

BURIED

by
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"BURIED"

FADE IN:

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL
What...? What is this?

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

After a beat, he lights his Zippo cigarette lighter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL (CONT'D)
What is this?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The time on the phone reads 6:12pm.

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL (CONT'D)
No. Where the hell is it? Son of
a...Come on!

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

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

His words barely make it pass the coffin walls.

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

A FEMALE 911 OPERATOR answers almost immediately.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
911, please hold.

The Female 911 Operator places Paul on hold.

PAUL
No! Wait!

She quickly returns.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
(overlapping)
911. What is your emergency?

PAUL
Hello?

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
911. What's the problem, sir?

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

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
Sir...

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

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

PAUL
Paul. Paul Conroy.

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

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
You're in a coffin?

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
Are you at a funeral home?

PAUL
No. I don't know. No.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
How are calling me right now?

PAUL
What?

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

PAUL

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

You're calling from your cell phone?

PAUL

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

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

PAUL

I didn't climb in.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

How did you end up in the coffin, sir?

PAUL

I was put here.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

In the coffin?

PAUL

Yes. Please send help.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

And you're saying the coffin is buried?

PAUL

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

Do you know your location, sir?

PAUL

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR

Iraq?

PAUL

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
Are you a soldier, sir?

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

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR
They shot who, sir?

PAUL
All of the other drivers.

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

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

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

PAUL
Ohio?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 411 OPERATOR answers.

411 OPERATOR
What city and state, please?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL
Fine, um...Chicago. Okay?

411 OPERATOR
Please hold for your number.

Paul is transferred to an AUTOMATED MESSAGE.

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

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

After a few rings, SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS answers.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS
Chicago field office. Special Agent Harris.

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

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS
Yes it is, sir.

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

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

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

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

PAUL
Paul Conroy.

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

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

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

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

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS
Were you shot at?

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

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS
Who put you there?

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

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

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS
A bunch of kids?

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

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

PAUL

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

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS

Hmmmm...

PAUL

Can you trace my call? GPS or
something?

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS

Why is it that they didn't shoot
you?

PAUL

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

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS

What's your social security number,
Paul?

PAUL

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

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS

Do you know where you're
...lo...if...dy..

The cell phone starts breaking up.

PAUL

Hello? What? I can't hear you.

SPECIAL AGENT HARRIS

Bet...un...near...

Suddenly, Special Agent Harris is not heard at all.

PAUL

Hello?! Hello?!

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

PAUL (CONT'D)

Shit!!

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

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

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

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

After a few rings, a CRT OPERATOR answers.

CRT OPERATOR

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

PAUL

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

CRT OPERATOR

Who is this, please?

PAUL

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

CRT OPERATOR

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

PAUL

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

CRT OPERATOR

Who took it, sir?

PAUL

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

CRT OPERATOR

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

PAUL
Who's that?

CRT OPERATOR
Please hold.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paul notices that his phone has again lost signal.

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

Paul hangs up and drops the phone to his side.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL
Hello? Hello? Is anyone there?
Hello?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

JABIR
Infidel American can breathe no
breathe?

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

JABIR
Let out?

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

JABIR
Soldier.

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

JABIR
Contractor?

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

JABIR
Blackwater.

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

JABIR
You are American.

PAUL

Yes.

JABIR

Then you are soldier.

PAUL

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

JABIR

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

PAUL

I'm not lying! We were all
drivers.

JABIR

Drive what?

PAUL

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

JABIR

Five million money.

PAUL

What?

JABIR

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

PAUL

Five million dollars? From who?

JABIR

Your family.

PAUL

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

JABIR

From Embassy.

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

Silence on the other end of the phone.

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

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

He lays back in the coffin, shell-shocked.

FADE TO:

INT. COFFIN - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He cannot remember the number is thinking of.

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

A MALE 411 OPERATOR answers.

MALE 411 OPERATOR
What city and listing, please?

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

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

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

MALE 411 OPERATOR
Ardmore Avenue?

PAUL
Yes, Ardmore Avenue.

MALE 411 OPERATOR
Please hold for your number.

Paul is switched to an AUTOMATED MESSAGE.

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

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

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

PAUL
Come on! Where the hell is
everyone?

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

DONNA eventually answers.

