

What's something to live, if you have nothing to die for?

We just got some burgers on our way to a routine checkup in Bagdad. We were laughing and having fun driving through a grimy, lifeless desert.

When you've been on duty long enough you start to find beauty in everything, even deserts. That feeling before you do something that is normally a routine.

That gut feeling. Deep down I felt it even though Bob, Will, Harry, Mark, and I were all laughing and excited to go home in 2 months.

"I'm looking forward to seeing my fiancé," Harry said in an optimistic voice. Bob replied with: "well you're lucky the only thing I will find when I get back to Louisiana is my cat and my uncle".

I didn't ask the rest of the crew what they were gonna find back home because I knew when they didn't say, they didn't want to.

Finally, we arrived in Bagdad. As Bob told us he "secretly missed his cat" and took a sip of water he got shot in the head.

Barely having taken his first step outside of the AV. There was no time for emotion as we couldn't get the car to start and had to scramble to different buildings. Before doing so though, we pressed an emergency button in the humvee.

Mark and I went to a Islamic church to hide under a set of tables that had one large, silk table cloth covering them. We couldn't hear, nor see whoever attacked us. We could feel them.

We could feel their soft breath and pounding heart trying to not inform us of their presence. We took the stairs up to the balcony overlooking the city.

We saw private Harry Schwarzmann and Will Baker standing, still? We didn't know why they weren't running instead of standing still in an open field. We realized only Harry was standing still and Will had adopted more of a "protector" function.

He was walking around Harry in circles with his gun off the safety and loaded. There was a child who appeared as a normal civilian who approached them.

"Why would a child want to be involved with the US army in their city? Usually, they avoid us" Mark said.

He had a point, normally kids would avoid us but, this kid. He seemed peculiarly interested in what Harry was doing.

We saw he was wearing headphones of some sort with an ISIS logo on them. At that moment our hearts skipped a beat and we shouted "WATCH OUT" as loudly as we could, drawing Will's attention. Will tried to stop the kid but it was too late.

Just as he pushed him. He stabbed Harry with a classic Iraqi dagger made out of gold with a white leather handle and a large red gemstone at the end.

Harry lost his balance as his spirit seemed to noticeably fade from his body. It was too late and he fell. He had been standing on a mine this entire time. Will, Harry, and the kid all died from the explosion.

Meanwhile, enemy forces were informed of our presence and we heard them running up the stairs with their squeaky, soft, leather boots. We heard a helicopter, which sounded like an Apache.

We climbed to the rooftop of a Mosque before the Helicopter spotted us and lowered a rope for us to hang onto and climb up. "I'll hold them off!" Mark shouted.

He shot around 2 or 3 enemies before I spotted a tiny, sparkling light in the distance. When my brain had processed this I realized... "Let them be, just grab the rope!" I shouted. But, it was already too late.

The moment Mark turned around I saw the bullet hit him. Because it was a supersonic rifle the sound came 1 second later. I screamed in agony as I saw him roll down the side of the round rooftop of the Mosque.

I got up to the helicopter and passed out.

*2 weeks later.

I woke up in the hospital and didn't even realize that I too had been hit. Minor damage straight through the flesh. No big deal.

I took a flight to Athens, Georgia where the funeral of my 4 comrades was supposed to take place. It took the pilot 4 tries to land the heavy, modern Boeing 747 on the runway of the airport because of bad weather conditions such as rain, thunder, lightning, and heavy winds.

I took a cab straight to the funeral site and waited in front of the cemetery for 3 hours in the rain, Soaking the all-black suit that I had transferred all my badges to.

Relatives of my deceased friends had chastised me for being late. Even though I was there for 3 hours I just couldn't stand to be at the site where they would spend the rest of eternity for more than 20 minutes.

The words of these people didn't hurt me. I felt numb. All of the pain that wasn't near the level of pain these deaths had caused me Just slid right off of me.

I didn't speak at the funeral. I just stood there. I ended up adopting Bob's cat and letting him live with me for the rest of my life in my cabin in a valley near the Rocky Mountains.

Sometimes, you will run into things in life that feel like they numb you. This will transition into pain and then transition into acceptance. Not being sad because of the way for example someone died, but being happy because of the way they lived.

I thought of something Bob told me before we started our journey to Bagdad: "Life is like backgammon, black and white, and sometimes you need to sacrifice something now to save something in the future. an What's a reason to live, when you have nothing to die for?"