DEAD GAMES

written by

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based on his novel

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

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FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN, NORTHERN SYRIA - NIGHT (GREEN)

SUPER: "NORTHERN SYRIA. TWO YEARS AGO."

Night vision. Green static. Flat roofs, water tanks and a minaret with no light in it.

Nothing moves. No dogs, either. ELI DRAKE has done three rotations in this country, and there's always a dog barking somewhere on a Syrian street at night.

Tonight the dogs are elsewhere.

SOUND: Heartbeat. Boot grinding gravel. Jaw chewing gum.

EXT. COMPOUND WALL - NIGHT (GREEN)

Seven shapes flat against the plaster, spaced so one burst can't take two of them. Lime dust gets in their teeth.

ELI DRAKE (42), master sergeant, ALPHA lead. Big hands, and he's careful with them. He has a face that hides nothing, and tonight he's trying to make it hide something.

SIMON CROSS (40), 22 SAS, on loan from London. Lean, with a long calm face. He reads a room before he walks into it, and he's already read this one.

ZOE TURNER (31), sniper, scoping the roofline with one thumb riding the dial. She doesn't look down at it. Cold and exact, and the last one on the team to talk.

MYLES JACKSON (34), USMC, the only Marine on the team. Det charges across his chest in a bandolier he sewed himself. He's the loudest man in the unit, and he handles those charges gently.

DANNY GALLOWAY (24) works a stick of Big Red on the left side of his jaw. Everybody's kid brother.

BISHOP (38), Welsh, knuckles taped. He quit boxing ten years ago and still tapes his hands before anything that matters.

REEVES (29), radio cord taped down his arm. He trusts whatever voice is in his ear.

ZOE
No targets. Zero wind.

GALLOWAY
Maybe they read the op order.

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MYLES
Then they're the first ones.

ELI
Lose the gum.

GALLOWAY
It's load-bearing, Bear.

Myles pats the charge with two fingers.

MYLES
Don't embarrass me in front of the Army.

FLASH CUT: ERBIL MOCKUP, A WHITEBOARD. Two arrows in Eli's marker. ALPHA to BRAVO. Under them: GALLOWAY, REEVES. Eli drew the split.

A flat COUGH. The wall PEELS OPEN.

GALLOWAY
(a whisper)
Same as always?

ELI
Same as always.
(keying his radio)
Overwatch, Alpha One. Confirm target.

OVERWATCH (RADIO)
(flat, Midwestern, through static)
Green. Second floor. Northeast corner. Server room. Go.

MONTAGE - THE LONGEST MINUTE

AUDIO DESIGN: Heartbeat is the metronome. The net piles up under the picture, half-heard. SPEED RAMPS: slow on every hit, fast on every run. A clock in the corner.

SUPER: "00:00:00"

FAST. We go up the stairs with Alpha, three at a time. FAST. Bravo clears four rooms. A chair with gouges where the straps went. A steel ring bolted to the floor. A car battery wired up through the ceiling. A pallet that still holds the shape of whoever slept on it.

SLOW. Galloway lays his palm flat on the blankets. Nobody says what these rooms were for.

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SLOW. Reeves at a window with no glass in it. The minaret, three hundred meters out. Something glints up in the gallery, and his eye goes right to it.

REEVES (RADIO, O.S.)
Overwatch, Bravo Five. Minaret's got eyes on the courtyard.

OVERWATCH (RADIO, O.S.)
Negative. Minaret's clear.

Simon gives it one second. He weighs the feed against what's in the window, and he lets Overwatch win. His first hold, and the wrong call.

SUPER: "00:00:31"

A steel door with the deadbolt on the OUTSIDE. Myles KICKS it, SLOW, and it tears off the frame. It's COLD in here. Six empty server racks. On the far desk, a work light swings to face the doorway and Eli's night vision WHITES OUT.

Why lock an empty room from the outside? Because somebody wanted them in it. The room is bait.

SUPER: "00:00:42"

SMASH. PKM fire from three positions, every window at once. Glass hangs in the air, SLOW, lit up by tracer. Galloway goes down. His thigh OPENS, and both hands clamp it, blood pushing dark between his fingers.

Simon's hands go over his and crank a tourniquet tight. He writes the time on the strap with a Sharpie, because a surgeon will need it, because there will be a surgeon.

Eli takes the north doorway. Simon stays down on the floor with Galloway.

ELI (RADIO, O.S.)
Move now.

SIMON (RADIO, O.S.)
Hold.

ELI (RADIO, O.S.)
We hold here, we die here.

SIMON (RADIO, O.S.)
Move without Bravo, we lose the lane.

ELI (RADIO, O.S.)
North. Go.

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Galloway grins through it, still working the gum.

GALLOWAY
Easy, Downton.

SIMON
Keep chewing. If you stop, I'll know.

SUPER: "00:01:05"

FAST. The north door BLOWS, and Eli runs with his breath loud in the mic, Zoe and Myles right behind him. FREEZE. The gate. A burned-out truck fills it post to post. Yesterday's drone stills showed it clear.

ELI
(very quietly)
Shit.

There's a cut in the wall beside the gate, and an engine ticking on the other side of it.

ELI (RADIO, O.S.)
Mule. Cut beside the gate. Now.

Eli looks back. Sixty meters to the lane. When Bravo comes out, they'll come out across the gun's field of fire, and somebody has to cover them. He knows who. SIMON'S MIND. The lane, and Eli turning with his rifle on the gate roof. REWIND. Same. REWIND. Same.

SUPER: "00:01:34"

A POP and a hiss. An RPG off the gate roof. The wall bursts WHITE, and then it isn't there. SLOW. Concrete comes off in lit slabs. One of them lands on Zoe.

AUDIO: ALL SOUND DROPS OUT. A high ring.

SLOW. Eli gets his fingers under the edge. Myles gets a shoulder under it, and something in that shoulder GIVES. The slab moves. Zoe's leg ends below the knee.

SOUND SNAPS BACK.

ZOE
Where's my weapon.

She drags her rifle to her chest by the sling. A thread of blood runs out of Myles's right ear and into his collar. He doesn't know it's there yet.

THE CHOICE, four held frames:

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The gate roof and its muzzle flash. The lane, with Simon in its mouth, waiting on a rifle that isn't coming. Zoe's hand closing on Eli's strap. Eli's hands, under her.

SMASH.

FAST. Eli carries Zoe toward the cut, away from Simon. Myles walks backward behind them with his rifle up.

MYLES
Two. Two. Three.

Behind them the gate gun OPENS UP, aimed bursts with a pause between. Eli knows that sound. He doesn't turn around.

SUPER: "00:02:11"

SLOW. Simon in the lane with Galloway between him and Bishop, Reeves behind, all four of them running. Concrete chips open Simon's cheek. He's listening for Drake's rifle on the gate roof.

Nobody is shooting at the gate roof.

SIMON
(radio)
Alpha One, Bravo. Coming out the lane. Gate roof is yours.

No answer.

On Eli's end, static in the earpiece, with Simon's call breaking up inside it. Both arms full of Zoe. SLOW. A burst from the minaret. One round goes in under Galloway's plate, where the carrier rode up.

AUDIO: TOTAL SILENCE.

Simon's hands on a chest, arms locked. Each compression PULSES the picture. His count comes up through the silence.

SIMON (O.S.)
One and two and three and four.

Galloway's jaw is still chewing. Then it isn't. Bishop puts a hand on Simon's shoulder and leaves it there. Simon looks at his own hands, blood to the wrist. He lifts the chain over Galloway's head. Two tags, still warm. His fist closes around them.

SIMON
We come back for him.

SLOW. Simon hoists Reeves across his shoulders and steps out into the slot the minaret can see. Six paces. We count every

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one with him. Nothing hits him. He doesn't look back at the man he's leaving on the ground.

SUPER: "00:03:40"

FAST. The cut. The Land Cruiser sits dark. Eli lays Zoe on the back seat with her rifle on her chest. Somebody walks out of the dust. It's Simon, blood on his hands and face, carrying Reeves, with Bishop walking backward behind.

Bravo went in four. Three come out.

ELI
Galloway?

BISHOP
He's back there.

Simon's right hand is a closed fist. Eli's knuckles go white on the door frame, and he has to make them let go. In the side mirror, a van turns toward the cut. Pale and boxy, no lights, its driver sure of where he's going. A door opens on its far side.

The Land Cruiser pulls out. A wall slides across the mirror, and the van is gone from it.

EXT. LANDING ZONE, FIELD NORTH OF TOWN - NIGHT

A helicopter sits in a flat field with its rotors turning and its nav lights pulsing through the dust. Eli carries Zoe up the ramp. Simon stands at the edge of the rotor wash with the chain between his fingers. The tags go in his chest pocket, and he buttons the flap.

Eli comes back down the ramp. Ten feet of dust between them. The instruments light Simon's face, blood and dust drying on it. Eli is backlit, a shape with no face and empty hands. There's nothing either of them could say that would help.

Eli turns and walks back up the ramp. Simon stays where he is and watches it close.

SMASH TO BLACK. The heartbeat STOPS.

MAIN TITLE: DEAD GAMES

INT. BODY SHOP OFFICE, VAN NUYS - DAY

SUPER: "VAN NUYS. TWO YEARS LATER."

Bondo dust and burnt coffee. RAYMOND OCHOA (50s), forearms the size of fence posts, reads a Summit Racing catalog.

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Eli walks in wearing a charcoal Men's Wearhouse suit that was wrong at the shoulders in the store. He bought it for a memorial. He puts a manila envelope on the counter.

ELI
You've been served.

Raymond's right hand closes. The shoulder dips and the weight rocks back. Thirty years of body-shop haymaker.

He takes it.

CRACK. His lip splits. He turns back, slow.

RAYMOND
What do they pay you for that.

ELI
Forty.

INT. SIMON'S FLAT, BERMONDSEY - DAWN

Paper and dust. SIMON CROSS, still in his running kit, uncaps a pen over a black notebook. Two years of entries in his own cipher, and one blank line he has no cipher for.

One voicemail.

AMA (V.O.)
(warm, done waiting)
Simon. It's Ama. I'm not calling again. You know where I am.

He plays it twice. DR. AMA MENSAH, A&E consultant at St Thomas'. She closed the cut on his cheek. By the sound of it, she's run out of patience with the rest of him.

A text, no name: VAUXHALL. NOW IF CONVENIENT.

The notebook goes into his Barbour, next to a chain with two flat scraps of metal on it. He doesn't look at them.

INTERCUT - THE TWO BRIEFINGS

INT. BLACKRIDGE SOLUTIONS, VAUXHALL - DAY

The room smells of nothing. CROWLEY, late fifties, squares his papers to the table edge, then squares them again.

CROWLEY
Simon. Sit down.

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INT. ELI'S APARTMENT, VAN NUYS - NIGHT

SUPER: "VAN NUYS. THAT NIGHT."

One bulb. Fry oil comes through the wall from the Del Taco next door. One chair. Eli holds a dish towel full of melting ice against his lip. A photograph lies face down on the table, and he turns it over.

Five faces on a flight line in Jordan. Zoe on two legs. Galloway on the end with gum in his cheek and his mouth shut for once. Eli hasn't called a single one of them. He's ashamed of that.

Eli lays it face down.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Nobody knocks here.

A man in a gray Jos. A. Bank jacket, with a shaving nick on his jaw and a fleck of tissue still stuck to it.

BRANDON COLE
(flat, Midwestern)
Master Sergeant. Brandon Cole. Hi. Sorry, it's late, I did knock. I work for Washington. Today that's all you need.

Blackridge, over a satellite photograph of an island shaped like a boot:

CROWLEY
The Riyadh renewal is sixty percent of your revenue. It has taken on complexity.

The apartment. Brandon takes the one chair and sets a ruggedized tablet down next to the photograph. Its case is stenciled KR-7741-HX.

BRANDON
Serenique Island. Eight private teams, ten days. There's a weapon on it. CHIMERA-7. Looks like a cold for seventy-two hours. Then it isn't.

CROWLEY
The material has Syria provenance. You know the file. The Americans run a parallel operation. Drake.

Simon goes to the window.

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His reflection lies over the river. Under it he sees a side mirror, exact. A pale van turning toward a cut with its lights off. A door opening on the far side.

He has never told anyone about the van. He's never written it down, not even in cipher. It shakes him, and he keeps his back to Crowley.

CROWLEY (CONT'D)
(to his back, pleasantly)
The American boy, Galloway. Listed killed, remains not recovered. His family got a flag. I mention it because Drake will.

SIMON
(to the glass)
Not recovered by whom.

Simon takes out his phone.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Bishop. Pack for the tropics.

INT. ELI'S APARTMENT, VAN NUYS - NIGHT

SUPER: "VAN NUYS. THE NEXT NIGHT."

Simon opens the door without knocking. There's a thin white scar on his cheekbone that wasn't there two years ago. His eyes go to the face-down photograph and stay on it.

SIMON
Drake.

ELI
No.

BRANDON
Not your call, Master Sergeant.

SIMON
(eyes on the lip)
I hear you serve papers now. Forty dollars a door.

ELI
Plus mileage.

SIMON
Light Brigade. Too aggressive, on bad intelligence. Your people paid.

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ELI
You were twenty meters away. Tell me, Simon. How many of my people did you help carry out.

Simon's hand goes inside the Barbour, high on the left, and stays there, closed on something. The answer is one. Reeves, across Simon's shoulders, out of the dust. Not Danny.

BRANDON
The server room in Syria. Somebody moved the program out ahead of you.

ELI
There was nothing in that room.

BRANDON
Report said dry. Somebody paid to keep that room cold.

The cold gets to Eli's skin before it gets to his head. Empty racks.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Two thousand a day. Each. Wheels up in forty-eight hours. Build your team.

ELI
I have a summons bag and a split lip.

BRANDON
Thursday.

ELI
Of course it's Thursday.

Brandon drops a folder. On top, still in its shrink-wrap, is a cheap drugstore ANDROID, the kind CVS sells next to the reading glasses.

BRANDON
Company phone. It takes pictures. Use it.

Simon pauses at the door.

SIMON
I trust you're better than you were in Syria.

He goes, and Brandon follows. The door CLICKS shut, considerately. Eli goes down to the Corolla in his T-shirt and comes back up with a flip phone, calls only. He opens

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Contacts. At the bottom, untouched for two years: ZOE. There's a worn ridge under his thumb.

He's scared of this call, so he dials before he can think about it. CALL.

MONTAGE - FOUR DOORS, ONE CALL

Company phone on speaker. One flat Midwestern voice reads the dossiers.

INSERT - FLIP PHONE

Ringing.

ZOE (V.O.)
(dry, recorded)
It's Zoe. I'm shooting. Leave it.

Eli hangs up on the beep.

BRANDON (V.O.)
Matthews, Jason. Six years with a unit that doesn't exist. Two million subscribers now. Not one video mentions the six.

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT, WEST HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

A ring light on an empty chair. The place smells of Jameson and a vanilla candle that cost more than the Jameson.

JASON MATTHEWS (29), adventure influencer, pours a shot for nobody, then turns on the smile for the lens.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Jason has a GoPro clipped to his chest rig before Eli finishes his first sentence. Eli takes the empty chair.

ELI
You carried a rifle before a camera. I'm asking for the rifle. Brief's on the plane.

BRANDON (V.O.)
Jackson, Myles. Marine drill instructor. Right ear gone, right shoulder dead, same alley. One daughter, sixteen.

EXT. CAMP PENDLETON, OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY

Hemp CREAKS under forty recruits.

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We find MYLES JACKSON slapping the rope above a hanging kid's hands, left-handed. His right arm hangs dead at his side. A beige HEARING AID sits behind his ear.

His daughter texts. His thumb hovers over the reply, and then he pockets the phone without answering and keeps walking. A suit crosses the grinder. Eli comes up on Myles's right. Mid-sentence, Myles pivots, and now Eli is on his left side.

MYLES
Say again? Other ear.
(Eli restarts on the good side)
Is it dangerous.

ELI
Very.

MYLES
Good.

BRANDON (V.O.)
Park, Katy. Air Force signals. Never in the field. Separation pending.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX, COLORADO SPRINGS - DAY

A blackout curtain shifts. A face. It falls shut.

KATY PARK (27), systems, comes down the stairs with one hand on the rail and her sleeves pulled over her fingers. She stops ten feet from Eli. She's scared to death out here, and she stays.

KATY
I don't come outside.

ELI
You won't have to. I need somebody smarter than whoever built it.

KATY
I'm not carrying a weapon. If it's what I think it is, I need to plant something in it. Not a name. A number.
(she meets his eyes)
You're the first one who didn't ask if I can shoot.

Upstairs, the DEADBOLT. Then the chain.

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INT. BLACKRIDGE WAREHOUSE, VAUXHALL - NIGHT

SUPER: "VAUXHALL. THE NEXT NIGHT."

Work lights HUM over the tarps. BISHOP sits on an ammo crate taping his hands. Next to his bergen is a white cake box from a bakery in Merthyr, tied up with string.

NADIA OKONKWO (36), analyst, reads the briefing pack for what isn't in it. A thin gold chain at her collar, with one charm. She never touches it.

TOMMY (41), fixer, tightens a wobbly table leg with the Leatherman that's always open in his hand. He thumbs up the lid of the cake box. Pink icing, a 7 and a 0.

BISHOP
Mam's seventy. Seven and a nought. A fortnight Sunday.

TOMMY
So are we holding Drake's coat or checking his pockets?

SIMON
Both. Simultaneously.

NADIA
You haven't briefed the Riyadh complexity.

SIMON
Not in this brief. Regrettably.

NADIA
Then it's the only part I'll read twice.

Bishop picks up the registration list. His finger stops dead on KONGA, the Nigerian entry. One name.

He looks up through the glass wall at Nadia. She learned that wrist lock in Lagos, and she has never said another word about Lagos.

EXT. RANGE ROAD, NORTHERN VIRGINIA - DAWN

BRANDON (V.O.)
Turner, Zoe. You know her.

Mist on the berms. PING. A steel target, far down the line. PING. A shooter sits at the last bench. Eli knows that back at two hundred meters.

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We get a look at her left leg. Below the knee it's carbon and titanium. At the ankle there's a sliver of bright metal between the pylon and the foot.

A machinist's shim.

There's a notebook on her bench with three names in it. Eli walks up behind her.

ZOE
You're in my light.

He steps aside. She fires. Works the bolt. Fires.

ZOE (CONT'D)
(to the scope)
You called once. Hung up on the beep. Two years. Somebody knocked.

She safes the rifle and turns around on the bench. She's older. Every soft edge is gone from her face.

ELI (CONT'D)
A weapon, Zoe. Out of that room in Syria. The one we lost Galloway for.

ZOE
Then I know where to point the rifle.

His eyes drop to the shim.

ELI
You cut that?

ZOE
Point-oh-four. Factory is point-one-five. I could feel the wobble at six hundred. So I fixed it.

She turns to pack the case and stops on his shoulders.

ZOE (CONT'D)
You wore that to Danny's.

ELI
Only one I own.

She reaches up and thumbs the shoulder seam flat, the one that never sat right. It's as close to a hug as these two ever get.

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ZOE
Two years proving I could live without this. I can.

The case LATCHES. SNAP.

ZOE (CONT'D)
I just don't want to.

Four doors. Four yeses.

INT. KING AIR, IN FLIGHT - DAY

SUPER: "SERENIQUE. DAY ONE."

The vinyl seats are cooked from the sun, and the coffee maker's dead. ELI sits with his eyes shut and his hands flat on his knees.

JASON
You said you'd brief me on the plane.

ELI
When we land.

JASON
This is the plane. We're rolling.

ELI
Two million subscribers. None of 'em cleared.

Jason films the window instead.

ELI
(eyes shut)
Y'all know if there's a Waffle House on this island?

MYLES
It's a private island, Bear.

ELI
That's what I was afraid of.

In the last row, alone, ZOE holds her rifle case across her lap with both hands on the latches. OUT THE WINDOW: the floodlit compound in the north. To the west, a bare plateau.

Eli watches the plateau until the WING takes it. We'll see it again.

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EXT. AIRSTRIP, SERENIQUE - DAY

Ninety-two degrees. Hot rubber and avgas. Sentinel tumbles down the stairs. Zoe comes last, and the carbon leg finds every tread without hunting for it.

Eli reads the apron before both boots are down. A camera every sixty meters on the fence. A service road climbs to the north.

