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Neither Heaven Nor Earth

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NEITHER HEAVEN NOR EARTH

Afghanistan 2014, Wakhan District

Here boy.

Lie down.

Here.

South Post for North Post.

South Post, come in.

Captain, I got eyes on a civilian.

Headed down from the village, sector 43
toward the border.

Its Maleks son.

North Post, you copy?

Hes entering your sector.

What the fuck?

Position.

Attention, warning shots.

Goliath!

South Post, you see the dog?

Negative, Captain.

JB, is the dog there?

Dont think so.

- We cant find it.

- Hold on...

- Are you going to the shura?

- Lernowski is.

Lernowski!

Those two are for the village.

No ones seen it.

Ask why he was down by the border,
he knows he shouldnt be there.

Its not your problem.

It is so!

He has no business there.

He wants money for the sheep.

Remind him how

were keeping the village safe.

He doesnt care. He wants money.

Sure, Ill write him a check.

What does Malek say?

Havent I always been clear?

The sheep died in your barbwire
so you must pay.

Im not paying!

Lets not argue.
Well leave it at that.
Well meet again next week.
Thank you, everyone.
Get down!
Where are they?
12 oclock!
I dont see them!
William!
Contact.
Come in!
South Post, you see them?
Negative, no visual.
Shooters in 43-7 or 43-8.
Stay covered, Captain.
Where are they?
Right! Further right.
William!
Youre not hit.
Benj!
Straight ahead.
- 12 oclock, along the ridge.
- Im ready!
Two shooters behind the third rock.
Now!
Further right. Go!
Fire!
Further right.
Fire!
I gotta go.
I love you too.
Sit down.
- Sorry for earlier.
- Forget it.
Happens to everyone.
Hows your wife?
Fine.
I dont tell her everything.
The less you say, the better.
Any day now, right?
- A boy?
- A little man.
Ill ask Lernowski
to tattoo his birth date.

Tek, we cant let him do it.
Either you or me, but not him.
I hate not having armored vehicles.
- Ever see a guy get wasted in one?
- No.
I saw it once in Kabul.
We had to get the body.
Holy shit, Tek.
That guy was a puzzle.
Pieces everywhere!
Fingers in a glove...
bits of flesh...
A charred knee all by itself
in the gravel.
We had to pick it all up.
Piece by piece.
It took us...
Bax, how long did it take?
Maybe 4 or 5 hours.
When we were done,
the bag weighed less than a man.
Hed been so blown to bits,
there was nothing left.
Whatd you do?
The captain took the bag,
went and dug up some dirt
to add to it.
We sealed the bag and casket
so the family couldnt open it.
The guy was sent back home like that,
dirt and all.
What the hell?
North Post for Base.
North Post for Base!
North Post, come in.
Mercier, get me the captain!
What are they doing?
Bax.
North Post, come in.
Captain, I got a dozen villagers
up on the ridge.
Theyre burning something.
Have they come down near the posts?
No, theyre in their sector.

- What do I do?

- Nothing.

As long as they stay there,
just keep an eye on them.

Yes, sir.

North Post. Now what?

We cant find Tek and Delcourt.

What?

Their post is empty.

They werent replying.

I thought their radio broke,
but the relief just arrived
and no ones there.

When?

Just now. I sent everyone out
but we found nothing.

What happened?

Did you see any civilians come near?

Negative.

They went back to the village.

After that, it was quiet.

I dont get it, Captain.

They couldnt go without you seeing!

I dont understand.

My eyes were glued to the sector.

Did you fall asleep?

How could you miss this?

They never wouldve left.

There had to be some contact.

Contact?

They mustve heard a noise,
gone to see and something happened.

Well find them hollering
down some hole.

Where were the civilians?

Up on the ridge.

Its a sheep, Captain.

Was your last radio contact
before or after the civilians?

Before, I think.

Hey Captain...

Bax! Get them.

Any trace of my men,
Im taking everyone!

