

TANTA

by

Adam Hunault and Ziad Al Tarek

646-660-3941  
abhunault@gmail.com

October 15, 2017

FADE IN:

OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE

Under the opening credits, TWO TV NEWS REPORTS play.

BBC NEWS REPORT

The BBC report is constructed entirely of B-roll from Arab stations. It's narrated by the disembodied voice of the typical BBC ANNOUNCER: rapid, aloof and erudite.

We see two ARAB POLICE OFFICERS standing over a body; a YouTube video of DANCING ARAB MEN in tight clothing; a LIST of names, written in Arabic.

BBC ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

No one knows for sure what set it off this time. Some say it was this video, posted on YouTube, of Iraqi men dancing. All we know is lists like this one began to appear in the streets of Sadr City about a month ago -- lists of homosexuals, or those suspected of being homosexuals.

ARTE NEWS REPORT

A different news report in French from the European station ARTE. It has a very different feel from the BBC -- slower, more personal.

A white, blonde, female REPORTER (35) in a headscarf walks slowly through an POOR BAGHDAD NEIGHBORHOOD.

ARTE REPORTER

(in French, subtitled)

*They are called "tanta." They are called "puppies." They are even called "emo." What they really are is gay men. And they are surviving, against all odds, in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Baghdad: Sadr City.*

## BBC REPORT

B-roll shots of Iraqis milling around a SADR CITY intersection; SOLDIERS in the crowd; a cinderblock brick, splattered with blood, lying on a sidewalk.

BBC ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

A few days later, the first bodies began to appear, at dawn, at this intersection. The people in this war-weary neighborhood call it "The Killing Spot."

## ARTE REPORT

The Arte reporter is greeted in an APARTMENT BUILDING COURTYARD by RAYYAN (25), an Arab man. The shots are composed to HIDE HIS FACE.

ARTE REPORTER (V.O.)

*Rayyan -- not his real name -- was one of the few gay men willing to speak on camera.*

RAYYAN

*Bonjour.*

ARTE REPORTER

*Bonjour.*

Now we're INSIDE RAYYAN'S APARTMENT. He appears IN SILHOUETTE, backlit by a window behind him. He speaks in Arabic. A male voice dubs French overtop, with a slight delay.

RAYYAN

*It's difficult. We try to create some kind of community. We go to each other's apartments. Sometimes someone creates a "nightclub." Just temporarily, for a few days.*

ARTE REPORTER

*Do you know anyone who has died?*

RAYYAN

*Two of my boyfriends.*

ARTE REPORTER

*Two?*

RAYYAN

Yes.

(beat)

*The Peace Brigades crushed their heads with bricks at the Killing Spot.*

BBC REPORT

Images of an IRAQI MILITIA on Sadr City streets -- men in mismatching fatigues, carrying machine guns; then a venerable SHEIK sitting on a prayer rug; then a PHOTO OF AL-SADR.

BBC ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The Saraya al Salam, or "Peace Brigades," control Sadr City. This militia is a key ally of the Iraqi government in the fight against Islamic State. Sheik Said Saffar, a follower of radical Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, denies the militia is involved in the violence.

The Sheik addresses the camera. He speaks Arabic, which a British voice dubs into English.

SHEIK

*Islam does not accept the idea of homosexuality. It must be eradicated. But it must be eradicated within the law.*

ARTE REPORT

Back to the Rayyan interview.

RAYYAN

*They're all involved. Police. Interior Ministry soldiers. But the Peace Brigades are the worst. I was beaten at a checkpoint last month, but it was only soldiers. I was lucky. If it had been the Peace Brigades, I'd be dead.*

FADE OUT.

OPENING CREDITS END.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE KILLING SPOT - DAWN

TWO BLOODY BODIES of young Iraqi men lie crumpled against a wall. Their heads bashed in.

In the gathering light, the first pedestrian of the day -- a LITTLE BOY -- approaches the bodies. His face is blank. No fear. No horror.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE KILLING SPOT - MINUTES LATER

The intersection is FULL OF PEOPLE now. Some merely look curiously. Some spit on the bodies, or take selfies with their mobile phones.

Toward the back of the crowd stands NORI RAHAL (31), an Iraqi man. He wears his hair a little longer than the other men, has tighter jeans -- subtle signs for those who can read them.

He has TEARS in his eyes.

FASIH (40), a short-haired, professorial man carrying a briefcase and wearing a tweed blazer, sees Nori. He speaks in Arabic.

FASIH  
(quietly)  
*Stop staring, Nori. You want your  
name on the next list?*

Fasih quickly moves on. Nori looks around. TWO WOMEN are looking at him. One whispers to the other.

Nori turns and walks out of the square.

SLOWLY PUSH IN on the two bodies with the crowd

DISSOLVE TO:

A WEDDING CAKE TOPPER

featuring two men in tuxedos.

SLOWLY PULL BACK to reveal...

INT. RECEPTION HALL - ARLINGTON, VA - DAY

A WEDDING PARTY, mostly white, fills a beautiful hall. Everyone is laughing, having a wonderful time.

At the center of everything is MALIK NASSAR (31), a handsome Arab man in a tux. He smiles broadly as he plants a kiss on the cheek of EVAN WEBB (30), a white, American man.

A sound cuts the din. MORRIS WEBB (61) stands up, TAPPING on his champagne glass with his spoon. His hair is close-cropped, military-style. He's imposing.

A hush begins to fall. Morris speaks into MICROPHONE.

MORRIS

Those of you --  
(sharply)  
Quiet down, now!

The room gets quiet fast. When Morris chooses, his booming voice has undeniable authority -- HIS "COLONEL VOICE."

MORRIS

Thank you. Those of you who know me, know: I'm a Regular Army man with Regular Army attitudes. When Evan came out to me, I said some terrible things. Awful things. But, Evan was patient with me. And, gradually, I evolved. Mostly thanks to my beautiful wife, Susannah --

Morris gestures to SUSANNAH (60), an elegant, WASP-y woman. She gives a little wave.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

-- I became a better, more tolerant person. Thanks, Susie.

SUSANNAH

(off mic)  
You're welcome.

Laughter from the room. Malik and Evan smile.

MORRIS

Now, my tolerance was tested when Evan came home from a tour with the State Department and told me he wanted to marry his Iraqi translator.

(MORE)

MORRIS (CONT'D)

I didn't know *what* to think. But once we got Malik over here, I didn't have any more doubts.

Morris lifts his glass to Evan.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Evan, thank you for bearing with me, even when I wasn't the father you deserved. I love you so much. I couldn't be more proud.

Morris and Evan hold a look -- and we can see in their expressions how much these two men have gone through to get to this point.

Morris raises his glass toward Malik.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Malik, you are a wonderful, generous person. I can see how much you love my son every time you look at him. Welcome to our family.

Applause breaks out. Malik smiles gratefully as tears stream down his face.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - MOMENTS LATER

As MUSIC plays, Evan leads Malik by the hand onto the dance floor. They begin to slow dance, looking into each other's eyes.

Susannah watches, brimming with happy tears.

Evan smiles at Malik. Malik closes his eyes and puts his head on Evan's shoulder. They sway together to the music.

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

ON A LAPTOP SCREEN

Nori's face in a FaceTime window. The picture is JERKY -- he's filming himself with his phone. It's night where he is, and there's DANCE MUSIC playing.

NORI

(in Arabic)

*Sounds like everything was perfect.*

WIDER ANGLE ON MALIK

sitting at the kitchen counter with his laptop. Next to him, dinner is half-made.

MALIK

*It would've been, if you'd been there.*

NORI

*Let me show you something.*

On the computer screen, Nori turns his camera to reveal a room full of men. They're dancing under a hand-lettered banner. Subtitle: "CONGRATULATIONS MALIK & EVAN!"

NORI

*Everyone here was celebrating with you.*

MALIK

*Most of those guys don't even know me, Nori.*

Nori turns the camera back towards himself.

PUSH IN SLOWLY on Nori's moving lips on the computer screen, until his pixelated mouth FILLS THE FRAME...

NORI

*You think that matters? You're one of us --*

...and suddenly we CUT to a DIFFERENT ANGLE of Nori, and **HIS DIALOGUE SWITCHES TO ENGLISH**. From this point on, *all the Arab characters* will speak English with a mild accent.

NORI (CONT'D)

-- and when one of us gets a day like this, it's important to us all.

(beat)

It's getting bad again, Malik.

MALIK

I saw on YouTube. Was that one of your clubs?

NORI

(nods)

We're checking phones at the door now. There were two more bodies at the Killing Spot yesterday. I didn't know them. This time.

MALIK

Are you being careful?

NORI

(shrugs)

You know me.

MALIK

You're moving the club?

NORI

Every week.

MALIK

And your cop friend's -- ?

NORI

(laughs)

Don't get me started on him!  
Listen to me, ruining your special  
day with this bullshit! I must be  
crazy! I'd better go.

MALIK

Talk soon?

NORI

Talk soon. Congrats, Malik. I'm so  
happy.

The call ends.

Malik stares at the blank computer screen for a long moment.  
He slowly closes his laptop.

INT. NORI'S CLUB - BAGHDAD - NIGHT

The "club" is an large, abandoned industrial space that's been  
decorated in a hurry with a few flashing lights over the dance  
floor and a bar that serves alcohol.

About THIRTY GAY MEN are having a small party. DANCE MUSIC.  
Nori's next to the bar. He lowers his phone as he ends the  
video chat.