A gray GULFSTREAM taxis in. Simon steps off last, already reading the other teams.

Past the terminal, cargo pallets bake next to a yellow forklift. Behind them, chocked, sits a DASH 8. White. No lettering, no crest. Who flies a plane with no name on it?

Between the pallets, OMAR HASSAN (50s), neat gray beard, counts crates against a tablet. He checks his gold Rolex more often than the crates.

At his shoulder stands a sunburned slab of a man in a Games security polo, a commando dagger tattooed down one forearm. The lanyard says BREYTENBACH.

A boy reads crate numbers off a manifest. FOUAD HADDAD.

HADDAD
Sentinel. Eleven pieces. One rifle case, flagged.

HASSAN
Customs. Set it aside. Gently. Americans are sentimental about their rifles.

THUD. A long black case drops to the tarmac with green tape on the handle. Zoe's spare. Eli starts for it and stops.

He's already walked past the last pallet. A steel box the size of a chest freezer, with a compressor bolted to its side and FROST on every corner in ninety-two degrees.

Inside the box, something KNOCKS. One knock. Soft, heavy, low. The compressor HUMS. Compressors clunk.

Eli stands there a second too long. Hassan looks up. So does Breytenbach, with a flat stare at Eli's hands.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
(pleasantly, to nobody)
Sentinel. Eleven pieces. Ten cleared. Mr. Breytenbach. The flatbed.

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Forty feet off, Simon has stopped too. He crosses straight through Sentinel, and they part for him. His eyes flick to the hearing aid, then away. Then to Zoe. The leg. Her face.

SIMON
(to Eli)
A sniper on one leg. A content creator.

ELI
Long shots. They'll surprise you.

SIMON
That's the concern.

Simon slows one step at the end of the pallets. The forklift sets the frost box on an unmarked flatbed in the shade of the terminal. He watches it settle.

INT. HANGAR TWO - DAY

Cold oil and kerosene. By the door, a red emergency cabinet. Behind the glass, fat flare tubes with lead collars, labeled SEARCH & RECOVERY MARKERS. FUEL JETTY. BURNS UNDER WATER. Eli's eyes stay on it a step too long. You might want to remember that cabinet.

A stubby refueler sits in the shade of the doors with JET A-1 stenciled on its tank. Keys in the ignition.

A laminated card is bolted up by the fire extinguisher. DHC-8-400 GROUND HANDLING. A line drawing of the aircraft over columns of dense small print.

Simon reads it top to bottom with his hands behind his back. Then he goes back to the top. Nobody reads those cards. Simon reads this one twice.

AT THE ARMORER'S BENCH: CLACK. The factory bolts come out of Sentinel's rifles, and blue ones go in, each with a hard collar machined into the face.

ARMORER
Conversion bolt. SF-7 only. Chamber won't take a live round. Everybody gets blue.

The factory bolts drop into foam crates stenciled by team. A handler stacks them on a pallet of green ammo cans, GAMES SECURITY 5.56 BALL, and wheels it out the side door.

Eli watches the cans go. He doesn't like it.

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MYLES
Blue's for recruits. Who's got live?

ARMORER
Games Security. North compound armory. Not you.

Zoe's rifle comes last. The armorer cracks a box of FAT GRAY ROUNDS, each slug seated in a plastic sabot.

ARMORER (CONT'D)
SF-7L. Heavy slug. Two hundred meters. Nobody inside thirty. Up close it breaks bone.

ZOE
Then nobody gets inside thirty of me.

EXT. THE BOWL - SUNSET

A grass amphitheater cut into the south lawn, clipped turf in tiers down to a stage with the sea behind it. Two thousand buyers in linen and Panamas. Cut grass and Hendrick's on ice.

A hangar-door screen. A JIB camera swings over the crowd. A DRUMLINE, sixteen snares on one pulse. Eight teams come down the center aisle.

The drums CUT. The jib sweeps the lines, and every face it catches goes up on the screen under a TRACKFIRE lower-third.

A barrel chest, hands that shrink his rifle, a telnyashka at the throat. He finds Eli across the grass and stares.

SUPER: "SERGEI VOLKOV / VOLK GROUP / TEAM LEAD / ENTRY 3.9 M/S"

A compact woman. Knuckles white with scar tissue, set shoulder-width apart. She doesn't blink.

SUPER: "LIN WEI / JADE DRAGON / TEAM LEAD / SHOT TO HIT 0.29 S"

All women, hair scraped back to the skull. One SILVER HAMMER hangs on a chain at one throat.

SUPER: "ASTRID HAUGEN / VALKYRIE / TEAM LEAD / HEART RATE ON TRIGGER 61"

Reyes gives the jib a two-finger salute and a grin. He's having a great time.

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SUPER: "ALEJANDRO REYES / SIERRA MADRE / TEAM LEAD / RELOAD 1.6 S"

Three fine scars on each cheek. Palms open.

SUPER: "EMEKA OBI / KONGA /
TEAM LEAD / ROUNDS PER CONFIRM 1.1"

On Blackridge's patch of grass, Nadia sees him. Her hand rises toward the charm at her collar, gets halfway and drops. The jib moves on.

Eli, squinting into the low sun, gray at the temples. Forty feet tall on the screen, he looks all of forty-four.

SUPER: "ELI DRAKE / SENTINEL /
TEAM LEAD / FIRST SHOT 0.8 S AVG"

LIGHTS DOWN.

Out past the reef, three hundred points of light lift off an unlit barge and draw the island's boot in the sky. The crowd finds itself on the map and CHEERS. Then the lights MOVE, and out of the pour comes the TRACKFIRE CROSSHAIR. A ring, four ticks and a burning point.

It slides up the coast and SETTLES. West, over empty dark, dead on the plateau from where Eli stands. It blinks out. The Bowl ROARS. Eli doesn't.

Stage lights, hot and white. MAXIM VOLKOV-CHEN (40s) jogs out in a faded DOOM II shirt under an Italian blazer, with a headset mic taped flesh-colored along his cheekbone.

MAX
The Warrior Games. Ten days.
TRACKFIRE adjudicates everything.
Lowest score goes home.

Front row. Hassan lifts two fingers off his tablet. Eli's eyes run the list. The green tape. The white Dash 8. The flatbed. All of it is Hassan's.

MAX (CONT'D)
Mr. Hassan runs logistics. Be nice to him.
(beat)
Move, it sees you. Stop, it loses you in ninety seconds. Find the seam between sensor arcs, you're invisible. It doesn't guess. It measures.

In the back of Sentinel, Katy watches a packet capture scroll on her phone.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

MAX (CONT'D)
The winner takes a five-year exclusive with Chimera Defense. Two hundred million dollars.

The logo flips to a beast with three heads. Eli's head comes up. Across the grass, so does Simon's.

Neither one says the name.

MAX (CONT'D)
One more thing. SF-7 doesn't sound like live ammunition. Softer. Flatter. You hear a sound that doesn't match the manifest.
(the flags SNAP in the trade wind)
Stop competing. Start surviving.

The screen flips to the bracket. SENTINEL and BLACKRIDGE land on the same side of the draw. Somebody up there has a sense of humor.

Nadia hasn't looked at the bracket. She's watching the stage, where Max signs Hassan's tablet with a fingertip, still talking, his eyes off the screen.

NADIA
Two hundred million, no tender. Who pays that to watch eight teams shoot each other?

SIMON
Someone who wants the eight teams.

NADIA
Or someone who wants the week.

Top tier. Eli turns. Below him, the apron under floodlights, and Zoe's spare case sitting alone on the tarmac.

Green tape on the handle.

HEADLIGHTS behind the terminal. The flatbed, with the steel box ratcheted down and the compressor's red light blinking. It climbs the service road and takes the first junction.

West. Toward where the crosshair went out.

INT. VILLAS - NIGHT

CROSS-CUT. One voice runs through three rooms, tinny, off a tablet propped against a fruit bowl.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

BRANDON (V.O.)
Handover's Day Nine, sunset, after the closing ceremony. Material's already on the island. West compound.

INT. SENTINEL VILLA, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Brandon's face on the tablet. Eli on the sofa, elbows on his knees. Simon leans against the wall, on principle.

BRANDON (V.O.)
Cross runs intel. Drake runs direct action. All traffic routes through me.

The tablet goes DARK.

INT. BLACKRIDGE VILLA, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy lies flat on the floor under the coffee table with the Leatherman in one fist.

SIMON (O.S.)
(from the kitchen)
There's no kettle.

TOMMY
There's a machine. Does lattes.

Simon fills the doorway.

SIMON
I'm aware of what it does. What are you doing to the table, Tommy.

Tommy opens his palm. A black PUCK, coin-sized, trailing two hair-thin wires.

TOMMY
Two wires. Somebody else's work. I'm undoing it.

SIMON
Then Drake's table has one too. Brandon just briefed in front of it.

NADIA
(a paper map pinned under four water glasses)
No work order for the west compound. No fuel log for the plateau.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

In the kitchen doorway, Bishop tapes his hands for a fight nobody scheduled.

SIMON
Bishop. A constitutional, I think. West perimeter, after dark.

Bishop TEARS the tape with his teeth.

INT. SENTINEL VILLA, TEAM ROOM - NIGHT

Katy's Toughbook sits on a hard case, cabled to black boxes with green LEDs. Beside it, a box of Cap'n Crunch she carried through two airports. She eats it dry. Zoe feeds a pipe cleaner through her bolt by feel. Gun oil and hot plastic. Myles fills the doorway to the balcony.

MYLES
Paintball's for the Army. What's the real job?

ELI
A weapon on the west plateau. We play their games. Then we pull second shift.

Eli leaves Syria out of it. If he tells them, every one of them hits the field hunting Galloway's killers instead of watching a sector. Zoe knows, from the range. Nobody else.

Zoe's pipe cleaner stops. She watches him hold it back, and she lets it ride. The pipe cleaner starts again.

KATY
(eyes on scrolling hex)
Their network has a secondary subnet. The TRACKFIRE backbone also talks to something else. The link opened four seconds while Max was on about the money. Nine packets. That's a C-minus.

ELI
Can you get in?

KATY
Not from in here. I need a port on their side of the wall.

ELI
Then we get you closer. Hassan pulled Zoe's spare. His box had frost on it. It knocked. After dark it went west on a flatbed.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Zoe's hand freezes on the bolt handle.

EXT. WEST PLATEAU, TREELINE - NIGHT

The insects are deafening. Hot dust and crushed sage.

Two hundred meters of scrub. Then low buildings behind chain-link. The long one has no windows and a loading bay at the north end. Under the bay light sits the unmarked flatbed. The bed's empty.

Simon lies prone behind a spotting scope with Bishop beside him. He walks the scope down the long building's west wall. It's WET. A ten-meter strip is beading and running where the corrugated panel meets the block.

Dry night, wet wall. What makes a wall sweat in this heat?

A white LAND CRUISER rolls along the inside of the wire, its spotlight raking the scrub. Simon thumbs the stopwatch on his Casio. The beam swings toward the trees. Simon lays two fingers on Bishop's wrist. Slow. Even. Sixty a minute. The light lifts over their heads and swings away.

Ninety minutes a lap. Simon nods once.

INT. BLACKRIDGE VILLA - NIGHT

The lights are off. Tommy's asleep on the sofa with the Leatherman rising and falling on his chest.

Simon steeps a Yorkshire Gold bag in a mug that says SERENIQUE. At the table he writes one line in cipher. In plain English:

DAY 1. W PLATEAU. COLD BUILDING. 90 MIN.

EXT. SENTINEL VILLA, BALCONY - NIGHT

The teak is still warm from the day. Chlorine drifts up from the empty pool, lit turquoise. Eli stands at the rail with his Steiner binoculars up, reading the island.

North, up the slope, the compound sits floodlit. White fuel tanks stand on a pad at its east edge. A row of barred windows marks the armory. Behind the bars are a foam crate stenciled SENTINEL and a pallet of green cans. Sentinel's factory bolts, parked next to the live ammunition.

West is dark. Two figures leave the resort on foot, one slim, one square through the shoulders. They head out for the plateau.

Eli slides the photograph out of his jacket and holds it face up in the pool light. Five faces. Galloway on the end

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

with gum in his cheek, for once not talking. Eli misses him. He holds the picture there for ten seconds and doesn't turn it over.

It's past one. The pool light CLICKS off.

Headlights on the plateau road. The flatbed is coming back the way it went. At a junction, a sodium lamp shows him its bed. It's empty, the ratchet straps coiled behind the cab.

He pockets the photograph. We go with him down the stairs to the south road.

INT. SERVICE TUNNEL, UNDER THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

SUPER: "0152."

Bleach over wet concrete. On the far pillar is a fire-hose cabinet, the dead drop. A chalk mark on its hinge means I have something.

SIMON moves along the wall with a red torch dark in his fist. The southern camera grid dies at 0157 for four minutes. Both men mean to use it.

He told no one about the tunnel. The hatch wears a new MASTER LOCK with the price sticker still on the shackle.

Simon stops. Holds.

Thirty meters short of the cabinet: BREATHING, fast and shallow, from a recess on his left. He thumbs the torch on. RED light.

ALMÁNZAR sits on the floor with his face pressed flat to a steel door, cheek on the cold metal. Eyes open, pupils blown wide. His shirt is black with sweat.

SIMON
Mr. Almánzar.

Nothing.

Simon crouches. Two fingers to the throat. The skin is BURNING. The pulse is too fast to count. Almánzar's hand SNAPS up and locks on his wrist. Wet. Hot.

Strong past anything a sick man owns.

Simon doesn't pull.

Almánzar turns his face off the steel and studies the hand. He's confused, and then he's ashamed. The fingers open.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ALMÁNZAR
(scraped voice)
Cold. Cold. Hot. I don't...
(to the steel)
Three days. They said three days.

Simon stands. He puts the torch on the hinge. Bare metal. No chalk. No contact. Behind the pillar, someone else breathes, slow and careful.

SIMON
Naturally.

ELI (O.S.)
Offsides, Cross.

SIMON
On my map, you're on your balcony.

Eli steps out of the dark.

ELI
You were supposed to be at the treeline.

SIMON
I told no one. You told no one. Same wrong pillar.

ELI
Two hounds. One tree.

They crouch in the same two feet of dark. Coconut sun cream. Down the tunnel, Almánzar rasps.

ELI (CONT'D)
What's that?

Simon has the true answer ready. A sick man. The contact. A hand on my wrist.

SIMON
Maintenance. Night shift.

Eli listens a beat longer and lets it go.

SIMON (CONT'D)
We withdraw. After you.

ELI
You first.

Neither moves.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

EXT. SERVICE ROAD - NIGHT

They surface inside the camera gap, into the warm dark.

SIMON
Every northern approach just got harder. Neither of us shared a plan.

ELI
Easy, Downton.

It lands under Simon's ribs. It's Galloway's word, in the dead man's cadence.

SIMON
Syria. Two plans, nobody briefed, someone pays.

It comes out tired.

ELI
I know what it looked like. I was there.

SIMON
We need a protocol.

ELI
Bring a pen.

They split into the dark in two directions.

EXT. OLEANDERS ABOVE THE TUNNEL MOUTH - NIGHT

SUPER: "0240."

Oleander sap, bitter and green. Simon is ten meters up the bank with his phone to his ear.

SIMON
Maintenance worker, end of the service tunnel. Unwell. Fever, possibly.

SUPER: "0258."

A white VAN rolls down the road with its lights off and backs up to the tunnel door. A refrigeration unit HUMS on the cab. Two men in logistics polos carry Almánzar out. The rear doors swing wide. Cold rolls out.

Someone's already inside.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

A woman lies strapped along the left wall on a foil blanket. She wears a pale blue housekeeper's smock with room keys coiled at her waist. Her face is to the wall.

One hand has worked loose of the strap and hooked over the rail. It's gray to the wrist. Simon has carried enough dead men to know that gray. He has never seen one hold on.

Almánzar lifts his face into the chill, grateful for it. The men boost him in. He sits beside her with his cheek on the rail, a breath from her gray fingers.

Nobody takes his pulse. Nobody looks at her. The doors THUMP. The van takes the left fork. Simon asked for a doctor. They sent a van.

EXT. ZONE ALPHA - DAY

SUPER: "DAY TWO."

Two mock towns sit side by side, ignoring each other, six structures a side. A red flag is clipped on a pole at the far end. Between them runs a wall of plywood three inches thick. You can't see through it. Hearing is fine.

Above the far end stands a glass GALLERY on steel legs. Two thousand seats of linen, with drinks in hand at ten a.m. The OPFOR spread across the pad, ex-military from a dozen armies, in scoring vests with SF-7 loads. They fire back.

Sentinel waits at the start line. Myles flexes his hands in front of a standard-width door. Zoe is already reading a balcony, and Jason tilts his chest GoPro two degrees.

JASON
Smile, everybody. This is the one they'll clip.

ELI
I am smiling.

ZOE
He is. That's the whole range.

Through the plywood, Welsh and quiet:

BISHOP (O.S.)
Right then.

HORN.

MONTAGE - THE SCOREBOARD

AUDIO DESIGN: A drumline pulse under everything. One CHIME each time the TRACKFIRE board refreshes; every cut lands on

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

one. SPEED RAMPS: slow on every hit, fast on every sprint. Split screen: Sentinel on the left, Blackridge on the right.

FAST. LEFT. Eli puts his shoulder into a steel door. BANG. Orange dye SLAPS the wall by his head. Two rounds into the first man, and his vest goes white. CONFIRMED, says a flat synthetic voice.

SLOW. RIGHT. Simon stands in a doorway with his carbine shouldered. He isn't firing. Eight meters off, an OPFOR kneels behind a hostage dummy strapped to a chair. A round in the dummy turns the scoring mat red.

FAST. LEFT. Zoe goes up a drainpipe. The good leg pushes. The carbon foot finds a seam in the blockwork and braces. Push, brace, pull. At a window in structure four, an OPFOR watches her climb with his rifle hanging. His rifle stays low the whole climb.

FAST. LEFT. Jason goes sideways through a seventeen-inch gap touching neither wall. SLOW. A waiting OPFOR tags his thigh.

Amber on the vest: WOUNDED. The Combat Skin cinches and keeps squeezing.

MYLES (RADIO)
Walk it off, Content.

CHIME.

SUPER: "0:10." "0:20." "0:30."

RIGHT. Simon hasn't moved. The OPFOR's muzzle dips an inch. A rifle held on a doorway gets heavy at thirty seconds. Simon used to teach that in a classroom at Hereford.

SUPER: "0:40."

The OPFOR leans two inches to check that the door is still full. His shoulder clears the canvas. One shot, collarbone. White. The mat stays green.

TOMMY
Forty seconds. I'd have talked.

NADIA
Your file says thirty.

A ROAR comes down through the glass.

CHIME.

AUDIO: THE DRUMLINE CUTS. A high thermal hum.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

LEFT. Eli breaches structure four. Two rounds, first man. White. Down. The second man is slow, his rifle rising by inches. His face is slick and his collar is soaked black. Glassy eyes. We recognize him. He's the man from the window.

Two rounds, center chest. White. CONFIRMED.

He doesn't fall.

SLOW. SF-7 hurts. Eli has watched bigger men fold up yowling. This one glares at Eli, vest lit, then sits down. Eli passes him on the way out, and his right palm brushes the man's shoulder. Heat comes through the shirt.

AUDIO: THE DRUMLINE SLAMS BACK IN.

FAST. The Square is sixty meters of open flagstone. Eli sprints and dives behind a planter. There's a sniper behind a vent housing on the far roof.

ELI
Zoe. Rooftop north. Vent housing.

ZOE (RADIO)
(RADIO)
Eyes on. Three exits. I've got all three.

SLOW. Her first shot paints an orange flower six inches from his head. He rolls, and her second goes through where his chest was. There are three ways off that housing, and she sees all three. He picks the wrong one. SLAP. White.

FAST. Both gates. Myles hits the steel gate with his whole body, and it SLAMS open. Through the wall, Blackridge's gate opens in one smooth swing. Same result, none of the force.

MYLES
I put two-forty through a gate. He stood in a door.

ELI
He read the door, Grizz. Twice.

CHIME.

SLOW. A door on each side of the plywood. Eli hits his, and Simon hits theirs. BANG, BANG, three-tenths of a second apart. Eli comes out on a hot concrete roof with the island spread below him. Three inches of plywood away, Simon has the same view.

At the far end, the flagpole.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
Grizz. Flag.

