

DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT

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Pilot Script

28 July 2004

FADE IN:

1 **EXT. SUBURB STREETS, BAGHDAD - 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.

SUPER A LEGEND that reads:

BAGHDAD, JUNE 2004

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 TOMKINS, 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?

(CONTINUED)

PREWITT

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

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?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

PREWITT (cont'd)  
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 --

-- 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, BAGHDAD - 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 --

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.

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

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 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?

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.

(CONTINUED)

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, firm)

Just do it. Now. Her too.

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

PREWITT (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.

PREWITT

(into radio)

Give me three warning shots.

THOMPSON fires THREE SHOTS over the car.

It keeps coming.

SOLDIER (EPPERS)

He's not stopping, Sir.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (3)

3

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.

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

SMASH CUT TO CREDITS...

Then FADE IN on:

4 **EST. BAGHDAD - 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. Stacks of newspapers and videocassettes litter the place.

A couple of LOCAL STAFFERS hurry about busily as we FIND Nick standing with "AJ" -- ABU JAMEEL, 50s, thinning hair, glasses perched on the tip of his nose, and potbellied. They're watching a bank of three mismatched TVs, all switched onto news channels.

CLOSE on the one they're focused on: Al-Jazeera, where a LOCAL REPORTER's interviewing some FIGHTERS with hooded faces and Kalashnikovs.

NICK

How do they find these guys?

AJ

They know under which rocks to look.

NICK

Even if we did, they wouldn't talk to us, would they?

AJ

'Talk' to you? No.

NICK

(nods, frustrated)

What about Al-Ghazzawi? He'd talk to us, wouldn't he? I want to do a piece on his little pipeline protection scam.

AJ

That we can do. As long as you promise not to use the words 'protection' and 'scam' when you see him.

(CONTINUED)

NICK  
(he knows)  
I'll try and remember that.

He leaves as RUSS WALKER -- 39, American, no nonsense, a hard life etched into his tough face and rough hands -- walks in, beelining for the coffee machine. He notices the Arab reporter now on screen.

RUSS  
Would you stop obsessing about these guys already? They've got the home court advantage.

NICK  
I'm not obsessing.

RUSS  
My mistake.  
(pours coffee)  
So how was your little outing with Ms Moynahan last night?

NICK  
Rather unpleasant, actually.

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

NICK  
Not exactly, no.

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 last month's expense report for you.

NICK  
(takes it from her)  
Don't forget they've moved the CPA briefing up to eleven o'clock today.

LAURA  
How could I miss it? By the way, CBC ran a great story last night about all these orphans in Paradise Square getting high on glue. I taped it for you, it's in the VCR.

(CONTINUED)

Nick nods, slightly annoyed, like 'we should have gotten that'.

RUSS

(sips coffee, grimaces)

Jeez.

(looks at Laura who's noticed)

Can't you do something about this?

There's got to be a way to get us  
some coffee that doesn't taste like  
strained mud.

LAURA

Apart from the subtle distinction  
that I'm a fully fledged  
correspondent and not your coffee  
girl -- it's the water.

RUSS

It's always the water.

LAURA

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 it's a huge loss.

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

RUSS

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

LAURA (O.S.)

(playful)

American git.

RUSS

Limey bitch.

SCOTT (O.S.)

Are we interrupting something?

(CONTINUED)

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)  
Howland, 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 --

Scott nods, Jake extends his hand, clearly a fan --

JAKE  
Great to meet you. That stuff you shot in Chechnya, it was unreal.

Russ just shrugs, uncomfortable with the adulation as Laura comes back in.

NICK  
And this little saucy vixen is our very own Laura Boden.

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. If there was one unit to be with, that was the one. It felt like they won the war single handed.

(at Nick)  
Bet you could have used some of that action, huh?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (4)

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 what's going on? Are your bags  
packed yet?

NICK

Almost. Hendrickson's meant to be  
here at the end of the week.

SCOTT

Bet you can't wait to get out of  
here, huh? It's got to be getting  
better, though -- they open a  
Starbucks here yet?

RUSS

(to Nick)

The man speaks my language.

NICK

And I can see that years of hard  
work are 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 rushes in from the next room, already on his  
cellphone --

AJ

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

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (5)

5

NICK  
Make it two.