No ones done anything.
What were those kids doing up there?
Taking the sheep up.
Why arent you in school?
- Hes a shepherd.
- A shepherd.
Right, youre all shepherds.
Show me your hands.
Come on!
Clean for a shepherd.
Search him.
See if hes got a cell phone.
Hes clean.
What were you doing up there?
- Burning the sheep from the barbwire.
- Why?
It wasnt killed properly
so they couldnt eat it.
I need to be told
when more than 2 men go to the valley!
No one goes to the valley.
What about him, the other day?
Men with sheep dont count.
Youre protecting someone.
Youre afraid!
Its Sultan, isnt it?
Where is he?
If I have to burn the village down
to find my men, I will!
There'll be nothing left but ashes!
If you do, well walk to Kabul
to report you,
and it is you
who will finish in ashes.
Dont use that tone with me.
What do they want?
Money?
I dont know. This isnt Kabul,
it doesnt work like that.
Make them talk.
What?
You think theyre Al-Qaeda?
Heres last nights satellite images
at 30-second intervals.

Between the villagers leaving at 2:44
and the relief arriving at 6:03,
there is no trace of any movement
in the sector or at the border.
Yet two of you were watching.

- William?

- Yes?

Go over there.

- Whatd I do now?

- Go over there.

- Here?

- A little further.

Sit in the middle of the camp.

Right here?

Thats good.

Look at him.

- See him?

- Yeah.

Corporals turn.

Something this simple blocks heat.

Dont believe only what you see
in the goggles.

No more of these.

For now, we have no idea what happened.

If theyre dead or alive.

But were going to find them.

Those who know me will vouch for this:

I have never left a man, body
or even a vehicle behind.

Well scour the sector.

Here are my orders:

Always stay in view of squad leaders,
day and night.

We close the posts
and adjust the windows.

No one can get in or out through them.

Motion detectors go above each post.

For now, no talk of the missing men
until we have news for their families.

Itll be tough but Im blocking
the phone line for now.

You may go.

I dont buy it.

The blanket doesnt work in motion.

Its noisy and heat leaks.
What am I supposed to say?
They may have gone AWOL.
To get their throats slit in Pakistan?
Captain?
May I ask you something?
Go ahead.
Id like a benediction.
A chaplain? Now?
If theres more fighting
and something happens...
Over there, thats not enough?
Benedictions are for the dead.
What you need is sangfroid.
That gets you home in one piece.
Ill see what I can do.
Fighters of Wakhan!
This sector is under international control.
We are prepared to hear your demands
for the release of our hostages.
Cease fire and open negotiations.
Lernowski, what you got?
A stake, Captain.
Describe it. No wires?
No, thats it.
A meter high, metal, rusty.
Have Mercier use the detector.
Nothing to report.
Just an old stake.
Nothing to report, Captain.
OK, carry on.
You havent been relieved?
Im not budging
till we get those bastards.
If it were up to me,
we wouldnt be dicking around.
What would you do?
Make those villagers talk.
Come on, the night our guys disappear,
they burn a sheep?
Civilian approaching!
Soldiers of France!
Open the gate!
Tear gas!

Who is this clown?
Search him!
Hes clean.
Have him identify himself.
His names Gulbbudin Bakhtawar.
Has he seen many men without clothes?
What?
Has he seen many men without clothes?
No, hes seen many clothes without men.
Let him in.
He says the Colonel in Kabul sent him.
You have messages for him...
I think he means pictures.
Does the colonel receive him like that?
Everyone knows him in Kabul.
Silly Christian, throwing smoke
when he comes to help.
Its OK.
Here are photos of my two men.
He follows the Colonels orders
and returns once he learns something.

Next time:

hands in the air and wait.
So hes not tear-gassed
or shot in the head.
Got it?
- Is that a yes?
- Yes.
Ask when he thinks hell be back.
Inshallah when?
Whatever, show him out.
Thank you.
South Post for Base.
South Post for Base.
South Post, come in.
Hes gone.
Leaving sector 43-9

at 21:

Roger.
Want some?
No.
Whats going on?