SIMON (O.S., his roof)
Bishop. Flag, please.

Myles sprints, six-four and two-forty, faster than anyone that size should move. On the other side, Bishop runs on quick, light feet. Myles rips the flag off its clip, and the pole SINGS.

MYLES
Alpha calls it! The Marine Corps CARRIES it!

Half a second later, Bishop's clip clicks open on the other side. Clean.

BISHOP (O.S.)
Tidy flag. Pity nobody scores the room, mind.

INT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

The boards populate. SENTINEL: 41 ROUNDS, 20 NEUTRALIZED, 2 CASUALTY. BLACKRIDGE: 11 ROUNDS, 11 NEUTRALIZED, 0 CASUALTY.

The replay runs both roofs side by side. Myles tears his flag off, and the pole whips. Half a second behind, a compact man lifts his clear with one taped hand. Beneath it, one number.

SYNC DIFFERENTIAL 0.3 SEC.

SIMON
(low, to Bishop, eyes on the replay)
Eleven doors. A shoulder on every one.

BISHOP
One was open.

EXT. GRAVEL LOT BEHIND THE GALLERY - DAY

An unmarked white Transit sits at a loading dock with a refrigeration unit humming on the cab roof. Its rear windows are fogged from the inside. The van rocks.

THUMP. Low on the rear doors, heavy and soft. THUMP. One a second. Is somebody trying to get out? A man would shout. This is too even.

Ten feet off, a logistics guy on a cable drum peels an orange. Citrus and diesel. He keeps his eyes on his thumbs.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Eli eases toward the doors, and the knocking quickens. He steps two paces left, out of its line, and it slows back to the count.

A palm presses the left window, and the fog clears around it. The fingers spread. The hand drags down the glass, and the fog creeps back over the smear.

The logistics guy wipes his fingers, leans into the cab and cranks a dial. The unit drops a note.

The blows slow.

ZOE
After the dial, every one slower.

LOGISTICS GUY
Event kit. Spoils in this heat.
Shuttle's round the front, folks.

He drives off and takes the left fork, west. Eli remembers the steel box on the tarmac. One knock, and the second where he let it be the compressor.

ELI
Compressors don't have hands.

MONTAGE - DAYS TWO AND THREE

AUDIO DESIGN: One CHIME, the TRACKFIRE board refreshing. Every cut lands on it.

INT. DEBRIEF SUITE - NIGHT

SLOW. A wall of screens, set to arctic. On the replay, Eli's hand brushes the slow man's shoulder and lifts away. Six frames. The fingers open and close, once.

Simon watches with a glass of water. Bishop sits beside him with a milk. Reyes holds a Modelo out to Myles. Myles shifts so Reyes is on his left.

REYES
Third in this company is surviving.
You always stand on that side.

MYLES
Good ear.

REYES
Then this is my side.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

MYLES
(low, nodding at Simon)
Why's Cross drinking water in a bar?

ELI
He's not drinking it. He's auditing it.

CHIME. Obi stops at the Blackridge corner. Nadia's hand goes to the charm at her collar and stops halfway.

OBI
Okonkwo.

NADIA
Obi.

He nods and moves on. CHIME. Tommy and Jason shake hands for the camera.

TOMMY
Tenner says I finish above you. Evens.

JASON
Make it fifty. On camera.

The leaderboard. Angola Tactical drops two places beside a small red word: PROCEDURAL. Beside it, a paper sheet: OPFOR 11, 14, 22. RELIEVED (MEDICAL). Eli looks at the right palm that brushed the slow man's shoulder.

At the bar, Hassan slides Max a tablet. Max signs with a fingertip and doesn't read it. That's twice.

Simon crosses to the terrace doors and passes Eli without breaking stride.

SIMON
Three-tenths, Drake. You're early.

ELI
You're late.

EXT. DEBRIEF TERRACE - NIGHT

Nadia sets a plate by Simon's notebook.

NADIA
No medical log for the OPFOR. Their medic keeps his own book. Somebody's keeping score. Not TRACKFIRE.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

EXT. ZONE DELTA, THE CORRIDOR - DAY

FAST. A steel corridor in white light, five gates over sixty meters. At the third gate, Jason, still favoring the leg the Skin crushed, catches his boot on the threshold. Half an inch. A flat POP, and Jason FOLDS.

JASON
Guys, TRACKFIRE says I'm dead.

ELI
(running on)
Then die quietly.

Jason slides down the wall, a dead man in a live corridor, his GoPro panning up the catwalks. The board reads white on red: ELIMINATION. ANGOLA TACTICAL.

EXT. AIRSTRIP - AFTERNOON

FAST. Hot tar. The white Dash 8 spools up. Eight men cross the apron with kit bags. Their leader stops at the stairs and takes one long look at the ridge. Then he climbs. The plane lifts, banks west toward open water, and is gone.

EXT. BEACH VOLLEYBALL COURT - DUSK

The pole lights buzz on. Sierra Madre against Sentinel. SMACK. Sand sprays.

Eli plays badly and scouts. Hassan sits at the court's edge in a folding chair with a beer he lifts and never drinks.

ELI
You play?

HASSAN
I schedule. The beer arrives at six. The rifles, Thursday.

ELI
Sniper's spare case. Long, black, green tape on the handle. I signed for it.

HASSAN
Customs. Tomorrow. Possibly after.

ELI
It cleared customs in Miami.

HASSAN
Then it will be a short tomorrow.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Behind the chain-link sits a white van with MEDICAL SCREENING on a magnetic sign. Twenty-one OPFOR stand in a chow line with their sleeves rolled. One after another, each bends his left arm and presses two fingers into the crook of the elbow.

Jason's GoPro, on its tripod at the far end, drifts toward them. Eli keeps his mouth shut.

LATER.

We stay on Hassan's chair. It's empty. Beside one leg stands the bottle he held all evening, full to the neck. Reyes picks up the volleyball and turns it in his hands.

REYES
My father ran a cantina in Culiacán. A man brings beer to a party and won't drink it, he isn't at the party. He's working.

INT. COMPETITOR SUITE - MORNING

SUPER: "DAY FOUR."

Two phones lie on a glass table. Simon sets his mug on the glass, squarely.

SIMON
Your coffee table is wired, Master Sergeant.

Eli's eyes drop to the glass between them.

SIMON (CONT'D)
This one's clean. I meant the villa.

ELI
How long?

SIMON
Tommy found ours Day One. I've kept it on.

ELI
Three days. You sat on it.

SIMON
You'd have stamped on it.

ELI
Damn right.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
Which is why it's still there. They think you talk about volleyball.

Eli pulls a resort Bic from his shirt pocket, Serenique crest on the barrel, and lays it square on the glass.

Two sheets go down. Simon's photo of the compound fire plan, with the service runs in red and blue. Eli's bar napkin, with the plateau road, distances in meters and a substation.

A buried conduit runs from the compound toward the plateau. Side by side, the halves FIT.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Whatever they're keeping cold isn't in the main compound. Secondary structure. West side.

ELI
The Games cover us. Every team scouts at night. We're two more.

SIMON
You go loud on the eastern approach. I use the attention on the west. Sequenced.

ELI
My people won't know it's sequenced.

SIMON
Mine will.

ELI
So I lie to four people to buy you forty seconds.

SIMON
Forty-five, if you can manage it.

ELI
You get forty.

Under Simon's cuff, four small dark ovals sit in a row on the wrist, where Almánzar's fingers were. They haven't faded. He gave Eli the table. Almánzar and the woman on the van floor wait for a diagnosis. Simon's uneasy about that. The Bic stays where Eli put it.

INT. KILL HOUSE, COMMERCIAL BLOCK - DAY

MONTAGE - THE SCOREBOARD, DAY FOUR

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

AUDIO DESIGN: The drumline again. Every cut on the CHIME.

Three buildings. The first muzzle on the other team's cardiac box wins. Sentinel starts south and Volk starts north. SERGEI VOLKOV waits at the far end with his hands loose. Behind him, three men nod.

KATY (RADIO)
Volk's villa IP pulled our Event
One replay. Just your entries.

Eli stacks on the first doorway. Left side. With Eli it's always the left side, and Volk has it on tape. Myles eases up on his right.

MYLES
Stack left?

ELI
Always.

HORN.

FAST. Cubicle walls. Two Russians go down in six seconds. SLOW. The residential corridor, and Eli stops dead at its mouth. It's the Syria stairwell, rebuilt in plywood.

A PKM opens up. Only Eli can hear it.

MYLES
Move, Bear! They read the Army manual.

ELI
I wrote the manual.

MYLES
That's the problem.

Eli knocks the studs. Hollow. He goes through it.

FREEZE FRAME on his back, mid-leap. CRUNCH. The near sheet bursts and the far sheet holds. Eli hangs in the wall to the waist, and we stay on his boots, kicking at the air.

MYLES
What are you doing, recruit?

ELI
Improvising.

MYLES
Since when?

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
Since the wall.

CHIME. Across the pad, Sergei watches Eli's boots.

EXT. RESORT TERRACE - DAY

SUPER: "DAY FIVE."

The terrace smells of truffle oil. A waiter sets down one poached egg in a puddle of FOAM.

ELI
Is that all of it?

WAITER
It's deconstructed, sir.

ELI
Could I have it put back.

He eats it in one bite and is still hungry.

Lin Wei crosses the terrace past Simon's table.

SIMON
Good morning.

She doesn't look at him. Five days, five good mornings, no answer. She sits down with Eli for ten minutes of Mandarin. At the next table, Simon lowers his FINANCIAL TIMES.

EXT. WEST PLATEAU, SUBSTATION - NIGHT

SUPER: "NIGHT FIVE."

The transformers HUM. The air smells of ozone.

We find TOMMY in a hi-vis vest with a clipboard he lifted from a supply closet. His phone sits on the monitor bank, looping twelve cameras on their own last seven seconds.

On Katy's screen the tiles go dead one at a time. On tile four a moth crosses a lamp. Then the same moth crosses the same lamp.

KATY
(radio)
Forty-three minutes.

A contractor walks in behind Tommy, who doesn't turn around.

BISHOP (RADIO)
Gumshield, Tommy.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

The contractor nods at the back of Tommy's head and goes.

TOMMY
Nodded at me. Clipboard does that.

At the treeline, Simon has the patrol on his radio. One white vehicle on a ninety-minute circuit.

Eli told his four that Blackridge is lending the radio watch, the camera loop and the scope, a favor between teams. That's the lie he promised Simon. He hated telling it. Tonight he can't look at Katy.

From across the plateau, a CLANG. One heavy blow, steel on steel, and it rings. A long wait. Then another, weaker. Eli's head turns. No third. Katy says it's a generator.

EXT. LONG BUILDING, LOADING DOOR - NIGHT

Diesel haze. A retinal scanner sits over a card reader. Tommy cloned the card off a maintenance man's lanyard in the breakfast line.

KATY
Card plus retina. Two-factor.

Eli's weight shifts toward the hinges. He stops himself.

ELI
This is your room, Katy. Tell me what you need.

KATY
Fifty seconds. And nobody talking.

INT. SERVER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fan roar and blinking green lights. Jason reads a trunk label off the cable.

JASON
Sierra seven two. Dash. Charlie. Same pipe that feeds the leaderboard.

A TELEMETRY folder. The OPFOR channels have been climbing since Day Three. Seven Angola channels sit frozen at forty, stale since Day Three. An eighth is sliding down to 4.2.

KATY
Body temperatures, off the vests. One of Angola's is falling. Errors don't have a slope.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

And one more channel, Subject One. It sits flat at 2.4, as far back as the file runs.

KATY (CONT'D)
I plant a user. No name, a number. A sleeper that sits and watches.

ELI
Do it.

Headlights SWEEP the window.

EXT. PLATEAU - CONTINUOUS

TOMMY
(radio)
Hang about. I'll give them a better building.

An ALARM goes off in the wrong building. One truck peels off toward it. The other truck's beam finds Katy. She drops flat with twenty-one kilos on her back.

A Games guard steps down, rifle in hand. Katy looks for a blue bolt. The bolt is bare steel. Terrified, she keeps her face in the dirt.

The safety comes off. The muzzle sweeps the scrub, because something moved. Something small and many-legged crosses the back of Eli's hand. He doesn't flinch. He thumbs the radio.

ELI
Dog in the scrub.

The truck swings away toward the alarm. Eli stays put. A runner in a headlight is the one thing every driver sees.

ELI (CONT'D)
Stay down. Count three. Then come.

Katy's chin is bleeding. Her hands are steady.

ELI (CONT'D)
Good work.

Six years of SCIFs, and nobody ever said that to her. She doesn't know what to do with it, so she gives him a number:

KATY
Forty-eight seconds. I said fifty. A-minus.

She lifts her head. Eli is already gone along the treeline. Jason puts a finger to his lips.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

INT. THE LONG BUILDING, COLD ROOM - NIGHT

There's no padlock on the hasp. Cold air spills out of the gap, and it smells of bleach.

An epoxy floor, coved for hosing. A steel lab stool by the door. A black container with 3.0 C on its display and two tamper seals across the lid.

Eli knows this kind of box from a course at Fort Detrick, where a bored civilian tapped the lid and explained what travels inside. He cracks the seals. There's paper on top.

Buyer docs, page nine: CASE 01. COUNTER-AGENT. HOLD 2 TO 8. BEFORE ONSET ONLY. REPEAT AT SIX HOURS. TWENTY MINUTES OUT OF BAND, DISCARD.

If there's a counter-agent, where's the agent? On the floor in front of him, in the black box. CASE 01, the cure, isn't in the room.

Every page is stamped in the margin: BUYER DOCS, RECORDS 2/4. The Records room is across the corridor. Steel door, keypad, one red light.

He has twenty-two minutes. In the back wall there's a wider door, solid steel, no window, C-07 at head height. Frost under it. Another keypad. No minutes for a keypad.

The other door has a window of fogged glass. Eli wipes it with a glove. Behind it, a man is strapped upright to a steel frame. Frost in his eyebrows. An ANGOLA TACTICAL patch on his sleeve.

It's the team leader who looked back at the ridge before he climbed the airstair.

The door seal hasn't caught, and the room has had an hour to warm. Eli builds a story that fits. Heat. A heart attack.

He looks at the straps.

ELI
(quietly)
Angola's team leader. Flew out Day Three. Mortuary Affairs never straps one down.

He pulls the door, and the seal PEELS. It's colder inside. His boots on the epoxy are the only sound. No hum, no drip. Eli stops close.

Eyes shut. Lips blue. The right wrist strap is chewed through, the nylon pulled out to rust-brown threads. The free hand hangs with its fingertips torn.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Eli puts two fingers to the carotid.

Ice.

Eli counts.

Five.

Eight.

Ten. Nothing.

Dead.

The throat SWALLOWS.

ELI (CONT'D)
Fuck.

The eyes OPEN.

There's nothing behind them. They find Eli and stay on him. The free hand SNAPS onto his collar. Eli RIPS back, and the grip doesn't give. The frame BUCKLES. The man comes off it, his whole weight, all at once.

Eli drives a fist into the face. CRUNCH, cartilage. The head doesn't turn. He hits it again. Same. Then TEETH, through his sleeve, grinding. Eli goes down on the frosted epoxy. A chest buckle skitters across the floor.

A seam in the wall swings open. It's SIMON, with a SureFire in one fist. One look takes it all in: the frame, the man, Eli on the floor, the buckle still sliding.

He grabs the steel stool by its legs, takes two strides and RAMS it into the man's chest. The man folds off Eli.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Drake. Wrist.

Eli has nothing left to buckle. Simon whips his own belt out of its loops, wraps the wrist and cinches it to the frame. The man pulls. The belt holds.

Simon backs out with the stool in one hand. He sets it in the doorway, thinks better of it, picks it up again and shoulders the door. The seal DRAGS.

THUNK.

Through the glass, the man winds down, each pull on the belt slower than the last. Eli stays on the floor with his back against the frost and his breath ragged and loud. His hands won't stop shaking. He's afraid.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

On his forearm, a purple crescent. The skin is unbroken.

Nobody speaks. Behind the glass, the fingers curl once. Then they stop.

ELI
You were supposed to stay on the west side.

SIMON
I created the window. Then I used it.

ELI
That's my move.

SIMON
Nobody owns a wall, Drake.

ELI
You were covering my approach.

SIMON
I was gathering intelligence.

ELI
Covering me.

SIMON
Both. Simultaneously.

ELI
He was dead, Cross. No pulse. Then he swallowed. Explain that.

SIMON
Hypothermia. Core that cold, a heart drops to a few beats a minute. Nobody's dead until he's warm and dead.
(he turns his wrist up: four ovals)
Dead drop night. Almánzar, the contact. Face on a steel door, burning up. Took my wrist harder than a sick man should. Logistics carted him off in a cold van. A woman strapped to the floor, gray to the wrist. I called her dead.

ELI
You let me walk in with two fingers out.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
I wanted a diagnosis before I gave you one.

Simon's phone lights up. A consignee line: HASSAN, O.

SIMON (CONT'D)
The man who signed for our kit. He's the consignee.

ELI
On paper.

Eli reaches for it. Simon puts the phone in his pocket.

SIMON
Not in here, Drake. When it's a fact. Not before.

Simon leaves through the seam in the wall. Eli doesn't follow. He checks his watch: eight minutes on Tommy's loop.

The Records room is across the corridor.

INT. THE LONG BUILDING, RECORDS ROOM - NIGHT

Katy's ghost user opens the mag-lock. THUNK. THUNK. THUNK. One HISSES instead. Down the corridor a door breathes out and settles. Eli has no time to look.

He goes straight to the back pages, the ones nobody photographs unless they know what to hunt for. The END USER line reads KR-7741-HX. It's the same code stenciled on Brandon's tablet case.

ELI
(to nobody)
That's Brandon's.

His hands are steady now. Click.

KATY
(earpiece)
Ghost user's catching a sat call on the trunk line. I'm keeping it.

INT. THE COLD BARN - CONTINUOUS

KATY
(earpiece)
Your heart rate's one-forty, Eli.

ELI
(a whisper)
Yes. I can feel it.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Back to C-07. Katy opens the keypad. He eases the door onto the back two-thirds of the long building. COLD. Wet concrete and bleach. A fan somewhere, steady.

A hangar-long corridor under blue light, the floor coved for hosing. Numbered steel doors run down both sides, each with a fogged window and a frost line under it.

He walks. Boots on wet concrete. Each step answers itself. Behind the first window there's an upright shape on a frame. He wipes the glass with a knuckle.

ANGOLA TACTICAL. The next door, the next man, frost in his eyebrows. Eli counts them without moving his lips. Seven. Eight, with the one on Simon's belt.

Then OPFOR in white vests. Men in resort polos. A thin man with a mustache: ALMÁNZAR.

Near the far end, a woman's face hangs close to the glass. Gray. Eyes half open. The frost has melted off in a ragged oval where her breath used to be.

He doesn't look long enough to see what she's wearing.

At the end, gowned men are strapping new arrivals to frames, two to a frame. There aren't enough frames.

KATY
(earpiece)
Eli. Every channel in my file is behind that glass. Angola. The OPFOR. Everybody.

The fan CUTS. Dark. It's so quiet he can hear the frost. The generators kick back over, and the lights come up blue. Behind him, one seal lets go. SHHHHK.

Eli stops.

An amber lamp turns over a door, with a two-note TONE. Fog crawls out along the floor, an inch deep. He turns his head and nothing else. Behind the glass, the frame hangs open, straps loose, with a transfer tag wired to the upright.

Empty.

Above it, a vent grille dangles on a dropped damper and feeds the room the lab's warm air. Somebody unbuckled her for the morning transfer and left her standing there.

He eases one step, then another. A small bright CHIME. Another. It has the rhythm of a step.

Another.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Out of the fog come bare feet. A paper gown tied at the nape with two white ties, over a pale blue smock. A ring of room keys swings on her hip. CHIME. CHIME.

She's a woman in a work smock. He brought no knife, because he came for paper. He will not put a hand on her. Running is the worst thing he can do.

CHIME. CHIME.

He hits the push bar at a dead run.

EXT. PLATEAU, SOUTH DOOR / YARD - CONTINUOUS

BANG. The south door, the night, and a hundred meters of open gravel under floodlights. SIRENS. Every light on the slope swings onto him. Behind him the keys go chime, chime, chime. Faster.

The keys stop chiming and start to RATTLE, a fist shaking them. Under the rattle, bare feet on gravel, fast. His run did that. Every stride he took gave her something to chase.

