

THE PACK

by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. SUBURB STREETS, CAPITAL - NIGHT 1

The outskirts of the damaged city. Low, two-floor houses and shops, some open fields. No one in the streets.

Nights here are stygian. Faint light, from the occasional gas lamp or generator, hints through shuttered windows.

A few shabby cars and trucks scurry through the dark streets, hurrying home.

In this dusty scene, we FIND a US ARMY PATROL, a convoy of SIX HUMVEES. Front and back ones have MACHINEGUNNERS manning .50 calibre guns, helmeted, alert. Local cars keep their distance warily.

2 INT./EXT. TRAVELLING IN THIRD HUMVEE - NIGHT 2

Up front, LT. JOHN PREWITT sits next to PFC DARRYL THOMPSON, young and black, who's driving. He chats with NICK HOWLAND, 36, British, tall, with easy good looks, and GAIL MOYNAHAN, 33, American, brown hair tied back, eyes that don't miss a thing. Both wear flak jackets; two large stills cameras dangle from Gail's neck.

RADIO CHATTER crackles in the background.

PREWITT

It was a good feeling, you know?
Driving into the city. Kids
watching the tanks roll in, waving
at us... It was pretty special.

NICK

There aren't too many people waving
now.

PREWITT

(unhappy about that)
No, there aren't...

NICK

Is it always this quiet?

PREWITT

Curfew starts in half an hour.
People don't want to get caught
out.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

GAIL

It's not like there's a lot going on to drag them out, is there?

NICK

I'm pretty sure that getting their nightclubs back up and running isn't exactly at the top of their agenda.

GAIL

It should be.

He looks at her. She grins back playfully. Nick shakes his head, glances out the window:

NICK'S POV: A couple of cars passing in the opposite direction HONK their horns, jeering faces and angry fists shaking at the convoy.

Nick turns, sees Prewitt watching them too, quietly angry.

PREWITT

Too many of these people have no sense of appreciation for what we're doing here. Which really pisses me off, if you ask me.

NICK

I'm sure a lot of them do. Appreciate it.

GAIL

Of course they do. They're over the moon. I mean, come on, who wouldn't want their home town blasted back to the dark ages?

PREWITT

Maybe they'd rather we'd left things as they were. Let their men disappear off the streets just for making a wisecrack, or have their daughters gangbanged in any car with government plates on it.

(beat)

I mean, what'd they expect? We're talking about the fourth biggest army in the world here. It's not something you can do with kid gloves on --

Just then, a BANG makes them jump --

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

-- and SEEN THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, the Humvee in front swerves, a small puff of smoke belching out of its side.

PREWITT (cont'd)

FUCK!

(barks into radio)

Echo Two, what's going on, Jimmy?

The soldier next to Gail locks and loads as they all tense up, eyes darting around. Gail's fingers calmly ready one of her cameras.

JIMMY (O.S.)

(urgent)

I'm not sure, sir. Steering's turned to lead and I've lost all traction.

PREWITT

(to Thompson)

That didn't sound like an explosive to me --

(in RADIO)

That wasn't an IED, was it?

JIMMY (O.S.)

Negative, sir. Feels like something just snapped.

PREWITT

Shit.

(over radio)

Okay, everybody. We've got us an unscheduled stop. You know the drill. Safeties off, eyes sharp.

Nick looks at Gail -- suddenly very uncomfortable. Prewitt looks back at them.

PREWITT (cont'd)

You wanted to see the sights, right?

(beat, serious now)

Just stick close and stay behind the vehicles.

3 EXT. SUBURB STREETS, CAPITAL - NIGHT

3

The convoy pulls over. Some SMOKE belches out of the second HUMVEE's underbelly.

Prewitt climbs out, shouting orders as the SOLDIERS pour out of their vehicles, chambering rounds and loading grenades --

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

PREWITT

Garcia, Smith, take point. Mendes, Thompson, you've got the back door. And use the flares. I don't want anything coming close without an invite.

Gail and Nick follow them out, Nick looking around, Gail SNAPPING away at the action with her Nikon as --

Prewitt reaches the disabled Humvee. A SOLDIER (JIMMY) is already looking underneath it with a torch.

PREWITT (cont'd)

What's it look like, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Could be a busted driveshaft coupling -- it's too damn dark to tell.

PREWITT

This isn't gonna be a quick fix, is it?

JIMMY

Doesn't look like it, sir.

Prewitt looks around, assessing what to do.

PREWITT

Okay. Eppers, call it in, see if we can get it choppered out of here.

EPPERS

Yes, sir.

ANGLE ON NICK AND GAIL

At the back of the convoy. Nick catches Thompson's eye as he and a couple of other SOLDIERS light up flares about a hundred feet back from the Humvees. Gail is looking for shots, but nothing excites her. She joins him.

GAIL

Well this is exciting stuff. I'm really glad I came along, Nicky.

NICK

It's all part of the story.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (2)

3

GAIL

Maybe... If you're writing for
Popular Mechanics.

NICK

Don't give up just yet. The night
is young. People could still die.

She makes a face and wanders off in search of a shot.

NICK

Looks down the road. It's deserted, quiet now. Flares burning,
dust swirling. Eerie.

Then he spots something: A white car, an old Peugeot, crossing
an intersection a hundred yards back. It slows down in the
middle of the road before disappearing behind the houses.

Nick lingers on it for a beat before turning away, soaking in the
setting around him. He scans the windows and rooftops. Lights
flicker behind shuttered windows, people obviously curious about
what's happening.

Around him are SOLDIERS on high alert, fingers resting on
triggers; GUNNERS manning the .50 Cals, focused, looking for
danger.

And beyond, a threatening darkness.

Nick looks back down to the intersection and sees a white car
again. In the dust and the darkness, it could be the same car.
It crosses the intersection, slows down as if to have a look, and
continues on its way.

It unsettles Nick. He looks at Thompson and the other grunts,
they don't seem to have noticed anything alarming. He thinks
about it for a quick beat, focused now on the crossroad, as
Prewitt reaches him.

PREWITT

We're waiting to find out how soon
they can have a chopper here to
airlift it back. I don't want to
hang around here too long.

NICK

Okay.

Prewitt can see he's preoccupied.

PREWITT

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (3)

3

NICK

I don't know. I... -- It's probably nothing.

And just then, A WHITE PEUGEOT appears at the crossroad, turns in and heads towards them. Not at speed, just advancing.

CLOSE ON NICK -- he's spooked.

Prewitt spots it.

PREWITT

What is it?

NICK

That car. I -- I think I saw it before. I think they were checking us out.

Prewitt studies Nick for a nanobeat and just snaps into action, rushing towards his men --

PREWITT

Take cover --

NICK

No, wait --

PREWITT

(turning)

Just do it. Now. Her too.

-- and barks orders as he joins his men at the rear vehicle --

PREWITT (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Heads up. We've got company.

The troops scramble, the GUNNERS ratcheting their rounds in. Gail joins Nick --

GAIL

What's going on?

NICK

I'm not sure.

He moves her away from their exposed spot and to the side of a nearby Humvee. She quickly changes lenses --

THE WHITE CAR gets closer. It's too dark to tell who's in it. Prewitt's men wave FLARES at it, motioning for it to stop.

It keeps coming.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (4)

3

PREWITT
(into radio)
Give me three warning shots.

THOMPSON fires THREE SHOTS over the car.

It keeps coming.

EPPERS
He's not stopping, Sir.

PREWITT
(into radio)
Go for the radiator.

THREE MORE SHOTS ring out, SPARKING against the car's grill, and
NICK and GAIL watch as

THE CAR still doesn't stop, just gets nearer, now about fifty
yards away and closing -- then something, someone's arm, juts out
of it, confusingly --

EPPERS
What's he doing?

PREWITT
He's not stopping --
(into radio)
Take him out! I say again, take
him out!

And ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE. The soldiers open fire, tracers
lighting up the darkness --

The mounted .50 Cal drills rounds into the car which LIGHTS UP
under the relentless pounding and BURSTS into flames --

The firing stops as the car rolls off the road. Prewitt and the
soldiers approach it hesitantly.

Nick and Gail emerge from their cover as the car limps to a stop.
Gail's camera WHIRRS away as they approach it. In the inferno,
they can just about make out some bodies, in flames.

CLOSE ON NICK -- stunned.

He looks over at Thompson, who's staring at it too, then at
Prewitt. Prewitt just nods, like 'it's all taken care of'.

Gail sidles up to Nick. She's also breathless.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (5)

3

GAIL

Jesus, Nick. You didn't have to do
all that for me...

SMASH CUT TO CREDITS...

Then FADE IN on:

4 EST. THE CITY - DAY

4

Early. Hazy with dust. Muezzins calling out from minarets.
Mules mingle with pick-up trucks and overloaded old Buicks.

And looming over the river, a run-down concrete tower, its "Hotel
Al Diwan" sign missing a few letters.

Home for the next few months...

5 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

5

Three connecting rooms form the cluttered, makeshift office. A
couple of STAFFERS walk in and out as we FIND Nick, sitting at a
table, laptop open in front of him. He's not typing.

RUSS WALKER -- 39, American, no nonsense, a hard life etched into
his tough face and rough hands, walks in, beelining for the
coffee machine.

RUSS

So how was your little outing last
night?

NICK

Rather unpleasant, actually.

RUSS

Not exactly a limo cruise down the
Champs Elysees, is it?

NICK

Not really.

LAURA BODEN -- 27, British, high energy and eager, short blonde
hair, not as strikingly drop dead as Gail but grows on you
alarmingly fast -- comes in holding a printout.

LAURA

I've got the expense reports for
last month if you want to go over
them.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

NICK
(not really there)
Fine.

LAURA
How's the article coming along?
She peeks at his screen: it's a blank page.

LAURA (cont'd)
That good, huh?
(notices he's not himself)
You okay?

NICK
Never better.

RUSS
Hey Laura, do something, will ya?
There's got to be a way to get us
some coffee that doesn't taste like
strained mud.

LAURA
It's the water.

RUSS
It's always the water.

LAURA
Just be patient. I'm sure a couple
of hundred Starbucks can't be too
far down the line.

RUSS
Don't toy with me like that.

LAURA
Okay, consider the words Big Mac
and Whopper permanently deleted
from my vocabulary.
(beat)
Not that they'll be particularly
missed.

She smiles and walks out, he calls out after her --

RUSS
Hey, at least we came up with
those. What's your great
contribution to world cuisine, huh?
Spotted dick?

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

LAURA (O.S.)
(playful)
American git.

RUSS
Limey bitch.

SCOTT (O.S.)
Are we interrupting something?

Two men walk in, pulling their baggage: SCOTT NOVECK, 28, American, a poster boy with great hair and teeth, exuding brash confidence; and JAKE CROWTHER, 32, Australian, tall, an extreme sports-dude with long sunbleached hair, a goatee and the most laid back attitude West of Bali.

SCOTT (cont'd)
Scott Noveck. Nick, right?

NICK
Yes.

SCOTT
Hey, great to meet you. You don't know Jake, do you?

NICK
No. Good to have you here.

JAKE
Good to be here.

NICK
(Re: Russ)
This is Russ Walker --

Russ nods as Laura comes back in.

NICK (cont'd)
And this little saucy vixen is our very own Laura.

Scott lights up. Laura puts out her hand for a formal handshake. He takes it.

LAURA
I enjoyed your pieces.

SCOTT
Yeah, it got pretty wild out there.
I guess we just got lucky --
(at Nick)
-- bet you could have used some of that, huh?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (3)

5

SCOTT (cont'd)

(turns to Jake)

Nick was with the guys up North,
waiting for the war that never
came.

JAKE

Bummer.

NICK

What can I say, the whole region
was hugely disappointed.

SCOTT

So are your bags packed? Bet you
can't wait to get out of here,
right? It's got to be getting
better, though -- they open a
Starbucks here yet?

RUSS

(to Nick)

The man speaks my language.

NICK

I can see all my good work's about
to be undone.