Animal.

Going out to check.

Go ahead.

Nothing to report.

There it is!

He sure smoked that sucker!

- Got any chocolate left?

- In my bag.

- Where?

- Top pocket.

- Hanging in there?

- Yeah.

I saw them the other night.

Saw who?

Tek and Delcourt. In a dream.

It was in a cave.

They were there, sleeping.

And?

Thats all.

It was just weird to see them.

You gotta learn to shut up.

Everyone thinks

you need to shut your trap

and open fire when youre told.

I gotta piss. Cover me.

Ben?

I was there, as usual!

- Where?

- Right there, like that.

You fell asleep?

We didnt see the detector go on.

The sun was up!

- Tell the truth.

- Hes the one who fell asleep!

- Youre lying!

- He never moved!

You leave me no choice, William.

In the stockade!

Your hands.

Theyre in my zone of fire,

what do I do?

Wait!

Whats he saying?

Khalil?

I cant hear.
Whats he saying?
Translate!
He wants to negotiate with you.
Tomorrow morning at 6:00
at the border.
Tell him I accept
but at noon, in broad daylight.
He accepts.
I dont want you up there.
You put the section in danger.
Youll be interrogated by high command.
Youll return with the first convoy.
Its best for us all.
Therell be an investigation,
youll testify.
What for?
He was there, he fell asleep.
Thats what Ill testify!
Get a different story.
You need me up there,
we have to go back!
Somethings going on!
Of course it is.
Men are being killed or kidnapped.
We need to go back up and sleep there,
to figure it out!
- Before were all gone!
- You missed something.
We all missed something.
Get ahold of yourself.
Youre going to write down
exactly what happened and sign it.
Is that clear?
Youve got some explaining to do.
It wont be easy.
But well find them
and well go home.
Theyve been informing all along,
its a code.
No sheep at the stake: clear.

Sheep:

Why dont we shoot the sheep?

No, call it off. Double back.
Men, head back!
Where are they?
- What do you see up there?
- Nothing, Captain!
He says, What do you want?
My men!
I want my men!
- He wants his men.
- What men?
I have no idea!
I want proof my men are alive.
He hasnt got your men,
but hell negotiate for his men.
They arent here,
or he hasnt got them?
He hasnt got your men
and he thinks youve got his!
Tell him to come out slowly.
Well talk face to face.
Careful, theyre coming out!
Nobody shoot!
Cover me.
Who has his men if its not us?
How many has he lost and how?
He who attacks with unknown arms
will know Allahs hatred.
Ask if he is Sultan.
He is,
and who are you to ask?
I sent a man to Pakistan 2 days ago
to negotiate for me.
An Afghan. Has he seen him?
Hes seen no one.
Ill offer him a deal.
He can search for his men freely
here in my sector,
and Ill search on his side.
- What the fuck, Antars?
- Translate!
We call a cease-fire.
No shooting until weve found our men.
He may even go to the village, up there.
The village of liars.

Whats he saying?
- Hes pretending to talk to someone.
- Are you sure?
Yes, hes talking by himself.
We cant negotiate with the Taliban!
Hes lying! We cant do this.
He wants a guarantee.
If I find who has my men,
well find his too.
You must swear.
I swear.
His turn.
He swears but hell cut your throat
if you betray him.
Everyone, let them through.
Do we go?
We wait.
Allah cant prevent more fires
or attacks.
I can.
Allah is great.
Malek, dont you want
whats best for your village?
Its not for me to decide what happens.
Its your war, its not for us to help.
You want the Taliban here
or your countrys army?
I want nothing. Allah decides and...
- And?
- Screw you.
This is useless.
Captain! Look!
It was at their home.
Whered you get it?
His son found it in the valley.
He found the motorbike here.
There was nobody.
You said that. I want the rest.
Even if it takes all night,
you will talk.
Get lost!
You too will disappear like dogs.
Son of a bitch! You dog!
He keeps insulting you.