At the south door, BREYTENBACH steps out with a Vektor R4 low off his left hip. Steel magazine. No blue bolt anywhere. Eli could take him three ways. Any of them is an incident, and an incident blows the job.

The swing starts low off the left hip. He could slip it.

Slipping is fighting.

He turns his face with it, cheekbone to the fist, temple clear. The Van Nuys punch, paid in full. CRACK. His earpiece TEARS out. His left eye starts to close. Breytenbach backs into the doorway with the rifle on him.

BREYTENBACH
Stay down.

Eli takes the second hit on purpose and goes down, face in the gravel, the hottest thing on the slope. The keys rattle close. A hand closes on his belt. Breath on his collar.

Breytenbach just watches. Eli waits for the breath.

Bucks.

Rolls.

STAMPS the base of the skull. The keys don't make another sound. On the ridge, a KONGA rifle watches and doesn't fire.

Breytenbach goes through Eli's pockets one-handed. He keeps the phone, drops the earpiece and puts a boot on it. CRUNCH.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

He doesn't look at the woman. Eli looks once.

Two gowned men cross the yard from the loading dock with a catch pole and a folded sheet. They're in no hurry, and their lights swing as they walk. They've done this before.

INT. THE LONG BUILDING, LAB - CONTINUOUS

Eli is marched back through the lab. The black container sits on its dolly against the west wall, its gauge reading 3.0. A steel door is stenciled SUBJECT 01, with a frost line under it. Behind its fogged glass stands one upright shape, apart from the others.

He keeps his eyes on it as long as he can turn his head.

INT. HASSAN'S OFFICE, NORTH COMPOUND - 0230

A bare room. A desk, and nothing on the walls. Cold cardamom coffee in a thimble cup. On the desk: a manifest, Eli's phone and a gold watch.

Eli sits, uncuffed. His left eye has swollen to a slot. Breytenbach stands on the door, his dagger tattoo aimed at the floor. Hassan comes in wearing linen. It's half past two in the morning, and Hassan's beard is freshly combed.

HASSAN
Sergeant Drake. Out of bounds.

ELI
I got lost.

HASSAN
The west compound is not on the way to anything.

He lifts the phone and wakes it with one thumb. He doesn't need to scroll.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Recording devices in a restricted area. I could have you on a plane by breakfast.

ELI
But.

HASSAN
But I would rather know where you are.

The phone slides into Hassan's pocket with Brandon's prefix on it, the END USER line, Eli's only proof off that plateau.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

HASSAN (CONT'D)
You get it back when you leave. Everything leaves when I say.

ELI
Including me.

HASSAN
Especially you.

He circles the desk and studies the swollen eye with professional interest.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
It will be ugly by morning. Ice, if you have it.

His gaze drops to Eli's boots. There's gravel packed in one heel, dark with something. Hassan looks at it and moves on. He never asks about the woman.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Your arm, please, Sergeant. The left.

Eli doesn't move. Hassan glances at the door, and Breytenbach steps off it. He takes the wrist and rolls the sleeve to the elbow, almost gently. The dagger tattoo sits an inch from the bruise.

A crescent of tooth marks. Purple. Fresh. Hassan bends close and doesn't touch.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Unbroken. Lucky.

Breytenbach lets go. Eli tugs the sleeve down, and his hand shakes doing it. Hassan watches it shake.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Somebody put a belt on one of my patients tonight. Where a strap had failed. Very neat work. A medic's knot.
(a smile)
Not yours, I think. You are not neat.

Eli's good eye locks on the gold watch. He saw that belt half an hour ago, still buckled, the tail tucked and the knot pulled flat and tight.

Hassan just told him he knows which patient Simon touched.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
What do you want.

HASSAN
Nothing. You have nothing I want, Sergeant.
You're a line on somebody else's schedule.

He takes Eli in once more. The eye. The arm.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
The Crucible starts at dawn, Sergeant. Thirty-six hours on my mountain. I would much rather watch you on my scoreboard than on a flight manifest.
(buckling on the gold watch)
After the closing ceremony, you are a plane.

He leaves.

EXT. ACCESS ROAD, NORTH COMPOUND - NIGHT

Wet gravel under the floods. Breytenbach walks Eli to the gate, a pace back, hands off. Eli keeps his eyes front and sees the yard anyway. The keys. Bare feet on gravel. A face lowering toward his collar.

He has put men down before, in rooms and on rooftops, and afterward he always knew who. This one he knows by a smock and a ring of keys. Somebody on this island handed her those keys every single morning.

Below, at the south door, the floods are still on and the sirens are dead. Two gowned men hose down the gravel. The water runs pink, then clear.

BREYTENBACH
Left eye's shut. Road has a ditch on that side.

The gate CLANGS shut with Breytenbach on the inside. Eli walks on alone down the access road, into the dark. Simon is standing square in the road.

His eyes go straight to the swollen face.

SIMON
Whose handiwork?

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
Hassan's. At the south door. He has the phone.

Simon steps in with his hands rising toward the cheekbone. The same hands that pumped Galloway's chest in the alley.

ELI (CONT'D)
Don't.

The hands drop.

SIMON
What was on the phone.

ELI
Sale paperwork. Hassan's name is on all of it.

SIMON
And.

ELI
That's what I have confirmed.

SIMON
Drake. That pause had a name in it.

ELI
I need to be sure.

SIMON
How long.

ELI
Give me till morning.

SIMON
I'll wait up.

Eli keeps the plane to himself. That makes two secrets now.

ELI
Hassan saw my arm. Said somebody put a belt on one of his patients. Not you, he said. You're not neat.

SIMON
No. You're not.

They walk. Simon takes the left side, the side with the shut eye. Eli can't see him without turning his whole head, and he doesn't turn it.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Leather soles on asphalt, even and unhurried. Eli hadn't meant to say any more. He carried it off the plateau with his phone gone and his eye closing, and he meant to carry it to bed.

ELI
There was a woman in a gown at the door. A pale blue smock under it.

On his blind side, Simon's footsteps stop. Eli walks on. He doesn't know why they stopped. We stay with Eli, and Simon's face stays in the dark.

INT. ELI'S VILLA, REPORT ROOM - 0400

Laptop glow. Cold coffee. A fan ticking on a bad bearing. The cursor sits after "containing a member of the Angola Tactical team, who." He's tried four times. No word he's ever put in a report covers what follows who.

He's too tired to dress it up. He writes what happened. Nothing about the Records room. Nothing about the barn.

INSERT - SCREEN

"Right wrist strap chewed through. No carotid pulse in ten seconds. Subject then swallowed, opened his eyes and attacked. Teeth through my sleeve. Restrained with Cross's belt and left in place. Container located in the west compound. Contents unconfirmed. Consignee of record on Cross's documents: HASSAN, O. Cross withheld a second name.

Cross assesses a hypothermic patient. I assess a dead man who moved. Request instructions."

ELI (V.O.)
I assess a dead man who moved.

SEND.

Seconds later:

BRANDON (ON SCREEN)
COPY. LOGGED. STAY ON THE CONTAINER.

Far off, somebody tests a pole speaker for the morning. Tinny and cheerful, one number on a loop.

SPEAKER (V.O.)
Thirty-six. Thirty-six. Thirty-six hours.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

EXT. CRUCIBLE START LINE - DAWN

SUPER: "DAY SIX."

Wet asphalt. Seven teams in full kit, every carrier with a Games medevac pouch: dressing, frequency card, two flares.

MAX (P.A.)
Thirty-six hours. Two phases. No rest schedule. No extraction until the clock runs out. At hour twelve, the opposition steps up to full-power loads. Read your brief.

MYLES
Thirty-six hours. Parris Island had worse chow and better manners.

It's ninety-four degrees, and Eli is in long sleeves. His left eye is puffed to a slot.

SIMON
(beside him)
Thirty-four degrees. Long sleeves.

ELI
Sunburn.

SIMON
You don't burn.

ELI
I do now.

He gave his team the cold room and the barn, the woman with the keys and the base of the skull. He kept Brandon and the teeth to himself.

Sentinel's knives ride chest-high now, handle down. Zoe's black Gerber was there already. Simon's knife is on his hip. His belt is Bishop's, two holes too big.

ELI (CONT'D)
Move your blade to your chest. You can reach it with a man on top of you.

SIMON
You're still on that frame, Drake.

ELI
You saw him come off it, Cross. Bit through my sleeve. Didn't break skin.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
I saw a man at three degrees who shouldn't move. Another burning up against a steel door. I have no name for either.

ELI
Day Two. Structure four. I put my hand on one. Hot as a July truck hood. If it's what I think it is?

Silence. Simon touches two fingers to his chest.

SIMON
Bishop.

Blackridge moves their knives without asking why. Bishop, Nadia, Tommy. Simon goes last, and he does it looking anywhere but at Eli.

SIMON (CONT'D)
If you're right, it costs us nothing.

ELI
Then what are we jawing about?

SIMON
One of us is wrong. I'd like it in the war diary.

Jason clips the GoPro to his chest rig and patches his radio into its audio port: the open field channel, which every team can hear. The Games allow streaming off the island's uplink. Max likes numbers.

JASON
We're live, chat.

ELI
Nothing I say goes on that camera.

JASON
Then say less.

EXT. JUNGLE RUN / THE RIDGE / RUBBLE FIELD - DAY

MONTAGE - EACH CUT A NEW SUN

AUDIO DESIGN: Boots. Breath. Wet roots, then dry rock. Jason's footage plays at quarter speed under every cut. A clock runs in the corner.

SUPER: "HOUR 1"

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

FAST. A green tunnel. Slick bark. Jason runs ahead, GoPro on his chest, calling the route off footage he shot yesterday.

JASON
Hard right at fifteen seconds.
Roots open up.

MYLES
(radio)
In meters, Content.

Haugen passes Myles at a run, red braids flying, Norwegian pacing calls coming up behind her.

HAUGEN
He's mine, Drake. First shot takes him.

ELI
Eleven percent off your right side.

HAUGEN
Eleven percent what?

ELI
Your load compensation.

HAUGEN
I was here first. I don't score it. I write it.

MYLES
Buck-thirty, and she talks to you like that?

ELI
Back home, that's how the vet talks to a horse.

SUPER: "HOUR 5"

SLOW. The ridge climb. Myles's right shoulder DROPS on every pull, and his left arm is doing seventy percent of the work.

Eli watches the slope.

SUPER: "HOUR 9"

At the ridge top, Eli marks the Crucible fence and its three gates. Below is rubble, and one thing with four floors: a gutted concrete tower with Jade Dragon's flag on the roof.

OBJECTIVE TOWER, says the scoreboard.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

KATY
(radio)
OPFOR stopped sweeping. Stop ninety seconds and TRACKFIRE drops you. Their vests still report position, so I've got them on GPS. You're thirty-seven. I'm thirty-seven. That one's forty and a half. That one's forty-one. Not a real number, Eli.

In Zoe's scope, at two hundred thirty meters, a man stands on a slab with his rifle at his feet. His collar is soaked black. It's the slow man from structure four.

ELI
What's he doing?

ZOE
Nothing. Looking up.

ELI
At what?

ZOE
The sun.

SUPER: "HOUR 11"

We go across the rubble to a three-walled hide, where Simon has his glass up on the same man. The man closes his fists in the sun. Opens them. Closes them. On Simon's wrist, the four marks burn.

ELI
(radio)
Jason. Warehouse side of the tall building. Still-hunt it. See anybody, back out.

JASON
Copy. Low and quiet. My worst-performing content.

EXT. RUBBLE FIELD / THE BOWL BAR - HOUR TWELVE

SUPER: "HOUR 12"

The sun touches the sea. The man on the slab goes from standing to a flat-out RUN, arms out, mouth open, rifle left behind. Jason puts in a textbook pair. CONFIRMED.

The man keeps coming. In Eli's scope, two hundred meters becomes twenty-five. He HITS Jason, and his teeth go to work on the plate carrier and the GoPro.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Jason gets a boot into the man's stomach and throws him back two meters. He's up again with no hands, rising straight off the ground. Jason empties a magazine into him from three meters. The vest flashes white. White.

White.

TRACKFIRE (V.O.)
NEUTRALIZED. NEUTRALIZED.
NEUTRALIZED.

Zoe's round takes the side of his helmet. It turns his head, and that's all it does.

JASON
Eli! He's still coming!

INT. THE BOWL BAR - SUNSET

The hangar-door screen. Guests in linen stand three deep at the rail.

White. White. White.

The bar CHEERS.

A corner of the screen plays Jason's stream. Sky. Concrete. A doorframe sliding sideways. Teeth on the lens, fogging it.

CHAT
lmao BEST EFFECTS. this is so fake
I love it

In his box, Max laughs along, his flute of Krug raised high.

MAX
(live mic, over the cheer)
The board's calling that a dynamic event, folks.

EXT. RUBBLE FIELD - CONTINUOUS

INTERCUT WITH THE BOWL BAR

In Zoe's scope, at three hundred sixty meters, with no sound: a Sierra Madre boy with a radio handset on his strap throws up a bare forearm, and an OPFOR in a white vest sinks his teeth into it. A medic swings a red bag into the back of the OPFOR's helmet. The helmet shrugs it off.

FIELD. Twenty meters off, two of Reyes's men break cover and sprint for the tall building. The OPFOR drops the boy's arm. His head jerks up, and he charges after them, snarling.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

The boy's mic OPENS, his bitten hand on the key, blood running down the cord. Every radio on the field hears it.

BOY (RADIO)
Me mordió. Me mordió. Me mordió el brazo.

THE BOWL. Half a minute late, the stream catches up, and the scream comes out of the bar speakers. A guest toasts it. MAX has stopped laughing. His thumbs are moving on a phone.

CHAT (CONT'D)
@maxvolkovchen: two laughing faces

Thumbs again. One word:

CHAT (CONT'D)
@maxvolkovchen: wait

THE BOOTH. Haddad lifts his hand off the switch. The stream's corner of the screen goes white type on black.

STREAM UNAVAILABLE.

FIELD. Katy reads her dots.

KATY
Every dot I've got. All over forty.

Eli checks the BLUE bolt in his rifle. SF-7 only. The chamber won't take a live round.

ZOE
Mine's blue too.

ELI
Zoe. Anything that follows him up the slope. Take the legs.

ZOE
Holding low. Knees.

ELI
Grizz. Find me rebar. Heavy end.

Myles TEARS a meter and a half of iron out of a slab, left-handed, his right arm dead at his side. The runner comes up the slope. Zoe takes his left knee at fifty meters.

ZOE
Inside thirty. Holding.

Myles stands in wrong, a right-hander swinging left. The man ducks into the swing. The bar CRACKS across his back and RINGS off the plate.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

He doesn't register it.

He takes Myles down at the legs. Eli slides down the loose dirt on his back, puts both boots into the man's ribs and drags him off by the carrier. A hot hand CLAMPS on the crescent under his sleeve. The pain goes white, and his grip opens on its own.

He heaves on the shoulder strap. The man rolls ten meters.

ELI
Zoe, cease fire. They're coming to the noise.

MYLES
(up, bar in his left hand)
Up or down? Left's still good.

ELI
Katy. The middle.

KATY
(radio)
Every dot's streaming toward Sierra Madre, where men are running. Straight down the middle, there's a hole.

On the radio, a SCREAM from the Sierra Madre side. Is anybody coming for any of them? Not for a full day. The extraction gate opens at hour thirty-six. Every rifle on the field fires plastic.

ELI
Down the middle. South rubble. Find walls.

JASON
Tell me he's a stuntman.

ELI
He's down. He won't stay down. Slab, housing, doorframe, wall. Tight. Nobody shoots.

At the foot of the slope there's a generator housing, and two white vests are coming around it. Katy's boot SNAGS on dead cable. She goes down on one knee, clutching the Toughbook. Fingers sink into her ruck webbing and TWIST.

Myles wades in on the blind side with the bar in his left hand, all shoulder and no aim. The iron RINGS off the steel corner of the housing. His left hand goes numb to the elbow. For now he has no good arms.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Eli grabs the drag handle on her carrier and throws his weight back. The hot fingers hold.

The stitching RIPS.

The strap TEARS free. Katy flies back into Eli's chest. The man sits down hard, the strap still in his fist.

He gets up.

They pile in under a tilted slab. A Sierra Madre shooter opens up nearby and pulls the two vests away.

MYLES
(through his teeth)
Up's gone. Left went with it.

They break from under the slab into the dusk. Behind them, the man Zoe dropped three times gets up a fourth time, slower, and follows.

EXT. BLACKRIDGE HIDE, SOUTH RUBBLE - DUSK

Three concrete walls and no roof. Hot dust and rebar rust. Simon has his notebook open on his knee, one word underlined: patient. It's for the man lying on a slab seventy meters out. 1812. The man RUNS. His rifle stays on the concrete where he left it.

Simon watches the word die on the page. 1813. Through Tommy's gap, two hundred meters off, a Volk warehouse door. Sergei is on his back. A white vest is on top of him. Its jaw works his forearm side to side. WET CRUNCH.

Two Volk men haul it off by the drag handle. Sergei's rifle stock hammers the helmet. Three times. Nothing. Then the SCREAM hits the open channel.

NADIA
Volkov's bitten. In Russian: it bit my arm.

BISHOP
It.

NADIA
"Me mordió." He bit me. Could be either.

SIMON
I chose.

White vests SPRINT past the hide. Tommy's scared. He talks low and fast.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON (CONT'D)
Louder, Tommy. I'm testing something.

TOMMY
(pint-ordering volume)
That one ran, so they went. Runners.

A vest passes ten meters out. Its head doesn't turn.

SIMON
The noise is irrelevant. Movement, and heat, I think. They run hot and go for hot things that move.

NADIA
Five past the gap since the screaming. Every one chased a runner.

TOMMY
So we're furniture. I can do furniture.

SIMON
Keep to the shade. Nobody so much as trots.

Tommy's fingers work a tie bar back and forth in its socket. Six hours now.

TOMMY
Tie bar, Bish. Holds nothing up but me.

Across the rubble, two of Reyes's people lie flat on a slab. One is the bitten volleyball boy, his forearm wrapped to the elbow. The other is his medic.

BISHOP
Leave them. They're flat and they're still.

NADIA
Flat on a griddle. Come dark, that slab's the warmest thing out here.

Simon held once before, with a boy in a lane. This time he calls out across the rubble.

SIMON
Sierra Madre. Get up. Walk to me. Do not run. Like you're grocery shopping.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

BOOTS in the rubble. A lot of them. Fast.

NADIA
Drake's file has no page for this. Does he stop, or run straight through us?

EXT. THE RIDGE ROAD, SOUTH - CONTINUOUS

Sentinel comes off the ridge at a dead run. Jason, Katy, Myles and Zoe, with the pack behind them. They go straight through Blackridge's hide and out the far side.

Simon, in the hide, gets on the open channel:

SIMON
Drake. You've brought guests.

ELI
You're in my lane.
(over his shoulder)
Two hunters on my six. Following the noise.

SIMON
And you've given them my grid.

Then Nadia, low:

NADIA
They didn't follow the racket. They followed you.

Jason drops to one knee between a vest and Katy. His hands are empty. The GoPro swings on its strap, forgotten. That's a first. Katy's hand finds his shoulder.

Forty meters on, Nadia's line lands in Eli mid-stride. He changes his mind.

ELI
Down. Everybody down. Nobody moves.

A vest crouches over Zoe's outstretched carbon foot. Its face slides up toward the warm back of her knee. Myles flicks a fist-sized chunk of slab off his wrist, with nothing above the elbow moving. It ARCS. The head follows.

MYLES
Two inches off your knee.

ZOE
Carbon doesn't run a fever.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

At the hide, Tommy steps one pace out of the shade to watch them go. The last vest turns.

RIBS CRACK. A white vest drives Tommy back into the slab. Bishop rips the tie bar out of its socket in a spray of grit. He RINGS it off the helmet.

Simon reads the gap:

SIMON
The harness, Tommy. Bring his head down.

Tommy hooks the harness and hauls the head into his arm. He's hugging the man he wants dead. A strip of neck opens under the rim.

TOMMY
Bismillah. Now, Bish.

Bishop brings the rebar down at the base of the skull. CRACK. The man stops all at once. Simon writes it down. He's rattled. His hand shakes on the pen.

SIMON
The rule. Harness first. Head down. Then the base of the skull.