AJ rushes out --

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 do the  
most blissful bergamot and  
eucalyptus rub.

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.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

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.

NICK  
How big?

AJ  
Big enough, my friend.

Nick turns to Scott, pointing out Jameel --

NICK  
You two go with Junior and cover  
the casualties --

SCOTT  
Junior?

JAMEEL  
(points at AJ)  
Abu Jameel.  
(re: himself)  
Jameel.

NICK  
(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)  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (2)

6

SCOTT (cont'd)  
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.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

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.

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  
Just 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 the Al-Jazeera REPORTER from the earlier TV report,  
wrapping up a piece to camera. Their eyes meet. Nick nods,  
acknowledging him. Russ watches him too.

NICK  
Man, these guys are fast.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (2)

9

RUSS

But you're not obsessing. That's good.

Nick frowns at him. Russ looks around.

RUSS (cont'd)

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?

AJ

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

10 INT./EXT. TRAVELLING WITH SCOTT, JAKE AND JAMEEL - DAY

10

Rushing through traffic. Jake's loading and prepping his camera.

SCOTT

So who was that babe?

JAMEEL

I'm sorry?

SCOTT

That woman. Who went with the others?

JAMEEL

Aah. Miss Gail.

SCOTT

Is she with the bureau?

JAMEEL

No. Miss Gail, she is independent.  
(gestures like taking snapshots)  
Camerawoman, you know? Takes  
fantastic pictures.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

JAMEEL (cont'd)  
(grins)  
She's very beautiful, no?

SCOTT  
(grins)  
Is she? I hadn't noticed.

JAMEEL  
(smiles, reads him)  
You're a danger boy, yes?

SCOTT  
Danger boy? Yeah. I like that.

11 **EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY**

11

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

12 **INT. HALLS, HOSPITAL - DAY**

12

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  
pop a bullet in my head before you  
let them wheel me into this dump.

JAKE  
No worries.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

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?

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?

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

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 --

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.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (3)

12

SCOTT

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

SORAYA

I have patients waiting.  
(beat)  
Why are you here anyway?

SCOTT

Scott Noveck. I'm covering 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.

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.

13 **EXT. TERRACED HOUSE, LONDON - NIGHT**

13

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

EMMA (O.S.)

It 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.

14 **INT. BEDROOM, HOWLAND HOME, LONDON - NIGHT**

14

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?

15 **INT. NICK'S ROOM, HOTEL - NIGHT**

15

Nick's alone too.

NICK  
Yeah, he's here.

INTERCUT WITH EMMA AT HOME

EMMA  
What about Hendrickson?

NICK  
End of the week, I think.

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.

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  
(playful)  
Just as long as you're aware of what's at risk here.

NICK  
Oh? And what's that?

EMMA  
Just a couple of months of pent-up horniness that's aching to come out.

NICK  
How aching?

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

EMMA

You know that new Croatian trainer  
down at the gym? He's looking  
tastier by the day.

NICK

I see. I guess I'd better get my  
skates on.

EMMA

Not a bad idea.

There's something about his voice. She can sense he's troubled.

EMMA (cont'd)

Are you alright?

NICK

I'm just tired, that's all.

EMMA

Come home, Nick. Mia misses you.  
I miss you.

NICK

Me too. Kiss her for me, will you?

(beat)

I love you.

EMMA

Love you too.

EMMA

Hangs up. Looks at the phone. Not sure about it.

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...

16 INT. BAR, HOTEL - NIGHT

16

Crowded with foreign press, noisy, smoke, music, some dancing.  
Surprising. TV in a corner over the bar. Scott, Jake, Laura and  
a couple of other REPORTERS are at a table, downing some beers.

(CONTINUED)

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.

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?

(CONTINUED)

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.

She's joined by Gail who watches the TV with her --

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

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.

(CONTINUED)

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. I think he's  
working on his magazine article.

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.

GAIL

Nah. I'll give you first dibs.

17 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - NIGHT**

17

It's late. Everyone's left, the TVs are switched off. No one there except for Nick. He sits alone, at a table, facing his laptop. He isn't typing.