BOOM! -- a loud but distant explosion reverberates around them.

SCOTT

What the fuck was that?

But Nick and Russ are already out of their chairs, grabbing their
gear --

NICK

Car bomb.

(calls out)

A-J!

And on cue, AJ -- ABU JAMEEL, 50s, thinning hair, glasses perched
on the tip of his nose, and potbellied -- rushes in from the next
room, already on his cellphone --

AJ

I'm finding out. Meet you outside
in five minutes?

NICK

Make it two.

AJ rushes out --

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (4)

5

NICK (cont'd)
(to Laura)
Call London. And make sure the
satlines are booked.

LAURA
Okay.

Scott and Jake stand there, watching them hustle --

SCOTT
Hey. What about us?

NICK
(beat, thrown)
Why don't you stay here and try out
the spa downstairs? They have the
most blissful bergamot and
eucalyptus rub East of the
Bosphorus.

Scott looks at him in disbelief.

NICK (cont'd)
Oh, for God's sake. Just grab your
gear and follow me.

6 EXT. HOTEL - DAY

6

Nick and Russ -- lugging his camera and gear pack -- rush out.
Scott and Jake a few steps behind.

RUSS
You really into that kind of shit?

NICK
What kind of shit?

RUSS
Bergamot and eucalyptus rubs?

NICK
You don't know the half of it.

RUSS
I'm sorry I asked.

Two cars are waiting: a big GMC and a Pajero. AJ stands with
his son, JAMEEL, 23.

AJ
It's a police station. In the
Jadriya district.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

NICK

How big?

AJ

Big enough, my friend.

Nick turns to Scott, pointing out Jameel --

NICK

You two go with Junior and do the casualties --

(to Jameel)

Take them to the Yarmuk hospital --

GAIL (O.S.)

Nick!

They turn to see GAIL rushing out of the hotel after them --

NICK

You need a ride?

GAIL

You seem to know all the happening places.

NICK

Hop in.

She passes Scott and Jake. Scott watches her go by. She eyes him right back.

SCOTT

Ouch.

(grins at Jake)

A car bomb *and* a total babe, on arrival. I think I'm gonna like this gig.

GAIL

(to Nick)

Is this jerk with you?

NICK

I'm afraid so.

Scott's speechless as she checks him out for a beat before shrugging.

GAIL

I've seen worse.

OFF SCOTT'S shrinking look --

7 EXT. STREET, APPROACH TO BOMB SITE - DAY

7

A station wagon and a pick-up truck rush past, horns BLARING, rushing wounded to hospitals as the GMC drives to the bomb site.

A cloud of dust hangs over it, mixed in with black smoke from a couple of fires. A BLACKHAWK with a big radar pod circles overhead.

IN THE CAR

Russ glances at Nick, who turns and looks at AJ. It doesn't look good.

8 EXT. BOMBSITE - DAY

8

Nick, Russ, Gail and AJ emerge from the GMC and approach the site. Gail rushes off on her own, shouting off --

GAIL
Catch you later.

-- and she's gone.

Russ shoulders the camera immediately and starts filming.

SEEN THROUGH RUSS'S VIEWFINDER: The immediate area is chaotic and urgent. The bombed out shell of the low building is still smoking, as are some mangled cars. Hordes of LOCALS work through the wreckage, helping SURVIVORS and finding VICTIMS.

Nick and Russ spot GIs and LOCAL POLICEMEN ringing the site, blocking its access. A few REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN argue with them, as does a MIDDLE AGED WOMAN in a head scarf who breaks down, pleading, crying.

NICK
They're not going to let us in.

RUSS
Screw that.

He starts to charge forward, but AJ holds him back.

AJ
Wait.
(pointing at the side)
We can go in from there. There's a
schoolyard backing onto the street.

Russ looks at him, then at Nick. Nick nods.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

NICK

Let's go.

9 EXT. FIELD AT SIDE OF BOMBSITE - DAY

9

Nick, Russ and AJ climb through an opening in a stone wall and onto a rough field leading up to the bombsite.

NICK

(to AJ)

Well spotted, Tonto.

Russ leads as they make their way across the dry, crumbly mounds in the field -- they're halfway across when a LOCAL MAN at the bombsite spots them and starts shouting at them and waving frantically, pointing at the field they're in --

RUSS

(to AJ)

What's with him?

AJ

(trying to understand)

I'm not sure. I think he's saying

"watch out, go back --

(looks at Nick)

-- bomb."

NICK

Yes, well... thank him and let him know we do realize it was a bomb, it's actually why we're here.

AJ

No, I think he means bombs. Here.

(he looks down at the ground

around them)

Around us.

They freeze and look around their feet.

NICK

Ah.

AJ

It must have been mined. Before the liberation, of course.

NICK

No doubt.

(beat, nervously eyeing ground)

I'm afraid I may need to rescind my earlier 'well spotted' remark.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

AJ

It's not hugely unreasonable.

RUSS

Are you two finished?

They look around nervously.

NICK

What is it you propose exactly?

Russ just shrugs, turns and walks on -- not too fast, but not too carefully either.

RUSS

Stick to my trail.

Nick looks at AJ, shrugs, and follows him.

AT THE EDGE OF THE FIELD

They emerge into the mayhem, unscathed.

Russ turns to Nick, who gives him a little nod.

Nick spots an ARAB REPORTER he knows, wrapping up a piece to camera. Their eyes meet. Nick nods, acknowledging him. Russ watches him too.

RUSS (cont'd)

Man, these guys are fast.

NICK

They've got the home court advantage.

Russ looks around.

RUSS

I'll get my shots and meet you back here in thirty for the piece to camera.

NICK

Good.

And Russ is off, camera on his shoulder, venturing through the smoking debris.

Nick takes in the devastation with AJ, in stunned silence.

NICK (cont'd)

How long are they going to keep doing this?

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (2)

9

AJ
(quietly angry about this)
Until you kill them all.

10 EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

10

Scott, Jake and Jameel walk past the bloodstained station wagons and pick-up trucks and the frenetic AID WORKERS and enter the building --

11 INT. HALLS, HOSPITAL - DAY

11

Mayhem in the bare boned hospital. Jake and Scott, sweating from the heat, look lost. Scott turns to Jameel.

SCOTT
We need to find someone who speaks
english.

JAMEEL
I will ask.

And he's off, leaving them standing there. Scott looks around at the state of disrepair around him -- no sheets or pillows on the gurneys, no gloves on the doctors, blood everywhere -- then notices a CLEANER wiping down the floor with a rag.

The man then reaches an unoccupied gurney with blood on it. Without flinching, he uses the same rag to wipe it down.

SCOTT
(reeling away with disgust)
Oh, man. That's vile. That's
really nasty. Promise me you'll
slit my throat before you let them
wheel me into this dump.

JAKE
No worries.

Just then, some NOISE erupts from down the hall. They turn to see A GROUP OF MEN, locals with trimmed beards, stomping in, two of them helping in a bloodstained, WOUNDED MAN.

An ORDERLY in plain clothes and a scrub jacket comes out to talk to them. One of them, who seems to be the GANG LEADER, starts shouting at him.

Jake's got his camera up and rolling --

SCOTT
You getting this?

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

JAKE

I'm on it.

The argument grows -- clearly, the gang leader wants his man treated, and the orderly is telling him there's some delay --

Then a female doctor, SORAYA, appears: late 20s, olive skinned, dark brown hair, great eyes. Her scrub robe's splattered with blood, and she looks exhausted.

She takes over and tries to talk sense into the man, but he's having none of it. They lay the wounded man down on a gurney and she examines him. She says something to the leader, he's not happy with it, he shouts at her, she argues back, he shouts back and --

He whips her with the back of his hand, sending her slamming back into the wall, cracking her lip --

Scott freaks out at this --

SCOTT

Hey? HEY!!!

-- and he storms over, shoving the guy back and slamming a fist into his face, sending him flying back into his friends.

SCOTT (cont'd)

What the fuck do you think you're doing? HUH???

Jameel reappears, too late -- the leader gets up, looks like he's going to charge Scott -- but then notices two US SOLDIERS down the hall looking over.

SCOTT (cont'd)

What's wrong with this guy?

SORAYA

I told him his brother's wounds aren't life threatening, that he can wait. We have worse cases to deal with right now.

SCOTT

So what's his problem?

SORAYA

He wants a real doctor to treat his brother.

(beat)

A male doctor.

Scott looks at him, now seething with anger --

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

11

SCOTT

Goddam Taliban freak. You wanna
fuck this place up too, is that it?

The man's eyes burn into Scott's as he says something clearly
insulting to him, and --

UNSEEN TO THE OTHERS, his hand very calmly reaches back under his
shirt, where he's got a handgun tucked into his pants --

One of the guys with him darts nervous glances back and forth,
sees the GIs now walking over. He grabs the leader's arm and
mumbles something urgent which includes a couple of 'yalla's.

The man's fingers twitch, resting on the handgun now, really
itching to pull it out --

They hang there for a beat, eyes locked --

Then he backs off, still glaring at Scott. He lets the others
lead him out, one of them raising his hands with a nervous smile
like 'calm down, it's okay, we're out of here' to Scott and
Soraya as they exit, leaving their wounded comrade on the gurney.

Scott breathes out in relief, turns to see Jake still filming.
Jake gives him an impressed grimace. He turns to Soraya who's
telling the orderly something. The orderly wheels the wounded
man away. She turns to Scott.

SORAYA

Thank you. I must go now.

She moves to leave, Scott reaches out and stops her.

SCOTT

Hold on, just wait a second.
That's it?

SORAYA

I have patients waiting.

(beat)

Why are you here anyway?

SCOTT

I'm covering a story. The car
bomb.

SORAYA

(waves around her)

Well, as you can see, they seem to
know what they're doing.

(beat)

I have to go.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (3)

11

And she wanders away. Scott watches her go as Jake joins him.

JAKE

I'm guessing there's a human
interest story brewing here.

SCOTT

Oh, yeah.

12 EXT. TERRACED HOUSE, LONDON - NIGHT

12

A neat row of houses in south west London...

EMMA (O.S.)

I sounds like it's getting worse by
the day.

NICK (O.S.)

It's not that bad. It's just going
to take some time to root out the
refuseniks.

13 INT. BEDROOM, HOWLAND HOME, LONDON - NIGHT

13

Nick's wife, EMMA, is on the phone. The TV's on, the lights are
dimmed.

EMMA

Easier said than done... So did
that American prat show up?

14 INT. NICK'S ROOM, HOTEL - NIGHT

14

Nick's alone too.

NICK

Yeah, he's here.

INTERCUT WITH EMMA AT HOME

EMMA

Great. So when are you back?

NICK

Soon. I just need to finish off a
couple of things and make sure
wonder boy knows what he's doing.

She knows what that means.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

EMMA

Nick...

NICK

It won't be long now, I promise.

EMMA

You're not very good with promises.

NICK

I could surprise you yet.

EMMA

Mia will be really disappointed if you're not at the spring concert. She's been practicing her little heart out hoping to get that solo, she's really excited about it.

NICK

I know, she told me. I really want to be there.

Something about his voice. She can sense he's down.

EMMA

Are you okay?

NICK

Yeah.

EMMA

Come home, Nick. They miss you a lot. I miss you.

NICK

Me too. Look, I've got to go.

(beat)

I love you.

EMMA

Love you too.

EMMA

Hangs up. Looks at the phone. Sighs.

NICK

Hangs up too. Glances at his laptop. On it is one of Gail's pictures of the night shooting. He looks at it and clicks to the next image, thinking...

15 INT. BAR, HOTEL - NIGHT

15

Crowded, noisy, smoke, music. Scott, Jake, Laura and a couple of other REPORTERS sit at a table, downing some beers.

SCOTT

(to Laura)

You should have seen the look on his face, he was like 'what the fuck?' -- he really didn't see that coming.

JAKE

I don't even think you saw that coming.

SCOTT

It was like, I had to do it. But let me tell you, it really felt good.

JAKE

Looked good too. Shame we can't use it.