Tommy holds his ribs. His breath whistles.

TOMMY
I hugged him, Bish.

BISHOP
He didn't hug back.

Bishop presses the Leatherman into Tommy's hand.

TOMMY
Cheers. Torque's still good.

BISHOP
Don't open it.

TOMMY
Blade stays shut. Till I can breathe.

SIMON
Shallow breaths, Tommy. I'll keep the count.

We find the dead man's arm. In the crook of the elbow, there's a round white plaster with a cotton ball under it.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Forty meters off, twenty minutes after the scream, the Sierra Madre boy rises. He runs past his own medic without turning his head.

1833. Simon writes the number in the notebook. Under it: Knives: Drake. Two pages back, Night Five still says patient. He doesn't cross it out. He keys the open channel. His voice is level, and his face isn't:

SIMON (CONT'D)
Blackridge has a casualty. Shah. Ribs. No teeth.

EXT. THE GORGE STREAM - HOUR SIXTEEN

Wet granite and cold mineral air. Both teams are strung out on the rocks above the water. They've been awake since 0612. They look it.

Upstream, past the boulder, three helmets sit chin-deep in the pool. Four figures in plates perch on the rocks around it. Still. One has a red braid down her back.

Eli fills canteens.

SERGEI picks his way down the bank alone. His telnyashka is black with sweat. His left forearm is wrapped from wrist to elbow in a dressing that was white once.

He plunges the arm in. His face goes slack with relief.

SERGEI
(to the water)
Cold helps.

His eyes come up to Eli. The face. The long sleeve. The left hand on the canteen.

ELI
Sunburn.

Sergei's eyes stay on the sleeve for a long moment.

SERGEI
You never look at the scoreboard, Drake. Neither does Cross. You are not here for the competition.

Eli screws the cap on.

ELI
When I find out what you're after, I'll know who to sell it to.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SERGEI
In Moscow they call that a pension.

ELI
Who's buying?

SERGEI
Limassol. A man, a suitcase, no questions. Every Russian knows the flight.
(water runs pink off the gauze)
Hassan pays two million for a name this year. I have been paid less for more.

ELI
Whose name?

SERGEI
If I tell you for free, it is not worth two million.

He carries the arm upstream against his chest. At the boulder, without turning:

SERGEI (CONT'D)
They are warm, Drake. Have you noticed? When they come at you. So warm. Like they have come from the banya.

Eli briefs the ledge. Volkov's bitten. Left forearm. He's selling a name to Hassan for two million. Zoe climbs down off her ledge and sits. She takes the canteen out of Eli's hand without asking. Drinks.

ZOE
He looked at your sleeve. I had the glass on him.

ELI
Sunburn.

ZOE
You gave him sunburn. Sleeve, wrist, all of it. He held on it three seconds.

She caps it and stands.

ZOE (CONT'D)
(CONT'D)
Twenty minutes. I'm back on glass. Keep your sleeve down.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

INT./EXT. THE TOWER - HOUR EIGHTEEN TO HOUR TWENTY-TWO

SUPER: "DAY SEVEN."

Past midnight. A gutted four-story tower in the rubble, with one stairwell and four walls. Three teams climb it. Jade Dragon holds the roof.

SIMON
You wanted walls.

ELI
And a deer stand on top.

We climb with them. The stair flights are precast, each slab seated on a nib of concrete at both ends. On the second landing, one has dropped an inch off its ledge. At the third, a floor slab has fallen against the north wall and left a crawl space, chest-high. These stairs are a lawsuit.

A red headlamp waits at the foot of the stair. PENG (19), Jade Dragon, counts under his breath in Mandarin. At the gap, he holds a hand out to Zoe.

ZOE
Hold the light.

Peng pins the beam where her foot lands.

Boots on the flights below. A file of women climbs out of the dark with their helmets in hand, wet to the plates. VALKYRIE. HAUGEN is in front, red braid down her back.

HAUGEN
We are cold. We would like to be colder.

Two of her women were bitten five hours ago. They've stood chin-deep under the gorge fall ever since.

HAUGEN (CONT'D)
Reyes's boy. Twenty minutes, bite to running. I timed it. These two, five hours. Thirty-nine four. Thirty-nine nine. Point two an hour. Cold should slow it.

SIMON
That's a hypothesis, Haugen.

HAUGEN
Guessing. So are you, or you wouldn't be in a tower.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

She names them as they climb: Ingrid, Sol, Marte, Kari, Tone and Liv. Simon writes all six, and her name last. Lin Wei refuses them in Mandarin. Eli answers her in Mandarin.

SUBTITLE: "When it's one of yours, where will you want them?"

SIMON
North wall of the stairwell. Coolest concrete in the building. Nobody goes near them.

ELI
And when point two an hour hits forty-one?

SIMON
Better they turn where we can see them.

ELI
Up here, they turn on top of somebody.

SIMON
Two are at thirty-nine already, Drake.

Eli drops his voice.

ELI
Seven women. Two sick. One stairwell. The rubble out there, hot. You want them on the roof.
(beat)
You left one in an alley.

The stairwell hears it. Nobody moves.

Simon holds still.

SIMON
Two on the north wall. Nobody touches them. You take the numbers. You call it.

HAUGEN
Every fifteen minutes. Out loud.

Katy cables the Toughbook to the scoring panel bolted up by the third-floor door. Beside it, a resupply locker hangs open. Zoe takes both magazines of fat gray long loads.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

KATY
Panel reads every vest. Core estimate off the liner. Ten seconds behind, but it's a number.

EXT. THE ROOF - NIGHT

We go with Zoe's thermal scope. The hiders show dim gray. The infected show WHITE, streaking at anything that moves.

A recorded voice comes off a pole.

MAX (V.O.)
Satellite window is open. Five minutes.

Jason reads his frozen chat. @maxvolkovchen: two laughing faces. Then @maxvolkovchen: wait. It shakes him. He lays the phone face down on the concrete. He says nothing until the board. Myles reads a text from his daughter.

INSERT - PHONE

DAD. I GOT IN. I SHIP TO PARRIS ISLAND IN THREE WEEKS. I'M NOT ASKING.

Myles starts a reply. Deletes it. Starts again. The window shuts on it, unsent. His head has left his sector.

Zoe covers him with one word.

ZOE
Legs.

Two walkers, a hundred and eighty meters out. Twelve rounds. Eight left on her. Two knees each. Legs, all night.

MYLES
Copy. Legs.

Then the rubble cools. The tower doesn't.

BISHOP crawls to Zoe with water. In her scope, the rest of Bishop goes into the roof. He's a living man on his knees six meters off, and she can't tell him from the concrete. She takes her eye off the glass to make sure he's there.

The west wall and the floor slabs baked for fourteen hours. Now they give it back, a brighter band at every floor. Where did the living on the roof go? Into the concrete. On the scope, they're gone.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

KATY
Thirty-eight on the grid inside three hundred meters. All closing. Walking.

NADIA
Correction. We're on the griddle.

Every white shape on the field turns toward the tower.

EXT. TOWER FACADE - CONTINUOUS

They come up the stairwell. They come up the outside wherever there's a hold. Three on the west wall, two on the south. FINGERS in rebar. Boots in empty window frames. Helmets KNOCKING on slabs. They're men in kit, climbing by the book. Good form, too.

On the roof, Zoe counts her rounds out loud and shoots hands off the rebar.

CRACK. SLOW, the climber: his fingers open, one by one. The body peels off the wall. FAST, the fall: THUD in the rubble.

MYLES
EVERY MAN UP HERE CALLS HIS SIDE OUT LOUD! NORTH, SOUTH, WEST! YOU SEE IT, YOU SAY IT! A QUIET ROOF IS A DEAD ROOF!

A fall makes a crawler. The crawler keeps climbing.

A CRAWLER comes over the south parapet at Myles's knees. It's one of the two walkers Zoe dropped at a hundred and eighty meters. The one she couldn't finish.

Zoe has no angle on her own kill. Myles waits.

MYLES
South. Saying it, Bear. I'm out of arms.

Eli drops off the coping and puts his knife into the base of the skull. Then he's back up on the coping.

INT. TOWER STAIRWELL, THIRD-FLOOR LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Bishop and Myles hold the landing with rebar. Simon calls it from one step up.

SIMON
Wait.

A helmet lifts, three steps short.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON (CONT'D)
Harness.

Myles hooks the bar's bent end through the helmet's harness. Hauls the head down.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Bring it down. Now.

Bishop's bar finishes it. Eli's watching. He sees where the bar goes in. Simon watches him watch. A second helmet comes up. Bishop's split tape lets the bar TURN in his grip. A hand closes on Myles's boot.

HAUGEN
Ingrid, thirty-nine point seven.
Sol, forty point eight. Haugen.
Forty point six.

She pulls her collar aside. There's a crescent on the back of her neck, above the plate carrier and below the helmet line. She's hidden it since the gorge.

SIMON
Noting it.

HAUGEN
Your sniper. Best numbers on this island. Tell her.

MARTE
How long?

HAUGEN
Two hours.

MARTE
Then you won't have to fight the helmet.

Haugen sets her helmet on the concrete, upside down. Two fingers up, then forward. Her team turns toward her.

She's Haugen.

KATY
Sol's forty-one.

ELI
BASE OF THE SKULL. BELOW THE HELMET.

SIMON
North wall. All seven in one pile. Haugen on top. Sol on the left.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
Jade, Blackridge, the landing. Now. While they're still people.

Marte, Kari, Tone and Liv wrap their arms round the three turning women. They hold on. Teeth find them anyway. Four bites in four seconds. Marte looks at her forearm and nods once. The fever takes them in minutes, faster than the boy. Marte's eyes go flat in the middle of a word.

LAMPS ON. White beams ricochet off the stairwell walls. Outside, fingers ring on rebar. The rescue puts eight hands where the teeth are.

Myles drives a rebar into the pile at the north wall. Peng steps in. A Valkyrie's outside reap takes him on the lip of the flight. He goes down. The concrete takes the sound. His red lamp rolls across the slab and stops against Lin Wei's boot. She says one word in Mandarin. His name.

Ingrid breaks from the pile and hits Simon into a column. CRACK. Two fingers on his braced left hand bend backward. Her lamp beam crawls over his face. On the floor, he pops the fingers back in himself.

A Valkyrie's boot heel GRINDS Eli's right hand into the slab. Knuckles go. He keeps the knife. Myles backhands the rebar. THUNK.

SIMON
Ingrid. She's going for Tommy. Low.

Under the collapsed slab, the ceiling is chest height. Bishop can't swing. Nadia rolls away, fast and on purpose. It's the most movement in the dark. Ingrid goes for it. Bishop drags her back by the ankle. The low slab tips her helmet. The bar finishes it.

Tommy's hands shake on the concrete. He keeps them there. Haugen rises, swaying, and crawls for Lin Wei's back.

Simon steps into her beam. He finds the Norwegian side-release buckle he learned in Rena one winter and tears the helmet off. A length of rebar, one swing. She drops. As she rolls into him, the little silver hammer's chain SNAPS on his wrist.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Haugen down. Valkyrie's all accounted for.

KATY
Eleven minutes, four seconds. Start to finish.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Bishop tapes Simon's two fingers without being asked. Lin Wei closes a poncho over Peng's face. Four corners. She takes one, and her three men take the rest. Simon lifts the little silver hammer off the concrete beside Haugen's face. It goes into his inside left pocket, with Galloway's tags.

In the doorway, Eli sees which pocket.

ELI
Down the stair, now. We kill our way out at the choke point. Down is the only way that gets easier.

SIMON
The landing's holding.

ELI
For four men on a landing. The bottom of your stair comes out in thirty of them. Bishop's out of tape.

EXT. THE ROOF - NIGHT

The east parapet. Simon studies the next ruin, eight meters across the gap. In Zoe's scope, there's one black bar in all that heat. A plank off the far roof, leaning across the gap.

SIMON
Two routes, Drake. Down is where they are. The far side's cold. Nothing climbs it. Then paracord off their roof.

ELI
That's a slab held up by prayer.

SIMON
It's held up by geometry.

ELI
Yours.

SIMON
Tonight, yes.

Eli looks at the stairwell. Then at his people.

ELI
Across.

It's the first call of Simon's that Drake has taken in two years. Simon's glad. He keeps it off his face.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
Then we cut the stair.

Myles and Bishop lever a door-long lintel off the fourth-floor landing. It drops one story onto the head of the flight below. The flight JOLTS and kicks off its crumbled nib. It hangs.

Then it goes down the shaft with two climbers on it.

EXT. THE ROOF, THE PLANK - NIGHT

A precast plank, a meter and a quarter wide and ten meters long. Fifteen degrees of tilt. Four stories of nothing on both sides.

Simon crouches at the near end with a penlight cupped through two knuckles. A crumbled ledge. A rebar stub hooked over the plank's end.

SIMON
Zoe first, covering. Jade Dragon. Katy. Jason. Nadia. Bishop. Myles. Drake and Tommy. Me last.

SLOW MOTION.

ZOE walks it upright, blade clicking. Jade Dragon's bearers slide Peng's poncho across on their bellies. Four corners, one slow inch at a time.

Tommy's ribs won't let him hold on. Eli straps him to his back with a rifle sling.

TOMMY
Sorry. Ribs.

Eli steps out. Four steps. Five. Halfway. CRRRUMBLE. The ledge gives. The plank DROPS two inches under both men.

Stops.

The rebar SCREAMS against concrete. It holds.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
(very small)
I'm undoing it.

Eli slides one boot forward, his weight over the hook. He slides the next. Far end. Hands grab his vest and haul. SPEED RAMPS UP. Simon, alone on the near roof, counts heads.

The poncho counts.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
(under his breath)
Twelve. Thirteen. Fourteen.

He steps onto the plank last.

Rain comes off the sea in one gray wall. In Zoe's thermal, the white shapes on the roof go gray. They slow. Then they stop. They drift under the parapets, faces in, and stand.

Simon walks it upright, in no hurry. A meter short, his left boot SKATES. Eli's hand shoots out and takes his wrist, right over the four bruises Almánzar's grip left. He hauls.

Simon comes over the parapet on his knees.

EXT. FAR ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The two of them under a poncho, with rain on both faces.

ELI
Held up by geometry.

SIMON
It held.

ELI
Dropped two inches.

SIMON
Within tolerance.

Eli's mouth twitches. Simon feels the same start in his own, and kills it.

ELI
They're in kit. They don't shoot.
They don't stop.

Nobody looks at Jason for his theory. He offers none.

MYLES
(to Eli)
Third time you've checked that sleeve. I count things, Bear.
Marine thing.

ELI
(kneading his forearm through the sleeve)
Count something else.

Zoe watches the hand. She reaches over and tugs his cuff down over the knuckle.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ZOE
Longer sleeve.

EXT. THE RUBBLE - DAWN

The rain stops. Steam lifts off the slabs. Under every one of them, gray shapes begin to glow. Ten hours in the shade of the slabs. Nobody moves in the open sun.

EXT. RUBBLE FIELD TO THE EXTRACTION FENCE - AFTERNOON, HOUR THIRTY-FOUR

KATY
Phase Two moved it up two hours. Fence closes in twenty. Bottom score goes home.

MYLES
Max said thirty-six. I rationed for it.

A kilometer of rubble to the fence. Three teams walk it. Jade Dragon carries Peng in a poncho: seventy kilos, four corners, four bearers. At every stop Bishop pivots a quarter turn and puts his back to the field. Tommy's ribs heave in his shadow.

KATY (CONT'D)
Window's open. Fourteen minutes.

A vest drifts toward the four warm bearers. The nearest one's arms start to TREMBLE.

LIN WEI
(breathes)
Mǎbù.

Her people sink into a horse stance. The poncho goes still. The vest bends over it, finds nothing and drifts away. Then the HORN. Whole field, mid-hold.

These people have spent careers moving when a horn says move. Katy's shoulders jump. Nobody's feet do.

KATY
Window's closed. Security runs the gate now.

At the fence, there are rifles on the towers.

NADIA
Konga quit at Hour Twelve. Then Logistics hired them as security, sixty thousand dollars, three
(MORE)

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

NADIA (CONT'D)
nights, real rifles. Who hires a man the hour he quits? The handbook bans live ammunition on the field and says nothing about the fence.

ZOE
Real FALs. No blue bolts. Steel magazines.

Inside the wire runs a drainage ditch, five meters off the fence and two hundred to the gate. The lip sits at a walking man's collarbone.

Below the eye line of anything on open ground.

At the gate, ten-meter platforms stand on steel legs. Two rifles each on T2 and T3. They fire side-on across the field at whatever charges the wire.

CRACK.

A runner on the open field folds at the nape. It's the first live round in six days.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Back of the neck. He waited for the head to turn.

ELI
We walk. Slow. Hands where they can see them. Nobody runs, nobody bunches. Anybody runs, they shoot him. Walk slow enough to be boring. Everybody die quietly for thirty seconds.

SIMON
First sound order in two years, Master Sergeant.

ELI
Write it down. Three-tenths ahead.

Into the ditch. Single file, a body length apart, Zoe last. Simon counts out loud behind Eli.

SIMON
Three. Four. Five.

TOMMY
(barely)
Don't let me cough.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

BISHOP
Then don't.

Eighty meters up the same ditch, Sierra Madre. Their last man is a kid (23) with a red bandanna knotted at his throat. He's scared. He keeps glancing back. He's lagging.

A runner lands on him. The file BREAKS.

REYES
¡Quietos! ¡Nadie corre!

A warning round THWACKS into the silt. Reyes walks back down his own file at a stroll. Hand between the kid's shoulder blades. He pushes him to his knees, out of the runner's reach. The tower's second shot takes the runner. The kid stays down, one forearm wrapped in his own sleeve.

Floodlights SLAM on down the wire. Generators kick in. The fence is the brightest, busiest thing on the field. Behind it, KONGA men move. Engines turn over.

Thirty white shapes break from the rubble at a dead run. They don't go around the file. They go through it. Bodies drop into the ditch and out again at arm's length. FAL rounds SNAP overhead. The file keeps walking.

A hot palm clamps Eli's left forearm, sleeve and all, right over the crescent. The heat burns through the cloth. Hands out. Eyes front. He keeps walking.

One vaults the ditch lip into the gap between Eli and Simon. The count behind Eli doesn't skip.

SIMON
Twenty-two. Twenty-three.

The runners hit the wire and climb into the barbed overhang. They hang there, caught by vests, sleeves and forearm skin. Heads tip forward. Napes go bare in the floods.

The towers take them side-on, under the helmet. Only napes drop anyone. Most of what hangs in the wire keeps moving.

ELI
Walk.

Lin Wei's bearers hold Peng's poncho level through it all.

SIMON
Ninety-four.

One runner in the pack is bareheaded. Twenty minutes of slow have cost Tommy more than a sprint would. His body LURCHES on a caught breath.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
Everybody stop. Tommy. Bishop. Stop dead.

The bareheaded runner overruns them. It skids two meters past in the silt. Turns back. A bead of sweat runs from Tommy's hairline into his eye. He holds still. Then the breath tears loose. His ribs bend around it.

Bishop's taped right fist comes down on the runner's nape. A rabbit punch, a DQ in every ring he ever fought in. Down the whole lit ditch, everyone holds dead still. Only Bishop's fist moves. A Konga sight settles over the body. At the gate, Obi says one word.

OBI
Kwụsị.

Every rifle swings back to the field. Nadia, passing him:

NADIA
Daalụ.

SIMON
(at the gate)
A hundred and thirty-eight.

He quits counting.

Zoe comes through last, carbon foot clicking, with the plastic bolt gun on her back. Obi reads the bolt. Then the shim in her ankle.

He unslings his FAL and holds it out, stock first, with two steel magazines.

OBI
Mine. Not the island's. One rifle, for the one who doesn't miss.

ZOE
Zeroed?

OBI
Two hundred. It pulls left.

ZOE
So do I.

Before the screening tables, she strips the rifle down into her drag bag. Fourteen came out of the Crucible. Thirteen walked. Peng was carried. One of the thirteen is armed.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

EXT. EXTRACTION ZONE - DUSK

SUPER: "HOUR THIRTY-SIX."

Medics in face shields. Chlorine and diesel. A generator hammering away.

An incident card blames a "heat-related medical emergency, aggravated by contamination of the OPFOR barracks water supply." When did somebody write that? The printer's date says the week before Day One.

A GAMES OFFICER (40s), lanyard and clipboard. Eyes down. He'd rather be anywhere else.