As he closes the app, THREE YOUNG MEN in their early twenties  
approach. Their leader is AZIZ (19). With his skinny jeans and  
excessive hair product, he's both hot and catty.

AZIZ

Why'd you do that?

(off Nori's confused look)

You pointed the camera at us!

NORI  
It's Malik's party.

AZIZ  
I don't know Malik. But thanks to  
you, he saw my face!

NORI  
Malik doesn't give a shit about  
your pretty face.

Nori starts to walk away, but Aziz's Posse blocks him.

AZIZ  
Haven't we had enough problems  
with videos?

NORI  
Malik helped me start these  
parties when you were still  
jerking off to Kadim Al Sahir.  
Have some respect!

AZIZ  
Why should I respect a couple old  
fags?  
(to his posse)  
C'mon, we're leaving!

Aziz and his two sidekicks start walking away.

NORI  
(quietly)  
Good luck scoring more meth,  
assholes.

Aziz hears him, freezes. He turns and LUNGES at Nori.

Some MEN from the bar rush forward CATCH AZIZ before he can  
reach Nori. They hold him by his arms.

Everybody stops dancing. They watch Aziz as he struggles.

AZIZ  
I'll knock your teeth down your  
fucking throat!!!

NORI  
Get him out of here.

Nori walks away.

Aziz stops struggling. He looks around -- everyone is staring.  
Except his posse, the whole room is on Nori's side.  
Humiliated, he shrugs off the men restraining him.

EXT. SALIM'S HOUSE - REAR COURTYARD - DAY

A spacious rear courtyard of a large house -- luxurious by Sadr City standards. Flowers growing in the flowerbeds, vines on the walls. TRICKLING WATER from a small fountain.

SALIM FAKHOURY (46) is kicking around a soccer ball with LITTLE EHSAN, called "HASOON" (7).

Salim is slightly overweight, with a graying beard and an imposing voice. He wears DESERT CAMO FATIGUE PANTS and an undershirt. He's puffing as he hustles for the ball.

Hasoon is an adorable little boy. He smiles broadly as he chases the ball around the courtyard. His laugh is as clear as a bell.

Salim stops the ball with his foot.

SALIM  
(winded)  
Hold it, hold it!

HASOON  
Come on! Pass it!

SALIM  
I need to catch my breath, Hasoon.

HASOON  
Pass, Dad!

Salim has an idea. He picks up the ball.

SALIM  
Can you do this?

He bounces the ball off his knees -- right, left, right, left -- about ten times. Then he tosses it to Hasoon. Hasoon tries again and again, but can't get it. Salim catches his breath.

SALIM  
You're lifting your leg early.  
Watch it come down.

JABAR (25), a tall, athletic man, enters from the house. He wears militia fatigues and carries a Kalashnikov machine gun over his shoulder.

SALIM  
(to Hasoon)  
Thigh parallel to the ground!

Jabar says something in Salim's ear.

INT. SALIM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The house is large, full of light, and decorated with traditional art and nice furniture. There are flowers in vases. It's not Saddam's palace, but Salim clearly has money.

Salim hurries in with a smile on his face. Hasoon runs after him, carrying his ball. Jabar follows behind, lingering discreetly in the doorway.

EHSAN SAMIR (37) smiles as they enter. He's a tall, handsome, educated, and SHARPLY DRESSED in a stylish blazer and no tie. A POLICE BADGE hangs from his belt.

SALIM  
(throws his arms wide)  
Ehsan!

EHSAN  
Salim.

They embrace.

HASOON  
Uncle Ehsan!

EHSAN  
Hey there, Hasoon.

HASOON  
Watch!

He starts trying to juggle the soccer ball with his knees, but he can't do it more than twice. Ehsan and Salim ignore him.

SALIM  
(to Ehsan)  
I wasn't expecting you till  
Friday.

EHSAN  
Official business, I'm afraid.

Salim gives him a pained look.

SALIM  
This isn't about -- ?

Ehsan nods.

SALIM  
 (to Hasoon)  
 Go to your room.

HASOON  
 But I want to show Uncle Ehsan my  
 trick!

Salim crouches down and takes Hasoon by the shoulders.

SALIM  
 (very kindly)  
 You can show him before dinner  
 Friday, okay? Show Jabar now.

Giving Ehsan a cold look, Jabar escorts Hasoon out. Salim's demeanor changes the moment his son is gone. He's angry.

SALIM  
 A few lousy *tantas* get their heads  
 bashed in and suddenly it's a  
 police matter?

EHSAN  
 (agreeing)  
 It's like Saddam's back in power.

SALIM  
 How's it your problem? Did you  
 piss someone off?

EHSAN  
 (shrugs)  
 The captain knows we're friends.

SALIM  
 He's a chickenshit son of a bitch.

EHSAN  
 Plus I'm not a fan of bodies in  
 the street.

Salim gives him a very hard look. Ehsan wilts a little, jokes  
 --

EHSAN (CONT'D)  
 It's untidy.

Salim laughs suddenly. Ehsan laughs with him. Relieved.

SALIM  
 No one wants to tidy up Sadr City  
 more than me.  
 (MORE)

SALIM (CONT'D)

With the rest of the Peace  
Brigades off fighting Daesh, a  
certain element starts to take  
advantage. I've got to pick up the  
slack.

EHSAN

Of course.

SALIM

So talk to the puppies, not me.  
Sooner they stop making a  
spectacle, sooner things will be  
tidy again.

Ehsan nods. Salim throws an arm around his shoulder. Starts  
guiding him to the door.

EHSAN

Should I bring anything Friday?

SALIM

You think I'm gonna let my son eat  
*your* cooking?

(laughs)

Get yourself a wife, then we'll  
talk!

They both laugh.

IN A SERIES OF JUMPCUTS --

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SALIM'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ehsan unlocks his beat-up old car.

I/E. EHSAN'S CAR - EVENING

Ehsan's driving through Sadr City.

EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - TWILIGHT

Ehsan's car comes to a stop in front of a four-story building.  
It's seen better days. The metal gate of a closed up shop on  
the ground floor is covered with Arabic graffiti. Drying  
clothes hang from some of the balconies.

ANGLE ON EHSAN

looking up at the building from his car window. He looks both ways -- rather GUILTY -- then turns the corner.

EXT. SIDE STREET - TWILIGHT

Ehsan turns another corner.

EXT. NARROW ALLEY - TWILIGHT

Ehsan parallels parks in a tight spot.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Ehsan makes his way back down the side street on foot. As he goes, he TAKES HIS BADGE OFF his belt and stuffs it in his pocket.

EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

With his head bowed, he hurries past the graffitied gate and enters the building.

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - 4TH FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Slightly winded, Ehsan comes out of the stairwell. A WOMAN (60) comes out of her apartment, carrying a basket of laundry.

WOMAN

Hello.

Ehsan gives her a curt nod. He steps aside so she can pass, then continues down the hall.

Throwing a look over his shoulder, he sees her disappear into the stairwell. He STOPS. BACKTRACKS to a door he already passed. KNOCKS.

Nori peaks through the crack of the door. He rolls his eyes and opens the door wide.

INT. NORI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A cozy, attractive living room. Nori knows how to do a lot with a little.

Nori re-locks to door. He turns, about to say something, but doesn't get the chance -- Ehsan starts KISSING HIM PASSIONATELY.

INT. NORI'S BEDROOM - LATER

Dark. Nori turns on a reading lamp. He and Ehsan are in bed, naked. Nori finds a cigarette and lights it.

The bedroom is spartan. A warm breeze stirs the curtains. On the wall across from the bed hangs a rainbow PRIDE FLAG. Ehsan stares at it.

EHSAN

You oughta get rid of that thing.

NORI

I like it.

EHSAN

You know what'd happen if somebody saw it?

Nori looks at the flag for a second. Drags on his cigarette.

NORI

I like it.

Ehsan throws up his hands. He gets out of bed and starts putting his pants on. Nori watches him, angry.

NORI

Remember my friend Malik? He got married yesterday. To a man.

Ehsan stops dressing for a moment. For an instant, there's a LOOK on his face -- faraway, inscrutable. He pushes the thought away and buttons his pants.

EHSAN

Good for Malik.

Nori watches as Ehsan puts on his shirt. Then:

NORI

Men are disappearing.

EHSAN

I know. And it's not gonna stop.  
Maybe cool it awhile, huh? Shut  
down the club.

NORI

Over my dead body.

EHSAN

If you're not careful --

NORI

Oh, fuck you, Ehsan! Your  
concern'd be a hell of a lot more  
convincing if you ever stuck  
around ten minutes after you  
fucked me!

EHSAN

What for? To pretend we're  
married, like Malik?

NORI

Why not?

EHSAN

Because I don't want to *die*! This  
is Sadr City, you can't go around  
waving your Pride flag!

He tears the rainbow flag off the wall, balls it up, and  
throws it in Nori's lap.

EHSAN (CONT'D)

The Peace Brigades are gonna kill  
every last one of you they can  
find!

NORI

Salim told you that.

EHSAN

That's right.

NORI

It never bother you being such  
good friends with the man killing  
us, does it?

Ehsan doesn't answer. He pulls on his shoulder holster, and  
tugs his blazer on over it.

NORI

That club is all a lot of them  
have.

Ehsan walks out.

NORI (CONT'D)  
 (shouts after him)  
 I'll be damned if I'm gonna take  
 that away from them!