Take it easy!
Thats enough!
He wants his father off the ground.
Hell talk if you pick up his father.
Not on the ground, up on the bike!
Im listening. Whats going on?
This is Allahs land.
Is this what you want?
He did nothing.
So, this is Allahs land?
Sergeant,
Allah is all youll get!
Translate.
Yes.
How far does Allahs land reach?
Behind the mountain then it stops.
Are the camp and village
on Allahs land?
No.
Is it forbidden to walk here?
You can walk but not sleep.
Why? What happens if I sleep?
- Allah takes you back.
- Cut it out!
Ask when it started.
When the soldiers came?
No, long before.
Since when?
Come here.
Give it to him.
In here.
No, there.
Why bring sheep here?
Theres no grass.
Thats where Allah forgives.
What happens then?
- You are forgiven.
- Is that all?
He doesnt return the men?
I bring a sheep for Allah,
it disappears and Im forgiven.
No, you leave it a full day,
take it back to the village
and cut its throat.

What if Allah takes it?
- Allah wont take the sheep.
- Why?
It doesnt sleep on the ground.
Yes, it does!
All sheep sleep on the ground.
If the sheep is alone, it is scared
and sleeps standing up.
And dogs?
Dogs sleep on the ground
so they disappear.
Look.
I lie down here
and I fall asleep.
Dont do that.
While I sleep here,
a man comes and kills me
in the night.
He takes me off and burns me.
Translate.
You come and say, Allah took him,
but a man killed me.
You dont see Allah do it,
so you cant be sure.
Yes, I can.
How can you be sure of something
you dont see and never have?
Look over there.
Its dark and you dont see the men.
But with your goggles, you see them.
If you dont see the men,
it doesnt mean theyre not there,
it means its dark
and you have no goggles.
Captain, its Base.
Captain, William got away!
He took the motorbike!
William!
There!
Its locked inside.
Its his, Captain.
Sleeping pills.
We need to get out of here!
Captain, Im not going back up.

- We need to strike back!
- Against who?
We need proof. Facts!
For 5 days
weve been looking for proof.
Following orders!
4 men are gone
and the Talibans back as a result!
- Its inexplicable!
- We just lack the explanation.
Share your thoughts, Antars.
- We dont know our enemy.
- How can we fight then?
Im done. Im calling the families
and high command.
Dont touch that!

Its 11:

The last convoy goes tomorrow at 8.
Whoever wants can leave with it.
But decide now.
You wont get a second chance!
If you choose to stay,
it means one thing is clear:
no matter what happens,
I am and will remain in command.
Oscar Varennes, chaplain.
Delighted, Captain.
35th regiment, 4th company.
How long have you been here, Captain?
A few weeks.
Any fighting?
Not really.
A delicate mission, thats all.
- Did they say something?
- No, thats the thing.
My job is observing people,
to feel if theyre on the edge.
Your men are about to plummet.
Do your job, reassure them.
Reassure them?
You think God is a teddy bear
you hold at night?
I dont know, tell them...

God is Love.

Look at the shit going on around you,
how can you say that?

Thats enough.

You leave tomorrow

with the convoy at 8:00.

While the men were in a deep slumber,
a voice came unto me.

It whispered and said,

Mans life on earth

is that of a soldier,

his days, those of a hireling.

I was at ease, but He has shaken me.

He seized my neck and broke me.

He shot at me as his target.

He opened breach upon breach.

He swooped upon me like a warrior.

It is He who pursues me.

He has broken me asunder,

treated me as an enemy.

His troops mobilize

and encamp round my tent.

Soon, I shall sleep in the dust.

He will seek me

and I will be gone.

- Got a signal?

- Yes.

Satellite call.

- Who is it?

- Williams wife, for you.

- Howd she get this number?

- Beats me.

Captain Bonassieu?

- Howd you get this number?

- William gave it to me.

The baby came, I want him to know.

- This is a military line.

- Put him on.

- Ill tell him.

- Let me do it!

You cant.