GAMES OFFICER
Heat-related. It's in the waiver.

NADIA
Page forty-one. Between the sunscreen clause and the sharks. There's no separate OPFOR water supply. One tank. Ours. So it isn't the water.

At screening, a white van takes anyone a medic doesn't nod through. The kid with the red bandanna goes in quietly. We linger on Reyes at the water table. He's gutted. He holds a bottle he isn't drinking.

One shot, two tables.

At the first, an official's fingers rest on the zip pull of Zoe's drag bag while she lies to a medic.

ELI
If they see the arm, I'm in a van.

ZOE
Clean arm. Flare burn, Hour Twelve, four centimeters. I dressed it. Open it in this dirt, it's yours.

The fingers come off the zip. At the next table, Simon, with Tommy beside him.

SIMON
Rib fracture. Fell against rebar. Forearm bruise, same fall. I'm his team's medic. No contact with affected personnel, or I'd have recorded it. Examined him at the scene and at Hour Thirty-Two. Again tonight. My notes are available.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Sergei went through these tables ahead of them, with Hassan's aide at the medic's elbow.

Nobody asked him to roll up a sleeve.

On the board: VOLK GROUP, HIGHEST RAW SCORE. Then, in red: UNAUTHORIZED SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT CONFIRMED IN VOLK GROUP KIT. TEAM DISQUALIFIED.

VALKYRIE and KONGA: ELIMINATED ON POINTS.

Hassan stands at the results table. Haddad hands the referee a printed report.

NADIA
That equipment was logged after the challenge started. I'm saying it out loud so somebody has.

KATY
Uplink: an A, until Hour Twelve. Then zero. Nothing's that clean by accident.

Konga's men are still on the fence, on the payroll. On a tower landing, seven women's vests are still blinking. Sergei crosses the dirt with a bag of ice taped to his arm. He stops in front of Eli.

SERGEI
Not mine.

ELI
Hassan's man brought the paperwork.

SERGEI
Not who. Yet.

His eyes go to Eli's long sleeve.

SERGEI (CONT'D)
Cold helps. Keep it out of the sun.

Two gowned men fall in at his shoulders. They walk him to the MEDICAL SCREENING van. It pulls out toward the airstrip. At the water table, Zoe.

ELI
You lied to a medic.

ZOE
You lied to me first. At the start line. At the stream. I've seen two vans. There won't be a third.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Her hand rests on his sleeve, over the bruise, one second longer than it has to. She walks away.

TOMMY
(to Jason, passing)
Nine places up, Yank. I've backed worse. Double's still on.

JASON
(his first words since the roof)
Doesn't count. They didn't stay down.

EXT. EXTRACTION ZONE, EDGE OF THE LIGHTS - DUSK

The floodlights buzz, and moths tick against the glass. Simon walks out of the zone at Eli's elbow, talking low.

SIMON
Your movement through the urban sector.

ELI
Shortest way off the ridge.

SIMON
Tommy left the shade because your pack ran through my position. Your hide sat on the logical route south.

ELI
Figured you'd stop at the wall.

SIMON
Every plan I make has you in it, Drake. You're never where I put you.

INT. BLACKRIDGE VILLA - NIGHT

Tape squeals off the roll. Bishop wraps his right hand first. It's been split since the hide. Then the left, skinned when he dragged Ingrid across the tower landing. His hands have had a long week.

TOMMY
Who's on the card tonight?

BISHOP
Nobody yet.

TOMMY
Topper's still in your kit, yeah?

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

BISHOP
Left pocket. Don't fix it.

TOMMY
That tap, yaar. Still going.

BISHOP
Tommy.

TOMMY
It's the washer.

BISHOP
Tommy.

TOMMY
Twenty-four functions on this thing. I've used nineteen. None of them is a washer. Eleven a minute.

A drip lands in the sink.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Twelve.

BISHOP
She rings Sundays. I say Cardiff. She says lovely and believes none of it.

TOMMY
I'll carry the cake. Upright. The whole way.

INT. TERMINAL, LOGISTICS DESK - 2130

Fluorescent tubes and floor wax. Eli comes through the door with a pink freight slip. He's chasing Zoe's spare at the customs cage. Simon is hunched over the duty officer's ThinkPad. Every line reads HELD TO CLOSE OF CEREMONY. Except one. ELIMINATED PERSONNEL. VOLK GROUP. D8 1200.

SIMON
Blackridge withdraws tonight. Four of us, one with cracked ribs.

DUTY OFFICER
A withdrawal scores as an elimination, sir. You'd fly with Volk Group at noon.

SIMON
I'd hoped it was a metaphor.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

The pink slip creases in Eli's fist. He lays it on the desk, squared to the edge.

ELI
Go on. You know the way to the car.

He's gone before Simon answers. We stay with Simon.

SIMON
(to the screen)
Routed where?

DUTY OFFICER
At Logistics' discretion, sir.

SIMON
The last two who went through Logistics went out in a van.

Simon once belted the first passengers on that routing to a steel frame.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Then we'll stay.

The cursor sits on D8 1200. Simon closes the laptop on it.

EXT. AIRSTRIP FENCE - NOON

SUPER: "DAY EIGHT."

Hot chain-link. Jet exhaust. SERGEI, gray, stands at the top of the airstair of Hassan's white Dash 8. He finds Eli on the fence. Holds his eyes. The plane taxis west, no markings, Volk's men aboard. It never lifts.

On the apron, the supply flight. A Twin Otter with a belly pod, down since eleven.

CROWLEY (50s) stands at the foot of its steps in a navy suit, buttoned, with a raincoat over one arm in ninety-one degrees. Behind him, MACKIE (40s), a big, quiet Scot. Bag in his left hand, right hand empty. His eyes go to the terminal roof first.

SIMON
(beside Eli at the fence)
Crowley. And Mackie. Hereford. He was mine.

ELI
Still?

SIMON
He's carrying Crowley's bag.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Mackie gives Simon one nod. Simon doesn't give one back. A boy in a polo meets them on the tarmac. HADDAD.

ELI
He read our crates off Day One. Counting us since.

Forty feet of fence between them.

SIMON
Mackie was my corporal. I taught him to wait. I never said for whom.

ELI
Hassan has my phone. You have his name on yours.

SIMON
Tonight we compare notes. In private.

ELI
Then we're square.

SIMON
We haven't been square in two years, Drake.

INT. COMPETITOR SUITE - 0330

SUPER: "DAY NINE."

The loneliest room on the island. The screens are dark, and the carpet's been vacuumed in stripes. The only light is the coffee machine's green glow.

Simon stands at the coffee station with a cup in his hand. He pressed the button a little after three. He's still holding it. Beside him, a white bar towel folded round a handful of ice. He set it down before he lifted the cup.

The door opens. He knows the step, and he doesn't turn.

SIMON
Crowley knows about the contractor. He claims passive knowledge. The active role was a surprise to him.

Eli reaches the counter. His left eye is swollen shut, the lid purple-black and shining. His mouth is dragged crooked.

ELI
In English.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
He knew Hassan's freight rode on our contractor. He says he didn't know what the freight was.

ELI
Do you believe that.

SIMON
No.

ELI
Neither do I.

Eli looks at the cup in Simon's hand and takes it. Simon lets him. Eli's palm goes against the side.

Cold.

He sets it back on the counter.

ELI (CONT'D)
How long have you been standing here.

SIMON
It's been a minute.

ELI
Simon. Drink the coffee.

SIMON
It's cold now.

ELI
That's not the coffee's fault.

Eli hits the button. GRIND. HISS. A fresh cup. He stands beside Simon.

ELI (CONT'D)
It's better when it's hot.

He drinks.

The towel sits between them. Simon set it there for Eli. He slides nothing down the counter. Says nothing. Eli doesn't touch it either. He's seen it, and Simon knows he has.

The ice sweats. A thread of water runs onto the counter.

Simon turns the cup a quarter turn and opens his mouth. The van in the alley is right there. His mouth closes. A bead of water gathers at the counter's edge. It DROPS.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Far across the resort, the island's PA CRACKLES. A tired technician stands too close to the mic.

TECHNICIAN (P.A.)
One. Two.
(a pause)
One two.

Eli's good eye turns toward the sound.

ELI
Day Nine.

SIMON
Fair and calm. Good weather for a handover.

At a quarter to four, Eli pushes off the counter and leaves. The ice is water. Simon stays, alone. Then he wrings the wet towel out over the sink, folds it, sets it back on the bar.

INT. CORRIDOR BEHIND THE GALLERY - 0410

SUPER: "DAY NINE. 0410."

A resort ballpoint with a palm tree on the barrel. Eli, down to one eye, writes a code on the back of a TRACKFIRE score sheet. His right hand won't close past halfway.

He makes three passes. The check digit MATCHES. Every time.

SIMON
Where's the END USER page.

ELI
Hassan's pocket. On my phone.

SIMON
That's not verification.

ELI
No. It's me.

Simon reads the three strings and takes the sheet. He trades first. The consignee line from Night Five: Hassan's freight rides on Blackridge's own contractor.

ELI (CONT'D)
How long have you known.

SIMON
Night Five.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
You pocketed his name in front of me.

SIMON
I needed the provenance.

ELI
Provenance. Big word. You tried to fly out.

SIMON
Logistics routes the eliminated west. I'd belted the first one to a frame. So we stayed.

ELI
I said something at that desk.

SIMON
You did.

Eli trades his.

ELI
Hassan gave me till the ceremony. Then I'm a plane.

SIMON
When.

ELI
Night Five. Two-thirty. His office. You were standing in the road.

SIMON
I was. That's the one you kept.

ELI
That's two-way.

SIMON
The woman at your door on Night Five. I saw her on a van floor, Night One. I called her dead.

ELI
She had keys on her.

Simon takes a small silver hammer from his inside pocket and holds it out.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
She left a message on that tower for your sniper. Not mine to deliver.

Eli takes it.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Syria. When you called north. Did you consider turning back for the lane?

ELI
Yes.

SIMON
Why not.

ELI
Zoe's leg was gone. The gate gun was re-laying. I had to get her out, and--

SIMON
That's for the dispatches. The real one.

ELI
I thought you'd get out. Your element makes the alley before the RPG team reloads. Mine makes the crossing under your suppression. I was wrong about the second part.

Simon's hand drifts toward his inside pocket. It stops.

ELI (CONT'D)
They never found him, Simon. His mother buried a flag.

Simon's jaw works.

ELI (CONT'D)
I called north. I went north. I picked her up. Not one round on that rooftop. Two years I've said it was the only thing I could do. It was. That's not the same as right.

SIMON
If I'd moved when you called it.

ELI
Don't.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
You couldn't have known.

ELI
Neither could you.

SIMON
No. I held the lane. I picked up Reeves.

This time the hand keeps going. A chain comes out of the Barbour. Two TAGS, one side worn smooth by a thumb.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Took them off him in the alley. I should have sent them two years ago. Didn't know what to write.

He slides the tags into Eli's front pocket, next to the silver hammer.

SIMON (CONT'D)
He's yours to carry now.

Eli's hand covers the pocket. Metal on metal, a small CLINK.

ELI
They used us.

SIMON
We stop the sale anyway. For Galloway.

ELI
Fourteen hours.

SIMON
Mr. Crowley's mine. And his minder.

ELI
I take Brandon.

SIMON
They'll contain us the moment they know we've seen the paperwork.

ELI
Then we hide the ball.

SIMON
You're the feint, Drake. I'm the main effort.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

INT. NORTH COMPOUND, SECURITY ARMORY CORRIDOR - 0440

Two men walk a concrete corridor with a steel door at the end. Tommy's in Simon's earpiece from the sofa, ribs taped.

TOMMY
(radio)
Loop's on. Twelve minutes, nobody at your door. Your guard's round the ring having a go at his armpits. Lynx Africa. I'd put money on it.

Simon thumbs the fire-code release. CLICK. Eli puts his shoulder into the cage gate. The hasp SNAPS. Inside, the foam crates from the hangar, stenciled by team. SENTINEL. BLACKRIDGE. JADE DRAGON. SIERRA MADRE.

Cans of live 5.56 are stacked to the ceiling. A TORCH BEAM swings into the corridor mouth. Cheap deodorant rolls under the door ahead of it. Tommy wins his bet. Eli and Simon freeze in place.

Does the guard come in? He tries the steel door. SHUT. He moves on.

Two crates and four cans of live 5.56 are gone. Simon re-seats the hasp so the cage reads closed. Katy's ghost user wipes the door log.

KATY
(radio)
Log's clean. That door shows zero opens tonight.

EXT. NORTH COMPOUND, OUTSIDE THE ARMORY - CONTINUOUS

Eli turns a factory bolt over in his palm.

ELI
Put these in now and Konga on the treeline sees rifles that can kill him.

SIMON
And quite reasonably shoots first.

Sentinel's five bolts go into Eli's ruck, one per rifle. Simon's own bolt goes into his breast pocket.

EXT. VILLA ROW - DAWN

Sentinel loads a Games golf cart and a Hilux on the move. Eli carries the photograph face up in his hand. Myles takes the ruck off him and keeps it.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

MYLES
First time I've seen that thing face up.
(beat)
Galloway's still chewing.

Eli briefs them while they load. He keeps it flat and in order, with his sleeve shoved up past the crescent.

ELI
Brandon sold us. Hassan sells it. The black box is the weapon. There's a cure, and Hassan has it somewhere.

KATY
You told Zoe on a range. Me, nothing.

ELI
I told her. Not you. That was wrong.

Katy's hurt. She hands him a spare earpiece. She doesn't look up.

KATY
I heard it land.

ZOE
(throwing a pack into the bed)
Three days I've watched you in that sleeve. I told a medic flare burn. I packed a go-bag yesterday for the day you didn't make it. Didn't tell you either.

MYLES
(low, to Eli)
She ships to Parris Island in three weeks. My island. "I'm not asking." First thing she's said that sounds like me.
(beat)
I'd like to be alive when she says it twice.

Katy shares an earbud with Jason. Hassan's satellite line, caught since Night Five, starts to play. We go with it to the north compound, waking under the floodlights.

HASSAN (RECORDING)
Move it during the ceremony. Not after.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

CROWLEY (RECORDING)
Your window. Before I bought two million from a man who left at noon. At sunset every team is watching a scoreboard. I'd rather the container were already on the road.

ELI
Sergei sold us for a bag of ice. Watched Hassan's plane taxi west with him on it. It never lifted.

On the Blackridge terrace, Nadia talks low to Simon.

NADIA
Obi's contract ends with the ceremony. Who holds the fence after that? Not him.
(beat)
And why "during"? Hassan wants it moved while every eye on the island is on a stage.

Simon crosses the road to the cart.

SIMON
Crowley's on the island. His minder used to be mine.

Katy sends the recording to Simon's phone.

ELI
Sunset, Sentinel's the Fourth of July at the north compound. Blackridge puts hands on the container.

KATY
Hands on. Not out the door. Till I know what it reports to, nobody wheels it anywhere.

ELI
Somebody goes down out there, nobody goes to them. Not till Blackridge is clear.

Jason is thumbing the GoPro onto its chest mount. Eli turns to him.

ELI (CONT'D)
Tonight you're the loudest thing on this island. Wear the camera.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

JASON
Nobody needs that footage.

ELI
Tonight somebody does.

JASON
(doing his Max)
Stop competing, start surviving.

ELI
Never on my net.

The cart pulls out. On the back bench, Jason and Katy thumb live rounds into magazines. Katy loads. She won't carry one.

Simon passes Bishop three Blackridge bolts in a sock. Blackridge works the container on plastic. The sock stays knotted unless the fence falls.

ZOE
(to Eli, from the cart)
Give me something high. No wind at sunset. Every man on that treeline looks at me before he looks at you.

MYLES
This Marine hates it.
(beat)
This Marine'll do it.

Myles stands up in the cart bed.

MYLES
(to the whole cart)
LISTEN UP. Plastic till Bear says different. Eyes on the treeline, mouths shut, and nobody goes down alone. Nobody.

At the edge of the villa row, Reyes steps into the cart's path with a Modelo in his hand.

REYES
They took one of mine in a van, Jackson. Chuy. Twenty-three. Where do the vans go?

MYLES
West.

Reyes presses a second Modelo into Myles's hand. It's warm.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

REYES
For Chuy. Open it when this is over.

EXT. NORTH COMPOUND YARD - 1808

SUPER: "DAY NINE. 1808."

A floodlit yard. A badge gate and three loading-bay doors. White fuel tanks sit on a concrete pad with a platform twelve feet up. Konga rifles line the treeline.

INTERCUT with the loading bay and the operations center.

Katy has bought them a four-minute blackout. A generator HAMMERS, and the air is thick with diesel. Myles works the fence, tripping sensor alarms one by one. He lobs a rock at a high one. CLANG.

MYLES
Shoulder said no. Rock said yes.

Zoe is up on the fuel platform with the SF-7L raised for every camera. Obi's FAL hangs behind the rail, out of any lens. He lent it at the fence. It's live, for the one shot the yard can't see. The only live rifle in the yard.

Her finger stays outside the guard. One shot from her and every Konga barrel swings onto Eli. At gate three, Jason strolls through and waves at the lens.

JASON
Gate three breached. On purpose.
Wide shot, if anybody's watching.

Eli walks to the middle of the yard and plants his boots.

MYLES
(radio)
You're at parade rest out there.

ELI
That's the job.

MYLES
(radio)
Same as always?

ELI
No.

MYLES
(radio)
Good.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

A vest scrambles at Myles's fence. One CRACK from the treeline, eighty meters out. A nape shot. The vest folds.

The floods DIE. Black. In the dark, three voices say it: "Ghost. Good work." Tommy, Myles, Bishop, one after another. On Katy's screen, her fake account, the one that kills lights and wipes logs, reads one word. GHOST.

The floods SLAM back on. SPEED RAMP: slow. Eli, then Zoe on the pad. A vest with a shot knee drags himself out of a drainage culvert, his helmet jammed down over his eyes.

A hot hand locks on Eli's ankle. Eli lets the leg go dead. Myles drives a rifle butt up under the helmet rim. CRUNCH.

MYLES
Get back on your fence!

Outside the wire, a Konga gunman walks the perimeter. BRRRT. He puts a burst into the fuel tank under Zoe.

MYLES (CONT'D)
FUEL! Turner, off that tank!

ELI
Diesel. It doesn't light.

The next round CRACKS her ankle adapter. The shim she cut herself spins out and goes end over end through the floodlight. Zoe hugs the rifle and falls twelve feet. THUD. She hits gravel.

SPEED RAMP: full speed. Eli. Every part of him wants to go to her. He holds. His heel grinds into the gravel, and his eyes stay front.

ELI (CONT'D)
Talk to me, Turner.

ZOE
(flat on her back)
I'm up.

MYLES
She's twenty meters out. I can carry her.

ELI
She stays there till Blackridge is clear.

A Konga muzzle finds her. Nadia cuts in on their channel.

NADIA
Emeka, ọ bụ m, biko.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

On the treeline, Obi.

OBI
Kwụsị.

The shooter lowers his rifle and steps back into the trees. At gate three, Breytenbach's pickup crew comes in with real Vektors. They take Jason.

JASON
(rifle down, slowly, to the pole camera)
So this is the part where the host gets arrested. Don't touch that dial.

A hand RIPS the radio off his collar. His GoPro lands lens-up in the gravel, and it's still recording.

TOMMY
(radio)
Camera six. Other truck's sitting empty in the gate.

A shot brings the treeline down on Eli. On the treeline, the first Konga man has the pad in his sights. Obi lays one hand flat on the barrel and holds it down.

OBI
North is mine. Hands off the triggers.

Brandon crosses the yard from the badge gate, hands loose, in no hurry.

BRANDON
Your shooter's down. Fuel pad. I watched her land.

ELI
You didn't go to her.

BRANDON
She wrote the deal.

KATY
(radio)
Keep him there. I've got his number.

She dials. In Brandon's pocket, a phone glows BLUE. That line rings only through Hassan's contractor. Eli leaves his mic open.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
You're in the sale.

BRANDON
Hey, listen, Syria wasn't on you, pal. I was Overwatch.

ELI
Say that again.

BRANDON
I was the voice. I called it green. Boy, have I replayed that one.

ELI
Reeves called the minaret.

BRANDON
Sure, I heard him.

ELI
You filed Syria wrong.

BRANDON
I filed it on time. It's all in the system, buddy.

ELI
And my report?