EXT. CHESAPEAKE BAY - DAY

An AMERICAN FLAG flies from the stanchion of a 30-FOOT WOODEN SAILBOAT. It's heeled over under a stiff wind.

In the cockpit, Morris is talking a blue streak to Malik, while Evan and Susannah exchange amused looks.

MORRIS  
 Forty years! Forty years I wore  
 the uniform! Vietnam, Germany --

SUSANNAH  
 -- Pentagon staff meetings --

EVAN  
 -- pushing papers across a desk...

MORRIS  
 (to Malik)  
 I hear the sarcasm in the voices  
 of my loving family, but I care  
 not a jot. Know why?

Malik shakes his head.

MORRIS  
 Because I worked hard, did my duty  
 -- and this boat's my reward.

EVAN  
 Are we sure it's sea-worthy?

MORRIS  
 Sea-worthy?! This boat's a  
 classic! Remember that hedge fund  
 bozo, Zach Conrad?

EVAN  
 Vaguely.

MORRIS  
 Last April, he offered me seventy-  
 five thousand for it. Cash. Know  
 what I said?

EVAN

"Yes"?

MORRIS

NO! Because being out here --  
Evan, tighten that line, it's  
luffing --

Evan tightens one of the sheets.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Being out here, free as the wind,  
makes it all worth while. The  
American dream!

EVAN

You shoulda been in the Navy!

MORRIS

You're not too old for me to wash  
your mouth with soap, smartass.

SUSANNAH

(to Malik)

Evan tells me you chose a  
dissertation topic?

MALIK

Sure have. Mercantilism the North  
African provinces of the Ottoman  
Empire.

SUSANNAH

(needs a beat to absorb that)

Wow.

MALIK

Professor Eidelmann's really  
excited about it.

MORRIS

(to Evan)

Looks like you're not the biggest  
brain in the family anymore, Evan.

The boat heels over more. Malik, very tense, grabs hold.

MALIK

(off Susannah's concerned  
look)

I'm from the desert.

SUSANNAH

Don't worry, it's supposed to do  
that.

(MORE)

SUSANNAH (CONT'D)

Ahab here's gonna have to work a lot harder to sink us.

MORRIS

(to Malik)

No loyalty! No loyalty from either of 'em.

(to Evan and Susannah)

I oughta keel-haul you both! Malik and I can sail this thing without you. You'd like that, wouldn't you, Malik?

Morris musses Malik's hair with affection.

EXT. HARBOR - EVENING

The sailboat is tied up at a dock. Evan and Susannah carry a cooler and some bags down the dock. As they reach shore, Morris takes the bags and puts them in his pick-up truck.

MORRIS

Malik's sure taking his time putting those sails away.

Evan turns and looks. In the distance, Malik is sitting on the bow of the boat with a huge pile of sails. His back is turned.

EVAN

I'll see if he needs help.

EXT. SAILBOAT - MOMENTS LATER

Malik sits on the bow, trying to stuff the sail into a canvass bag. HE'S CRYING. Evan steps aboard.

EVAN

Need any help?

Malik turns. Evan sees the tears.

EVAN

What's wrong?

MALIK

I dunno, it just --

Evan sits next to Malik.

MALIK

I had so much fun today. And then I started thinking about home.

(MORE)

MALIK (CONT'D)  
What Nori's going through.  
(beat)  
I wish I were back there. Crazy,  
right?

EVAN  
'Course not. It's normal.

MALIK  
I should be *doing* something!

EVAN  
There's nothing you can do. It's  
not your problem anymore. You got  
out.

Malik nods. Evan holds him.

INT. NORI'S CLUB - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A STEREO SYSTEM

Its display and buttons GLOW in the DARKENED ROOM. Nori's hand  
inserts a CD.

DANCE MUSIC BEGINS. It continues through the next sequence.

CLOSE ON THE LIGHTS

as they come on. A mirror ball begins to turn.

A WIDER ANGLE

as Nori throws open the doors. MEN enter. Outer layers are  
shed, revealing more risqué outfits. Drinks are ordered.  
Dancing begins.

ON NORI

briefly stopping each man at the door.

NORI  
We're changing locations. Check  
the web forum. Let's send this  
place out with a bang!

INT. AZIZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As MUSIC CONTINUES, Aziz and his posse -- YOUSIF (18) and SAIF (16) -- take hits of meth -- in between making out with one another.

Yousif and Saif pull Aziz down onto a mattress, the only furniture in the bare apartment.

INT. NORI'S CLUB - NIGHT

Men dance like there's no tomorrow -- Nori in the middle of everyone.

INT. AZIZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The whole group is naked now. Aziz pauses to light his meth pipe again. He frowns. Hands the pipe to Saif.

AZIZ

Saif! More ice.

Saif hops up. Aziz starts kissing his way down Yousif's bare chest.

SAIF

Shit.

Aziz turns. Saif holds up the empty plastic bag.

SAIF (CONT'D)

There's no more.

I/E. BEAT-UP OLD CAR - BAGHDAD STREET - NIGHT

Aziz and the posse DRIVE through the dark streets with the windows down. Aziz sticks his head out the window and WHOOPS.

INT. DARK APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Aziz gives money to a DRUG DEALER (50s), who slips him a bag of meth.

INT. AZIZ'S CAR - NIGHT

As Aziz drives, Yousif and Saif smoke meth and make out in the back seat.

INT. NORI'S CLUB - NIGHT

Nori delivers drinks to a DANCING COUPLE. One man playfully slaps Nori's ass as he turns to go. Nori laughs and swats him back.

I/E. PEACE BRIGADE CHECKPOINT/AZIZ'S CAR - NIGHT

A FAT MILITIA MEMBER (40) with a machine gun holds up his hand to stop Aziz's car.

JUMP TO:

THE FAT MAN

shining a flashlight in Aziz's bloodshot eyes. Then on Yousif and Saif in the back seat. Saif is shirtless.

JUMP TO:

AZIZ AND HIS POSSE

being dragged from the car. The Fat Man and three other guys dump the boys on the ground and start KICKING them.

INT. ABANDONED BASEMENT - NIGHT

Aziz and the posse are taking a beating. The Fat Man starts unbuckling his belt.

FAT MAN

You cocksuckers love sucking cock?

JUMP TO:

THE FAT MAN

pants down around his butt, holding the back of Aziz's head and thrusting into Aziz's mouth. Aziz is GAGGING.

FAT MAN  
That's it... that's it... good  
little puppy...

He turns to his friends and laughs.

FAT MAN (CONT'D)  
Sweet as a little girl!

JUMP TO:

SAIF

sobbing loudly as one of the men violently pounds his ass.  
Nearby, the men raping Aziz and Yousif pause to switch places.

JUMP TO:

THE BOYS LYING IN A HEAP

on the floor. The Fat Man looms toward Aziz with a KNIFE.  
Terror on Aziz's tear-stained face.

AZIZ  
Wait, wait, don't!!!

The Fat Man grabs Aziz's hair, puts the blade to his neck.  
He's about to disgorge him, when --

AZIZ  
(wild-eyed desperation)  
There's others! You'll be a hero!

The Fat Man lets the knife drop half an inch. He's listening.

INT. SALIM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Salim snoozes on the sofa. A Koran is open on his chest,  
reading glasses slipping off his nose. Jabar shakes him awake.

INT. SALIM'S ENTRY WAY - SECONDS LATER

The Fat Man and his friends REMOVE THEIR HATS as Jabar returns  
with Salim.

INT. NORI'S CLUB - NIGHT

The doors BURST OPEN. Salim crashes in, at the head of a HORDE OF MILITIA. Men SCATTER. General chaos. The militia ATTACKS with clubs.

ANGLE ON NORI

Alarmed, he starts running along with everybody else.

WIDER ANGLE

The men are beaten savagely as they try to escape. SCREAMS. BURSTS OF GUNFIRE.

ON NORI

struggling as he's dragged across the floor.

ANGLE ON THE STEREO

A nightstick comes down, SMASHING it.

DANCE MUSIC STOPS.

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK, a KNOCK on a door.

SLOWLY FADE IN ON:

INT. NORI'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ehsan KNOCKS on the door of Nori's apartment. He pauses. Knocks again.

EHSAN  
(hoarse whisper)  
Nori? Nori, it's me.  
(MORE)

EHSAN (CONT'D)  
(knocks again)  
Let me in, please.

He knocks again. Nothing. He looks around to make sure no one's watching.

EHSAN  
(quietly to himself)  
Fine.

He starts PICKING THE LOCK.

INT. NORI'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A CLICK. Knob turns. Door opens. Ehsan sticks his head in.

EHSAN  
Nori? I was a jerk. I'm sorry.

Ehsan closes the door behind him. He advances cautiously.

EHSAN (CONT'D)  
(under his breath)  
Don't throw anything heavy...

The living room is empty. Ehsan pokes his head into the kitchen nook. No one's there.

INT. NORI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ehsan opens the door and enters. Empty.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ehsan sits down on the sofa. A pause. He glances at his watch.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Ehsan curled up in fetal position. His eyes snap open. The first light is coming through the window. He looks at his watch. 5:35 a.m.

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Ehsan eases in.

EHSAN  
 (soft)  
 Nori?

The bed is STILL MADE.

Ehsan's eyes fall on the RAINBOW FLAG on the wall. He's suddenly frightened.

INT. POLICE STATION LOCKER ROOM - DAY

UNIFORMED COPS are changing. Ehsan leans on his open locker door, a FLIP PHONE to his ear. RINGING on the line.

