

Deployment

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He flipped the switch, and fluorescents flickered on. They illuminated a coral pink seashell bedspread, a wooden table next to it, and a TV on a dresser across from that. Letting straps go, he winced at the sound of his duffel hitting the floor. Trickle of sand from canvas crevices leaked onto the carpet, remnants of nine months spent in a desert. He slumped over onto the bed, running his hands over the pants of his fatigues. Then he reached for the TV remote. Slowly he turned it over in his hands, the buttons worn beneath his calluses.

A quick glance at the clock on the bedside table, and 7:45 flashed back at him. They would have eaten dinner by now. They might even have taken their baths. In forty-five minutes, his daughter would be in bed for the night. The remote felt cool in his hands as he debated whether to make the phone call, or to watch reruns of *Mythbuster* until midnight.

He finally put it down and dialed their home number. The phone rang three times, before his wife answered.

"Hello?" She asked

"Hey, Eva, hi it's Darrel."

"What do you want?" •

"I just, I got home tonight," he paused, fighting with the words. "I was expecting you and Rachel at the-"

"You were just expecting us to drive across two states to see you home? Is that it?" She interrupted. "I have things to do Darrel; I can't drop everything every time you come back."

"Right, could I talk with Rachel then?"

"She's in the bath right now."

"Well, tell her I'll see her soon, and that I love her." Darrel said. "I love you, too."

The line crackled quietly between them.

"I'll tell her." And Eva hung up, the dial tone ringing as loud as mortar explosions, even after he turned the phone off.

"I kept my promise," he whispered to it, "I made it home."