BRANDON
Went up the chain. Every page, I swear to you, and look, I know how that sounds, but that's the system, there's a form, there's always a form.
(beat)
Walk off this yard with me and you're home tonight. Easy as that. Or stand there and be quiet, would you? I'm working.

MYLES
(radio)
Want him held? One hand's enough.

ELI
Leave him. He's good at watching.

Brandon's hand comes out of his pocket with a compact PISTOL. He jams it into Eli's ribs on the blind side. It's a handler's habit. He's never aimed a gun at anyone from farther than this.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

BRANDON
Okay, now pull your people. Please.

Eli's boots stay planted. His half-closed right hand traps the wrist against his chest. His left strips the gun. The magazine drops.

The rear sight hooks his belt buckle. One-handed, he racks the chambered round out against it.

He hands the empty pistol back, butt first. Brandon takes it, embarrassed. There's nothing else to do with his hands.

ELI (CONT'D)
Myles. Bench him.

Myles leans on the wall between Brandon and every gate, and lets him breathe.

INT. WEST PLATEAU, LOADING BAY - CONTINUOUS

Hot oil on cold concrete. Bishop stands over three of Hassan's crew. His left hand is broken. A ratchet hook did that. At the back, a fourth crewman raises a ratchet bar.

The container sweats on its cart beside him. CLANG. The bar rings off the steel an inch above the container's left seal. The bay goes silent.

Bishop has been walked onto a cable, and it runs to the container. It goes TAUT. On the panel, a light FLICKERS.

NADIA
The cable! Get off the cable!

SEAL 2 / LINKED / MANUAL, says the panel.

NADIA (CONT'D)
Find the hand on the switch. The cable is just where it ends.

Blackridge's cart crew wheel it out of the bay and up the service ramp to the plateau cold room, plastic rifles slung.

INT. OPERATIONS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Terminals, and a wall of screens with the yard on every one. A kettle ticks on a filing cabinet. MACKIE is on the door. He's big.

Quiet.

MACKIE
Sergeant.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
Corporal.

Mackie holds.

Simon moves first.

A chair into the shins. A monitor arm TORN off its clamp. A phone cord twice around a wrist. Mackie's elbow finds Simon's ribs. Twice. CRACK.

Those ribs go the whole night with him. Mackie waits for the counter. It doesn't come. He goes down across a desk. Two cable ties.

MACKIE
Chapter one, Sergeant. Hold, wait. You went first.

Simon pulls the tie one more click.

MACKIE (CONT'D)
I was told you'd wait.

SIMON
I was told it was a passive conduit.

At a terminal, CROWLEY, pleasant, is reaching for his phone.

CROWLEY
The Riyadh renewal was the payment. It was moved, Simon, so that you would finish. Washington put up the money. London supplied the premises.

SIMON
Then why send me.

CROWLEY
Mr. Hassan kept a second cold line off his manifests. No routing, no price. A man who keeps a thing off his invoice means to sell it twice.

SIMON
You knew they kept people in that building before we breached it.

CROWLEY
I put you in that building, Simon. It will all be minuted. Nobody lied to you. Everyone told you what you needed to know.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Simon holds up his phone. Katy's recording. Crowley's own voice fills the room.

CROWLEY (RECORDING)
I'd rather the container were already on the road.

Crowley goes still.

Eli, on the radio.

ELI
(radio)
Simon.

SIMON
Ten minutes.

Hassan's trunk line, recorded, goes out to four ministries.

Simon dials the Porton Down incident desk. He gives a duty scientist everything in plain English. Then he asks for a hospital ship.

SIMON
RFA Hesperus. Eighty miles south. Off the reef by eleven. The buyers are the United States and the United Kingdom.

He holds the receiver across the desk. Crowley takes it.

CROWLEY
(into it, once)
Acknowledged. This will be minuted.

SIMON
The other phone. The one that rings London.

Simon holds his palm out. Crowley lays a satellite phone in it, still warm from his chest.

SIMON (CONT'D)
So I would finish, Mr. Crowley. I've finished.

EXT. NORTH COMPOUND YARD - CONTINUOUS

Brandon, to Eli's open mic:

BRANDON
I said go.

Across the compound, a room away:

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

CROWLEY (O.S.)
It will all be minuted.

We linger on Eli, holding the middle of the yard. Twenty meters off, his sniper lies in the gravel. A muscle jumps in his jaw.

INT. LAB ACCESS CORRIDOR - 1836

There are steel doors at both ends. Eli and Simon arrive in the same second from opposite sides. They trade halves.

SIMON
You first.

ELI
Hassan's sitting on a counter-agent. It's on page nine of the buyer docs: Case 01, Hold two to eight. We don't know where he keeps it.

SIMON
The other half of the sale. Wolseley took quinine to Kumasi. Nobody fields a fever without the fix. Theirs went in without.

ELI
Two teams, no cure. Guinea pigs.

A MAG-LOCK holds a steel door. Its red LED burns steady.

ELI (CONT'D)
Katy can pulse it.

SIMON
Save her pulses. Every lock here hangs off the cold rooms' feed. So does whatever Hassan's got his thumb on.

Simon's fingers find the maintenance release blind.

SIMON (CONT'D)
I read the fire regulations for this lock the day we arrived.

ELI
Which day exactly.

SIMON
Day One. Before lunch.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
All of them.

SIMON
Twice.

INT. LAB ACCESS, OBSERVATION GLASS - CONTINUOUS

A white room that smells of bleach. HASSAN stands in it, his linen dark with sweat, his thumb white on a hardwired grip switch. Past him is a door marked 01 with wired glass in it.

GALLOWAY. Upright. He's in two-year-old American kit, the NVG mount empty, the chinstrap fastened.

There's frost in his stubble. His jaw works at nothing.

There are no tags at his throat. His carrier is laced shut with cable ties where Simon cut it open in the alley. Under the ties, a chest seal has gone curled and yellow.

Simon's hands know him. Thirty compressions on that chest.

SIMON
In the side mirror. A van, no lights, into the alley. A door opened. I saw it and never reported it. Reeves was bleeding across my seat. I'd report it at the LZ. Then I didn't, and every day it got harder to write down.

ELI
The box. Day One. Something knocked.

SIMON
He was here before we were. Weeks, maybe. Your box was someone else.

ELI
They walked me past that door on Night Five. I told myself it was nothing.

Eli turns his head.

ELI (CONT'D)
You drove away.

SIMON
I did. With his tags in my hand.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

INT. THE WHITE ROOM - 1840

SIMON
(at the door)
He'll want you. Your name was on the Syria operation. I know where the junction is.

Simon takes the junction. Eli takes Hassan.

HASSAN
(as Eli enters)
I can talk for ninety seconds.

ELI
I know. I've heard you.

HASSAN
Let go of this and the seal on the container opens. So we will talk.

The door CLOSES. Eli's hand finds the tags.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
You came to win a tournament, Sergeant. I sold you the field.

ELI
I sign for everything.

HASSAN
A plane. Tonight, nineteen-thirty, as scheduled. No cuffs, no hands on me.

ELI
And if there's no plane?

HASSAN
There is always a plane. That is my entire profession.
(a nod at the glass)
Don't flatter yourself. The room was laid for any team. You were merely punctual.

ELI
That's my soldier in there.

HASSAN
Subject One. Your Overwatch reported Syria dry and I left you a kill box. Your friend I collected afterward. Still warm.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Hassan goes for the bruise.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Your sniper. My gate man judges falls poorly, so I asked twice.

ELI
I know whether she got up.

HASSAN
My man on the gate radioed it in. She lay on the gravel and stayed there.

The compressor behind the glass STOPS. At the container, Nadia and Bishop:

NADIA (RADIO)
(RADIO)
Panel's dark. There's no reading on the seal.

BISHOP (RADIO)
Then we watch it ourselves. Keep off that cable, mun.

SIMON
(radio, from the junction)
His switch hangs off the cold room's feed. I'm cutting the feed.

HASSAN
Your friend has cut the cold.

The frost on the little window clears from the middle out. Hassan's thumb starts to shake. That's twenty minutes on a spring built for five.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I am fifty-four years old. I have been holding this since your shooter fell.

Eli crosses the room. His half-closed right hand covers Hassan's and presses the thumb down through the pain.

ELI
Now we are both holding it.

HASSAN
Mine doesn't shake.

The status light DIES. Eli lifts both hands off the switch. Nothing happens. Simon steps through the service door.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
The circuit's dead, Mr. Hassan. Nothing left to hold.

HASSAN
Two of you. I had you in separate columns.

ELI
Same column now.

Behind the wired glass of 01, the frost is gone. Galloway's eyes open. Filmed gray. They find three warm men.

SIMON
(very softly)
Danny.

INT. THE WHITE ROOM / ROOM 01 - 1845

The thigh strap SNAPS. Then the chest strap. Galloway hits door 01, and it swings out a hand's width. Fog. A gray hand. A helmet brim. Eli's shoulder SLAMS it shut. The bent latch won't seat.

Behind them, CLICK. Hassan slips out through a flush panel in the wall. His voice drifts back.

HASSAN (O.S.)
Mind the step, Sergeant. It sticks.

Eli's weight tips toward the panel. Toward the seller, and the plane.

SIMON
Drake. The door.

Eli stays on the door.

SIMON (CONT'D)
(by reflex)
Seal the room. Building containment. Then the corridor, and we let him.

Simon stops.

SIMON (CONT'D)
We hold.

ELI
That's Galloway. He's still in there.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON
He's not. I did his compressions. I know when he went.

ELI
Warm and dead, you said. You pumped a chest. You don't know what's in there. We left him once.

SIMON
Keep your weight on it. Nothing comes out that I don't send. I go in.

ELI
Simon. He's mine to carry.

SIMON
You'd hesitate. I've had two years to decide. You held a yard for twenty minutes. Hold this for one.

The door BOOMS. Eli's boots slide on the wet floor. Simon RUNS, and we go with him. Forty meters, fast-forward, the white wall a blur, and then he's there.

A fire cabinet. His elbow goes through the GLASS. An AXE comes off the bracket. The fire code puts one in every corridor of this class.

He's back at the door, skidding. It's the first real weapon he's held on the island, gripped in two taped fingers. GRAY FINGERS jam through the gap past Simon's ear.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Drake. Shut the door on his hand.

CRUNCH. The fingers go.

ELI
Keeper's cracked. One more hit and this door's open.

SIMON
He'll stack on it first. That's my window.

ELI
Tell me.

SIMON
When I say, open a foot. I go through. Shut it behind me. Don't open it again until I say.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
And if you don't tell me?

SIMON
Then it stays shut. You've the command.

ELI
Copy.

BOOM. Silence. Two full seconds.

SIMON
Now.

Eli opens it a foot. Simon slides through. Eli SLAMS it and throws his back into the steel. OUTSIDE: Eli holds, his boots skidding on the wet floor.

INSIDE: three meters by four, warming by the second. Simon's breath shows white. The air over Galloway's working jaw stays clear.

Galloway's head chases Simon's breath. The first swing misses. The second sticks in the nylon loop of the drag handle. The plate is untouched. Galloway drives Simon into the door. The brim SPLITS his eyebrow. Blood runs down into his left eye.

SLOW MOTION on Galloway's thigh. The tourniquet is still on it. The four numbers Simon wrote on the strap have gone brown. Two years without blood below it.

Simon's boot skates on the drain grate. The axe bites the plate and sticks. Both men go down. Simon gets his palms flat to the helmet. It's the hold for a broken neck, the one he used in the alley. He drives a knee into the tourniquet. The dead leg folds. He rolls free and wrenches the axe out.

Galloway turns from him. Squares up on the shut door. Tucks his head and stacks. A doorway is a doorway. The drill outranks the man behind him.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Now, Drake.

Eli cracks the door a foot. Galloway drives into the gap. Eli SLAMS the steel into his shoulder and pins him in the frame, hard. Pinned, the head tips forward. The brim drops and the collar sags. The gap opens.

SLOW MOTION on Simon. He draws what's left of the cold. Two years of reading that name. GALLOWAY DANIEL J.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON (CONT'D)
Easy, Danny. Keep chewing.

The axe rises. We stay on Simon's face, and on the jaw.

THUNK.

The jaw goes still.

Simon knows.

ELI
(on the door)
Still on the door.

SIMON
Pass me the tags.

He checks for a pulse that won't be there. He closes the eyes and straightens the arm.

A hand comes through the gap with a chain. Simon loops it over Galloway's head, under the chinstrap. He settles the tags on the plate carrier, where they hung in a photograph.

He opens the door all the way.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Eli. It's done.

It's the only time on the island Simon says it to his face. Eli's face is wet. His hand lands on Simon's shoulder, where Bishop's came down in the alley.

KATY
(radio)
Hassan's aide filed a departure at eighteen forty-four. Wheels up nineteen-thirty.

SIMON
Hassan's carrying the cure. Something long and cold. It came off your team's pallet.

ELI
That's Zoe's spare. It's been in customs since Day One.

EXT. WEST PLATEAU, COMPOUND - 1850

Tommy works the Leatherman outside the container's room. Pliers first, then the blade.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Across the yard, Hassan's crew throw an annex party. BASS thumps through the tent wall. A catering girl (16) crosses with a tray of tumblers and a bucket of ice.

HADDAD (20s, tablet under his arm) strolls from the party to the logistics office. He taps the terminal. Every cold room on the plateau unlatches at once.

Down the corridor, the doors CLACK open.

Fog rolls up the corridor at ankle height. A man walks out of it with Simon's old British Army belt still buckled on his wrist. He was the Angola Tactical team leader. Bishop knows the belt.

BISHOP
I hold them in the corridor. You shut that fire door behind me.

NADIA
A fire door has no lock, Bishop.

BISHOP
Then put your back on it. Don't open it. Not for me.

TOMMY
And if you don't come out?

BISHOP
Then you've still got a door.

INT. PLATEAU CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The corridor is two meters wide. Bishop has Tommy's rebar in taped fists. The backswing CLANGS off an open door. Every finish goes in at the base of the skull.

Then a Sierra Madre kid in a red bandanna, fingertips torn raw from his straps. CHUY. Bishop swings anyway.

Down his one sightline, the catering girl stands in the open. A lab tech in a white jacket is going for her throat.

BISHOP
(shouting)
Tommy!

Tommy, who can't run, gets there first.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
Back in your corner!

Tommy shoves his left arm into the mouth that wanted her. TEETH go through the sleeve. His cracked ribs GRIND. The

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

Leatherman's long blade snaps open, goes in at the base of the skull, and TWISTS.

TOMMY
Bhaago. Run. To the lights. Don't stop.

The last two from the cell block sway in the fog. The open rooms breathe cold.

NADIA
Cold, Bishop. It's in every log.

BISHOP
The one in the helmet. You can't get at him.

Nadia empties a CO2 extinguisher into the fog. A SCREAMING white cloud. She swings the empty cylinder. It CRACKS the helmet. Bishop's broken hand loses the bar. Nadia hauls the fire door shut on the head, Bishop slams it from his side, and BONE gives.

Tommy holds out the arm. The bite went deep, right through the sleeve.

TOMMY
Don't tell the Yank. He'll want paying.

BISHOP
Cold room. Door shut. I won't do the other thing. Not you.

We stay on Bishop while he shuts thirty-one doors, counting under his breath. He leaves the empty one open.

TOMMY
(from inside)
Opened the long blade. Before I could breathe.

BISHOP
Shut it before. Not after. Promise.

Bishop strips a turn of tape off his own hand and tapes his transmit key open. Every radio on the net will hear this room now.

EXT. SOUTH LAWN, BEHIND THE STAGE - 1854

The Bowl is full for the closing ceremony, two thousand guests in linen. Big screen, jib, drones on a barge. Breytenbach's crew have Jason zip-tied in a pickup.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

A white Thermo King reefer is parked behind the stage. Off the jib's junction box, a dish sits on a tripod. Its amber light goes green. The roller door RATTLES up on its own.

Volk Group drops off the tailgate in plates and helmets. SERGEI comes first, blue and white stripes at the collar. A waiter with a tray of flutes walks right into them. Sergei takes him up onto the lip of the stage, into the lights.

Overhead, three hundred drones draw the crosshair from Day One again. Two thousand faces laugh up at the screen. Why wouldn't they? For nine days this has all been the show.

A man in a Panama hat raises a toast to it. Jason knows that hat from the Hour Twelve chat. The laughter stops, and the Bowl stands.

CRACK. CRACK. CRACK. A guard fires three real rounds at five meters. They spark off a plate. The guard goes down. Max's live mic carries over every speaker.

MAX (P.A.)
Hassan, pick up. They're in my box.

STATIC.

A Volk man bends the jib operator back over the counterweight cage.

JASON
Jib op! Behind you. Let go of the stick.

Jason saws his zip-tie on a broken champagne flute. He's in a hurry, and he cuts to the bone of his forefinger. Over the speakers, the reel starts again from the top of the show.

MAX (RECORDING)
Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the closing ceremony of the Warrior Games.

Jason runs for the service road. Beside him runs a woman of sixty in green silk, with her Louboutins in her hand.

WOMAN IN GREEN SILK
Is this part of it? Is this the show?

JASON
No, ma'am. This is the part they don't post.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

EXT. PLATEAU ROAD / GATE THREE - 1905

Nadia on the net:

NADIA
(radio)
Tommy's bitten. Left forearm.

KATY
(radio)
Ice buys hours. The cure only works before he turns.

Simon stops and looks back at the plateau.

SIMON
The cure's on Hassan's plane. Bishop has the door. Move.

He hates the call, and he turns his back on the plateau.

Obi raises one palm, and his two men walk up into the trees. Konga's contract ran out at 1850. Obi held them a quarter hour over.

The treeline empties.

Gate Three. Myles has the ruck. Myles zip-ties Brandon to the steering wheel of an empty pickup, the tail of the tie in his teeth. PULL.

MYLES
Mr. Cole. Sit very, very still.

Myles gets Zoe upright on his good side.

ZOE
Rifle first. Don't carry me.

MYLES
He's not. Myles is.

Two pickups SLEW through the gate. It's Breytenbach's crew, with real rifles. Ours are still on plastic.

BREYTENBACH
(to his men)
No shooting. He flies tonight.
(beat)
Legs.

Headlights and gravel. A foot from the brawl, Brandon sits behind starred glass, hands in his lap. Eli and Simon run the pin and the gap on living men. Never the kill blow.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

It works on the first man. On the second, Simon is a half-beat early. An elbow finds the ribs Mackie cracked. Simon DROPS.

Zoe sits propped against the pickup's front tire. Her ankle adapter is cracked, and the shim is gone. Obi's live FAL lies across her lap. Myles dropped her plastic SF-7L beside her. She won't kill these men, so she picks up the plastic.

Knees, at three meters. PFFT. PFFT. The armorer did say it breaks bone.

Myles swings the ruck one-armed.

MYLES
NEXT!

ELI
Katy. Everything.

KATY
Everything is two diesels. One click a rifle.

From the Toughbook, Katy kills both diesels.

DARK.

MONTAGE - BOLTS IN THE DARK

SUPER: "00:00"

BLACK. Breathing. Boots on gravel. A plastic POP. A man cursing in Afrikaans.

Then Myles, left hand only, with the rifle pinned under his dead arm. Rear pin. The blue carrier comes out. The factory bolt goes in by touch. CLICK.

SUPER: "00:15"

Simon. Bench-learned fingers. His own Blackridge bolt comes out of the breast pocket. CLICK.

SUPER: "00:30"

Eli. Big hands, slow and exact. CLICK.

SUPER: "00:45"

Three clicks, then magazines seating. SLAP. SLAP. SLAP. Fifteen seconds a rifle.

ELI
Katy. Lights.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

The floods come up. The first live CLICK is Zoe's FAL, up on Breytenbach's crew. Their weapons CLATTER onto the gravel.

Breytenbach reverses the second pickup toward the airstrip. Behind the starred glass of the gate pickup, Brandon still hasn't moved.

BRANDON
Anything comes up that slope, I'm the warmest thing on this road.

ELI
Galloway was still warm when you filed Syria.

Myles picks Jason's GoPro out of the gravel and pockets it. Eli hands Jason a crew Vektor.

ELI (CONT'D)
Below the helmet. Nothing else counts.

EXT. AIRSTRIP, RUNWAY, FUEL JETTY - 1914

SUPER: "EVERYTHING LEAVES."