NORI'S VOICEMAIL  
*Hi, you've reached Nori, leave  
 your --*

Ehsan closes the phone. He shuts it in his locker.

EXT. LEYLA'S HOUSE - OUTSKIRTS OF BAGHDAD - NIGHT

Ehsan rings the bell of a humble, single-level house on a residential street. A VOICE answers through the door -- scared. An old woman.

LEYLA (O.S.)  
 What do you want?

EHSAN  
 Mrs. Rahal?

Ehsan holds his badge up the the peep hole. A long pause.

EHSAN  
 Mrs. Rahal?

LEYLA RAHAL (62) opens the door. She wears a headscarf and a pretty, homemade dress. Her speech is ODDLY CALM, like she's dazed.

LEYLA  
 You're here about Nori.

EHSAN  
 That's right.

Leyla wanders into the house. Ehsan hesitates, then follows he through the open door.

INT. LEYLA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ehsan comes in. He takes in the old furniture, the cracked walls with chipping paint. Leyla digs for something in a desk drawer.

LEYLA

(the same odd calm)

I'm not a wealthy woman. My husband worked for the old regime. But he's gone. We lost everything.

She hands Ehsan an envelope. He looks inside. It's full of cash. He's confused.

LEYLA (CONT'D)

That's all I have. Please bring my son back. He's a strange boy, but that's all. He's not a gay. He's hurting no one.

Ehsan thrusts the money back into Leyla's hands and gropes his way to a chair. Head bowed, he tries to catch his breath.

Leyla watches him.

EHSAN

Who has him?

Confused, Leyla says nothing.

EHSAN

Police? Interior Ministry? *Who was here?!?*

LEYLA

The Peace Brigades.

(beat)

Who are you?

EHSAN

Which commander?

LEYLA

Who are you?

EHSAN

Was it Salim Fakhoury?

Leyla hesitates.

LEYLA

Yes.

Ehsan rubs his forehead, thinking. He jumps up. Leyla follows him to the door.

EHSAN

I'll be in touch.

LEYLA

What will you do?

Ehsan starts opening the door. Leyla blocks it with her hand.

LEYLA

You can't reason with him. We have to pay.

Ehsan closes the door again.

EHSAN

How much did they want?

LEYLA

Fifty-five million dinars.  
(off Ehsan's amazement)  
They think I'm rich. But my husband's dead.

She puts the envelope back in Ehsan's hand.

LEYLA (CONT'D)

Eleven million. You're a policeman, you must have money.

EHSAN

I can't get forty million.

LEYLA

(thinks a minute)  
Nori has a friend in America. I don't know his name.

EHSAN

Malik.

He hurries out the door.

INT. NORI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Out of breath, Ehsan kneels and takes out Nori's laptop from under the bed. It's password protected.

EHSAN  
 (mutters to himself)  
 Birthday. You always use your  
 birthday, you dumb shit.  
 (types)  
 April tenth.

It fails. Ehsan thinks for a second.

EHSAN  
 Fuck. *June* tenth.

The computer unlocks. He clicks Malik's name among the contacts. The computer RINGS as it tries to make contact.

EHSAN  
 (whispers)  
 Pick up pick up pick up pick --

MALIK (O.S.)  
 Nori?

EHSAN  
 Malik?!

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Malik sits on the sofa with his laptop. The coffee table is filled with dog-eared HISTORY TEXTBOOKS and SCRIBBLED NOTES.

MALIK  
 Who are you?

INTERCUT MALIK AND EHSAN

EHSAN  
 Ehsan Samir. Nori's... friend.

MALIK  
 The cop?

EHSAN  
 No. Yes, that's right. The cop.  
 (beat)  
 I need your help, Malik.

MALIK  
 They've taken him.

Ehsan nods. Malik takes a second to digest this.

MALIK

Is he alive?

EHSAN

I think so. They want fifty thousand dollars, US. I haven't got it.

Malik thinks for a second. When he speaks he's calm and reassuring.

MALIK

We'll get it.

INT. PRISON SHOWER AREA - DAY

A black bag is PULLED OFF Nori's head. Terrified, he looks around. He's shirtless, handcuffed to a chair in the center of a LARGE, DARK ROOM. Sunlight seeps through blacked out windows.

Jabar and TWO MILITIA GUYS tower over him. One guy chuckles. Nori looks up at them. Jabar PUNCHES Nori in the ribs. Nori moans. The other men step forward and take turns punching him.

Leaning against a wall in the shadows, Salim watches, stroking his beard.

INT. PRISON SHOWER AREA - LATER

The two guys hold Nori's head under water in a large metal tub. He struggles. Finally, they let him up. He gasps.

They drag him back to the chair. Jabar holds two wires, attached to a car battery. He touches them together in front of Nori's face. SPARKS. Nori loses any composure he had left.

NORI

Don't! Don't! I have friends.  
They'll pay!

Jabar stops. Looks toward Salim. Salim takes a few steps forward, out of the shadows.

NORI

(to Salim)  
They'll pay.

SALIM

(disgusted, to Jabar)  
Not too much.

Salim leaves the room. Jabar sticks Nori with the wires. Electricity CRACKLES and Nori SCREAMS.

EXT. MOSQUE - SADR CITY - DAY

Salim gets out of a car in front of a gorgeous mosque. Beautiful architecture, but signs of damage from a decade of war. Salim goes inside.

INT. MOSQUE - DAY

The faithful are at prayer. Dozens of men in white prostrating themselves on prayer rugs. A large PHOTOGRAPH of Muqtada al-Sadr hangs on one wall.

The prayer is led by SHEIK SAÏD SAFFAR (66), a distinguished man with a graying beard. (We saw him interviewed in the BBC report earlier.)

The prayer ends. As the faithful disperse, the Sheik sees Salim. They embrace.

SHEIK

Hello, my friend. Quite a herd of puppies yesterday!

SALIM

Thank you.

The Sheik nods toward the portrait of al-Sadr.

SHEIK

Your energy and initiative are being noticed. You're just the man for this homosexual problem.

SALIM

With all respect, I'd rather go to the front to take on Daesh.

SHEIK

(doubtful)  
Maybe in time, *inshallah*.

SALIM

I think I've proven --

SHEIK

Salim, we have more commanders than men.

Salim looks disappointed. The Sheik sees it.

SHEIK

We don't get to choose our calling, Salim -- it chooses us. I myself thought I'd be a doctor.

(MORE)

SHEIK (CONT'D)

In a way, the work you're doing here's more important than fighting Daesh. It pays for the movement.

SALIM

Letting them go is wrong.

SHEIK

(alarmed)

Salim!

(laughs to cover alarm)

Salim, Salim... I like how you look at the world. Black and white. Refreshing. By all means, we should kill *tantas*. But we can afford to be merciful to some. If it helps the movement. You understand, yes?

Scowling, Salim nods. The Sheik laughs again and claps his shoulder.

SHEIK

Good. Good.

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - ARLINGTON - NIGHT

Malik and Evan pour over bank statements and financial records, which cover the dining room table.

EVAN

Why couldn't this have happened before we bought the house?

MALIK

What does it come to?

Evan punches some figures into a calculator.

EVAN

Your savings is three thousand eight. My savings, eight thousand five. The mutual fund's at about nine thousand. We'll liquidate my IRA -- that's only twelve thou', after the penalties...

MALIK

And Ehsan's ten thousand --

EVAN

-- makes...

(finishes typing it in)

... forty-three thousand three hundred seventy-four, and eighteen cents.

MALIK

Not enough.

EVAN

So, we'll get more. I'll talk to work about dipping into my four-oh-one. I dunno, maybe Jim and Saul? They're always giving money to --

Malik starts to cry and walks away, covering his eyes.

EXT. MALIK AND EVAN'S BACK DECK - NIGHT

Malik looks at the dark sky. As Evan comes out through the sliding door, Malik wipes away his tears.

MALIK

I'm sorry.

Evan comes up behind Malik and wraps his arms around him.

EVAN

Hey... it's only money.

MALIK

And once they know he's got friends with money, he'll never be safe.

EVAN

(digesting)

We need to get him out of the country.

Malik nods.

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICE - DAY

GORDY SCHAFFER (53) is hard at work in a cubicle. He's a portly bureaucrat with a scraggly beard, wireframe glasses, and a sweater vest. His desk is stacked high with files and binders.

The LOGO OF THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT is on his computer screen.

Evan, dressed in a suit, an ID LANYARD around his neck, appears at the door of the cubicle.

EVAN

Got a minute?

Gordy puts down his file.

EVAN (CONT'D)

I gotta get somebody out of Iraq.

EXT. STATE DEPARTMENT BUILDING COURTYARD - DAY

Evan sits on a picnic blanket with BLANCA ESPINOZA (42), a tall, formidable woman with an alto voice, wearing a skirt suit. She packs up the remains of a picnic lunch.

BLANCA

You just went through this with Malik. It's a process! You know you can't just snap your fingers and he's here.

EVAN

He's probably being tortured right now!

BLANCA

There's a limited number of visas.

INT. GORDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

We're back with Evan and Gordy again.

GORDY

I can probably reach out to USCIS to expedite the approval on the visa application, but first he's got to fill out the forms, meet with an embassy official, get all his official documents translated

--

EXT. COURTYARD DAY - DAY

Evan and Blanca are walking now. Evan has trouble keeping up.

BLANCA

Malik was relatively easy. He was a translator, he worked for us. It still took fifteen months.