SCOTT

You never know. Save it for me, though, will you? Might come in handy sometime...

(winks at Laura)

Chicks love a hero.

LAURA

And even more so a humble one. Still...

(beat)

Much as I think that what you did was brave and wonderfully chivalrous -- and rather surprising, to tell you the truth -- I do think you need to be careful. People here take their feuds and their manhood seriously. And to do it like that, to insult him in front of a woman...

SCOTT

Maybe he'll do us all a favor and slit his wrists in shame.

LAURA

I'm serious.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

SCOTT

Well stop being so serious and relax a little and tell me about you. Are you shipping out with Howland or are you sticking around?

LAURA

(coy)

Oh, I'll be here for a while.

SCOTT

Excellent.

LAURA

I'm not sure my mother agrees, but there you go.

(gets up)

I'll see you guys in the morning.

SCOTT

Hey, come on! We're just getting started here.

LAURA

That's just what I'm afraid of.
Good night.

She walks over, past the bar where an overhead TV is on. She stops and looks at it:

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN: NICK is doing a piece to camera by the bombsite --

NICK (ON SCREEN)

As with the other recent bombings, no one has laid claim to today's tragic events, but sources here are now concerned that a new group has joined the ever growing list of suspects-- the followers of the Imam Marzook, who recently returned after years of exile in Iran which he fled to after being tortured and having fourteen of his brothers and cousins killed by the regime.

THE SCREEN now shows the IMAM giving an angry speech to a huge group of FOLLOWERS.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

NICK (cont'd)

The Imam's uncompromising rejection of the coalition presence here has brought him a huge following in the poorer parts of the country, a following which is quickly, and rather worryingly, growing.

Gail joins her.

GAIL

Makes you wonder if any of those brainiacs at the Pentagon even remember who Khomeini was.

LAURA

I wouldn't know.
(grins)
That was way before my time.

The SCREEN reverts to Nick standing at the bombing.

LAURA (cont'd)

You were there today, weren't you?

GAIL

Yeah.

LAURA

Nick didn't say much when he got back.

GAIL

It was pretty grim. There's a school next door...
(beat, re Nick on TV)
Where is he?

LAURA

I haven't seen him since we sent out the piece.

Gail looks over, sees Scott and Jake looking over.

GAIL

How are the newbies?

LAURA

Young, willing, and able.
(beat)
You should join them.

Gail checks them out, then turns to Laura.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (3)

15

GAIL

Nah. I'll give you first dibs.

16 EXT. ROOF, HOTEL - NIGHT

16

Gail walks out onto the flat roof of the building. Several satellite dishes sit there. In the distance, occasional bursts of GUNFIRE and trails of TRACERS disturb the otherwise quiet setting.

She finds Nick, sitting on the floor, his back to an elevator shaft. A bottle of whiskey is next to him.

GAIL

I thought I might find you up here.
Where's Russ?

NICK

I'm not sure. He was being a big cagey.

GAIL

Which probably means he's nailing that French skank from Reuters.

NICK

Probably.

GAIL

Sleeping with the enemy. I like that in a man.

(beat)

Mind if I join you or is this a solo drunk?

Nick looks up at her, smiles.

NICK

Drinking alone is grossly overrated. Personally, I blame Hemingway for its unwarranted mystique.

GAIL

And look where it got him.

She sits down next to him.

GAIL (cont'd)

It was pretty gruesome out there today, even by their standards.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

It's all part of the local charm.

GAIL

They're not just killing our guys now... they're blowing up their own people.

NICK

That's what this place is, isn't it. One big happy slaughterhouse.

GAIL

Okay, you want to tell me what this funk's about? It's not like it's the first time you've seen someone's head blown off, is it?

NICK

Hardly.

GAIL

So, what, would you rather be covering the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin?

NICK

Perish the thought.

She looks at him like, 'well?'

NICK (CONT'D) (cont'd)

It's not the bombing. That's... That's beyond our control.

(beat)

Tell me something. Last night. What did you see, exactly?

GAIL

Unless I was seriously wasted, you were there, Nick.

NICK

I know, I know. I mean... did you see anything, I don't know, threatening? You know, guns, or... Something.

GAIL

Well, no, but... they didn't stop. That tells me they probably weren't kosher.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

You see, that's the problem.

GAIL

What?

NICK

You said 'probably'.

GAIL

And...?

NICK

Probably's not good enough.

GAIL

Nick, I don't see how --

NICK

(interrupting)

Don't you get it? We can't just kill people because they 'might' have wanted to harm us, because they're 'probably' up to no good.

GAIL

Okay, forget the 'probably'. It was a split second decision, it had to be taken. Some of us could have been killed. As it happens, they got killed instead, and call me a selfish cow but that's kind of my preferred outcome in these situations.

NICK

What if we were wrong?

GAIL

It's too late to worry about that.

NICK

No, it's not.

GAIL

I don't know why you're obsessing about this --

NICK

(interrupting)

Because I caused it, alright?

GAIL

What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: (3)

16

NICK

The car. I pointed it out. I was the one who alerted Prewitt to it.

GAIL

So?

NICK

So maybe if I'd kept my mouth shut-

GAIL

(interrupting)

Prewitt acted as he saw fit. What did you expect him to do? I mean, come on, our guys are getting picked off out there every day. Every goddam day. Prewitt said he lost four guys himself last week.

NICK

That still doesn't make it okay to shoot first and ask questions later.

GAIL

It wasn't your call. He was the one who ordered the fireworks.

NICK

Come on, Gail. I pointed it out to him. I made a big deal about that car.

GAIL

And you probably saved our lives by doing that. How do you know they weren't about to hit us with RPGs?

NICK

How do we know they were?

Which she has no answer for...

17 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

17

Nick, Russ, Scott, Jake, Laura have their morning meeting as a couple of other STAFFERS come and go in the background.

LAURA

(reading from notepad)

And lest we forget, there's the CPA weekly briefing at two.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

NICK

Scott?

SCOTT

Sounds like a real hoot.

NICK

If by hoot you mean an
excruciatingly mind numbing display
of duplicity and delusion, then
yes, absolutely.

(beat, grins)

Still, it has to be done.

SCOTT

You're kidding, right?

NICK

No.

RUSS

Upside is, you get to see the
palace which, trust me, is the new
intergalactic benchmark of tack.

SCOTT

(hardly delighted)

Great.

LAURA

Internet access is down again. I'm
going to have to use one of the new
internet cafes. There's one on
Musharafieh.

(beat)

Could be a story there. They
weren't allowed it before.

NICK

Sounds good.

LAURA

What are you up to?

NICK

I'm going out with AJ.

He doesn't elaborate.

LAURA

Okay.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (2)

17

RUSS

Since you guys seem to have all the bases covered -- I'll be by the pool if you need me.

18 INT. LOBBY, HOTEL - DAY

18

Scott and Jake walk through the crowded lobby --

JAKE

...but the briefing's not for a couple of hours.

SCOTT

The briefing's bullshit. There's a lot going on out there. Howland just wants to hog it all for himself.

They find Jameel by the bar.

SCOTT (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Jameel, my friend. Why don't we go out for a little drive? You can show us around this city of yours...

JAMEEL

(thrown)

Where is it you want to go?

SCOTT

Everywhere.

19 EXT. HOTEL - DAY

19

Jameel's Pajero drives out of the heavily guarded hotel compound. It turns into the street and heads up.

ANGLE ON A MAN -- one of the gang from the hospital -- standing by a wall inconspicuously, holding a newspaper. He watches it go past...

20 EXT. STREET, SCENE OF ROADSIDE SHOOTOUT - DAY

20

The burnt out wreckage of the shot up car is still there, as are the remains of the broken down Humvee which has been completely stripped clean.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

Nick watches as AJ talks to some LOCALS. He doesn't say anything, just stands back and listens, a bit wary. The conversation is animated, the locals venting at AJ.

Nick notices a BOY looking at him. Nick tries to avoid his stare, worried that maybe the boy recognized him from the shooting. AJ turns to Nick.

NICK

That didn't sound good.

AJ

What do you think? They're angry. It's not the first time those trigger happy imperialist bastards have done something like this.

NICK

Did they really say that?

AJ

Well, the imperialist bastards part is actually mine.

(beat)

Anyway, this family here, they watched the whole thing from their roof, over there.

NICK

What were they doing up there?

AJ

It's too hot to sleep inside. Anyway, they saw nothing to justify the shooting. He says they were just driving along slowly.

NICK

Do they know who they were?

AJ

No. They weren't from around here. But they think there were four men in the car.

He looks at Nick knowingly, like that could mean something.

NICK

What happened to their bodies?

AJ

They were taken away this morning.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

By whom?

AJ

Some local aid workers. I'm sure we can find them.

(beat, sees Nick's frustration)

It may take a day or two for the families of the dead men to put two and two together. Then we'll know who they were.

NICK

Okay.

(nods to the LOCALS)

Thank you.

AJ says his thanks and they walk away, over to the car's wreckage.

AJ

I hope this has taught you not to go out partying without me again.

He looks at Nick, sees he's too engrossed for any kind of mirth. Nick walks around. As he walks around the wreck, in the weeds by the road, he sees something. He bends down and picks it up.

It's a license plate. Bent, but still legible. He just stares at it, thinking. Looks at AJ.

AJ (CONT'D) (cont'd)

No good.

NICK

Let me guess --

AJ

Interior ministry. Day three of your shock and awe.

NICK

Wonderful.

The Nick notices something: the BOY from earlier. Hovering nearby. He looks at him curiously for a beat, then hesitantly approaches him.

NICK (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Marhaba.

The boy doesn't answer. AJ joins them.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (3)

20

NICK (cont'd)
Can you ask him if he saw anything?

Which AJ does. The boy doesn't answer.

AJ
He might need some...
encouragement.

NICK
Don't we all.

AJ takes out a wad of cash, and starts peeling out some bills. The boy shakes his head. AJ looks at him, confused. He asks him what he wants. The boy points at Nick's arm. At his watch.

NICK (cont'd)
You want this?

The boy nods. AJ is dismissive, starts telling him off -- but Nick stops him.

NICK (cont'd)
No, no, it's alright.

He takes off his watch and hands it to the boy. The boy looks at it admiringly.

NICK (cont'd)
Here, let me help you.

He kneels down and helps him put it on. The boy admires it some more, and half smiles at him. Nick is still down at his level.

NICK (cont'd)
(using gestures)
Did you see this? Did you see
anything?

AJ translates. The boy shakes his head.

NICK (cont'd)
(smiles)
I think I've been had.

He gets up to leave when the boy reaches into his pocket, pulls something up, and holds his hand out. Nick looks. He opens his hand.

CLOSE: in his plan is a bunch of bullets.

Which greatly piques Nick's interest.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (4)

20

NICK (CONT'D) (cont'd)
Where did you find these?
(to AJ)
Ask him where these are from?

Which he does. The boy raises his finger and points. Nick turns to follow its direction: it's the burnt out car.

21 INT./EXT. TRAVELLING WITH NICK AND AJ - DAY

21

Nick and AJ, in the GMC. Nick eyes the bullets, deep in thought.

AJ
Four men. Bullets in the car.
(beat)
Does that make you feel better?

NICK
It doesn't mean anything. Every
car in this city has a gun in it --
for self defence. And so what if
they were four men?

AJ looks at him. Understands that this is important to him. And appreciates the fact that it is.

AJ
Okay.

22 INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY

22

Laura enters the small shop. A dozen LOCALS sit at PCs, typing away. Some OTHERS wait their turn nearby, smoking, playing backgammon, drinking coffee.

Laura spots an older MAN with a tray of coffees -- and talks to him in arabic. He listens and nods, then seems to say 'wait a minute' and calls over to another guy, 'Tarek', to come over.

TAREK -- late 20s, clean shaven, good looking -- walks over.

Laura talks to him in arabic. He looks at her like he doesn't understand a word she's saying. She stops.