DONNA
Hello?

PAUL
Donna, it's Paul.

DONNA
Hey, how's it going?

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

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

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

His hand falls to his forehead, defeated.

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

Donna picks up the phone.

DONNA
Paul?

PAUL
Donna.

DONNA
What do you want?

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

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

PAUL

Are you near a computer or
something?

DONNA

Uh...yeah. Why?

PAUL

Turn it on.

DONNA

It is on.

PAUL

Look up the number for the State
Department for me.

DONNA

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

PAUL

(interrupting)

Donna, please, please, please -
just get me the number.

DONNA

Is everything alright?

PAUL

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

DONNA

Don't fucking yell at me, Paul.

PAUL

I'm not yelling!

DONNA

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

PAUL

(exploding)

Just get me the fucking number! Get
me the number, get me the number!

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

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

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

He lies there, motionless.

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

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

DONNA

What?

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

PAUL

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

DONNA

What?

PAUL

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

DONNA

(BEAT)

Hold on.

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

After a beat, she picks the phone back up.

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

PAUL
202-624-4750?

DONNA
Yeah.

Paul writes the number on the wall of the coffin.

DONNA
What the hell's going...

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

A STATE DEPARTMENT REP answers after a few rings.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP
United States Department of State.

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

STATE DEPARTMENT REP
Where are you calling from, sir?

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

STATE DEPARTMENT REP
Are the kidnappers with you?

PAUL
No. I'm buried somewhere.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP
You're buried?

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

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

PAUL
I don't have the number.

STATE DEPARTMENT REP
What number?

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

STATE DEPARTMENT REP
The people holding you hostage?

PAUL
Yes.

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

PAUL
No. Wait...

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

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

REBECCA
Rebecca Browning.

PAUL
Hello?

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

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

REBECCA
I'm sorry.

PAUL
Don't be sorry. Just help me.

REBECCA

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

PAUL

You've got to be kidding me.

REBECCA

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

PAUL

(interrupting)

Wait, wait, wait...how did you know
my name?

REBECCA

I'm sorry?

PAUL

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

Rebecca is silent on the other end of the phone.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What the hell is going on right
now?

REBECCA

(after a beat)

We received a call from a
representative at CRT. You left
him a message?

PAUL

Yeah...?

REBECCA

He contacted us right away.

PAUL

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

REBECCA

There's little we can do from
Washington.

PAUL

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

REBECCA

No.

PAUL

Then what?

REBECCA

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

PAUL

In the Diyala Provence. In Baqubah.

REBECCA

Okay. And has contact been made with the kidnappers?

PAUL

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

REBECCA

Or else...?

PAUL

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

REBECCA

We'll do everything we can.

PAUL

So you'll pay them?

REBECCA

(BEAT)

No. That we can't do.

PAUL

Wait...what?

REBECCA

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

PAUL

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

REBECCA

I understand your frustration...

PAUL

(interrupting)

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

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

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hello?

REBECCA

I'm here.

PAUL

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

REBECCA

Take down this number.

Paul takes out his pen.

PAUL

Go ahead.

REBECCA

410-555-5453.

Paul writes the number onto the walls of the coffin.

PAUL

Who's that?

REBECCA

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

PAUL
Hostage Working Group?

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

Paul shakes his head in disgust.

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

REBECCA
Call Dan Brenner. He should be
expecting you.

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

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

PAUL
Why?

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

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

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

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

PAUL
Fine.

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

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

A few rings pass before DAN BRENNER answers.

DAN
Brenner.

PAUL
Dan Brenner?

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

DAN
Is this Paul Conroy?

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

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

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

PAUL
Oh, thank you, God.

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

PAUL
That's what he said.

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

PAUL
Yeah, in an old, wooden coffin.

DAN

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

PAUL

I don't know. Maybe.

DAN

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

Paul looks at the display to find out.

PAUL

Less than half.

DAN

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

PAUL

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

DAN

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

PAUL

Do you know if there were any other
survivors?

DAN

From your convoy?

PAUL

Yeah.

DAN

I don't know. I'm sorry.

PAUL

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

DAN
I don't think any of us did.

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

PAUL
It's him. He's calling.

DAN
The kidnapper?