The Dash 8 sits on the apron with its props turning. Kerosene stink. Hassan stands in the door in linen and the gold watch. The boarding stair is rolled up to him.

Up the stair goes a long black rifle case. Green tape on the handle. A vaccine compressor is zip-tied to it. The little display reads 4.6.

KATY
(radio)
That's CASE 01. The cure. Manifest two lists one rifle case. Clears every airport on earth.

The ceremony crowd runs for the planes. Among them, faster, run the white shapes. The woman in green silk is bitten at the gate. She sits up, puzzled.

Up the road come SERGEI'S FIVE, helmets in file. The big man at the corner stops and stacks left. SERGEI. Somebody drilled these men well.

ELI (CONT'D)
There's always a plane.

SIMON
Not if the runway's closed.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

KATY
(reading her screen)
Hangar two is the halfway mark.

Hangar two's wall. A refueler truck sits against it with JET A-1 stenciled on the tank.

SIMON
He needs most of that runway. A truck across the middle and he can't. Kerosene lights if you hold a flame in it.

ELI
I'll drive.

SIMON
I'm driving. You're the bait, I'm afraid. They follow warm. Be warmer. Go when you're level with the hangar.

KATY
Site plan. Gap in the fence where the fuel line runs down from hangar two. They don't swim, and they don't come up. You do. Diver's flares. Red cabinet by the door. They burn underwater. The pack follows light.

Eli's boot BREAKS the glass on the red cabinet by the hangar door. Inside, two bundles of fat tubes. He takes one. Simon reaches past his shoulder, slides a single flare from the other bundle and buttons it inside his jacket.

Eli doesn't ask.

EXT. RUNWAY, CENTERLINE - CONTINUOUS

SUPER: "1920."

Eli stands on the centerline with a burning flare in each fist and ten more down his shirt. HISS. Phosphorus stink. The RUNWAY PACK, thirty strong, is on his heels. Blue edge lights run away down both sides.

ELI
Hey! Come and get it!

From the terminal roof, Zoe fires Obi's FAL. It's her second live round in two years. CRACK.

ZOE
One. Under the brim.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

MYLES
(spotting, range voice)
My size, your two hundred, running.
Send it.

CRACK.

At the terminal door, Jason holds with the Vektor. Katy, who still won't carry one, runs the grid.

JASON
(radio, as Max)
Folks, Sergei's still in file at fifty. Eli, keep him there.

ELI
(running)
Never on my net.
Keep going.

Burning stubs mark the centerline, one per light. The nearest runners stop on each one. Only a shot to the base of the skull drops anyone.

A SPONSOR in a blazer catches Eli's wrist. He bites down on the flare casing. Eli lets him have it. The man holds the flare out in both hands and stares. The pack knots on him.

Slag from the casing SIZZLES across Eli's left knuckles. Crater in the palm. It hurts. He jams a fresh flare into that hand anyway, teeth bared.

INT. TERMINAL LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Sixty civilians. Frozen. The TERMINAL PACK is at the glass, palms smearing the pane. Jason won't fire. A round through a waiter goes on into the window, and then the faces outside come in. Vektor down.

JASON
Katy. Freeze.

The waiter from the lawn walks down the lounge, stepping over the people on the floor.

LOUNGE GUEST (O.S.)
Waiter! Over here. I never got my drink.

TEETH go through Jason's sleeve. Katy swings the Toughbook down corner first, all hundred and fifteen pounds of her behind it. Base of the skull. CRUNCH.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

KATY
Magnesium alloy. Rated for a six-foot drop.

Her hand lands flat on Jason's chest. Stays.

EXT. RUNWAY, THE TAKEOFF RUN - 1930

SUPER: "T MINUS FOURTEEN LIGHTS."

Hassan won't wait.

The plane sits at the south threshold, nose north. Eli is ahead of it, running for hangar two.

The stair rolls clear. The door SEALS flush. The white plane swings onto the runway behind the pack. Brakes locked. Props wound to full power. A WHINE climbs up through the concrete.

From the hangar door, Simon sees what Hassan sees. Drake is clearing the man's runway for him. Landing lights ON. Eli's shadow stretches forty meters up the centerline, with the pack's beside it.

Eli can't leave the line. If he breaks off, the pack breaks with him, across the only lane the bowser can use. SLOW. Eli's breath. The flare hiss is swallowed whole.

The brakes come off.

INT. HANGAR TWO - CONTINUOUS

Simon counts the blue edge lights from the hangar door. Key in his fist. Too early, and the pack ditches Drake for the bigger, hotter truck.

Too late, and the transport is rolling.

Light thirteen: Eli passes the hangar door with the halfway mark under his boots. At fourteen, he's clear.

Simon turns the key.

EXT. PARALLEL TAXIWAY, THEN THE RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

The bowser ROARS out of the hangar. Down the taxiway, racing the plane. Hard over, square across the runway at the halfway mark.

Simon flips up the red guard and throws the TANK VALVE toggle. Fuel POURS out behind him.

SMASH CUT:

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

A gray arm comes in through the open window. Fingers in Simon's collar. A barman's waistcoat, and a wedding ring.

Simon winds the glass up on the forearm, two taped fingers screaming on the crank. He drags the man along at twenty with the arm snapped tight. BRAKES.

In the side mirror, the wet stripe stops a wing short of the far edge. Behind it, the plane's lights. Coming. Two years ago he watched something in a side mirror and drove on.

He puts her in reverse. The stripe closes edge to edge.

EXT. RUNWAY, THE FUEL POOL - CONTINUOUS

Simon drops out of the cab into the fuel pooled under the dump outlet, ankle deep. He strikes the flare he kept and holds it down in the pool.

SUPER: "ONE."

The hairs on the back of his hand curl and go.

SUPER: "THREE."

A groundsman in a polo shirt, three meters off and coming.

SUPER: "FIVE."

Pull the flare now and the count starts over. He has no other flare. For all his fear, he holds it where it is.

SUPER: "SIX."

Blue flicker. Yellow. Then a low WHUMP behind him.

The runway burns.

Simon lets the flare go and runs upwind with the fire at his heels. Cuffs wet. Nothing on him lights.

Fire walks the wet stripe out from under the tank, edge to edge. Black smoke rolls over the top. At the grille, the runway pack turns from the radiator's warmth to the flame. They lean toward the heat. The smoke takes them.

Down the runway, the plane's lights stop rushing. The pilot has seen a truck on his runway. The props go to full reverse. HOWL.

She stops six hundred meters short, landing lights shining into the smoke. Nothing comes out the other side. Eli never looks back.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

At the terminal, every head in the TERMINAL PACK turns from the glass to the fire. They flood across the apron toward it, away from sixty civilians.

Eli runs between them and the burn with two fresh flares. At hangar two he turns for the fence gap, with the fast ones strung out behind him.

INT. EMPTY COLD ROOM, WEST PLATEAU - CONTINUOUS

We go back up to the plateau. Tommy sits on the floor, knees up, Leatherman in hand. Outside the latched door, Bishop sits on the floor with his radio key taped open.

JASON (RADIO)
You there?
(beat)
Got one in the arm, Shah. Collab. Same clock.

TOMMY
(from inside)
Double or nothing. I hold out longer.

JASON (RADIO)
You're on.

BISHOP
(to the steel)
I'm in your corner. All night.

EXT. FUEL JETTY - CONTINUOUS

Sixty meters of tarred planks. Hot creosote. No rail. A lifebuoy and a boat hook hang on a post halfway out, and there's eight meters of water at the end.

At the fence gap, Eli throws one flare into the gap's mouth. Rifle up. He fires into the crouch at four meters until the bolt LOCKS back.

He drops the empty rifle and rips the boat hook off the lifebuoy post. A catering jacket hits him. Planks. Eli rolls with it and pins the man face down with the boat hook across his back.

Simon comes round the fire upwind at a run, behind the pack. He reverses his rifle. The butt drives into the gap at the base of the skull. No break in stride.

Sergei reaches the gap. He stacks on the fence post, waiting for a file that isn't there. The habit buys Eli two seconds to get up.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

The file stacks on Sergei. Sergei breaches fast, low and left, on the blind side. Double-leg. Eli goes limp under the plates. The flare in his fist still burns.

Two flares arc out into the harbor. Every helmet on the jetty turns to follow them. Eli drops off the side. SPLASH. Sergei's fist goes in with him.

Simon takes one step toward the edge. Stops.

He holds.

UNDER THE JETTY. Three flares burn on the sand. Red light, and rising bubbles.

Eli hooks a forearm through Sergei's elbow, sets his boots on the chest plate and drives. Three times, until the fist finally slides open.

Sergei sinks into the light, arms floating over his helmet. The pack settles on the flares. Reaching. Slower. Stopped.

Fifteen seconds of air. Eli climbs a piling furred with weed, and the barnacles open up the burned palm.

ABOVE. Simon counts at the edge. At twenty, one knee down. At thirty, he sets the rifle aside. At forty, nothing has surfaced. Then a hand comes over the lip of the ladder.

Simon, black against the burning bowser, hauls him up the last rungs by the drag handle.

SIMON
Drake. The runway's closed.

ELI
(dripping)
Took you long enough.

SIMON
Forty seconds. I'm keeping count.

ELI
Of what.

SIMON
Three-tenths. Ahead of you.

They walk back between the blue edge lights, one wet and one dry, toward a runway on fire.

EXT. RUNWAY, THE TRANSPORT - 1944

Breytenbach's pickup sits on the grass off the wingtip.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

ELI
(into Katy's handheld)
Ghost. Boarding stair off the apron. And every bag of ice in the terminal bar.

A baggage TUG crawls up the runway with Katy at the wheel. Hitched on behind is the boarding stair Hassan rolled clear. Jason rides the second cart, packed in bar ice to the chin.

KATY
Iced him at nineteen forty-one. Twenty minutes after the bite.

JASON
(through his teeth)
I'm a cooler.

The transport sits nose to the fire. They roll the stair to the forward door. Third window aft, a lit oval of glass shows red numbers: 4.6.

The door swings out on its arm. Hassan stands at the top. Linen. Gold watch. He holds up Eli's phone.

HASSAN
Nineteen-thirty. It does not move.

ELI
Not tonight.

HASSAN
The case keeps cold in here.

He drops the phone down the stair. The screen's cracked, and the END USER page is still lit. The door shuts flush with the skin. CLUNK. The props feather and stop.

Under the tail, a small unit keeps WHINING. It's the plane's own fridge. Every socket aboard runs off it, and one of them feeds a vaccine compressor.

EXT. UNDER THE TAIL - CONTINUOUS

Simon ducks under the tailcone for the panel. BREYTENBACH steps out from behind the main gear, where the pickup's driver went. A shoulder SLAMS into Simon's ribs.

Simon lands hard on the concrete. Eli vaults the baggage cart. Two on one under the belly.

SPEED RAMP, slow. Breytenbach breaks Simon's pin. Eli's swollen eye is shut, and the big man lives on the dark side. FAST. Breytenbach HURLS Eli face first at the gear strut.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

BREYTENBACH
Your left eye is closed.

WHITE FLASH in the shut eye. Blood in his teeth. The strut RINGS, long and loud. SLOW. Breytenbach's left hip drops. His rifle stock swings back around, and it comes in on Eli's RIGHT. The seeing side.

Van Nuys, the south door: both came from the dark. Eli stood still for both. This one he watches all the way in. He steps inside the swing. Wood CRACKS against his back.

The right hand, half-closing since the tower, slams shut on the big man's jaw. Something in it GOES. HARD CUT. Breytenbach lies flat on the apron, out cold.

Two cable ties go on the wrists. Eli tucks the hand against his ribs and keeps it there. Simon kneels at a palm-sized panel under the tail. He read the ground-handling card in the hangar because it was there.

He flips the guard and pulls the T. The whine DIES. Every cabin window goes dark. Only an amber strip along the floor stays lit.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Lights out, gentlemen. No restart from the flight deck now.

Katy keys the airband handheld: the first prop that turns gets a round through the windscreen from Turner. In the cabin window, the red number climbs. Hassan turns the display to the glass. He's still selling.

EXT. APRON, BESIDE THE STAIR - CONTINUOUS

From the dark side of the infield comes the woman in green silk, one shoe in her hand. She brushes Eli's sleeve. Wet, hot. He stands still and lets her pass.

She presses her palms and face to Hassan's window. Hassan is afraid of her. His handkerchief stops. Jerks. Resumes.

ELI
Leave her. Let him look at her.

Simon RAPS on the door. Her head turns to follow the sound. Four seconds. She turns back.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Six point eight, Mr. Hassan. That's the only cold on this airfield.

At 7.1 the latch CLICKS. Haddad stands in the doorway in a soaked polo, hands showing. The woman peels off the hull and

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

goes for the stair, past Eli. Simon is at the top, with nowhere to go but in. Myles on the handheld:

MYLES
(radio)
Four hundred ten. Hair right.
(one breath)
Send it.

CRACK.

She folds at the foot of the stair, mid-stride. The crack reaches them after she's down. Her shoe drops.

ZOE
(radio)
Four.

Eli climbs the stair past her shoe.

INT. THE TRANSPORT, CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Hassan has his fingers on the case latches.

HASSAN
I lift this lid, it's thirty-one degrees in here. We negotiate.

ELI
Those were people on the lawn.

HASSAN
Those were the demonstration.

SIMON
Visibility nil. Nobody lands. The only ship coming is mine.

Hassan dials a satellite phone. In Simon's jacket, Crowley's phone rings. Simon turns the screen around, and Hassan reads his own number.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Mr. Crowley's. London isn't taking calls.

ELI
Washington's zip-tied to a steering wheel at the gate. Sitting very still.

Hassan studies Eli's swollen eye, his held-in hand, Simon's taped fingers.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

HASSAN
Plastic in your magazines. Nothing in your arms.
You were the control.

Ice goes around the case, and the lid shuts. Two cable ties go to each armrest, pulled tight with Eli's teeth alone.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
No cuffs, I said.

ELI
Not cuffs. You never wiped my phone.

HASSAN
Who would you show it to? Both your governments are on it.

ELI
Somebody in a white suit. At breakfast.

At the door, Hassan:

HASSAN (CONT'D)
There is always a plane, Sergeant.

ELI
You're sitting in it.

Eli carries the iced case down the stair. Hassan lets him.

EXT. APRON, BAGGAGE CART - CONTINUOUS

Jason, still packed in bar ice.

A laminated card in four languages. Two milliliters, outer thigh. Repeat at six hours. Before onset only. Useless on the dead.

ELI
Ship's three hours out. Or I do it now.

JASON
(from the ice)
I vote now. So does chat.

Katy works fast because she's scared for him. She cracks the case seal on the cart. One vial comes out, and the lid shuts before the cold escapes. The needle goes in through his trouser leg.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

JASON (CONT'D)
Tell Shah I got mine first.

INT. EMPTY COLD ROOM, WEST PLATEAU - NIGHT

Steel door. Bishop is up against it, pushing up off the floor. It takes two tries. The rebar never drops. Behind him, Nadia's back is still on the fire door. She hasn't moved. Simon drove up alone with the case in a bar cooler on the seat.

BISHOP
Thermometer first.

Simon holds it up.

SIMON
Case reads six point two. Ice still cold.

He opens the lid. Bishop studies the vials. Then he lifts the latch with his own hand.

Tommy is against the far wall. Has he turned? The Leatherman opens, shuts, opens. He hasn't.

SIMON
Thirty-eight nine.

TOMMY
Cold helps. What's the Yank on?

SIMON
Thirty-eight four. Dosed two minutes past eight.

SNAP. The Leatherman shuts.

TOMMY
He's cheating.

The needle. Tommy looks past it at Bishop. Bishop is relieved. His hand shakes once on the rebar, and he leans the bar on the wall.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
You stayed.

BISHOP
Said I would. All night.

EXT. AIRSTRIP, QUARANTINE LINE - DAY

SUPER: "DAY TEN."

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

The boarding stair. A woman's shoe sits on the bottom step. A white suit cuffs Hassan on the top step. He comes down between two rifles and steps over the shoe.

At the jetty planks, zip-tied men sit in a row. Breytenbach is one of them. Mackie gives Simon one nod and gets one back. Eli thumbs the cracked phone open to the records-room page. He hands it to the woman who runs the line.

ELI
Both governments are on it. In writing.

SIMON
Forty dollars, I believe.

ELI
Plus mileage.

Myles passes over Jason's GoPro. Katy hands up a printout folded in quarters.

Katy's laptop kept every word of Eli's open mic. That's Mr. Cole, in his own voice. Brandon steps into the boat beside Crowley. Neither one looks at the other.

Simon enjoys this. He puts Crowley's satellite phone in a man's palm himself, and he takes his time about it.

Myles knocks the cap off Reyes's second Modelo on a bollard. The first swallow goes onto the planks, for Chuy. Reyes lifts two fingers in answer.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Zoe, on crutches, hands Obi's FAL back to him butt first. He slings it and stops in front of Nadia.

NADIA
Fifteen minutes that aren't on any timesheet, Emeka.

OBI
Nobody paid me for those.

She unclasps the gold chain and holds it out. He folds her fingers back over the charm. Obi smiles. We've waited ten days to see that.

Bishop, after:

BISHOP
What did you say to him? On the net, in the yard.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

NADIA
It's me. Please.

Bishop fastens the chain at the back of her neck. Splint and all, he takes it slow.

Jade Dragon files down the planks to the boat, Lin Wei last. She stops beside Simon.

LIN WEI
Good morning.

She steps down into the boat. Ten days. Simon looks like a man who just won a bet.

EXT. HESPERUS, STARBOARD LADDER - DAY

A boat comes through the reef pass. A white bag lies on a stretcher with the tags on top, where anyone can read them. Eli takes the head. Simon takes the feet. The ladder SWAYS. They lift Galloway up it together, rung by rung.

ELI
He goes home from here.

SIMON
Two years late.

INT. RFA HESPERUS, COLD WARD - DAY

Antiseptic and diesel. Monitors BEEP in two rhythms. Eli, left eye swollen shut, right hand splinted to the wrist. Simon, ribs taped, three stitches in the brow. Bishop, a splinted hand and a buckle cut on the cheek. Zoe lies flat with her prosthetic in a Ziploc. Katy's asleep on a bunk, the box of Cap'n Crunch from the team room under one arm.

Jason and Tommy lie under silver blankets packed with ice. Jason's forearm is bandaged, with one forefinger stitched. Simon drinks real tea.

ELI
(from the next bed)
Any good?

SIMON
Adequate.

ELI
You're smiling.

SIMON
I'm scoring.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

On Bishop's blanket sits a cake topper, a seven and a nought. Mam's seventieth is a fortnight Sunday. Bishop will make it.

Eli leans from his bed and puts Haugen's silver hammer in Zoe's hand.

ELI
Best numbers on this island. Haugen said it. I should've.

ZOE
You're in my light.

He starts to look away.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Don't.

He stays.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Don't disappear for two years again.

ELI
I won't.

The monitors flip over. 37.7. 37.4.

JASON
I'm up nine places, Shah.

TOMMY
(from under the ice)
Doesn't count. We didn't stay down.

EXT. HESPERUS, STERN RAIL - DAY

We join Myles at the stern rail on a satellite phone. A gym squeaks behind his daughter's voice. Myles turns the bad ear into the wind and doesn't ask her to say it twice.

MYLES
I'm proud of you, recruit.

He holds the phone out. Simon takes it and dials a London number he's known by heart for two years. Four rings.

SIMON
Ama. It's Simon.

Silence on the line. A long one.

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS

SIMON (CONT'D)
I'm coming home.
(a beat)
Thursday.

Across the deck, Eli doesn't turn around.

ELI
Of course it's Thursday.

EXT. HESPERUS, HELIDECK - DAY

ROTOR WASH. A helicopter sits on the deck, ramp down.

Simon waits at the foot of the ramp. Eli stops ten feet back with his face in shadow. It's the same distance as the landing zone two years ago, and the same dust.

This time he waits.

BISHOP
Go on, then.

Simon climbs in. Eli boards last.

The ramp closes on all of them.

INT. HELICOPTER, IN FLIGHT - DAY

Simon opens two years of cipher to a clean page. He writes one line in plain English, without a pause. A van, an alley, a time, a name.

ELI
(across the cabin)
What'd you write?

SIMON
The alley.

He closes the notebook.

Simon, to Eli:

SIMON
I believe I was ahead on points.

ELI
I believe you were not.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END

ORBITAL RANCH STUDIOS