TAREK
You do realize you've just asked me
if my uncle puts carrot paste in
his ears.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

LAURA

I did no such thing.

(beat, smiles)

And you obviously speak english.

TAREK

Yes, amazingly, some of us savages do speak a foreign language. Now if only we could master the use of knives and forks.

(disarmingly smiles)

What can I do for you?

LAURA

(thrown)

I need to use the internet.

TAREK

You've come to the right place.

LAURA

So it would seem.

TAREK

Print or TV?

LAURA

TV. Is it that obvious?

TAREK

For some reason, we still don't seem to be able to attract the tourists.

LAURA

(holds up a CD)

Can any of your PCs take one of these?

TAREK

Can I see it?

She hands it to him. He takes it, studies it, holds it up, shakes it, listens to it, takes a mock taste of it, smells it, and ponders it.

LAURA

Okay. Why don't we do this? I promise not to assume that any insulting stereotypes apply to you - not that I do, but we'll leave that for now -- if you promise not to take the piss out of me anymore.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2)

22

TAREK

Much less fun, but... who am I to question the wisdom of the great western mind.

LAURA

Why do I get the feeling you've reneged on our little deal already?

TAREK

Sorry. Won't happen again. Right this way.

He leads her to a desk deep in the shop --

TAREK (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Besides, you probably have some important reports to send back to the civilized world. Has another one of our valiant liberators become a tragic martyr of freedom and democracy?

LAURA

You're doing it again.

TAREK

It's very hard to resist.

(beat)

Besides, it's true, isn't it? It's all your viewers care about.

LAURA

That's not true.

TAREK

Of course it isn't.

(beat)

Come, let me set you up.

She looks at him -- piqued.

23 EXT. POOL, HOTEL - DAY

23

Crowded, party-like. Gail appears poolside in sunglasses, a T-shirt and a sarong wrap. Not dressed to kill, but she cuts a sexy swath nevertheless.

It's a busy place, a familiar oasis of sorts. WAITERS deliver drinks and nibbles to REPORTERS and to small clusters of BUSINESSMEN -- which she notices, not too happily.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

She watches them as she joins Russ who's sitting in a lounge, reading a book, grabbing a waiter as she passes and ordering two beers in arabic.

GAIL

What, are they busing them in from Wall Street now?

RUSS

It's the new frontier.

GAIL

And to think *I* used to feel like a vulture...

RUSS

It's a thin line you walk.

GAIL

(swats him with her magazine)
Be nice. I just ordered you a beer.

RUSS

Local or imported?

GAIL

(puts on heavy, breathy french accent)
Only ze best for you, my little Reusse.

She sits down next to him, takes off her T-shirt and sarong to reveal a bikini. She looks good in it. Which he notices. She spreads some sun cream on herself.

GAIL (cont'd)

How come you're not out with Nick?

RUSS

He's doing something with AJ.

GAIL

Oh.
(as in 'I get it'. A beat.)
You know, he should just move on. He's not gonna make himself any friends by chasing it up. On either side. It's a lose-lose situation.

RUSS

What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (2)

23

GAIL

Didn't he tell you about the other night?

RUSS

What about it?

24 INT. PREWITT'S OFFICE, ARMY BASE - DAY

24

Prewitt smiles at Nick from behind his desk.

PREWITT

So what's on your mind? You're not looking for another ride, are you?

NICK

(sheepish)

No... It's not that.

PREWITT

You weren't an embed during the war, were you?

NICK

I'm afraid I wasn't.

PREWITT

See? Big mistake, right there. You would have seen a lot more of that if you'd been out there riding with us.

NICK

Well that's what I'm trying to understand better.

PREWITT

What's that?

NICK

Well... Take something like what happened the other night. It's not something I've experienced before, but... Were there other indications, was there something I wasn't aware of, I don't know, some intelligence or something about that area maybe?

PREWITT

Not really.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

What about the rules of engagement?
I mean, there's a car approaching,
we don't know who's in it. The
flares were clearly visible, they
must have seen them, and then you
had your men fire some warning
shots before aiming at the
radiator.

PREWITT

Well, that's how we usually do it.
If they don't stop, we assume
they're hostile.

NICK

But isn't there more you could have
done such as, I don't know,
shooting out their tires or
something?

PREWITT

What are you getting at exactly?

NICK

I'm just trying to get a better
feel for what happened, you know,
about how these things are dealt
with --
(hesitates)
-- given the mistakes that were
done in the past.

PREWITT

If you're saying something here,
why don't you just come right out
and say it.

NICK

No, it's just that --

PREWITT

(interrupting, angry now)
Look, you came to us, okay? You
came to us looking for a story and
we did you a favor, we took you out
with us, which is not something
we're particularly keen to do,
we've got enough on our plate in
this shithole without having to
babysit some fucking journos and
make sure they stay in one piece
cause God forbid one of you guys
should get injured, right?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

PREWITT (cont'd)

-- and as it happens, you got lucky, you got something to write about. I suggest we leave it at that.

NICK

All I'm saying is... How can you be sure?

(beat)

Don't you want to know?

PREWITT

(holds up a letter)

Listen to me. There's a woman in Falls Church, Virginia who's about to find out her nineteen year old son is dead, all because he was unlucky enough to pull guard duty at the fucking museum and someone in this town didn't appreciate the fact that he was there trying to make sure no one walked out with some 'priceless' two thousand year old trinket no one gives a shit about anyway. And so one of them decides to put a bullet in his head while he's buying a can of soda. You getting me? We're here trying to the right thing, but it's a war, there's no sugar coating that. And given the lack of value these people seem to assign to their own lives, if it comes down to maybe losing one of my boys against maybe wasting a bunch of theirs, as far as I'm concerned, it's a no brainer.

NICK

How can you say that? How can you say they don't value their own lives as much as we do?

PREWITT

We're done here.

NICK

Look, all I'm asking for is --

PREWITT

(interrupting)

I said we're done here, asshole.

25 EXT. BUILDING, ARMY BASE - DAY 25

Nick walks out of the building and heads for the gates.

A man watches him leave. A soldier: THOMPSON, the black GI who was with them that night...

26 INT. BAR, HOTEL - NIGHT 26

Bustling. Scott, Laura, Russ, Nick, Gail and Jake are all there, having drinks. The TV is on --

CLOSE ON THE TV -- A REPORTER makes his report from in front of the Capitol building in DC.

REPORTER (ON SCREEN)

Getting the aid package approved by Congress is a major victory for the President who'll be watching closely when it goes before the Senate next week...

RUSS

They'll pass it. It's a done deal.

SCOTT

It's such a load of crock. Seventy billion dollars to keep our guys here.

LAURA

And less than twenty billion to rebuild the country. Is it just me, or is there a skewed logic there somewhere?

SCOTT

What, you want them to spend more? Those are my tax dollars you're talking about.

LAURA

And you know what? Knowing how much more you get paid is suddenly so much more bearable.

SCOTT

You know what they should do? They should just send our guys home and use that seventy billion to buy off every single asshole with a rocket propelled grenade. Bet you it wouldn't cost half as much.

(CONTINUED)

GAIL

It would also put all of us out of work.

LAURA

(to Scott)

You know, that's the first smart thing you've said all night.

SCOTT

I get better as the night goes on.

LAURA

(flirtatious)

How do I know that's true?

SCOTT

There's only one way to find out. What do you say?

LAURA

(to the others)

And there it is. Thank you very much.

Scott looks around, lost. Laura puts her hand out, and the others each grudgingly give her a \$20 bill.

SCOTT

What are you doing?

JAKE

She bet us it wouldn't take you more than a day to hit on her.

SCOTT

And you all took the bet, you morons? Like you don't know me?

JAKE

You make us proud.

Nick notices someone at the door: a GI, Thompson.

He edges away and walks over to him.

SCOTT

(to Laura)

I wasn't kidding, you know.

LAURA

(kidding)

Really?

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: (2)

26

Gail sees Nick go, glances over at Russ. He gets it.

27 INT. BAR, ANGLE ON A QUIET CORNER TABLE - NIGHT (LATER)

27

Nick sits in a quiet corner with Thompson, with a couple of beers.

THOMPSON

It's happened a couple of times before. Less so now, but... It happened a lot the first day we drove into the city. And not just with our unit. A lot of cars got shot up that day.

NICK

How do the others feel? The rest of your squad?

THOMPSON

It's not easy out there. They're picking us off all the time, you don't know where the next bullet's coming from. It's just not easy...

NICK

What about Prewitt. What if you were in his shoes. Would you have handled it differently?

THOMPSON

The C.O., he's just looking out for us. And we lost some buddies last week, some good guys.

NICK

I know.

THOMPSON

(beat, uncomfortable)
I shouldn't be here.

NICK

This is completely off the record. It's just you and me talking, that's all. No one else.

A beat. Thompson thinks about it.

THOMPSON

Maybe they were just out driving around, you know, on their way home or something...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

THOMPSON (cont'd)
or maybe they meant us some harm.
I don't know. I guess all I'm
asking is that either way, no
matter what you find out... Just
let me know, okay?

NICK

Okay.

28 INT. SCOTT'S ROOM, HOTEL - DAY

28

Scott wakes up. Gets out of bed, groggy. Sees something by the door: A folded piece of paper.

He picks it up, opens it up: it's got arabic writing on it.

29 INT. RESTAURANT, HOTEL - DAY

29

Breakfast. Nick stares at a printout with four faces of it: blow-ups of passport shots of four young men. AJ's with him. A local newspaper with the same shots on it is on the table.

AJ

These two are cousins. This one was in the army, the other was a student at the university. This one here, he was a car mechanic. And this one was a carpenter.

NICK

(studies photos)

The ex-soldier -- they're the ones causing the most trouble.

(focuses on one of the faces)

And this one, the student --

AJ

Braheem.

NICK

Didn't you need to be a party member to get into the university?

AJ

A lot of us had to be party members just to get food, my friend. Doesn't mean we liked those butchers.

NICK

(a beat, holds up the student's picture)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

NICK (cont'd)

What were they doing out there that night?

AJ

They're saying they were on their way home from a friend's funeral. They're all from the same neighborhood.

Nick stares at their faces, frustrated.

NICK

Can you find out more? Quietly?

AJ

Of course.

(beat)

You might want to come to their funeral march.

Nick looks at him, surprised.

AJ (cont'd)

It's this afternoon.

Scott walks in and joins them --

SCOTT

Morning.

(checks out buffet)

Nick, you've been here forever. What's the least poisonous thing on the menu?

AJ

I'm afraid it's all very filthy. You're safer sticking to just bread.

SCOTT

(accepting it, oblivious)

Okay, thanks.

(hands him the note)

Someone slipped this under my door this morning.

AJ reads it. He frowns. Looks at Nick. Scott's lost.

SCOTT (cont'd)

What?

30 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

30

Nick, Scott, Laura, Jake and AJ. We're in the thick of a heated debate.

NICK

(angry, looks at Laura)
I don't believe this. Why didn't anyone tell me about this?

LAURA

It didn't seem that important. Besides, you've been a bit preoccupied lately.

Nick looks at her, shakes his head. He turns to Scott.

NICK

I know you were doing what you thought was right, but --

SCOTT

(interrupting)
But what? What was I supposed to do? Just stand back and watch him beat the shit out of that girl?

NICK

No, of course not, but...

SCOTT

You're not gonna give me the line about how we're observers, how we don't get involved.

NICK

There are GIs stationed there. You could have called them.

SCOTT

It's not how I was raised.

NICK

Well that's a shame, cause if you'd done that, your biggest fan would probably be locked up in some cage right now and you wouldn't be receiving death threats from him.

SCOTT

It's just hot air. It doesn't scare me.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

You don't get it, do you? You're not an embed anymore, alright? You're not driving around in an armored personnel carrier with a platoon of jarheads escorting you. This is it. We're it. And I'm sure the last thing AJ wants is to have bullet holes in his nice new truck and your blood staining its seats.

AJ

It's true. My son's Pajero, on the other hand...

(makes a gesture like 'maybe')

RUSS

This isn't just about you. You could be putting us all in danger.