PAUL
Yeah. What do I do?

DAN
You know his number?

PAUL
Yeah.

DAN
Give it to me.

PAUL
What about the call?

DAN
Give me the number first.

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

PAUL
He's going to hang up.

DAN
Take the call.

PAUL
But...

DAN
(interrupting)
Take the call. Now.

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

PAUL
Hello.

JABIR
Two hour, six minutes.

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

PAUL
You have to give me more time.

JABIR
You talk to embassy? They give money?

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

JABIR
No pay?

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

JABIR
Terrorists? I am terrorist?

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

JABIR
You are terrified, so I am terrorist?

PAUL
What did I ever do to you?

JABIR
Ever do?

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

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

PAUL
That's not my fault!

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

JABIR

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

PAUL

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

JABIR

Rebuild what you have destroyed.

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

PAUL

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

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

JABIR

You make video, ransom video.

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

PAUL

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

JABIR

No. You make video now.

PAUL

What...? How?

JABIR

You use video on phone.

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

JABIR (CONT'D)

Near foot. You read note near foot in box.

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

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

JABIR
Only if we get money.

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

JABIR
We take less. One million money.

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

JABIR
(after a beat)
One million money.

Jabir hangs up, ending the call.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After a few rings, Dan answers.

DAN
Paul?

PAUL
Here's his number...

DAN

Hold on. Alright, go ahead.

PAUL

It's 07902-24-921.

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

DAN

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

PAUL

What about me? Can you track my cell signal?

DAN

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

PAUL

What does that mean?

DAN

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

PAUL

He wants me to make a ransom video.

DAN

No. Hold off for as long as you can.

PAUL

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

DAN

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

PAUL

We?

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

DAN

This can't turn into an international incident.

PAUL

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

DAN

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

PAUL

(overlapping)

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

DAN

You're not soldiers.

PAUL

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

DAN

We're doing the best we can.

PAUL

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

DAN

I know.

PAUL

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

(MORE)

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL
I'm no terrorist.

DAN
Neither are they.

PAUL
How do you know that?

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

PAUL
I wouldn't kill someone.

DAN
How can you be sure?

PAUL
(getting frustrated)
What difference does it make?

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

PAUL
So pay them, then.

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

PAUL
How many others have there been?

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

PAUL
How many have you rescued?

Dan is reluctant to answer the question.

PAUL (CONT'D)
How many?

DAN
(BEAT)
Not many.

PAUL
Tell me their names.

DAN
Who?

PAUL

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

DAN

Mark White.

PAUL

Who was Mark White?

DAN

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

PAUL

What happened to him?

DAN

Insurgents grabbed him.

PAUL

When?

DAN

About three weeks ago.

PAUL

You remember his name.

DAN

I remember all their names.

PAUL

(afraid to ask)

Did he...? Is he...?

DAN

Yeah. Yeah, Paul, he's alive.

Hearing this affords Paul some semblance of relief.

PAUL

Where is he?

DAN

Home. Probably happy to be back at
school.

PAUL

I want to get out of here.

DAN

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

PAUL

How?

DAN

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

PAUL

You do?

DAN

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

This news calms Paul's nerves.

PAUL

That's...that's good.

DAN

Yeah.

PAUL

What should I do in the meantime?

DAN

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

PAUL

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

DAN

Do you have them with you?

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

PAUL

Yeah.

DAN

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

PAUL

I feel nauseous.

DAN
You have to calm down.

PAUL
I'm trying.

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

PAUL
Okay.

DAN
Just hang in there, Paul.

PAUL
Yeah. I'm trying.

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

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

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

Paul answers.

PAUL
What?

JABIR
Did you make video?

PAUL
No.

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

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

JABIR
(to Paul)
You make video!

PAUL
Let me out and I'll make it.

JABIR

No! You make video now. In box.

PAUL

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

JABIR

Make video now!

PAUL

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

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

Jabir returns his attention back to Paul.

JABIR

You make video now.

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

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

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

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

PAUL

I'm never getting out of here.

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

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

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

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

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

After a few rings, a NURSING HOME NURSE answers.

NURSING HOME NURSE
Mountain View Nursing Home.

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

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

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

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

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

MARYANNE
Hello?

PAUL
Mom...it's Paul.