As we MOVE around him, we SEE the screen and realize it's blank. He hasn't typed a word. Just stares at it, blankly.

He picks up a printout of one of Gail's shots of the car getting shot up. Looks at it, through it.

He puts it down and shuts the lid of the laptop. He's not going to be writing anything tonight.

18 **EXT. ROOF, HOTEL - NIGHT**

18

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 half empty 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 bit 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)

You want some company or is this a solo drunk?

NICK

(looks at her for a beat, smiles)  
What do you think?

(CONTINUED)

She sits down next to him, takes the bottle and takes a swig.

GAIL

It was pretty gruesome out there today.

NICK

It's all part of the local charm.

GAIL

They're not just after 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)

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? Guns, or... something.

(CONTINUED)

GAIL

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

NICK

See, that's the problem.

GAIL

What?

NICK

You said 'probably'.

GAIL

And...?

NICK

Probably's not good enough.

GAIL

Nick, you can't expect --

NICK

(interrupting)

What? Come on, Gail. We can't  
shoot people just because they  
'might' want 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 and as it happens, they  
got killed and we're still here.  
Now call me a selfish bitch but  
that's kind of my preferred outcome  
in these situations. Why is this  
such a big deal for you anyway?

NICK

Because I caused it.

GAIL

What are you talking about?

NICK

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

GAIL

So?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (3)

18

NICK

So maybe if I'd kept my mouth shut-

GAIL

(interrupting)

We'd all be dead. Look, Prewitt's a well trained officer. He acted as he saw fit. What did you expect him to do? Our guys are getting picked off out there every day. Prewitt lost four guys himself last week.

(beat)

You probably saved our lives by calling it. How do you know they weren't about to hit us with RPGs?

NICK

How do we know they were?

19 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

19

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

NICK

AJ's got us a chat with Al-Ghazzawi today. Which is handy given that the pipeline was sabotaged yet again early this morning just outside Shirqaat...

RUSS

(to AJ)

Nice timing.

NICK

(to Laura)

Will you let London know it's coming in?

LAURA

Yep.

(reading down notepad)

Which leaves us with the CPA weekly briefing at two.

NICK

Scott?

SCOTT

Sounds like a real hoot.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

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.

LAURA

The upside is, you get to see the  
palace which has got to be the new  
intergalactic benchmark of tat.

SCOTT

(hardly delighted)

Great.

(to Laura)

You wanna be my tour guide?

LAURA

I'd love to, but sadly our internet  
access is down again.

(to Nick)

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.

20 **INT. LOBBY, HOTEL - DAY**

20

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.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

They find Jameel by the bar.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

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

JAMEEL

(thrown)

Where is it you want to go?

SCOTT

Everywhere.

21 **EXT. HOTEL - DAY**

21

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...

22 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY**

22

Active. TVs are on. Staffers working on computers, filing videotapes. Nick goes over a document with a staffer, sends him on his way, and looks around, sees AJ by the window, on his cellphone. He joins him as AJ hangs up.

NICK

I need you for something.

23 **EXT. STREET, SCENE OF ROADSIDE SHOOTOUT - DAY**

23

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

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. They didn't see anything to justify the shooting. He says they were just driving along slowly.

NICK

They don't know who they were, do they?

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 by 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.

(CONTINUED)

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)

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)

*Marhaba.*

The boy doesn't answer. AJ joins them.

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.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (3)

23

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 palm is a bunch of bullets.

Which greatly piques Nick's interest.

NICK (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.

24 **INT./EXT. TRAVELLING WITH NICK AND AJ - DAY**

24

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?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

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.

25 **INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY**

25

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

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.

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)

Besides, you probably have some important reports to send back to the civilized world.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: (2)

25

TAREK (CONT'D)

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.

26 **EXT. POOL, HOTEL - DAY**

26

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.

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 bussing 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.

(CONTINUED)

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's Nick doing?

RUSS

You know Nick. He's not saying  
much, but it's on his mind big  
time.

GAIL

He should just forget about it and  
move on. There's no point. It's a  
lose-lose situation.

RUSS

Move on? What are you talking  
about? He loves her.

GAIL

(gets it)  
That's not what I'm talking about.  
Didn't he tell you about our little  
mishap?