SCOTT

So that's it. That's what this is really about.

NICK

Partly, yes. But believe it or not, I'm also rather partial to not having you die while you're out here. It kind of interferes with your ability to do your job.

SCOTT

Okay, are we done here? Cause this is a load of crock. You would have done the exact same thing -- and if not, I shouldn't be standing here listening to your horseshit.

NICK

Sadly and until the wise men in London deem otherwise, I'm in charge of our little family. So here's what we're going to do. AJ, you're going to try and find out who the wounded man at the hospital is, and let's try and reach his brother and broker some sort of peace.

(turns to Scott)

You, in the meantime, will do us all a huge favor and lie low.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: (2)

30

NICK (cont'd)

Enjoy the pool, work on your tan,
write that best-selling memoir,
sign autographs, just keep out of
sight until this thing is sorted
out. Do you think you can do that?

SCOTT

Hey, whatever floats your boat.

NICK

Which presumably is a yes, in which
case we're done here.

31 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

31

A major demonstration is under way. A horde of ANGRY LOCALS march down the street, carrying four coffins covered by flags, noisy loudspeakers and bullhorns egging them on. They wave signs with the dead men's pictures on them and banners with slogans like "American Murderers".

ANGLE on Nick and AJ. They stand under a colonnaded pathway running along the street.

NICK

What are they saying?

AJ

The usual.

NICK

They really hate us, don't they.

AJ

Only about ninety percent of them.

NICK

What about the other ten percent?

AJ

I have a very big family.

He scans the area. Spots Gail across the street, covering the march from an opposite angle. She acknowledges him.

Russ pops out from an overhang, dangling his camera to Nick --

RUSS

Grab this, will ya?

-- before ably climbing down a column and joining him.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

RUSS (cont'd)

You should see it from up there.
This thing stretches forever.

Nick looks at the marchers, then turns towards where they're headed, sees the US soldiers standing there in full gear. Looking nervous. A disaster waiting to happen.

RUSS (cont'd)

I got a great reverse shot of them heading for those APCs with the minaret in the background -- it'll look awesome.

NICK

(focused on troops)
I don't know what they're doing here. They shouldn't be here.

RUSS

You want to go tell them that?

Nick looks at the procession. At the soldiers. Back at the march. They're getting closer.

RUSS (cont'd)

Might want to do a piece to camera.
This thing could get ugly.

Nick doesn't answer, focused.

RUSS (cont'd)

Nicky?

NICK

What?

RUSS

Piece. To camera. Like now?

NICK

Okay.

Russ chucks Nick the mike and shoulders his camera, focusing. In the middle of the march by the coffins, and now at their level, are MEN and WOMEN IN BLACK. Blow-ups of the dead men's faces stare down from big placards.

Nick looks at a cluster of mourners under the face of the dead student. He can't take his eyes off them. AJ notices.

AJ

That's the student's family.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (2)

31

RUSS

We're rolling.

Nick holds the mike, wants to say something but nothing comes out. He can't take his eyes off the march.

One of the women, the student's MOTHER, looks over and catches Nick's eye. He can't tear his eyes away. She holds his stare, anger and sadness in her look.

RUSS (cont'd)

Nicky. Anytime you're ready.

Nick watches her glide by.

RUSS (cont'd)

No rush. Just say the words. Any words.

Nick watches as they reach the soldiers. They walk inches away from them, the soldiers eyeing them very carefully.

Like an angry mob now, their chanting gets louder, more feverish. The soldiers hold their ground, sweating it out. For a moment there, it looks like it's going to explode big time. The crowd hold there, taunting the soldiers. The soldiers don't budge --

Then they back off slowly, slipping back quietly, and climb into their Humvees. They drive off, angry fists and signs waving behind them.

Nick breathes out.

Russ looks out from behind his eyepiece.

RUSS (cont'd)

Maybe we could just do a voice over later, how about that?

Nick looks at him, frustrated. Then he turns to AJ.

NICK

I need to talk to their families.

AJ

Nick...

NICK

Can you or can you not get me to them?

AJ nods...

32 EXT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY 32

Laura enters the shop. She looks determined.

33 INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY 33

Tarek's busy with a customer. Laura marches right up to him.

LAURA

You're wrong, you know. It's not
all they care about.

TAREK

Excuse me?

LAURA

What you said the other day.
You're wrong.

The CUSTOMER seems put out and complains. Tarek calms him and asks him to excuse him for a minute. He takes her aside.

TAREK

I'm trying to build a business
here. That's what we're supposed
to do, isn't it? Build businesses,
get mortgages and have two point
four children?

LAURA

You're wrong and I'll prove it to
you.

TAREK

How are you going to do that?

LAURA

Help me find a story, a human
interest story, something
completely local that has nothing
to do with one of our valiant
defenders dying to safeguard the
newfound freedom that's allowing
you to surf porn sites. I'll put
it on the six o'clock news.

TAREK

I'm sorry, have we met?

LAURA

Laura Boden.

(CONTINUED)

TAREK

It's funny, you look a lot like this other Laura Boden I met yesterday, only she was more...

LAURA

Respectful?

TAREK

I was going to say boring, but your word is better.

LAURA

Must be my superior western mind.

TAREK

Must be.

LAURA

So? Do we have a deal?

TAREK

It sounded more like a bet to me.

LAURA

A bet.

TAREK

Yes. I give you a local story, and if your editors deign to broadcast it, you win.

LAURA

What do I win and where on earth did you learn to use words like 'deign'?

TAREK

Same book I learned the word hurlyburly from, but that one's much more difficult to drop into casual conversation. What do you want to win?

She looks at him, surprised. Again.

LAURA

What have you got?

TAREK

A lot of oil, I'm told.

LAURA

That'll do.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: (2)

33

TAREK

Take a number.

LAURA

You're on.

(beat)

So what's the story?

TAREK

Just like that?

LAURA

Come on, you're the one whinging
about how we don't care.

TAREK

(thinks about it for a beat)

The university. It's re-opened.

LAURA

I know.

TAREK

I'm not too sure about that new
dean they've picked.

LAURA

Al-Azhari? What about him?

TAREK

I thought you were the reporter.

She looks at him. Smiles.

34 EXT. STREET WHERE MARCH TOOK PLACE - DAY (LATER)

34

The march is over, the street is back to normal. Russ and Nick
sit on a ledge under the colonnade.

RUSS

What if it does prove to be a
mistake?

NICK

Maybe I can stop it from happening
again. Even if I can stop just one
more mistake like that...

RUSS

Come on. It doesn't work that way.
You know that...

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

RUSS (cont'd)

Say it turns out that way, say these guys were really just out getting a pizza. You put the story out and you're hoping next time a car doesn't stop for a roadblock, whoever's manning it remembers your piece and gives them the benefit of the doubt and doesn't shoot.

NICK

It's worth it, isn't it?

RUSS

(beat)

What if you end with a bunch of dead soldiers instead?

NICK

I don't know... All I know is, they don't have a choice about being here. They live here. We have a choice, and if being here is going to cause innocent people to die, well... maybe we would be better off covering the World Dairy Expo.

35 EXT. POOL, HOTEL - DAY

35

Scott is on a sun lounger, annoyed, swatting flies away. Gail plonks herself down next to him.

GAIL

I hear you've been grounded.

He looks at her, surprised. Then she takes her T-shirt off. His day's suddenly looking up.

SCOTT

That's just Howland being an overly paranoid dick.

GAIL

I agree. I mean, where does he think we are? Some third world backwater with a total breakdown of law and order?

SCOTT

Whose side are you on?

(CONTINUED)

GAIL

If you knew anything about me,
you'd know the answer to that.

She lies back. He's not sure how to take that. He sits back.

SCOTT

It's no big deal. I don't mind
hanging out for a couple of days.
Besides, he'll be out of here soon
enough.

(beat, soaks in some sun)
Man, that's a strong sun.

GAIL

Enjoy it while you can. It'll hit
one twenty in a month's time.

SCOTT

Bring out the burkas.
(looks at her, lying there)
Do you have sunblock on?

GAIL

No, I'm used to it.

SCOTT

You should really put some on.
I've got some really good stuff.

She looks up. He's holding up a bottle. Grins.

SCOTT (cont'd)

It spreads on real nice.

Gail looks at him, then:

GAIL

I'd like that, I really would, but
here's the thing. You'll start
creaming me, your hands will be
gliding up and down my oily skin,
inching closer and closer to the
hot spots... You'll get all worked
up and I'll get all horny, and
before you know it the swimsuits
are off and we're on top of each
other licking and grinding and
pounding away right here on the
loungers which would be just
heavenly, God knows I could use
some of that right now...

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (2)

35

GAIL (cont'd)
...except that there are all these
other people around and...
(she sits back and smiles, as if
nothing happened)
Not a good idea.

A CELLPHONE across the pool BEEPS.

SCOTT
(struggling to maintain his
composure)
Hey, I'm just looking out for you.

GAIL
(without looking at him)
You're such a peach.

Then she notices something across the pool. Scott notices,
follows her eye line:

THEIR POV: a couple of REPORTERS, one of them -- the ARAB
REPORTER from the bomb site -- picking up his cellphone. He
talks into it urgently, then clicks off and he and his buddy
hurry off.

Gail sits up, then gets up and quickly gathers her stuff, hitting
the speed dial on her cell.

SCOTT
What's going on?

She doesn't answer. He watches the guy leave inconspicuously.

SCOTT (cont'd)
That's that Ramzi guy, isn't it?
From Al-Jazeera?

GAIL
Yep. Bastard gets the bet tip-offs
in town.

And she's off, cellphone to her ear --

GAIL (cont'd)
Ali? This is Gail --

Scott watches her go, then gets up himself.

SCOTT
Fuck it.

36 EXT. HOTEL - DAY

36

The Al-Jazeera reporter gets into a car and drives off as Gail exits the hotel, waiving to her waiting DRIVER, just as --

37 INT. LOBBY, HOTEL - DAY

37

Scott hurries through the lobby, pulling his shoes on, cell to his ear --

SCOTT

Come on, Jake. Pick up the damn phone.

-- and comes face to face with Nick.

NICK

What are you doing?

SCOTT

Did you see Gail?

NICK

She just left. Where do you think you're going?

SCOTT

She's following some guy from Al Jazeera.

NICK

And you're not supposed to go out, remember?

SCOTT

She could be on to something good.

NICK

I don't care. You're not going anywhere until your little problem is sorted out.

SCOTT

I'm not, huh?

NICK

No.

(beat)

Not unless you want to go freelance. Which can be easily arranged.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

SCOTT

You think London's gonna go for that?

NICK

Why don't we ask them? I'm sure insurance premiums and compensation to next of kin are far from their mind.

SCOTT

Maybe. I sure as hell know ratings aren't. Why do you think they sent me here?

NICK

Can't be for your social skills, that's for sure.

(beat)

So what's it going to be?

SCOTT

Fine.

(turns away and storms off)

Just get on that plane already, will you? While there's still a war on.

38 INT. BAR, HOTEL - NIGHT

38

Scott and Jake are at a table with a couple of girls. At the bar, Laura's with Nick. Nick glances at Scott, who's laughing and drinking with the girls, as Laura shows him a picture of the dean.

LAURA

...he's been in charge of the history department for over fifteen years. And he's now been appointed to run the whole university. By our guys.

NICK

You think he's worth going after?

LAURA

Men like Al-Azhari, they're the ones who'll define the future of this place. If our people are making the wrong choices, someone needs to point it out.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

NICK

Okay. Just be careful. Make sure
Junior's with you at all times.

LAURA

Okay.

Laura looks at him. Nick takes a sip from his beer.

LAURA (CONT'D) (cont'd)

You okay?

NICK

I'm fine. It's just...

LAURA

Battle fatigue?

NICK

Too many fronts.

LAURA

You'll be home soon... and all this
will gradually fade away.

NICK

Yeah...

OFF Laura -- she's not thrilled at the prospect...