EVAN

This is an emergency!

BLANCA

He can apply for refugee status,  
but he needs to be referred to  
USCIS by a US embassy, the UN, or  
a designated NGO.

INT. GORDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

As Gordy goes on, we can see Evan getting discouraged.

GORDY

There are the standard fees, of  
course. Petition filing fee, visa  
processing fee, medical exam,  
vaccinations. That'll run two,  
three thousand.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Evan gets in front of Blanca to force her to stop for a  
second.

EVAN

How long will that take?

BLANCA

Two months? Three?  
(off Evan's disappointment)  
America's not the most welcoming  
place these days, kiddo.

EVAN

Okay, two months. Fine. We can  
keep him safe that long, right?  
There are places we can stick him  
in the Green Zone.

BLANCA

Safe houses are for diplomatic and  
intelligence priorities.

EVAN

Bullshit, Blanca. You know what  
strings to pull.

BLANCA

This is the State Department,  
Evan. You wait your turn.

She walks away.

INT. GAY RIGHTS NOW! OFFICES - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Malik comes off the elevator into an office with trendy, modern décor. The LOGO painted on the wall reads "GAY RIGHTS NOW!"

At the reception desk, a female RECEPTIONIST (25). Dyed blue hair, eyebrow piercing, sleeve tattoos. Dressed professionally.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome to Gay Rights Now. You got an appointment?

MALIK

Yeah. Um, Fiona Blakeney?

RECEPTIONIST

Take a seat over there. You want a water or something?

MALIK

No. Thanks.

RECEPTIONIST

Have some condoms.

She shoves a mass of condoms into Malik's unprepared hands. He tries to catch them all. Can't.

INT. WAITING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

The CONDOM PACKAGE is decorated with with INTERLOCKING WEDDING RINGS, and text proclaiming "WE WON!!!"

Sitting on the sofa, Malik STARES BLANKLY at it.

FIONA (O.S.)

Malik!

Malik looks up. FIONA BLAKENEY (45) smiles broadly. She's a short, butch woman with short hair and a blazer.

FIONA (CONT'D)

It's good to see you!

MALIK

Fiona.

They hug.

INT. BACK OFFICE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Fiona leads Malik past "fishbowl"-style offices with glass walls.

FIONA

I hear you started your dissertation. What's it about?

MALIK

Mercantilism in the North African provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

(off Fiona's blank look)

My advisor's really excited.

FIONA

Listen. I looked into Nori's situation.

MALIK

Can you help him?

FIONA

I'll try. But you've gotta understand -- things are different now.

INT. FIONA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They enter Fiona's office. Newspaper clippings about Third World anti-gay atrocities are taped all over the fishbowl-style glass walls. Fiona flops in her desk chair with a heavy sigh.

FIONA

Don't expect too much help from people around here, either. It's like they're still sleeping off the hangover from the party after Marriage Equality passed. If they bother to suit up, it's to go to war with the new administration. Meanwhile, I'm running International with only two useless interns! What the fuck! I'm like, ever heard of Nigeria, you entitled faggots! Ever hear do fucking Uganda?!?

(calms herself)

Where were we?

MALIK

Nori.

FIONA

Of course. Nori. We'll sponsor him for a refugee visa, no problem. And I know a few women at DHS. Maybe one can pull some strings. I dunno. At the very least, I'll pry five, six thousand out of the emergency fund to help you with the ransom.

MALIK

Thanks, Fiona.

FIONA

But you've gotta have a plan to make sure that money gets there. You can't just wire it to a stranger and hope for the best.

EXT. MORRIS'S SAILBOAT - CHESAPEAKE BAY HARBOR - DAY

Morris scrubs the deck with a sponge. Malik and Evan stand alongside the boat, on the dock.

EVAN

Some of your army buddies still work security in Iraq, right?

MORRIS

Yes...

EVAN

Bob Orr, Steve Pembleton --

Morris stops cleaning. He faces Evan.

MORRIS

What's this about?

MALIK

My friend Nori's been taken by the Peace Brigades.

MORRIS

(exhales slowly)

That's al-Sadr's outfit, right? The old Mahdi Army?

EVAN

Yeah.

(MORE)

EVAN (CONT'D)

We've already got the money, we  
just need someone we can trust to  
--

MORRIS

(shaking his head)  
No way, Evan.

EVAN

Just to deliver it and take --

MORRIS

I won't let you drag Bob and Steve  
into it!

MALIK

This was a mistake.  
(to Evan)  
I'll go to Iraq myself.

Malik walks back down the dock. Evan gives his father a  
beseeching look. This is what he was most afraid of.

EVAN

Please, dad...

MORRIS

(sighs)  
Wait here.

EXT. HARBOR PARKING LOT - DAY

Morris jogs to catch up with Malik.

MORRIS

Malik! C'mon, wait up.

Malik stops.

MORRIS

I'm sorry about your friend.  
(beat)  
These things have got too many  
moving parts, son. You're throwing  
away your money, and -- and if you  
feel like you've got to, I  
understand, but --  
(beat)  
They're gonna kill him, Malik. If  
you go, they'll kill you too.  
Think about Evan.

MALIK

It's my best friend.

Malik turns his back on Morris and walks to the car.

EXT. MORRIS'S SAILBOAT - CHESAPEAKE BAY HARBOR - EVENING

Morris sits in the cockpit, troubled. Susannah climbs aboard. She starts to rub his shoulders. Says nothing for a time.

MORRIS

It's crazy.

SUSANNAH

Crazy.

MORRIS

You know what the Mahdi Army would do if they caught him? Does he think they'd hesitate to blow his head off?

Susannah just keeps massaging Morris's shoulders. He slumps.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Right when I finally started to like him.

SUSANNAH

Why should he leave a man behind? You never would.

Morris turns and looks at her. Susannah just keeps massaging his shoulders.

INT. EVAN'S CAR - EVENING

Malik riding shotgun, Evan's driving. They're on a freeway. Evan's phone RINGS. He answers.

EVAN

Dad, I'm driving.

He listens for a second, passes the phone to Malik.

EVAN

He wants you.

MALIK

(into phone)  
Hello?

Malik listens. Nods. Covers his mouth with his free hand.

MALIK

Thank you!  
 (beat, quieter)  
 Thank you.

EXT. THE KILLING SPOT - DAY

A JEERING CROWD has gathered. They're cheering a bunch of MILITIA GUYS who use BRICKS to stone TWO KNEELING MEN.

To the side, a couple UNIFORMED COPS watch with their arms crossed. They're smiling. Ehsan's car comes to a SCREECHING HALT behind them. Ehsan jumps out.

EHSAN

What's going on?

COP

(bored)  
 More tantas.

Hardly concealing panic, Ehsan pushes through the screaming mass. He bursts through, face to bloody face with one of the victims.

For a just a second, RELIEF -- it's not Nori.

The second victim is doubled over. Ehsan walks right past the militia guys, lifts the second victim so he can see his face.

EHSAN

Nori?

IT'S SAIF, the 16-year-old boy from Aziz's posse. Ehsan looks at his face in horror -- HE'S JUST A KID.

Jabar appears beside Ehsan.

JABAR

Problem?

EHSAN

No.

Ehsan releases Saif. Saif SLUMPS at their feet.

Jabar smiles -- all teeth -- and HANDS EHSAN A BRICK.

Ehsan looks at the brick in his hand. It's stained with blood. Jabar's expression is intense -- "Do it." The militia guys CROWD AROUND Ehsan, watching what he does.

Ehsan raises the brick. His hand trembles. Jabar smirks. Saif raises his head. Looks straight at Ehsan. His face TOTALLY BLANK. Ehsan meets his eyes.

Ehsan's hand -- REALLY SHAKING NOW.

The militia guys crowd in. Jabar's hand rests on the butt of his holstered pistol.

Ehsan steels himself. He has no choice. He BRINGS THE BRICK DOWN as hard as he can onto Saif's head. Saif is knocked flat.

Falling to his knees, Ehsan hits Saif again and again. There's a HIDEOUS CRACK. BLOOD SPLATTERS on Ehsan's shirt. He stops. Looks at what he's done.

He staggers to his feet. Hands the bloody brick to Jabar.

JABAR

Shit, Ehsan.

(laughs)

Leave some fun for the rest of us!

The militia guys laugh. Ehsan pushes his way through them.

INT. EHSAN'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Ehsan gets in the car, slams the door. He GASPS for air, his eyes like saucers. Head bowed against the steering wheel, he tries to regain control.

INT. POLICE STATION LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Ehsan is on Nori's laptop. On the screen, Malik's face in a chat window. Ehsan keeps checking over his shoulder.

EHSAN

(hushed)

We don't have too much time. The two men at the Killing Spot this morning were arrested the same night as Nori.

MALIK

We've put the money together.

EHSAN

Good. I'll talk to Salim tonight.

MALIK

Is something wrong?

Ehsan hesitates.

EHSAN

No.

EXT. SALIM'S HOUSE - REAR COURTYARD - EVENING

Ehsan and Hasoon pass the soccer ball between them. Ehsan's mind is elsewhere, but the little boy doesn't notice. He just runs and laughs.

MOMENTS LATER

Hasoon juggles the ball using his knees. Ehsan cheers him on.

EHSAN

Okay, okay -- but can you do this?

Ehsan starts juggling, then knees the ball HIGH, bends at the waist, and CATCHES IT ON HIS BACK. Hasoon claps with delight.