RUSS

No, I thought you were talking  
about Hendrickson and going home.  
(beat)  
What mishap?

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

No.

PREWITT

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

NICK

I'm afraid I wasn't.

PREWITT

Big mistake. You would have seen a lot more action 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. Were there any indications, was there something I wasn't aware of, perhaps some intelligence about that area, that influenced how the situation was handled?

PREWITT

Not really.

NICK

So what are the rules of engagement exactly? For roadblocks, at night.

PREWITT

Well, what you saw is pretty much it. The flares were there, they know they're supposed to stop, and if they don't, we assume they're hostile.

(CONTINUED)

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 and for 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? -- 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?

PREWITT

(holds up a letter)  
Listen to me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (3)

27

PREWITT (cont'd)

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 do 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.

28 **EXT. BUILDING, ARMY BASE - DAY**

28

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...

29 **INT. BAR, HOTEL - NIGHT**

29

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

(CONTINUED)

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.

LAURA

It would also put us all out of work.

GAIL

Hey, go easy on the guy.

(to Scott)

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

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT

You should stick around. I get better as the night goes on.

GAIL

Really?

SCOTT

So I'm told.

GAIL

(flirtatious)

And just how do I know that's true?

SCOTT

There's only one way to find out.  
(flashes his killer smile)  
What do you say?

GAIL

(turns to the others)

And there it is. Thank you very much.

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

Laura watches her bask in her self-confidence.

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 took the bet, you moron?  
Like you don't know me?

JAKE

(laughing)

The look on your face alone was worth the twenty, mate.

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

He edges away and walks over to him.

SCOTT

(aside, to Gail)

I wasn't kidding.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED: (3)

29

GAIL

Just in case you missed it -- I was.

Laura notices Nick go. She glances over at Russ. He's also noticed it.

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

30

Nick sits in a quiet corner with Thompson, with a couple of beers. Thompson's uneasy and speaks with a Southern clip.

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 never 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.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

A beat. Thompson thinks about it.

THOMPSON

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

31 **INT. SCOTT'S ROOM, HOTEL - DAY**

31

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 handwriting on it.

32 **INT. RESTAURANT, HOTEL - DAY**

32

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.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

AJ (cont'd)  
Doesn't mean we liked those  
butchers.

NICK  
(a beat, holds up the student's  
picture)  
What were they doing out there that  
night?

AJ  
They're saying they were on their  
way home from a friend's engagement  
party. 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.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: (2)

32

SCOTT (cont'd)

What?

33 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

33

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.

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 Marines stationed there. You could have called them.

SCOTT

I didn't need to, did I?

NICK

Well it's too bad you didn't, cause if you had, your biggest fan would probably be locked up in some cage right now and you wouldn't be getting death threats from him.

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT

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

NICK

You don't get it, do you? You're not an embed anymore, alright? The guided tour with the 3rd Cavalry, that's over now. You're not driving around in an armored personnel carrier with a platoon of jarheads watching over you. This is it. We're it. And I'm sure the last thing AJ wants is to have some bullet holes in his nice new truck or your blood all over his seats.

AJ

It's true. Jameel'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

Until Hendrickson gets here, I'm in charge of our little family, alright? So here's what we're going to do. AJ, you're going to try and find out who that wounded man at the hospital was, and let's try and reach his brother and broker some sort of peace.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: (2)

33

NICK (cont'd)

(turns to Scott)

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

34 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY**

34

Hectic, news channels on. Laura comes up to Nick who's in a heated conversation into the phone --

NICK

I give you an exclusive with a tribal kingpin who's interfering with the oil revenues of an entire country that's just been ravaged by war -- and you just shut us out to give three whole minutes to some pink haired pop star getting a divorce?

35 **INT. NEWSROOM, HEAD OFFICE, LONDON - DAY**

35

Very different: big, sleek, buzzing. On the phone is JONATHAN BOOTHE, mid-40s, who runs the international desk.

BOOTHE

Key word here is popular, Nick. A very popular pop star.

BACK WITH NICK

NICK

Yeah, well... make sure you call me the second she gets her belly pierced.

He hangs up, fuming. Looks up at Laura.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

NICK (cont'd)  
If I ever find out you're even  
remotely into her music, you're  
fired.