39 EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

39

Laura and Jameel walk in to the administration building.

40 INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, UNIVERSITY - DAY

40

Two SECRETARIES sit behind a counter. Several PEOPLE are
waiting. In arabic, Laura asks one of the secretaries something
while showing her her press card.

The woman answers, and from her shaking head it's clear an
interview isn't on the cards. Laura presses her request a bit
more, but to no avail.

41 EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

41

Laura steps out with Jameel, frustrated. She stands outside the
building, looking around.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

JAMEEL

We go back to the hotel, Miss
Laura?

She looks around, sees a lot of STUDENTS walking around. Thinks
for a beat.

LAURA

No. Let's stick around here for a
little while.

42 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

42

AJ talks to the doctor, Soraya. Her body language tells us the
man AJ's looking for, the injured brother, is no longer there.

She gives him a 'sorry' wave and hurries off. AJ stands there
and thinks for a quick beat, looks at his watch, and heads out.

43 EXT. SCENE OF ROADSIDE SHOOTOUT - DAY

43

AJ is back at the scene again, alone this time. It's quiet. He
wanders around, looking for clues.

He spots a gang of KIDS playing ball nearby. One of them looks
over. It's the kid from before. Their eyes meet. The boy stops
playing. AJ walks over to him.

AJ kneels down and talks to him. The boy hesitates. AJ
continues, making his case. The boy still hesitates. AJ looks
defeated.

Then he does something. He pulls up his sleeve and shows him his
watch. The boy looks at it. AJ takes it off and gives it to
him. The boy eyes it, then pockets it, and gestures for him to
follow him.

He takes him to the side of the field, to a rusty old barrel. He
nods at it, says a few words. AJ looks at it, then slides off
its top and reaches in.

He pulls out a bent, scorched AK-47. And another. And another.

He holds it up and asks the boy something. The boy nods yes.

OFF AJ -- thinking...

44 INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY

44

Laura's with Tarek.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

LAURA

They won't talk to me about him.
The few that will only say a couple
of quick words about how wonderful
he is before moving on like I had
ebola.

TAREK

Well I must have it wrong then.

She waits. He just smiles sheepishly.

LAURA

You have to help me out.

TAREK

You don't really understand the
concept of betting, do you?

LAURA

Come on. Give me something more to
work with.

He thinks about it. Then:

TAREK

I never really liked history.
(beat)
I much preferred agriculture.

45 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - NIGHT

45

Nick's on the phone --

NICK

Tomorrow? What time?

AJ pops his head in. Nick waves him over.

NICK (cont'd)

Okay. Great. Thanks.

He hangs up.

NICK (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Marzook is giving the friday prayer
at the big mosque in Karbala
tomorrow.

AJ

Now you tell me? It's probably
sold out by now.

(CONTINUED)

NICK

We should cover it, no?

AJ

You want to drive four hours to watch someone tell a few hundred zombies that they should be out slaughtering people like you?

(smiles)

Send the young American.

NICK

Don't tempt me.

AJ

Listen, I've been thinking about your little problem.

(beat)

The official story is that the four of them were on their way home from that funeral. You were there. What time did it happen, exactly?

NICK

It must have been around quarter to eleven or so?

AJ

Fifteen minutes before the curfew.

NICK

I think so.

AJ frowns.

NICK (cont'd)

What?

AJ

They live in the Hasbaniyyi district. The shooting happened in Ghubayri.

(beat)

There's no way they could have made that trip in fifteen minutes. And no one in their right mind wants to be on the streets after the curfew starts.

NICK

Are you sure it takes that long? Remember, there's much less traffic at night.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (2)

45

AJ

It can't be done.

Nick looks at his watch. Looks at AJ.

NICK

Show me.

46 EXT. STREETS/TRAVELLING WITH NICK AND AJ - NIGHT

46

Nick and AJ, in the GMC, drive through the dark streets. Nick looks around. Uncomfortable.

It's pretty spooky: no street lamps, no pedestrians, very few cars.

Up ahead, they spot a US Army roadblock, a stopped car being searched by SOLDIERS.

They slow down, AJ turns on the car's inside lights as Nick fishes out his Press card.

NICK

Slow down.

AJ

Any slower and we'd be going backwards.

They reach the roadblock. The soldiers peer in, flashlights shining in their faces. As they're waved through, Nick glances at the stopped car, the LOCALS standing aside unhappily under guard as the car is searched.

AJ drives on.

NICK

How much further is it?

AJ

We still have to get across the bridge and go past the old stadium.

Nick checks his watch.

NICK

We're never going to make it in time.

AJ

As a general rule, I try to avoid saying 'I told you so', but in this case...

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

NICK

Perfectly justified.

(beat)

Can we get back to the hotel in time?

AJ

Barely. But you might have to find me a room for the night.

NICK

Will Imm Jameel mind?

AJ

With my snoring? She'd pay you good money to keep me.

NICK

I'm open to offers.

AJ turns a corner, heads back.

NICK (cont'd)

(beat)

Thanks. You didn't have to do all this.

AJ

Oh, but I do.

NICK

I can't imagine too many of your friends would be happy to have their innocent martyrs exposed.

AJ

You don't know my friends.

NICK

You know what I mean.

AJ

My people have been manipulated and controlled by lies for the last forty years. And now a new group of butchers want to do the same thing?

(beat)

We have to start helping ourselves.

47 INT. NICK'S ROOM, HOTEL - NIGHT

47

Nick's lying on the bed, talking on the phone.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

NICK

You did?

48 INT. KITCHEN, HOWLAND HOME, LONDON - NIGHT

48

Emma's reading a magazine, cup of coffee in hand, while Nick's 8-year old daughter MIA is on the phone, all excited.

MIA

Yes, Miss Elizabeth said my singing was really good now and that I could do the solo.

INTERCUT WITH NICK

NICK

That's really great. I'm so proud of you, darling.

MIA

Mummy said you're going to be back for the concert.
(hesitating, wary of answer)
Are you, daddy?

ON NICK

NICK

I really hope so, sweetie.

49 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

49

The whole gang's here for the morning meeting: Nick, Russ, Laura, Scott, Jake, and AJ.

NICK

Main event today is the esteemed Imam Marzook giving a sermon today.

RUSS

I love his speeches. Not that I can understand them, but just watching them gives me that warm, loving feeling, you know what I mean?

NICK

(to AJ)

How are we doing with sorting out Scott's situation?

(CONTINUED)

AJ

No luck at the hospital. They took the brother's bullet out and discharged him the same day.

SCOTT

Well there's a surprise. The guy knew we could track him down that way.

RUSS

(to AJ)

Do you think you can find him?

AJ

It's not going to be easy. They think his name's Ali Hussein.

SCOTT

That's something.

LAURA

It's like Bob Smith around here. In a city of six million with no records left.

SCOTT

Great. So, what, you expect me to spend my whole stint here by the pool? It was just a goddam note for Chrissake.

NICK

(frustrated)

Look, you want to risk it, be my guest. As long as London clears it.

SCOTT

Let's call them.

NICK

It's still too early there.

RUSS

(to Scott)

Hope you're packing some kevlar.

JAKE

(to Russ)

You want to partner him for a while? You know, try something new for a change?

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED: (2)

49

SCOTT

(fed up)

You know where to find me.

Scott leaves the room.

NICK

(to AJ)

We really need to find these people.

(turns to Laura)

Laura? You want to cover the speech?

LAURA

(thrilled)

Sure.

NICK

Jake?

50 INT./EXT. TRAVELLING WITH LAURA AND JAKE - DAY

50

Laura ties her hair back, stuffs it under a khaki hat, puts on some men's sunglasses and zips up a photographer's gilet, the one with lots of little compartments, puffing up the lower ones to mask her breasts.

JAKE

What are you doing?

LAURA

Women aren't allowed inside that mosque.

JAKE

You want to go inside?

LAURA

(grins)

Didn't I mention that?

She finishes her makeover, looks at Jake. Half man, half woman.

LAURA (cont'd)

What do you think?

JAKE

(troubled, conflicted)

I may need to book into some therapy.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

The Pajero hits traffic, slows down. It soon stops, cars closing in on all sides. Laura looks out in alarm --

LAURA

Can't you take another road?

JAMEEL

We have to take this bridge.

He tries to slither through, but gets blocked. Cars pull in behind them, and pretty soon it's just stuck in the biggest traffic jam you've ever seen.

Jameel opens the door, and stands on his doorsill, looking around. It's a sea of cars, gridlocked around each other. HORNS blaring, PEOPLE shouting at each other and arguing angrily --

LAURA

No, no, no! Not today! Jameel, do something!

JAMEEL

I'm sorry, Miss Laura, but there's nowhere I can go.

She looks at her watch. And fumes.

51 INT./EXT. TRAVELLING WITH NICK AND AJ - DAY

51

They drive through the chaotic streets.

NICK

I thought you said all the car registration records were gone.

AJ

They are. But there's a new register they started a month ago. For stolen cars.

NICK

AJ, you're a genius.

AJ

I like to think so.

52 EXT. TRAFFIC JAM - DAY

52

Jameel's car is still boxed in. It's a total nightmare now.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

Laura is out desperately trying to make people move their cars. It's hopeless. She comes back to find Jake just lying back, totally relaxed. She peers through the open door, seething.

LAURA

Try not to get too worked up about this.

JAKE

It's just a speech. There'll be others.

LAURA

'There'll be others'... Tell me you didn't just say that.

JAKE

You're way too stressed out over this. It's not healthy.

LAURA

Hey, I didn't exactly come here for a bloody cure, did I?

JAKE

Look, we're not going to make it, that's all. The world's not gonna end, is it?

She lets out a huge, anguished sigh. Looks at her watch again. Then gives up and pulls out her cellphone. And hits the speed-dial.

53 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

53

Scott passes a RINGING PHONE. He picks it up.

INTERCUT WITH LAURA

LAURA

Scott. Is Nick there?

SCOTT

Haven't seen him. What's up?

LAURA

I'm stuck in a traffic jam from hell. You need to get hold of him and tell him he needs to go to the mosque himself, we're going to be stuck here for a couple of years --

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

A couple of GUNSHOTS rip the air around her. Laura ducks, shrieking --

LAURA (cont'd)

FUCK!

More SHOTS --

SCOTT

(hearing them through the phone)

What's going on?

Laura scurries into the car, she and Jake duck into the footwells as a small GUNFIGHT erupts around them.

LAURA

Just a little road rage. I've got to go. Call Nick!

And she clicks off. Stray bullets PINGING around them. She looks at Jake --

LAURA (cont'd)

Is it okay with you if I get stressed out now?

SCOTT

Hangs up. Goes to dial again, then thinks about it and puts the phone down. Russ passes through the room.

RUSS

Hey, cabana boy. Wanna get some lunch?

SCOTT

Grab your camera. We're going out.

54 INT. ELECTRONICS SHOP - DAY

54

Nick and AJ are drinking coffee with the OWNER of the store.

NICK

(to AJ)

I don't understand. He reported the car stolen, didn't he?

AJ

Yes. But he's saying it was all a misunderstanding. He says his wife lent it to some friends without telling him.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

Nick looks at the OWNER. He puffs on a cigarette, a bit nervous. He asks AJ something, which AJ answers briefly, putting him at ease. Nick studies him.

NICK

So he's saying his wife knew one of the four men who died. Can you ask him which one?

AJ asks him. The man, uncomfortable, says the name wrong. AJ corrects him, then the man repeats it, nodding, rambling on his explanation. Then he looks at his watch and starts gesturing like 'sorry, I have to go, you understand...'.

AJ

(while smiling at the man)
He's lying. He doesn't know them.

NICK

He doesn't want to rock the boat.

AJ

They've turned them into martyrs. He wouldn't last an hour if he ruined their story.

NICK

Are you going to be okay doing this?

AJ

(smiles)
Why do you think I gave him a false name?

AJ turns, smiling at the Owner, who smiles back nervously...