MARYANNE
Who?

PAUL
It's Paul, Mom. Your son.

MARYANNE
My son?

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

MARYANNE
I'm fine.

PAUL
That's good.

MARYANNE
Who are you?

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

MARYANNE
Paulie?

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

MARYANNE
(remembering slightly)
Paulie?

PAUL
That's right, Mom.

MARYANNE
Is this Paulie?

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

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

This is almost too much for Paul to take emotionally. He
fights back tears with all his effort.

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

MARYANNE
How are you doing, sweetie?

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

MARYANNE
That's nice, honey.

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

MARYANNE
Flowers?

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

Maryanne doesn't respond.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Did you hear me? Mom? I told
you...do you want to tell me you
love...

MARYANNE
(overlapping)
Yes, dear. Your father and I have
been playing gin rummy every night.

PAUL
(after a beat)
Okay, Mom. Tell Pop I said hi.

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

He lays there, sobbing relentlessly.

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

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

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

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

PAUL
Oh no. No, no, no!

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

JABIR
Video make?

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

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

JABIR
We shoot her if you no make video.

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

JABIR
You get money. American million.

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

JABIR
Two kids?

PAUL
Yes. She has two kids.

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

PAUL
Wait...

JABIR
No wait!! I give three seconds.

PAUL
I can't read the paper.

JABIR
Three...

PAUL
No. Wait!

JABIR

Two...

PAUL

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

JABIR

One.

PAUL

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

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

PAUL (CONT'D)

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

JABIR

You have three minutes to send video.

Jabir hangs up, ending the call.

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

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

PAUL

(re: the script)

Fuck.

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

He presses the record button.

PAUL

(speaking at the phone)

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

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)

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

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

We see that the screen says: Video Sent.

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

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

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

FADE TO:

INT. COFFIN - LATER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He listens further as the call to prayer continues.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Both are not good signs, and he knows it.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Oh shit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL
No! No, no, no!!!

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

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

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

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

His hand shakes, his lips tremble.

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

Paul closes his eyes.

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

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

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

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

DAN

Why the hell did you make that video?

PAUL

It's all a bunch of lies.

DAN

What is? What are you talking about?

PAUL

All of it.

DAN

All of what?

PAUL

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

DAN

We're going to find you.

PAUL

By looking the other way?

DAN

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

PAUL

You let her die.

DAN

(after a beat)
No I didn't.

PAUL

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

DAN

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

PAUL
She sent three videos.

DAN
That's what they told her to say.

PAUL
Why?

DAN
I don't know.

PAUL
What do you know?

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

PAUL
I found out the number to this phone.

DAN
How?

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

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

PAUL
Then how are you ever going to find me?

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

PAUL
What about mine?

DAN
We're working on that, too.

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

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

PAUL
You're nearby?

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

PAUL
They're alive?

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

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

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

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)

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

DAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL
This can't be happening.

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

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

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

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

PAUL (CONT'D)
No. Come on. Please work.

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

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

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

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

PAUL
(frantically)
Hello? Hello? Who's there?

Alan Davenport answers calmly from the other end.

ALAN DAVENPORT
Is this Paul Conroy?

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

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

PAUL
I left you a message.

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL
No.

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

PAUL
What difference does it make?

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

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

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

ALAN DAVENPORT
I know you're upset...

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

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

PAUL
Bullshit.

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

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

ALAN DAVENPORT

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

PAUL

(confused)

What?

ALAN DAVENPORT

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

PAUL

What are you talking about?

ALAN DAVENPORT

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

PAUL

No. Wait...

ALAN DAVENPORT

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

PAUL

We...we were just friends.

ALAN DAVENPORT

I don't know what to tell you.

PAUL

This is bullshit.

ALAN DAVENPORT

I'm sorry.

PAUL

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

ALAN DAVENPORT

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

Paul sees where Alan is going with this.

PAUL

(interrupting)

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

ALAN DAVENPORT

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

PAUL

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

ALAN DAVENPORT

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL

Answer the phone!!

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

PAUL
Why won't you answer?!!

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

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

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

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

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

Paul is surprisingly serene.

DAN
Paul, is that you?

PAUL
They're dead.

DAN
How do you know that?

PAUL
I just do.