LAURA  
(like 'as if')  
Please.

She's still hanging around.

NICK  
What?

LAURA  
They don't care, do they?

NICK  
Who?

LAURA  
Back home. They just care about  
what's happening to our boys.

NICK  
(wondering himself for a beat)  
We're here to make sure they don't.

36 **EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY**

36

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.

(CONTINUED)

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.

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)  
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?

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: (2)

36

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: (3)

36

RUSS (cont'd)  
Maybe we can do a voice over later,  
how about that?

37 **EXT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY**

37

Laura enters the shop. She looks determined.

38 **INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY**

38

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.

(CONTINUED)

TAREK

I'm sorry, have we met?

LAURA

Laura Boden.

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.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

38

LAURA  
What have you got?

TAREK  
A lot of oil, I'm told.

LAURA  
That'll do.

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  
Farouki? What about him?

TAREK  
I thought you were the reporter.

She looks at him. Smiles.

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

39

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

NICK  
Have you decided what you're gonna  
do?

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

39

RUSS

I don't know yet. Might go back to Moscow.

NICK

Is Anya still there?

RUSS

Oh, yeah. Real question is, will she take me back...

(beat)

Listen, Gail told me. About the other night.

Nick nods.

RUSS (cont'd)

You can't beat yourself up about that. So what if it does prove to be a mistake? Wouldn't be the first time.

NICK

Maybe I can stop it from happening again.

RUSS

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

(beat)

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

NICK

Something like that.

RUSS

(beat)

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

40 **EXT. POOL, HOTEL - DAY**

40

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

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

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?

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

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.

(CONTINUED)

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)

...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 Al-Jazeera 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.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: (3)

40

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

GAIL  
Yep. Bastard gets the best 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.

41 **EXT. HOTEL - DAY**

41

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

42 **INT. LOBBY, HOTEL - DAY**

42

Scott hurries through the lobby, pulling his shoes on, cell jammed against his ear, and reaches the door --

SCOTT  
Come on, Jake. Pick up the damn  
phone.

-- and runs into Nick who's just walking in.

NICK  
Whoa. Where the hell do you think  
you're going?

SCOTT  
(urgent)  
Did you see Gail?

NICK  
(like 'what does it matter')  
Yes, she just left.

SCOTT  
She's following some guy from Al  
Jazeera --

NICK  
I don't care. You're not supposed  
to leave the hotel, remember?

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT

Fuck that. She's onto something.

NICK

Well good luck to her. You're staying put.

SCOTT

I am, huh?

NICK

Yes.

(beat)

That is, if you want to stay with the bureau.

SCOTT

You can't fire me.

NICK

Watch me.

SCOTT

You think London's gonna go for that?

NICK

Why don't we ask them? I'm sure insurance premiums and lawsuits from 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

So you got lucky once --

SCOTT

Hey, it's once more than you've had lately, isn't it? But then maybe it isn't about luck. You tell me, Nick. You still up for it? Cause right now I don't see you chasing after her.

NICK

(beat, angry, controls himself)

So what's it going to be?

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED: (2)

42

SCOTT

Fine.

(turns away and storms off)  
Just get your scrawny ass on that plane already, will you? While there's still a war on.

43 INT. BAR, HOTEL - NIGHT

43

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 Farouki, they're the ones who'll define the future of this place. If our people are making the wrong choices, they need to know about it.

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. Pensive.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You okay?

NICK

I'm fine.

LAURA

(a beat, studies him)  
Battle fatigue?

NICK

Too many fronts.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

LAURA

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

NICK

Yeah...

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

44 **EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY**

44

Laura and Jameel walk in to the administration building.

45 **INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, UNIVERSITY - DAY**

45

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

46 **EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY**

46

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

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.

47 **INT. HOSPITAL - DAY**

47

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' shrug and hurries off.

48 **EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY**

48

AJ stands by his car, on his cellphone.

AJ  
I'm sorry, my friend. He's not  
here anymore.

49 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY**

49

With Nick, on the phone --

NICK  
Okay. Let's sit down when you get  
here. We've got to sort this out  
before he gets himself killed.

BACK WITH AJ

He glances at his watch, thinking.