55 EXT. MOSQUE - DAY

55

A big event. Loads of PEOPLE, all men, converging on the domed structure, loudspeakers drawing them in.

We FIND Scott and Russ, getting out of a car, Russ lugging his camera out of the boot. Scott looks around, catching a few dirty looks to add to his unease.

SCOTT

Not sure we're exactly welcome here.

RUSS

Oh, well then maybe we'd better leave.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

And he just walks towards the mosque. Scott follows.

56 INT. MOSQUE COURTYARD - DAY

56

A huge, open courtyard, surrounded by a two-storey arched galleria. WORSHIPPERS are all gathered in the courtyard, lining up facing the podium.

A few other REPORTERS AND CAMERAMEN are brusquely directed to a press area in a far corner. Russ looks at it, looks at the podium, not happy with it. He looks around and up towards the galleria. He nudges Scott --

RUSS

Come on.

SCOTT

What are you doing? They want us to go there.

RUSS

(already moving)

The angle's crap from back there. Come on.

Scott darts a nervous glance around him and follows Russ.

57 INT. MOSQUE COURTYARD - DAY (LATER)

57

The speech is in full swing. ON THE PODIUM, the Imam, spewing out words of anger. INSIDE THE COURTYARD, hundreds of followers, most of them in white robes, mesmerized, responding in unison.

UP IN A CORNER OF THE GALLERIA

We FIND Russ and Scott. On the upper level, sitting discretely, camera rolling. They have a great view.

SCOTT

Nice angle, man.

RUSS

They're always there. You just gotta find them.

Scott watches the Imam.

SCOTT

Look at the sonofabitch go. He's got them in the palm of his hand.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

RUSS

Halleluah.

SCOTT

Wish I knew what he was saying.

RUSS

It ain't peace on earth and good
will to all men, that's for sure.

Just then, a couple of SHOTS ring out --

And then all hell breaks loose:

THE IMAM goes down, blood splatters on his chest, the BODYGUARDS
freaking out all around him --THE CROWD goes apeshit, people stampeding their way out while
others rush forward to the podium --

RUSS doesn't bat an eyelid, covering the action coolly --

SCOTT watches, wide eyes glued to the chaos below --

SCOTT

They've nailed him! They've
fucking nailed him!Then SOMEONE in the crowd below sees them and points up at them,
and starts shouting --

OTHERS look up, right at Scott and Russ --

Scott edges back, suddenly pissing himself --

SCOTT (CONT'D) (cont'd)

This isn't good.

The noise from below is now deafening, total chaos --

SCOTT sees some ARMED MILITIAMEN shoving their way into the
courtyard, seeing them, turning their AK-47s up towards him --

SCOTT (cont'd)

Oh, shit.

Russ is already on them, his camera pointing down at the gun
barrels --

SCOTT (cont'd)

Oh, SHIT!!!

And THEY FIRE --

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: (2)

57

Scott and Russ duck, bullets PINGING around them, Russ edging up and keeping the camera rolling --

SCOTT (cont'd)

Get down!

RUSS

Later.

Then there's another SHOUT -- this one from across the hall -- and the bullets stop. Scott and Russ inch up to see the militiamen SPIN their guns and push their way across the hall in the opposite direction --

And across from them, on the opposite galleria, a glimpse of THE GUNMAN, a man with a rifle, running --

RUSS is quick to film him -- none of the other reporters can get the shot, they're all blocked by the stampeding crowd --

Scott raises himself, confused --

SCOTT

What's going on?

RUSS

(concentrating through eyepiece)

They've got the shooter.

(gets up, lugs camera)

Come on!

They run across the upper gallery of the mosque, following the crowd, camera constantly rolling --

THE GUNMAN disappears into a far corner of the building, chased by three GUYS --

THE CROWD rushes through a doorway, following him --

RUSS looks around, quickly guesses the right route to them, and charges through a doorway --

RUSS (cont'd)

This way!

58 INT. STAIRS, MOSQUE - DAY

58

Russ leads Scott down some stairs, three at a time --

59 EXT. MOSQUE BACK COURTYARD - DAY

59

Russ and Scott burst into the fray, Russ's camera on his shoulder and rolling --

They make his way through the crowd, Russ just pushing his way through like a bulldozer --

THE GUNMAN is caught and grabbed by the crazed mob --

SCOTT looks around, scared shitless, while --

RUSS just keeps charging, holding his camera up over his head, pushing through the throng like a man possessed --

THE GUNMAN is swamped by the crowd, arms and rifle butts coming up before crashing down, pummelling him off camera --

RUSS holds there for a beat, watching them go, before looking around, same time as FACES look at him --

Time to get out of there --

He backtracks, finds an overwhelmed Scott and grabs him, pulling him back with him --

RUSS

Let's get out of here --

They make their way against the flow, a driven Russ paving the way, a shell shocked Scott following in his wake, trying not to attract attention, but ANGRY LOOKS flashing from all sides --

And in that confused rush, Scott catches A GLIMPSE OF A FACE staring back, their eyes meeting for a beat, the face of a man, dark haired, but not a local, something foreign, out of place, about him --

Russ, still pushing though the crowd, calls out to Scott --

RUSS (cont'd)

You got your words ready?

SCOTT

(still shaken)

What words?

RUSS

Your piece to camera, man. But I doubt we'll be able to do more than one take, so make sure you get it right.

OFF SCOTT, stunned --

60 INT. BAR, HOTEL - DAY

60

Busy, as always. Only tonight, Scott holds court, beaming. On the TV, Russ's footage, a big exclusive, jarring images of the killer on the balcony, dodging the bullets, the chase, the mob...in

The gang's there, watching it, Scott -- half drunk -- refilling champagne for Jake, Laura, and a couple of the STAFFERS. A passing REPORTER, a curvy brunette with a blonde FRIEND, smiles at him as she passes. Scott raises his bottle at them --

SPANISH BABE

Ola, Scott. Nice going.

SCOTT

Ola! Come on. Join us.

She keeps walking, winks as she goes.

SCOTT (cont'd)

Come on!

He turns back to his gang. Gets to Russ.

SCOTT (cont'd)

This guy! You should have seen this guy. Cool as a cucumber, bullets popping left, right and center and he's like making sure the lens is clean.

(raises the bottle to him)

Here's to you, my man. May you always, always find that angle.

Russ smiles --

BY THE DOOR

Nick shows up. Watches them from the doorway, doesn't really want to go in. Gail walks in, stands with him.

GAIL

Come on. Don't be a sore loser.

She leads him to the table. Scott sees them, makes 'shushing' gestures like a kid who's been caught.

SCOTT

Oh oh. I think I'm in trouble.

Nick stands there, doesn't want to get dragged in.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

SCOTT (cont'd)
Hey, Nick. What's going on? Catch anything good on the news today?

Nick shakes his head, containing himself.

SCOTT (cont'd)
I do believe we have a first here, ladies and gentlemen. For your entertainment pleasure, allow me to present the great, and the speechless, Nick Howland.
(at Nick)
Say it ain't so, Nick.

Nick shakes his head, ponderous. Then fixes Scott.

NICK
You're fired.

Which totally takes the steam out of Scott -- he does a double take, his mind's not at its clearest anyway, and reels back --

SCOTT
What?

NICK
You heard me. You disobeyed a direct order.

Scott looks around, stunned and confused. The others are also speechless. Scott looks at Nick, totally thrown --

NICK (cont'd)
You behaved recklessly and irresponsibly... You put other lives at risk...
(beat, then cracks a smile)
And you got us one fuck of a story.
Drinks are on me.

Takes a beat for Scott to get it -- meantime Russ, who knows Nick too well, high fives him -- then Nick wags his finger at him.

NICK (cont'd)
You... You ought to know better.

RUSS
Hey, don't blame me, I just go where I'm told.

Nick looks at Scott. Scott eyes him back. A small nod, an understanding of sorts. For the time being...

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (2)

60

ANGLE ON LAURA

She watches Scott partying away, king for the night. Should have been her night. She gets tired of putting on a brave face and drifts away to the bar, alone.

RUSS joins her, sits down next to her. She looks at him. He knows what she's feeling.

RUSS (cont'd)
Hey... Come on, cheer up...
There'll be other stories...

She nods halfheartedly...

61 INT. SCOTT'S ROOM, HOTEL - DAY

61

Morning light stabbing into the room. Scott stirs in bed. The Spanish babe's with him. She moans and turns over.

He sits up, hung over, rubs his head. Looks around. His eyes settle by the door to his room.

There's another note waiting.

62 INT. LOBBY, HOTEL - DAY

62

Scott, in his towelling robe and messy hair, is waving the note and kicking up a storm with the MANAGER and the RECEPTIONISTS.

SCOTT
What kind of dump are you running here? People can just waltz in and out of here and do what they want, just like that?

Nick, trailed by AJ, hurries over --

NICK
Alright, calm down, let's just --

SCOTT
(interrupting, shoving note in his face)
I'm not gonna calm down. These jokers don't know the first thing about --

NICK
(interrupting, shouting)
Scott. Calm down.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

Scott stops his rant. Nick takes the note, hands it to AJ.

NICK (cont'd)
We'll deal with this. Just calm
down.

He nods at the Manager and leads Scott away, glances at AJ who reads the note. AJ nods.

AJ
They know he was at the mosque
yesterday.

NICK
Okay. Let's get this sorted out
before it gets completely out of
hand.

63 EXT. AGRICULTURE BUILDING, UNIVERSITY - DAY

63

Laura walks past a small sign announcing it to be the agriculture department and enters the building.

64 INT. HALLWAY, AGRICULTURE BUILDING, UNIVERSITY - DAY

64

The hallway's empty, except for Laura who walks up to an older, grey haired man with a satchel who's locking his office, on his way out.

LAURA
Professor Muneef?

PROF MUNEEF
Yes?

LAURA
My name is Laura Boden. I was
hoping you had a few minutes.

PROF MUNEEF
What is this about?

LAURA
I'm doing a story about the
university. I was wondering if you
could help me get some background
information.

PROF MUNEEF
I'm late for a class. You can walk
with me if you like.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

LAURA

I think it might be better if we
talked in private.

(beat)

It's about a recent appointment.

He looks at her for a beat, clearly rattled.

PROF MUNEEF

I'm sorry, I can't help you.

He starts walking away. She follows.

LAURA

Professor, please. If you have
something to say, now's the time to
say it. Before it's too late. No
one has to know we talked.

PROF MUNEEF

I'm sorry --

LAURA

Our people appointed him. If you
think they're making a big mistake,
help me fix it.

(beat)

You can't expect them to know
everything.

(beat)

Help me fix this.

He stops. Looks around, sees there's no one there. Looks at
her. And nods...

65 EXT. CPA HQ - DAY

65

The ex-palace: big, brutal, oppressive. Major security at the
gates outside, mirrors checking under cars, the works.

Which is where we FIND Nick, Scott, and AJ, at the guard post
with a MARINE SENTRY checking out their papers.

The soldier looks at them, then at AJ. He hands them back their
press cards.

MARINE SENTRY

You can go inside.

(re: AZ)

He waits here.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

NICK

He works with us. He's an employee
of the network.

MARINE SENTRY

He waits out here.

End of story. Nick wants to press his point, but AJ stops him.

AJ

It's okay.

(beat)

We were never allowed inside before
either.

He glances at the Sentry, hoping he got it before walking away.

66 INT. INTEL OFFICER'S OFFICE, CPA HQ - DAY

66

Nick and Scott sit with BARNHART, a Military Intelligence
officer.

BARNHART

Bet you're glad you went out there
though. That was one hell of a
scoop. You're lucky to be alive.

SCOTT

Tell me about it.

BARNHART

Who shot the pictures?

SCOTT

Russ Walker.

BARNHART

Oh yeah. He's a good guy.

He holds up one of the threat letters, ponders it for a beat.

BARNHART (cont'd)

Look, I don't know what to tell
you. We can try and track down
these guys, but the truth is our
intel on the ground is pretty thin
and what resources we have are
committed to rooting out the hard
cases that are still out there.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

NICK

These people don't seem particularly thrilled to have us around either. It doesn't take a huge leap to see them setting off IED's by your convoys.