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

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

DAN
(after a beat)
Yeah.

PAUL
Did they care?

Dan does not answer.

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

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

PAUL
You tried that already.

DAN
We can try again!

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

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

DAN
No.

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

DAN (CONT'D)
Yeah.

PAUL
What should I do?

DAN
I don't know.

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

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

PAUL
Yeah...me too.

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

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

He presses Record.

PAUL (CONT'D)

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

(BEAT)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paul answers immediately.

PAUL
You're not dead.

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

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hello? Hello?!

Jabir turns his attention to Paul.

JABIR
Where is money?

PAUL
I don't know.

JABIR
What don't know?

PAUL
I don't know where the money is.

JABIR
Liar!

PAUL
I'm not lying! I swear.

JABIR
Swear?

PAUL
I'm telling the truth.

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

Jabir returns his scornful attention to Paul.

JABIR
From Embassy, you get money now!

PAUL
I can't!

JABIR
You will!!

PAUL
I need more time. Please.

JABIR
No more time!

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

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

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

JABIR (CONT'D)
You show blood.

PAUL
What?

JABIR
You show blood, they give money.

PAUL
No.

JABIR
You cut off thumb finger, send
video.

PAUL
I'm not doing that.

JABIR
Yes!

PAUL
No.

JABIR
No?

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

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

JABIR
You have wife?

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

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

JABIR
Sir?

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

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

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

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

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

JABIR
No?

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

JABIR
Detroit. Ann Arbor.

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

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

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

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

After several rings, her voice mail picks up.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The beep sounds. Paul delivers a frenzied message.

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

Paul hangs up the phone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL (CONT'D)
Holy shit.

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

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

He presses the record button on the cell phone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VOICE #1
He's down here!

VOICE #2
Get him out! Keep digging!

VOICE #3
Paul, we're here!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL

Yeah.

DAN

Paul, it's Brenner.

Paul doesn't have the strength to answer.

DAN (CONT'D)

Paul? Are you there? Paul?

PAUL

I'm...here.

DAN

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

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

PAUL

You are?

DAN

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

PAUL

How do you know?

DAN

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

PAUL

You're coming for me?

DAN

Buddy, we're practically already there.

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

PAUL

You have to hurry.

DAN

We are.

PAUL

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

DAN

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

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

PAUL

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

DAN

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

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

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

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

PAUL
Linda.

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

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

PAUL
It's me, sweetie.

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

PAUL
I'm...okay.

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

PAUL
It's going to be okay now.

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

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

LINDA
Who?

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

LINDA

(elated)

They are? Oh thank God. Oh dear
God, thank you.

PAUL

It's all going to be okay.

LINDA

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

PAUL

I'm okay.

LINDA

I was so afraid I was going to lose
you.

PAUL

You're not.

Linda breaks down in joyous tears.

LINDA

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

PAUL

(welling up)

I love you too.

(BEAT)

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

LINDA

It doesn't matter.

PAUL

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

LINDA

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

PAUL

I will.

LINDA

Swear it.

PAUL
I will. I swear I will.

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

PAUL (CONT'D)
They're here!

LINDA
The people?

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

LINDA
Call me right away.

PAUL
I will. I love you.

LINDA
I love you. Swear it again.

PAUL
I swear. I have to go.

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

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

DAN
Move! Move! Let's go.

PAUL
Brenner?

DAN
Paul? Paul?

PAUL
It's me.

DAN
We're here!

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

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

Dan gets back on the phone with Paul

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

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

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

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

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

DAN
Just hang in there!

PAUL
Hurry! Please!

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

Paul fights to keep his head above the sand.

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

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

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

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

DAN
We're almost there.

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

SOLDIER (O.S.)
There it is!

DAN
(to the soldiers)
Keep digging!!

PAUL
Hurry! Please!!!

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

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

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

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

SOLDIER
It's clear!

DAN
(to the soldier)
Open it!

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

DAN
(shocked)
Oh my God.

PAUL
What is it?!

DAN
I'm so sorry, Paul.

PAUL
What?!!

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

PAUL
(overlapping)
You said...!

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

PAUL
No.

DAN
I'm so sorry.

PAUL
No!! No!! NO!!!

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

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

FADE OUT.

THE END