AJ  
Give me an hour.

50 **EXT. SCENE OF ROADSIDE SHOOTOUT - DAY**

50

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.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

OFF AJ -- thinking...

51 **INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY**

51

Laura's with Tarek.

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.

52 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - NIGHT**

52

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.

(CONTINUED)

NICK (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.

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  
an engagement party. 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)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED: (2)

52

AJ (cont'd)

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.

AJ

It can't be done.

Nick looks at his watch. Looks at AJ.

NICK

Show me.

53 **EXT. STREETS/TRAVELLING WITH NICK AND AJ - NIGHT**

53

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 crawl to 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.

(CONTINUED)

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...

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.

His face takes on a more serious, determined look.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED: (2)

53

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)

Maybe it's time we started helping ourselves.

54 **INT. NICK'S ROOM, HOTEL - NIGHT**

54

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

NICK

You did?

55 **INT. KITCHEN, HOWLAND HOME, LONDON - NIGHT**

55

Emma's reading a magazine, cup of coffee in hand, while Nick's 5-year old daughter MIA is on the phone, all excited.

MIA

And Miss Elizabeth said my reading was so good now that I can move on to the yellow books.

INTERCUT WITH NICK

NICK

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

MIA

Mummy said you're coming home soon.

NICK

(conflicted)

I am, sweetie. Very soon.

(beat)

You want to put mummy back on the phone for me?

MIA

Okay.

She hands it to Emma.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

EMMA

So I called up a couple of those small hotels I told you about in the Cotswolds, and they're pretty booked up at the weekends. I'm going to have to leave a deposit. Do you have a definite date yet?

NICK

No. I'll confirm Hendrickson's arrival date tomorrow.

EMMA

I might be able to get something the weekend after next. Mum's happy to drive down and stay with Mia.

NICK

(annoyed with himself)  
Don't do anything yet, okay? Let me confirm it first.

EMMA

(hesitant, sensing something off)  
Okay. Just -- just let me know.

56 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY**

56

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 his big sermon this afternoon.

SCOTT

(to AJ)  
What's happening with my penpals?

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.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

(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 John Smith out 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 Jake)

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?

SCOTT

(fed up)

You know where to find me.

Scott leaves the room.

NICK

(to AJ)

We need to find these people.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: (2)

56

NICK (cont'd)  
(turns to Laura)  
Laura? You want to cover the  
speech?

LAURA  
(thrilled)  
Sure.

NICK  
Jake?

They break off.

AJ  
(aside, to Nick)  
I think I have something for you.

57 **INT./EXT. TRAVELLING WITH LAURA AND JAKE - DAY**

57

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.

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?

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

JAMEEL

This is the nearest 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 nothing I can do.

She looks at her watch. And fumes.

58 **INT./EXT. TRAVELLING WITH NICK AND AJ - DAY**

58

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.

59 **EXT. TRAFFIC JAM - DAY**

59

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

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.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

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.

60 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

60

Scott passes a RINGING PHONE. He picks it up.

INTERCUT WITH LAURA

LAURA

Scott. Is Nick there?

SCOTT

No. 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 --

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

LAURA (cont'd)

FUCK!

More SHOTS --

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

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 tell him not to take the Jumhuriya bridge!

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.

61 **INT. ELECTRONICS SHOP - DAY**

61

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

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...

62 **EXT. MOSQUE - DAY**

62

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.

And he just walks towards the mosque. Scott follows.

63 **INT. MOSQUE COURTYARD - DAY**

63

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.

64 **INT. MOSQUE COURTYARD - DAY (LATER)**

64

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.

RUSS

Halleluah.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

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)

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 --

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

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: (2)

64

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!

65 **INT. STAIRS, MOSQUE - DAY**

65

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

66 **EXT. MOSQUE BACK COURTYARD - DAY**

66

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

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

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 through 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 --

67 **INT. BAR, HOTEL - DAY**

67

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

Hola, Scott. Nice going.

SCOTT

Hola! 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)

67 CONTINUED:

67

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.

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)

67 CONTINUED: (2)

67

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... Cheer up... There'll be  
other stories...

She nods halfheartedly...