BARNHART

Yeah, but we've got people with much bigger grudges to worry about.

(beat)

You winded punched a guy. We've got stacks of people who've lost a relative and are just aching to get even.

SCOTT

So what should I do?

BARNHART

You're saying the guy's brother's no longer at the hospital?

NICK

Yes. I mean, no, he's not.

BARNHART

(makes a doubtful face)

These guys don't give up easily.

(beat)

It's up to you, really. My advice would be to get out of Dodge.

67 EXT. COURTYARD, CPA HQ - DAY

67

Nick and Scott step out of the building, heading for the gate.

SCOTT

Well that was useful.

NICK

Can't say I'm surprised.

SCOTT

Hey, I gave them some great coverage during the war, I made them look real good. You'd think it would count for something.

NICK

Difference is, they needed you back then.

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

67

Scott notices a MAN stepping out of car, in civilian clothing. Scott does a double take: it's the guy from the mosque shooting, the foreigner he noticed.

The man steps into the building. Scott heads back towards the building after him --

SCOTT

(to Nick)

I'll be right back.

(calling out to MAN)

Excuse me! Hey!

68 INT. ENTRANCE HALL, CPA HQ - DAY

68

-- and rushes into the cavernous hall. Scott looks around: a few MILITARY and CIVILIAN men walking back and forth, but no sign of his guy. He stands there, scanning for him. Nothing.

69 INT. AGRICULTURE PROFESSOR'S OFFICE, UNIVERSITY - DAY

69

Laura sits with the Prof. He's showing her a letter.

PROF MUNEEF

This is a memo he sent to the ministry last summer. He was proposing not only that all staff members should be long-standing members of the Party, but that new students who weren't members of the Party should be refused admission, and that graduate students who didn't show a high level of loyalty to the Party should be failed until they did.

(beat)

We all had to dance with the devil, to a certain extent, just to survive. But Al-Azhari, he didn't need to be asked twice...

70 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - NIGHT

70

It's quiet now, everybody's gone. Except for Nick, who sits with AJ. Documents are on the table.

AJ

I think it's clear everyone's lying about this.

(beat)

That's enough for you, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

NICK

No. I need to be sure.

(beat)

I have to talk to the families.

AJ

(beat, not looking forward to it)

We can't see all of them. You have
to choose one.

Nick looks at the four pictures, spread out before him. Studies them for a beat. Then selects the one of the student.

NICK

Him.

71 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - NIGHT

71

Russ takes Scott through all the footage of the Imam's shooting at the editing console. They're fast forwarding through it, looking for something. Scott sees it and --

SCOTT

There. Freeze it right there.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN: The image is hazy.

SCOTT (cont'd)

Can you back up a few frames?

Russ does it.

SCOTT (cont'd)

Yeah, there. See? This guy here.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN: We can barely make out the guy from the shooting and the CPA HQ, standing in the background as blurry shapes rush in front of him.

SCOTT (cont'd)

He was at the palace today. He's got military intel stamped on his forehead, don't you think?

RUSS

(doesn't think much of it)

If anything, I'm amazed they got it right. Marzook should have been right up there on their watch list.

SCOTT

Yeah, I know, but there's something about him.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

RUSS

It's part of the job description.

(beat)

Come on. I don't like to keep my
beers waiting.

72 INT. LIVING ROOM, LOCAL HOME - DAY

72

A simple room. On the walls are big, framed black and white portraits of the dead student, and two other men, older, from a previous era.

Nick's with AJ. Sitting across from them are the student's FATHER, a couple of other male RELATIVES, and a younger BROTHER, around fifteen. The student's MOTHER is also there, with another two WOMEN comforting her. The women sit further away, and aren't part of the discussion.

Nick watches uncomfortably as the father talks in pained tones to AJ. He's clearly stating his sadness and frustration, trying hard not to tear up, taking a break to steady himself.

AJ listens attentively, as does Nick -- who discretely glances over at the mother. She meets his gaze before he turns back to the father.

AJ

Braheem was studying architecture.
They were optimistic. There's a
lot to rebuild...

(beat, more discreet)

Beyond that, they're sticking to
the official story.

NICK

(a beat)

Okay.

A pained WAIL comes from upstairs. Nick notices the student's mother flinching, exchanging worried looks with the other women. The father looks concerned too.

A GIRL comes rushing in, says a few words to the mother. She nods, stands up, glances at the father, and at Nick, and leaves.

Nick looks at AJ, quietly --

NICK (cont'd)

Did you catch any of that?

AJ just nods discretely, like 'not now'.

73 INT. UNIVERSITY, PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

73

The hall is crowded with REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN. The Dean, AL-AZHARI, is fielding questions from them. BODYGUARDS stand nearby, as does a US MINDER in fatigues.

LAURA is there, with RUSS. Inching her way forward, watching, biding her time.

AL-AZHARI

And in closing, I just want to again thank the coalition for giving me the opportunity to help rebuild this great institution and move forward into a new era.

(waves)

Thank you everybody.

He starts to step away from behind the lectern when Laura shoves a mike in his face.

LAURA

Dr Al-Azhari, do you renounce the Baath Party?

He looks at her, thrown, and keeps moving as if to leave.

AL-AZHARI

That's not a question one can answer in a few words.

She blocks his way, keeping the mike in his face, Russ's lamp lighting up his face --

LAURA

(interrupting)

It's a pretty straightforward question. Do you renounce the Baath regime, yes or no?

AL-AZHARI

It's not that simple. The party has a long history, it stands for a very broad ideology --

LAURA

(interrupting)

I just want a yes or a no, Dr Al-Azhari. Do you renounce the Baath party?

The dean looks around, clearly troubled. His MILITARY MINDER takes his hand and pushes Laura aside, dragging him through the crowd --

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

MINDER

Okay, everybody. This conference is over, thank you very much.

LAURA

Excuse me, the dean didn't answer my question --

MINDER

(interrupting, very firm)
I said thank you very much.

They watch him go, Russ filming every step of the way --

74 EXT. DEAD STUDENT'S HOUSE, POOR SUBURB - DUSK

74

Nightfall. Nick sits in AJ's GMC, watching the dead student's house, watching AJ who talks to an OLDER MAN outside the house next door before nodding his thanks and heading back.

He climbs into the car.

AJ

Braheem has a sister. She's twelve.

(beat)

She was playing in that field over there ten days ago. Another girl picked something up. An unexploded cluster bomb. Needless to say, the girl's dead.

NICK

What about his sister?

AJ

She still has shrapnel fragments in her skull. She needs microsurgery or she'll eventually die, but they don't have the equipment. So they sent her home. There's nothing more they can do for her here.

(beat)

They can do it in Jordan. But it costs money.

NICK

Which they don't have.

AJ

Braheem told the neighbor she was going to have the operation next week.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

A beat.

NICK

Where's the money coming from?

AJ looks at him. They're on the same wavelength.

Then he notices something across the street, at the house's entrance. Nick follows his gaze:

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

A CAR pulls up. A battered, old BMW. THREE GUYS are in it, unshaven, rough looking. The driver BEEPS the horn.

The dead student's YOUNGER BROTHER steps out of the house. He looks nervous, darting glances around. He goes to the car, exchanges a few words with the guys in it. He nods, almost looks resigned to something. The car pulls off.

Nick looks at AJ.

NICK (cont'd)

What's a dead American soldier worth these days?

AJ

Enough.

Nick climbs out of the car. AJ goes after him --

AJ (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Nick, wait --

But Nick is walking across to the young boy who sees him and walks up the street. Nick speeds up, followed by AJ --

NICK

Wait. Please.

The boy hurries on. Nick chases him, running now. He catches up to him, as does a panting AJ. The boy starts shouting angrily. Nick does his best to calm him down.

NICK (cont'd)

Shwayy shwayy. I'm a friend, okay?

(to AJ)

Tell him I'm a friend, will you?

AJ does.

The boy shuts up, brushes him off, angry. And scared.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED: (2)

74

NICK (cont'd)

Ask him... Ask him if he wants to end up like his brother or if he'd rather have his sister treated.

AJ does. The boy doesn't answer, more nervous now. Nick looks him in the eye.

NICK (cont'd)

I know about how Braheem was going to get the money. I don't care about that. I just don't want you to end up like him. Okay?

AJ translates. The boy looks at Nick. Very nervous now.

Then he looks down and nods...

75 EXT. ARMY BASE - DAY

75

Nick waits, looking around, impatient. Then he sees him: THOMPSON, the black driver from the night shooting. Nick smiles and walks towards him.

76 EXT. DEAD STUDENT'S HOUSE, POOR SUBURB - DAY

76

Nick and AJ stand outside the house. Two HUMVEES and an AMBULANCE are parked outside. SOLDIERS stand guard as TWO MEDICS carry a twelve year old GIRL out on a stretcher, an IV line dangling over her.

Also with them are her family: her father, mother, other siblings, and the younger brother.

NICK

(to the family)

She's going to be fine. They're going to take good care of her.

AJ translates. They nod, in silence.

Nick looks at the father, who's stern faced, proud, angry. Then at the boy's mother.

She looks at Nick, holds his look. An unspoken thanks, as she pulls her son closer to her...

77 INT. LOBBY, HOTEL - NIGHT

77

Laura walks through the lobby. She crosses a BRITISH REPORTER, walking with a colleague.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

REPORTER

Hey, Laura. Congrats.

LAURA

What for?

REPORTER

Didn't you hear?

(beat)

The new dean. He's just --

(makes air quotes with his
fingers)

"resigned".

OFF Laura, beaming --

78 EXT. ROOF, HOTEL - NIGHT

78

Nick and Gail sit in their spot, staring out at the night. Tracers and the occasional CRACK of distant gunfire are still there...

GAIL

So you're off the hook.

(beat)

I guess that means I owe you my
life.

NICK

You know what the worst part was?

(beat)

Sitting there, talking to that
boy's father, intruding on his
grief, and all the time hoping
he'll tell me something that will
help me prove his son was a killer.

GAIL

A potential killer.

NICK

Yes.

GAIL

Do you think he knew?

NICK

He didn't know... None of them
knew... Just the brother...

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

NICK (cont'd)

What kind of world are we living in where a nineteen year old boy has to go out and murder people just to get the money to save his sister's life?

GAIL

Welcome to planet Earth.

(beat)

I hope you come in peace.

Nick manages a haunted smile...

79 INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY

79

Laura walks in, looking for Tarek. He's not there. She sees his ASSISTANT there.

LAURA

Hi -- is Tarek around?

ASSISTANT

No, I'm sorry, he's out.

LAURA

When will he be back?

ASSISTANT

Two, three days maybe.

LAURA

Is he okay?

ASSISTANT

(makes a pained face)

A good friend of his died. He's with the family.

LAURA

Who died?

ASSISTANT

Professor Matar. From the university.

(beat)

They shot him yesterday.

80 INT. NICK'S ROOM, HOTEL - NIGHT

80

Nick's on the phone.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

NICK
I'm sorry, Em, I just...

EMMA
The war's over, Nick.

NICK
I know. I just need to stick
around a bit longer. It's
important to me.

81 INT. BEDROOM, HOWLAND HOME, LONDON - NIGHT

81

Emma's on the bed.

EMMA
How much longer?

INTERCUT WITH NICK

NICK
Not long.

A beat.

EMMA
I'm worried, Nick.

NICK
Come on, Em. It's not that bad.
I'm not going to die here.

EMMA
I'm not you dying there that I'm
scared of. It's us.

NICK
It won't be long. I promise.

EMMA
Don't. Say anything you want, but
don't make promises you can't keep.

NICK
Okay, I promise.

She laughs, despite herself. A bittersweet laugh.

NICK (cont'd)
I love you.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

EMMA

Me too...

(that's the problem...)

OFF NICK. Alone. In his room...

And we FADE TO BLACK.

END OF THE EPISODE