STILL LATER

Hasoon and Ehsan sit on a step, resting. Ehsan seems far away. He doesn't notice Hasoon watching him.

HASOON

Did they call you Hasoon when you were little?

Ehsan comes out of his reverie. He smiles at Hasoon.

EHSAN

That's right.

HASOON

And when I'm older, I'll be Ehsan?

EHSAN

That's how it works.

HASOON

Good, I like "Ehsan." My dad and you must be real good friends.

EHSAN

He was real good friends with my brother.

HASOON

Where's your brother now?

EHSAN

He died.

HASOON

Sorry.

EHSAN

It was a long time ago. In the  
Gulf War.

HASOON

Oh.

EHSAN

I hardly knew him.

INT. SALIM'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ehsan, Salim and Hasoon are finishing up dinner. The mood is  
merry. Salim tells a story with animated gestures.

SALIM

The other day, Hasoon comes home  
and says --

HASOON

Dad --

SALIM

I'm going to --

HASOON

Please, Dad --

SALIM

I'm just telling Uncle Ehsan what  
you said!

Hasoon stares at his plate.

SALIM (CONT'D)

He says, he's friends with Niesha,  
and has he really got to go to the  
all-boys school next year?

EHSAN

(to Hasoon, teasing)  
Who's Niesha?

HASOON

Just a girl in my class.

EHSAN

(to Salim)  
Hasoon has a girlfriend.

HASOON

She's not my girlfriend!

SALIM

What can I say, my son starts early!

Salim and Ehsan share a hearty laugh. Hasoon looks mortified.

HASOON

May I be excused?

SALIM

(looks at his watch)

It's past bedtime anyway. Jabar!

Jabar comes in.

SALIM (CONT'D)

Bedtime.

JABAR

Right away. C'mon, kiddo.

Jabar pulls back Hasoon's chair. As he does, his gaze locks with Ehsan's. Ehsan's eyes follow Jabar and Hasoon out of the room. Salim notices this exchange.

SALIM

Jabar told me what happened. You have a soft heart. Your brother always said so.

EHSAN

That kid had suffered enough.

SALIM

(stern)

That's not for you to decide.

EHSAN

You're right. It's up to Allah. Unless their families pay the Sheik a ransom, in which case all is forgiven.

Salim is visibly angry. He forces himself to smile.

SALIM

(not a question)

Why don't we change the subject.

EHSAN

Sure. A woman named Leyla Rahal hired me. Her son's called Nori. One of the *tantas*.

Salim searches Ehsan's face. He's suspicious. Maybe this isn't the first time he has suspected Ehsan...

SALIM

How do you know this man?

EHSAN

I've never met him.

SALIM

Then why does his mother come to you?

EHSAN

Who knows? When someone gives me five million dinars, I don't ask questions. Maybe she's afraid.

Salim drums his fingers on the table. Weighing Ehsan's story, choosing his next gambit.

SALIM

Give this woman back her money. Don't get involved with this.

EHSAN

(too forcefully)  
I promised her I'd help.

Salim frowns. He knows Ehsan is more invested than he claims.

SALIM

I see.

INT. NORI'S CELL - NIGHT

Nori is sleeping. Suddenly, the door opens and militia guys burst in. Nori wakes with a start. They seize him and drag him out of the cell.

INT. PRISON SHOWER AREA - NIGHT

Salim and Jabar watch from the shadows as Nori is dragged into the room and handcuffed to the chair. Salim comes forward into the light.

SALIM

Nori Rahal?

Afraid, Nori says nothing.

SALIM

I'm Salim Fakhoury. Brigade commander. Your name is Nori Rahal?

Nori gives a cautious nod.

SALIM

And you know a man named Ehsan Samir?

NORI

(too quickly)  
Never heard of him.

A thin smile from Salim.

SALIM

How do you know Ehsan Samir?  
(beat)  
He's offering fifty thousand US dollars for you, you must know him somehow.

NORI

He's... he's a police officer. I pay him for protection.

SALIM

Good.  
(to Jabar)  
That's good, right?

JABAR

I'd buy that.

SALIM

(to Nori)  
Ehsan said he'd never met you.  
(beat)  
Is Ehsan Samir your lover?

Nori says nothing. Salim nods to Jabar. Jabar draws a pistol, chambers a round. Points it at Nori's head. Nori struggles against the handcuffs. It's useless.

SALIM

Last chance.

Nori's frightened eyes look right at Salim. Salim crosses his arms and waits.

NORI

(quietly)  
Yes.

With a wave of his hand, Salim tells Jabar to lower his gun. He bows his head, like he's mourning.

Then, with a ROAR OF RAGE, Salim punches Nori so hard he KNOCKS OVER THE CHAIR.

He kicks Nori over and over with increasing ferocity.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Ehsan's car pulls up in front. As he gets out, Jabar appears.

JABAR

Salim knows what you are.

Ehsan tries to stay stone-faced.

JABAR (CONT'D)

You really have fifty million dinars?

EHSAN

(nods)

I'll bring it to the house.

JABAR

The prison. Salim doesn't want you near his son.

Ehsan reacts like he's been slapped. Jabar walks away. Shock and horror on Ehsan's face.

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - ARLINGTON - DAY

At the dining room table, Evan types furiously on his iPad. Morris is on a laptop. Susannah waits nervously. Malik enters, drops his keys, takes off his jacket.

EVAN

Everything good, hon?

MALIK

(nods)

I deposited Jim and Saul's check. The Gay Rights Now money's ready, they just need a secure account for the transfer.

EVAN

Then we're all set.

MALIK

The visa?

CUT AWAY TO:

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - GORDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Gordy is on the phone. He nods and furiously jots notes on a legal pad.

EVAN (CONT'D, V.O.)  
Gordy's got the ball rolling at  
USCIS.

CUT TO:

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - OFFICE DOORWAY - DAY

Blanca and Evan talk in the open doorway of Blanca's office. Blanca shakes her head and shuts the door in Evan's face.

EVAN (CONT'D, V.O.)  
The Gay Rights Now sponsorship  
opens some doors, it could be  
months. Blanca's no help.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - DAY

The scene with Evan, Malik, Morris and Susannah continues.

MALIK  
He can't even set foot in the  
Green Zone without her permission.

MORRIS  
My buddies are on that, Malik.  
Consolidated's got a few  
safehouses. Orr already spoke to  
the CFO about using one. And  
they've agreed to have the money  
transferred through their  
accounts. We're ready to go.

MALIK  
How will it work?

CUT AWAY TO:

EXT. BAGHDAD STREET - DAY

Ehsan waits on the sidewalk. A BLACK S.U.V. pulls up.

MORRIS (V.O.)  
We make the transfer to  
Consolidated. Orr and Pembleton  
meet Ehsan with the cash.

CUT TO:

INT. BLACK S.U.V. - DAY

Ehsan, in a rear-facing seat, pulls the door closed behind him. Across from him are two Americans: BOB ORR (52) and STEVE PEMBLETON (45).

Orr is a slight, ascetic man in a black suit -- retired CIA. Pembleton is big, athletic, sunburned, and wears a crewcut and gray fatigues -- former Special Forces. They shake Ehsan's hand.

ORR  
Bob Orr.

PEMBLETON  
Steve Pembleton.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - DAY

MORRIS (CONT'D)  
They make sure Ehsan's on the up-  
and-up. They give him the money,  
drive him to the prison.

SUSANNAH  
They're not going in with him?

EVAN  
Sending private security guys will  
just antagonize them, mom.

MORRIS  
They'll do what they can to  
protect him.

CUT AWAY TO:

INT. BLACK S.U.V. - DAY

The car's IN MOTION now. Pembleton puts an earpiece in Ehsan's ear.

ORR  
(to Ehsan)  
You sure you want to go unarmed?

EHSAN  
They'll frisk me.

Pembleton takes out a tiny pistol.

PEMBLETON  
This here's a Smith & Wesson M&P.  
We tape this little fucker up  
between your cheeks.

ORR  
Used to do it all the time in  
Pakistan.

PEMBLETON  
(to Ehsan, laughing)  
You should be used to it.

Orr gives Pembleton an annoyed look.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAGHDAD STREET CORNER - DAY

The SUV comes to a stop.

SUSANNAH (V.O.)  
So he has to go in alone.

INT. BLACK S.U.V. - DAY

BUNDLES OF CASH in a SILVER CASE. Orr closes the case and  
hands it to Ehsan.

ORR  
The combination's three-five-one.  
Safer not to tell it to them till  
you and Nori are back outside.

Ehsan starts to open the car door.

ORR  
Hey -- good luck.

Ehsan nods and gets out.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - DAY

SUSANNAH

Then what?

EVAN

We just wait for the phone to ring.

CUT TO:

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE TELEPHONE

We linger on the phone. It sits in the center of the dining room table. Refusing to ring.

A WIDER ANGLE

Malik, Evan, Morris and Susannah watch the phone intently.

DISSOLVE TO:

SOME TIME LATER

Malik is STILL INTENT on the phone. Everyone else has wilted. Morris is slouching. Susannah rubs her tired eyes. Evan looks at his watch.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER STILL

Malik HASN'T MOVED an inch. Susannah's head is down on the table. Evan is nodding off.

Morris glances at Malik. Malik stares at the phone with unwavering attention. Morris FROWNS thoughtfully.

DISSOLVE TO:

DAWN

is breaking outside the windows. The phone is still silent. Evan and Susannah are asleep. Malik is LIKE A STATUE.

