

Resurrection
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I think they call it Groundhog Day, when every day is the same. That's what it's like for me. Something over my head, dishing out the same cold plate of Hell. I get my stuff together, pick up my weapon, get on the truck with the rest of the guys and we are dropped off in our designated zones, to go through the same garbage. The skies over Iraq will be the same dirty brownish grey they always are, and nothing like the clear blue of Wyoming I long for. Blue skies hold promises of beautiful days. There is no possibility of one of those for me, but I don't complain much, there is little point. I know how this day will end. I will die and this is how. I can never remember sleeping, like I never remember eating. But I guess I must do both sometimes, even if my numb brain doesn't register it.

In all of the parts, of my life, my head plays out for me, it is always daylight. When my existence comes into

realization, I am standing in the armoury picking out what I am going to need for the day. A soldier in that part of the world fights many enemies and all of them are silent and faceless. Your body needs to be protected from every possible angle. Sniper's bullets can come from anywhere and at any time, so body armour is more important than a rifle, even an automatic one. That's the first thing I pick up and attach to my torso. Then there is my combat helmet with night vision mounted plate, my folding knife, bayonet, dog tags, ID card, iodine tabs, ball ammo and basically anything else the sweltering heat will allow me to carry. As usual, I would forget to put on my shades like an idiot. Then I look in a full-length mirror to see if I look enough like a US soldier. Only then, is it worth me walking out of the door. The next thing I know, I am standing on a dusty road in some Arabic ghost town, scanning doorways and rooftops for insurgents. It sounds unfair, but it's best to treat everybody as if they have a concealed weapon, or an explosive belt. The latter, is usually a set of tubes

containing acetone peroxide with shrapnel, often nails. Thanks to the Internet you can learn how to kill people with practically anything these days. I find myself searching the same people regardless. There is the merchant who stumbles out of the shop doorway with handfuls of CDs and tee-shirts. All with my favourite rock bands are on them. It would be tempting to get a closer look. I know the guy is clean, he is every day, but I aim my rifle at him anyway and he shows me there is nothing under his tunic but his bare chest. I check his ID papers and tell him to move along. Then a little further along the road there are the kids who insist on surrounding me, like I was some movie star. They do this every single day, and somehow I'm always a novelty to them, the young GI with the pale skin.

Then the action starts. Bullets rip into the wall behind me. Single shots, four in all. The last, shattering a window by my face. I throw my body to the ground, and crawl quickly under the red pickup parked by the side of the road. I strike the button on my chest radio and call

for backup. There is no response at all. Just an annoying crackle from a dying battery pack. I am on my own again. Instinct tells me to return fire, only how can I do that, when it is impossible to determine where the shots are coming from? A helicopter gunship, casually passes right over, as if nothing is happening. It fills the air with echoes. I treat it as a distraction, and risk exposing my cover by pulling myself away from the vehicle, where I let off a volley of shots from my automatic rifle. God knows if I actually hit anything. I was firing at the sun, maybe I killed that.

I carry on along the street. Suddenly, I am aware of a rifle sticking out of the window of laundry house. I'm on the ball now. I fire a round in that direction. There is a scream, as I hit my target, no surprise. I stop by the lamp post and wait for my next one. A woman comes out of her house yelling. She is holding a baby. As she gets closer I see that it isn't a woman at all. As she moves a scarf falls from the neck to reveal a beard, and it isn't an infant, but a pistol wrapped in a blanket. I discharge my

rifle, before he gets the chance to use it and my bullets tear into his chest and he falls to the ground. I continue along the street until I get to a crossroads. It doesn't matter which way I go, as everywhere, looks pretty much the same. I pick left. I always do, perhaps because am left-handed, my mistake. I don't see the tripwire, I never do. Next thing I know it all goes black, there's strange music in my head and I am back in the armoury picking out my stuff. I don't feel dead, and have no memory of being blown to smithereens. Just that I'd made the same old mistake and triggered the mines. On this day, however, things are very different. I don't know why they are but they are. I am looking in the mirror and there is a different version of me staring back, angrier, more determined. Not the drained face I see each time I dress myself for combat. There is more fight in me, more desire to make today stand out from all the rest in my life. I take stock realising that I have done all of this four hundred and seventy-eight times so far. No more, not today. I decide that if I was going to die this time,

then it would be the last. The mines were not going to get me anymore. 'This time,' I say to my reflection. 'I gonna get that guy on the roof before he gets me. I am gonna ignore anybody who approaches me, who I know isn't armed, and best of all I am gonna turn right and not left.'

I am reborn, not a zombie, but a man with a solid will of iron, with fire in my veins, and not ice. I pick out my sunglasses from my locker and put them on. I take out a pen and write a large letter R on my right hand to remind me of what I must do. I step out into the daylight a bigger man. The truck drops me off on my street and I stand there again scanning the vicinity. With my shades to cut out the glare, I have a better view of the rooftops. I make a rough guess about where I think the sniper might be, and look again. This time, I think I can see something moving. It is a man's head. I run for the cover of the truck once more, this time, resting the barrel of my rifle on the roof. I line my victim up in my sights, getting his forehead lined up in the cross hairs, and with

one squeeze of the trigger pick him off like a Jack rabbit on a hunting trip. I ignore the gunship passing over the merchant and the kids, and I run to the end of the street, picking off the sniper above the laundry house with great ease, as well as the woman with the baby, before she reveals herself to be any other gender. Then, I reach the crossroads. I lift my right hand and stared at it with a grin. Now, this is the turning point for everything, a crossroads in every sense of the word. I turn my body around so that I am facing the right-hand turning and move forward to change my destiny. But I can only take a few stupid steps, before something damned crazy happens. Unexpectedly, my whole body freezes and I can go no further. What is wrong with me? I think. I can't even take a right turn instead of a left one. Is that what being left-handed is all about? I try and I try feeling like an idiot and still I can't get my body to go that way. It seems I am doomed to live my life in one big circle for the whole of eternity. Starting in the armoury, and ending with my body ripped to shreds by a

freak explosion, I could do nothing about. So I face my fate and turn left. I have no choice in the matter. This time I wait first before I step to my death. It is just a minute later when four, five, six men appear from nowhere with machine guns, which they clumsily fire over my head. I have an idea. Sometimes a soldier has to think fast. I am about twenty feet away from the trip wire, maybe further. I begin backing off from it to maintain a safe distance. I lower my rifle and open fire on the ground at the mines. By then the men have gotten in range. Several small explosions rip craters into the street, sending clouds of sandy brown dust into the air. The next time I look, to my relief, there is no-one there. What happens next is the strangest thing of all. There is a loud fanfare with brass horns and electric guitars and drums.

And there are some words in the sky now and numbers which read...

46862 points - LEVEL 1 CLEAR.

As my body begins to dissolve away before my eyes, I wonder what it is that is ahead of me. The game continues.