakes and hits the flashlight. It still does not work.

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.

Paul unscrews the top of the flashlight. Switches the positioning of the batteries. Screws the cap back on. Hits the switch.

Nothing.

Jabir returns to the phone.

JABIR (CONT'D)
You show blood.

PAUL
What?

Paul unscrews the top of the flashlight again. Removes the batteries. Bites down on them a few times. Blows hard inside the flashlight tube.

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 puts the batteries back inside the flashlight. Begins screwing on the cap.

PAUL
No.

JABIR
No?

PAUL
That's right, no. You let me out of here, and I'll cut off my whole God damn hand if you want.

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

Paul finishes closing the top of the flashlight.

JABIR
You have wife?

Click. The flashlight turns on!

Paul considers Jabir's question to be a potential sign of 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.
(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
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.

The flashlight starts to dim. Paul shakes it, causing it to regain its strength.

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.

The flashlight goes out. The cell phone’s display illuminates Paul’s face.

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.

Paul tries the Zippo. Nothing. Only sparks. He tosses it aside.

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.

He hits the flashlight a few times. Click. It turns on.

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.

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 one of the expired glow sticks. 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.

After placing the flashlight on the ground, to ensure that the camera picks up the image, 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 a swift chop of the blade.

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 vibrates once again. To Paul, the vibration against the wood seems so distant, so foreign. The vibration 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, eking out a tortured smile.

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. He is too exhausted to display his disappointment.

The phone continues to vibrate. It soon stops. Paul is in too poor condition to show any concern.

After a beat, the phone begins vibrating 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. He spits out stray particles of sand from his mouth.

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're coming?

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.
(MORE)

DAN (cont'd)
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
We're practically there already.

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.

A beep is heard. Paul has another call coming in. He's visibly elated upon seeing who it is.

DAN
Three minutes. Try to --

PAUL
I have to go!

DAN
Paul, no --

PAUL
Call me right back.

DAN
Paul!

PAUL
Call me right back.

Paul switches to the other call, 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 flashlight just above the top of the sand pile, allowing it to illuminate what little unoccupied area remains.

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.

The flashlight dims. Paul shakes it, regaining a bit of its strength.

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.

The flashlight flickers. Paul hits it. It flickers some more.

PAUL
It's all going to be okay.

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

The flashlight continues to flicker almost like a stroboscopic light from this point forward.

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. It's 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!

The flashlight fades. Paul hits it, momentarily returning it to full strength.

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. The flashlight dims.

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

DAN
We're almost there, Paul. We're almost there!
(to the soldiers)
(MORE)

DAN (cont'd)
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.

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 --

We see the circled name of "MARK WHITE" written in capital letters on the top of the coffin.

PAUL
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. The filament of the flashlight bulb burns out. 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.

OVER BLACK

DAN
I'm sorry, Paul. I'm so sorry.

THE END