Morris is staring at Malik openly. He has a look of RESPECT AND WONDER -- he's never seen this side of his son-in-law before.

Suddenly, Malik turns to Morris.

MALIK  
Something's wrong.

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Morris talks with Orr and Pembleton ON SPEAKER. Malik, Evan and Susannah are gathered round, listening.

PEMBLETON (ON PHONE)  
*We dropped him five blocks from the prison. Y'know -- discreet distance. I offered him the gun. Dumb fuck wouldn't take it. He got out. Headed for the prison.*

MORRIS  
Then what?

PEMBLETON (ON PHONE)  
*Then... nothing.*

ORR (ON PHONE)  
*We circled back every ten minutes for six hours. Found the earpiece. It was crushed on the sidewalk a block from the prison.*

MORRIS  
What else?

Silence on the line.

MORRIS (CONT'D)  
Come on, guys! Didn't you do anything else?

PEMBLETON (ON PHONE)  
*Like what? Knock on the fucking door? Get our heads blowed off for that Arab faggot!?!?*

Uncomfortable silence. Morris glances at Malik and Evan. They're pissed.

ORR (ON PHONE)  
(clears throat)  
*There're still things we can try, Morris. Official channels.*

MORRIS  
Think there's a chance in hell that'll work?

ORR (ON PHONE)  
 (beat)  
*Probably not.*

MORRIS  
 (to Malik)  
 You got any bright ideas?

INT. LEYLA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Leyla comes out of the kitchen with a pot of tea. The phone RINGS. Leyla drops the teapot. It SHATTERS as she rushes to answer.

LEYLA  
 Nori?!?

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Malik, phone to his ear, is taken by surprise by Leyla's question.

MALIK  
 ... No.  
 (beat)  
 Is this Leyla Rahal?

INTERCUT MALIK AND LEYLA

Leyla, bitterly disappointed, lets the phone fall to her side.  
 Malik listens to the dead line.

MALIK  
 Hello?! Can you still hear me?  
 (beat)  
 Are you still there?

Leyla lifts the phone to her ear again.

LEYLA  
 Yes.

MALIK  
 (pause)  
 Mrs. Rahal, it's Malik Nassar. I'm  
 Nori's friend in America. We met  
 once?

LEYLA  
 I know who you are. Is my son all  
 right?

MALIK

I'm trying to find out. Ehsan went to the prison four hours ago. We haven't heard from him.

Leyla closes her eyes in despair. A silence.

MALIK (CONT'D)

Mrs. Rahal?

LEYLA

I haven't heard from him either. They killed him, didn't they?

MALIK

(trying hard to stay calm)  
I don't know, I'm... I'm not sure how to find out.

Leyla's expression becomes calm and determined. Slowly, as if hypnotised, she hangs up.

Malik hears the line go dead. He's panicking now.

MALIK

Mrs. Rahal? Mrs. Rahal!?!?

CUT TO:

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malik bursts in. He begins stuffing clothes into a suitcase. Evan runs in, followed by Morris and Susannah.

EVAN

What are you -- ?

MALIK

Exactly what it looks like.

EVAN

You can't go back there!

MORRIS

Evan.  
(beat)  
He has to.

Evan thinks. Nods.

EVAN

(to Malik)  
Then I'm coming with you.

MORRIS

No. I'll go with him.

Evan gives Morris a surprised look.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

You need to sort out the Green Zone access. I know how to get results out of Orr and Pembleton, and besides, I...

(glances at Susannah)

Well, I don't believe in leaving a man behind.

Evan looks at Morris with amazement and love. He takes his father in his arms and hugs him.

EXT. PRISON ENTRANCE - BAGHDAD - DAY

CLOSE ON A HAND

beating on a steel-reinforced door. The wrinkled hand of an old woman.

WIDER ANGLE

on Leyla, pounding on the door of a formidable brick edifice -- a URBAN JAIL. A WALKWAY, about ten yards long leads from the door to the street, a high chainlink fence topped with razor wire on each side. Bored MILITIA GUYS patrolling the other side watch Leyla.

ON LEYLA

She pauses. Licks her lips, afraid but determined. She starts knocking again. The DOOR OPENS.

A YOUNG GUARD (20) with a rifle stands in the doorway.

YOUNG GUARD

What do you want?

LEYLA

You have my son.

YOUNG GUARD

Go away.

He closes the door. Leyla pounds harder than before. The door opens once more.

LEYLA

I want to see your superior.

YOUNG GUARD

Get lost!

He SLAMS the door shut. Leyla steps back. Considers what to do. She sits down in front of the doorway. Waits.

EXT. PRISON ENTRANCE - LATER

The sun is much higher in the sky. Leyla is sweating, wilted. The door opens again. The Young Guard comes out with a BURLY GUARD (35).

YOUNG GUARD

I told you, get lost!

Leyla stands. She looks them in the eye.

LEYLA

Not till I see your superior.

Exchanging a look, the two Guards sling their rifles. Each grabs one of Leyla's arms. They drag her down the walkway, and THROW HER TO THE GROUND in the street.

Laughing, they return to the prison.

Slow and unsteady, Leyla picks herself up off the ground and brushes the dirt off her clothes.

CUT STRAIGHT TO:

LEYLA'S HAND

pounding on the prison door again.

It opens. Once again, the two Guards come out. Real menace this time. Leyla backs away.

YOUNG GUARD

You're getting on my nerves, you old hag!

LEYLA

I won't leave till I see my son,  
Nori Rahal.

The Young Guard shoves Leyla. She staggers back, manages to stay on her feet.

LEYLA

You don't frighten me!

The Young Guard unslings his rifle.

LEYLA (CONT'D)

Tell your superiors I won't move  
from this spot until --

The Young Guard DRAWS BACK to hit Leyla with the butt of his  
rifle. She throws up her hands to protect her face when --

JABAR (O.S.)

Ahmed!

Jabar is in the doorway.

JABAR (CONT'D)

What's going on here?

YOUNG GUARD

She won't leave.

JABAR

That's no way to treat an old  
woman.

Jabar steps forward. The two Guards slink back into the  
prison. Leyla, very shaken, lowers her hands from her face.

JABAR

I apologize. Now, what's this  
about?

LEYLA

My son is Nori Rahal. My friend  
came here to pay for his release.

JABAR

Your friend.

LEYLA

Yes. He came and paid. I want my  
son.

JABAR

Your friend is Ehsan Samir?

LEYLA

(hesitates)  
Yes.

JABAR

Then he took your money and ran.

LEYLA

You're lying. You've hurt him.

JABAR

If he'd come, I *would* have hurt him. I'd have beaten the shit out of him. But I wouldn't lie about it afterward. I'd tell you proudly, because it's what he deserves. Turns out he's a smart faggot, too smart to show his face. After the lies he told Salim, he's probably half way to Saudi Arabia.

On Leyla's face, we see she believes him.

EXT. BAGHDAD STREET - DAY

Leyla walks slowly down the busy sidewalk. PEDESTRIANS hurry past, jostling her. Car horns BLARE. A mother shouts after her running children. Leyla doesn't register any of it. Her eyes are downcast. Completely without hope.

EXT. LEYLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Coming up the walk, she takes her keys out of her handbag. She sees the door is ajar.

INT. LEYLA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fearful, Leyla pushes through the door. Ehsan is leaning against an end table.

LEYLA

So. You do have the courage to show your face.

EHSAN

(bitterly)

Nori always says I don't really care. What do you expect? I'm a *tanta*.

Leyla's eyes rest for a moment on the SILVER CASE, sitting on the floor by his feet.

LEYLA

Why didn't you take that for yourself?

EHSAN

I did. I was fifty kilometers away.

LEYLA

But you came back.

(beat)

I never understood homosexuals. Nori tried to explain. It seems unnatural. But I believe a homosexual can be a good person.

EHSAN

If I go to that prison, they'll kill me.

Ehsan picks up the case and hands it to Leyla. He can't meet her gaze. He starts to leave.

LEYLA

(as he reaches the door)

Where will you go?

EHSAN

I have a friend in Ankara.

LEYLA

You're a coward.

Ehsan turns in the doorway.

EHSAN

All the heroes in this country died years ago.

He's gone.

INT. BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM - NIGHT

Malik and Morris, looking tired, come out of the secure area into the baggage claim. Except for the Arabic signage and military guards, this could be any modern terminal in the US or Europe.

Orr and Pembleton wait for them, flanked by TWO AMERICAN BODYGUARDS in black fatigues, burly and alert with earpieces and holstered handguns.

PEMBLETON

(to Morris)

Colonel, you're a crazy son of a bitch, y'know that? What the hell are you doing here?!?

MORRIS

Trying to clean this mess up.  
 (shakes Orr's hand)  
 Orr.

ORR

Webb.

MORRIS

This is my son-in-law, Malik.

Orr shakes Malik's hand. Pembleton gives him a wary look, decides "what the hell," and shakes with him.

PEMBLETON

Good to meet you, Malik.

They begin walking.

ORR

I'm not sure we *can* clean this up.  
 We still don't know what happened  
 to Ehsan. Plus, what do you plan  
 to do for money?

MORRIS

I was thinking Consolidated has  
 more than --

Malik spots Leyla, hugging the silver case with the money to her chest, looking lost.

MALIK

Mrs. Rahal?!

Morris, Orr and Pembleton stop. Leyla hurries toward them. Pembleton points at the case.