68 **INT. SCOTT'S ROOM, HOTEL - DAY**

68

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.

69 **INT. LOBBY, HOTEL - DAY**

69

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)

69 CONTINUED:

69

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. We have to end this before  
it gets completely out of hand.

70 **EXT. AGRICULTURE BUILDING, UNIVERSITY - DAY**

70

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

71 **INT. HALLWAY, AGRICULTURE BUILDING, UNIVERSITY - DAY**

71

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)

71 CONTINUED:

71

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...

72 **EXT. CPA HQ - DAY**

72

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: AJ)

He waits here.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

72

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.

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

73

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)

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 floored a guy. We've got stacks of people who've lost a relative and who'll do anything 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.

74 **EXT. COURTYARD, CPA HQ - DAY**

74

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

SCOTT

Well that was useful.

NICK

You're 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)

74 CONTINUED:

74

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!

75 **INT. ENTRANCE HALL, CPA HQ - DAY**

75

-- 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.

76 **INT. AGRICULTURE PROFESSOR'S OFFICE, UNIVERSITY - DAY**

76

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 Farouki, he didn't need to be asked twice...

77 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - NIGHT**

77

It's quiet now, everybody's gone. Except for Nick, who's with AJ, pacing angrily. Scott's death notes are on the table.

NICK

Come on, AJ. That's twice now someone's walked right up to his room. And no one saw anything?

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

AJ

No.

NICK

That doesn't bode well for any of us, does it? What's stopping them from putting a bullet in him right here?

AJ

They've got more guards at the doors now. And at the gate. But you know the situation. They're looking for bombs, not biros. If someone really wants to sneak in...

NICK

Well that's just great.

AJ

(beat)

I agree with that officer you saw. I think he should leave.

NICK

Leave? Not a chance. Not after yesterday. He thinks he's bloody invincible.

AJ

I thought you all did.

Nick shrugs, rubs his eyes. Stares out into nothing.

AJ (cont'd)

You're still thinking about those four.

NICK

Yeah.

AJ

They're all lying, my friend. It's clear. There was no engagement party.

Nick barely nods. It's still nagging at him. AJ sees it.

CLOSE ON AJ: he knows he has to do more...

78 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - NIGHT**

78

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 deserved to be right up there on their watch list.

SCOTT

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

RUSS

It's part of the job description.  
(beat)  
Come on. I don't like to keep my beers waiting.

79 **INT. LIVING ROOM, LOCAL HOME - DAY**

79

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.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

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'.

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

80

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)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

AJ (cont'd)

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 very soon.

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?

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (2)

80

AJ

Enough.

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

AJ (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.

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...

81 **EXT. ARMY BASE - DAY**

81

Nick stands with Thompson. Talking, Thompson nodding.

Prewitt walks out of his quarters. Nick sees him. Thompson nods and walks away as Nick walks towards Prewitt, who sees him and watches him come up to him, hardly welcoming.

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

82

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

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...

83 **INT. UNIVERSITY, PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY**

83

The hall is crowded with REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN. The Dean, Farouki, 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.

FAROUKI

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 Farouki, do you renounce the Baath Party?

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

(CONTINUED)

FAROUKI

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?

FAROUKI

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  
Farouki. 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 --

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 --

And MATCH-CUT to the report now on TV:

The Minder pulling Farouki away as Laura speaks to CAMERA

LAURA (ON SCREEN)

The dean's refusal to renounce the  
previous regime can only underscore  
the widespread unease among faculty  
members who feel betrayed and let  
down by the CPA's questionable  
selection process...

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED: (2)

83

And we PULL BACK to show we're watching it at --

84 **INT. BAR, HOTEL - NIGHT**

84

Where WHOOPS of applause and cheers erupt at our GROUP's table for a chuffed Laura...

85 **EXT. ROOF, HOTEL - NIGHT**

85

Later now. 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...

A beat. Booze, tracers. Surreal.

GAIL

I'm gonna miss our little fireside chats, you know that?

86 **INT. LOBBY, HOTEL - DAY**

86

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

REPORTER

Hey, Laura. Congrats.

LAURA

What for?

REPORTER

Didn't you hear?

(beat)

The new dean. He's just --

(makes quotation marks with his fingers)

"resigned".