- Im hanging up now.

- Wait!

Goodbye.

Antars? Whats going on?
Go back where I can see you.
Antars!
Its OK. Im fine.
I can do this.
Youre way too scared.
Itll happen.
Its a matter of time.
I havent slept in days.
When I do, I have the same dream.
I see them...
See who?
Delcourt, Tek, Benj, William.
Sleeping in a cave, beneath the border.
William screwed with your mind.
William?
He told me that dream.
He told everyone.
He didnt tell me.
No one told me anything.
He says go away, he was here first.
Who drew this circle?
He did.
Whats in there?
- Its the place from the sura.
- What?
What sura?
The People of the Cave.
The villagers told him.
Get a reading.
Black probe first.
Well?
Theres a cavern 3m down.
The high point?
Theres a conduit near here.
Sergeant, theres activity.
They want to see the hole.
Tell them no weapons.
Theyre afraid.
- Of what?
- What well find.
Its the story of some men
who flee the city.
They hide in a cave

and ask God for help.
God puts them to sleep for many years.
Some say there were four,
others five.
Some say there were seven men
and a dog.
A dog?
Yes, there was also a shepherd
with his dog they met along the way.
The dog fell asleep outside the cave,
with its paws outstretched.
You could see its teeth.
Its eyes were open
as if guarding the cave,
though it had been asleep for years.
And when they woke up...
Lets keep going.
Move everything down.
We tried, theres no one down there!
I saw it in a dream.
They must be there!
How can they be?
Theres no way in or out!
Lets go before the F-16s get here.
- Khalil?
- I have no idea.
Hes saying something!
Youre out of control.
The captains worse than a goat!
How can he tether his sheep
with all this mess?
There. Satisfied?
You wont find them.
No one will.
Theyre gone!
Now you must fill in the hole!
Captain Bonassieu,
I havent heard from William
for a week.
No answers from the camp.
There are rumors here.
The families talk of fighting
and hostages.
If somethings happened

or hes in danger, I want to know.
Now.
Whats going on?
Its started.
Its Him.
Listen closely, Captain.
First, there was nothing,
not even rocks.
Then He put the trees there...
animals...
women...
men, you, me.
But its over now.
Hes taking us back one by one.
It started here
but it may be happening elsewhere.
Soon it will be everywhere.
Everyone!
Hell take children...
fathers, mothers.
Soon therell be nothing left,
no one.
Someone will call out,
and no one will reply.
Im afraid, Captain. Afraid of that.
Antars!
Antars!
Get me four
and shear them.
What?
Sarah,
the fighting has started again.
I cant talk about it.
Theres nothing to say.
No one here can say anything.
Everyone fights, shuts their mouth
and closes their eyes.
So I shut up too and close my eyes.
I close them now, Sarah.
Im invisible.
Im here in the mountains,
in fear.
Im there in our home,
next to you and our baby.

I open them
and wonder if it was real.
William,
I dont recognize you.
I dont recognize your words.
Whats going on?
You said the fighting was over,
you'd be home in a matter of days.
Your mother and I saw
new footage from over there.
They announce more casualties.
Apparently,
many soldiers return in silence,
they lose the ability to speak.
Come back to us, William.
Back to me.
At ease.
Captain Bonassieu,
by exposing your men to friendly fire,
you have caused 4 of them to die.
By virtue of article L-456B,
you are under arrest and must appear
before the international court.
Pending investigation results,
you shall be held prisoner.
Order arms!
Sarah,
the assault began tonight.
All around, I hear the cries of men
and the clash of weapons.
I take a deep breath
and slowly subside.
The earth lulls me back home
like a disobedient son
who has strayed too long.
I hear the dead speak.
For Tek.
Our dead.
For Delcourt.
All our dead.
For Benj.
They know me.
- For William!
- They call me home.

Sarah,
Im not asleep.
Im not gone.
I havent disappeared.
I am absent.
I await you behind a door.
In a world within the world.
A world beside the world.
A world around the world.