OFF Laura, beaming --

87 **INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY**

87

Busy, as always. Nick takes the phone from a waiting STAFFER.

NICK

Thanks.

(into phone)

Jonathan. What are we going to do about this?

88 **INT. NEWSROOM, HEAD OFFICE, LONDON - DAY**

88

With BOOTHE.

BOOTHE

I'm not calling about Scott. I've just got some bad news for you. It's about Hendrickson.

89 **INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY**

89

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

LAURA

Hi -- is Tarek around?

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

ASSISTANT

No, I'm sorry.

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

I'm sorry... Who was it?

ASSISTANT

Professor Muneef. From the university. He was shot yesterday.

90 INT. OFFICE SUITE, HOTEL - DAY

90

Nick's on the phone.

NICK

The guy broke his leg. It's not exactly my fault, is it?

91 INT. KITCHEN, HOWLAND HOME, LONDON - DAY

91

With Emma.

EMMA

So let them send someone else. It's not your problem.

INTERCUT WITH NICK

NICK

Come on, Em. I can't just leave them here like that.

EMMA

They're adults, Nick. You don't have to baby-sit them. Especially not that American prick.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

NICK

It's not just him. There's Laura,  
and the others.

EMMA

The war's over, Nick. Sooner or  
later, they all end.

NICK

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

EMMA

How much longer?

INTERCUT WITH NICK

NICK

Not 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 chuckle.

NICK (cont'd)

Love you.

EMMA

I know.

92 **EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HOTEL - DAY**

92

Laura's outside the hotel, walking back to the entrance gate. She's still dazed by the bad news. As she reaches the gate, Jameel's car comes out and stops next to her. The passenger window slides down, and Scott smiles out.

SCOTT

Hey. Why the sad face?

It takes her a second to click out of her thoughts.

LAURA

Are you supposed to be out?

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT

I won't tell if you won't.

POV FROM ACROSS THE STREET

Someone's watching them, from behind Laura, seeing Scott in the car.

ANGLE ON THE SIDEWALK

It's the GUY who was watching him earlier, one of the gang from the hospital. He looks left, SEES the normal street activity going on; Looks right, SEES the GUARDS outside the hotel busy checking out a CAR that's waiting to be allowed into the hotel's forecourt.

Slowly, matter of factly, he starts walking towards them, towards Laura's back.

BACK WITH LAURA

SCOTT (cont'd)

So why the long face?

LAURA

I just -- I got some awful news.

BACK WITH THE GUY

Still walking towards her, she's still got his back turned to him. He discretely pulls out a handgun from under his jacket, holds it down by his leg --

BACK WITH LAURA

SCOTT

Why don't you jump in and come with me. My guys are in town, the unit I was embedded with.

BACK WITH THE GUY

And HIS POV, edging ever closer to Laura. He's almost there, his hand's coming up now --

And AT THE GATE

A CAR

Wanting to leave, pulling up behind Jameel's HONKING --

THE GUY

(CONTINUED)

Gets even closer, Laura's head now looming in front of him --

BACK WITH LAURA

LAURA

Thanks, but... I think I just need  
to be alone.

SCOTT

Come on. They're a lot of fun.  
It'll take your mind off things.

ONE OF THE GUARDS

checking the waiting car, noticing Jameel's car blocking the  
exit, looking up to see why it's still there, SEEING Laura  
talking to Scott in the passenger seat --

THE GUY's hand comes up, Laura and Scott now just a few feet  
away, LAURA's right there in his way --

And THE GUARD spotting him, yelling as he raises his AK-47 --

LAURA turns, confused, SEES

THE GUY coming up fast looking rabid, handgun up, about to fire --

Then THE GUARD FIRES --

THE GUY's SHOTS go wild, HITTING the Pajero's windshield and  
right wing --

LAURA and SCOTT, confused by the loud GUNFIRE, Laura ducks and  
recoils as the GUY is hit and falls over --

THE GUARD approaches, on alert, gun still aimed --

LAURA turns, sees the GUY sprawled on the street, blood seeping  
out of him --

CLOSE ON THE DEAD GUY -- This isn't over...

And we FADE TO BLACK.

END OF THE EPISODE