PEMBLETON

Is that -- ?  
 (beat)  
 Well, I'll be god-damned.

EXT. GREEN ZONE CHECKPOINT - DAY

Cars wait in single file between concrete barriers, as Iraqi soldiers from a sandbagged machine gun position check IDs and search trunks. Overhead, a sign in Arabic and English reads: "ENTERING INTERNATIONAL ZONE: HAVE I.D. READY."

EXT. GREEN ZONE LUXURY HOTEL - DAY

The American-style luxury highrise looks out of place with armed guards under the harsh desert sun.

PEMBLETON (V.O.)  
I don't mean to be rude, colonel,  
but no way in hell!

INT. HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

As Malik and Leyla watch, Morris and Pembleton argue heatedly. Orr is trying to referee.

MORRIS  
Explain that to me.

PEMBLETON  
Ain't nothing to explain! No  
fucking way am I gonna get my ass  
shot off for some Iraqi candy-ass  
--  
(to Malik)  
-- no offense --  
(to Morris)  
-- who got himself captured.

ORR  
We feel for the young man, Webb.  
Colorful language notwithstanding.  
But Consolidated doesn't pay us to  
take unnecessary risks.

MORRIS  
Thanks, fellas.

PEMBLETON  
We bent every rule for you, sir!  
But that place's a death trap! I  
ain't walking into it!

MALIK  
I'll go.

Everyone stares at Malik.

MORRIS  
Not by yourself!

MALIK  
It's too dangerous for you.  
(MORE)

MALIK (CONT'D)  
 (re: Pembleton & Orr)  
 And they're right. They don't have  
 to risk it. I'm Nori's friend.

LEYLA  
 (to Morris)  
 I'll go with him.

MALIK  
 Mrs. Rahal --

LEYLA  
 You're his friend? I'm his mother.  
 Maybe they'll be too ashamed to  
 kill you in front of an old woman.  
 (under her breath)  
 Though I wouldn't count on it.

EXT. BAGHDAD STREETS - DAY

The black SUV moves slowly through traffic.

INT. BLACK S.U.V. - DAY

Malik is sweating. Leyla rides next to him in back. In the  
 seat facing them, Morris and Pembleton are giving last minute  
 instructions. They and Orr (who's driving) wear bulletproof  
 vests.

PEMBLETON  
 It's the next corner.

MORRIS  
 We'll stay mobile and meet you in  
 front when you come out.

PEMBLETON  
 Remember, you don't give them that  
 fucking combination till you're  
 what?

MALIK  
 Outside.

PEMBLETON  
 That's right.

The SUV stops. Malik takes a shaky breath.

PEMBLETON

Hey. You're one brave  
motherfucker, Malik.

MALIK

Thanks.

PEMBLETON

Don't fuckin' die, y'hear?

Malik and Leyla get out of the car.

EXT. PRISON ENTRANCE - DAY

Carrying the money case, Malik and Leyla enter the walkway to the door of the prison. Chainlink fence and razor wire tower over them. Militia Guys peer through the fence. They reach the door. Malik POUNDS with his fist.

INT. PRISON SHOWER AREA - DAY

GUARDS roughly escort Leyla and Malik (still carrying the case) in. With frightened eyes, Malik looks around. Salim stands at the other end. Jabar waits to the side.

Salim studies them for a long time. They wait.

SALIM

I was expecting Ehsan.

LEYLA

He was too afraid to come.

JABAR

Perhaps he's smarter than we  
thought.

Jabar laughs. Sees Salim isn't laughing with him. Stops.

SALIM

(to Leyla)

You're the emo's mother?

LEYLA

Yes.

SALIM

(nods, to Malik)

And you?

MALIK

I'm Nori's friend.

SALIM  
His friend.

Salim approaches Malik. Studies his face more closely.

SALIM  
I recognize you! You used to work  
for the Americans. You know what  
we do to people like you?  
(beat)  
You've got a lot of nerve coming  
here.

MALIK  
(tries not to sound afraid)  
I'm just here for Nori.

SALIM  
Are you a *tanta* as well as a  
traitor?

LEYLA  
Malik lives half way around the  
world. What does it matter?

SALIM  
It matters if he offends God.

LEYLA  
Many people offend God. Must the  
rest of us be punished if we love  
them anyway?

Salim frowns, troubled. He seems to consider this for a moment. Without a word, he takes a step back from Malik. He nods to Jabar. Jabar goes to the door.

JABAR  
(to someone outside)  
Bring him in.

Guards bring Nori in. Face covered with blood and bruises, he has a terrified, wild look. He looks at Malik and Leyla with suspicion: are they real, could this somehow be a trick?

Malik stares at Nori. He fails to conceal his horror. Leyla leans over to him.

LEYLA  
(low voice)  
Give them the money.

Malik recollects himself. Hands the case to Salim. Salim tries to open it, sees it's locked.

SALIM

What's the combination?

LEYLA

I will tell you that once Malik  
and my son are safe.

Salim gives Leyla his thin smile. In a leisurely motion, he draws a handgun from his hip holster and aims at Nori's head.

MALIK

(shouts)

Three-five-one!!! It's three-five-  
one!!!

Smiling, Salim holsters his gun. He enters the combination and opens the case. He shows Jabar a bundle of \$100 bills.

SALIM

American dollars.

Jabar pushes Nori toward Malik and Leyla. They catch him before he can fall. Huddled together, they watch Salim flip through the money.

SALIM (CONT'D)

Crisp. Brand new.

JABAR

(eyes Malik)

There's probably more where that  
came from.

Malik and Nori exchange a terrified look -- Salim's not going to let them leave!

But Salim's eyes are on Leyla. She stands tall and looks him straight in the eye, resolute and without fear.

Jabar, leering, takes a menacing step toward Malik.

SALIM

Let them go.

Jabar stops. He looks at Salim with disbelief.

SALIM (CONT'D)

(to Malik and Nori)

I'm being merciful. But just this  
time. If I see either of you in  
Iraq again, you will die.

Nori and Malik hurry from the room.

Leyla lingers. Her gaze is inscrutable -- not challenging or defiant, not exactly passive either. Salim meets it.

He gives her a respectful nod, almost in spite of himself. Without returning it, she goes.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

Nori, supported by Malik and Leyla, stumbles out the front door of the prison. Jabar and company watch from the doorway. They walk faster and faster with each step down the walkway.

Right on cue, the BLACK S.U.V. COMES AROUND THE CORNER.

INT. BLACK S.U.V. - CONTINUOUS

Morris, riding shotgun, points through the windshield at Malik, Nori and Leyla. Orr nods and accelerates.

EXT. PRISON - CONTINUOUS

Malik, Nori and Leyla RUN to the curb. The SUV SCREECHES to a halt. Morris and Pembleton, guns drawn but low, jump out. Hustle the three inside. The SUV peels out.

Scowling, Jabar watches it drive away.

EXT. WASHINGTON, DC - DAWN

A fine mist hangs over the city. An orange glow is just cresting on the horizon, behind the Washington Monument.

Over this, a PHONE RINGING.

INT. GAY RIGHTS NOW HEADQUARTERS - FIONA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Evan, asleep on a sofa, jolts awake. Rubbing his face, he staggers to the desk to answer the RINGING PHONE.

EVAN  
(into phone)  
Hello?

INT. GORDY'S CUBICLE - STATE DEPARTMENT - DAWN

Hair mussed, eyes bloodshot, chin covered with stubble, Gordy drinks from an energy drink from a can as he SHOUTS MANICALLY into the phone. The office is dark. The only light is from Gordy's desk lamp and computer monitor.

GORDY

That son of a bitch Stevenson is a wizard, Evan! I knew he was our guy! You want results from the government, you gotta go all the way to the bottom, baby! Woooo!

INTERCUT EVAN AND GORDY

EVAN

(rubbing his eyes)  
...Gordy?

GORDY

Man, I am PUMPED! Bureaucracy is my BITCH!

Fiona, carrying two coffees in a take-out holder and a box of doughnuts, enters. Shoots a questioning look at Evan.

EVAN

What time --?

GORDY

Five-thirty! I'm gonna take a brisk walk down to the Potomac, pound another Red Bull, and get back to my desk. I got work in a few hours!

EVAN

How many Red Bulls have you had, Gordy?

Gordy glances down. The floor of his cube is covered with empties.

GORDY

I dunno. Doesn't matter! Don't you understand what I'm telling you?

EVAN

No, I don't understand anything you're --

GORDY

We got it, man!

EVAN

(beat)  
We got the visa?!

FIONA  
 (to Evan)  
 Wait, we got it?

EVAN  
 (to Fiona)  
 We got it!!

GORDY  
 WOOOOOO!!!

In pain, Evan jerks the phone away from his ear.

EVAN  
*Jee-sus, man!*

He puts the call on speaker for Fiona.

GORDY  
 WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO -- !!

EVAN  
 (overlapping)  
 Calm... Calm down a second. Tell  
 me what this means.

GORDY  
 It means it's fast-tracked, baby,  
 he's a fuckin' refugee! He's just  
 got to wait seven, eight weeks for  
 it to go through channel --

EVAN  
 Seven or -- What's he supposed to  
 do for seven or eight weeks?

GORDY  
 Above my paygrade, dude. You said  
 Blanca Espinoza would okay a safe  
 house.

Fiona, visibly struck by an idea, tugs Evan's sleeve. With a sideways jerk of her head toward the door, she silently says, "Let's go!"

GORDY (CONT'D)  
 I mean, she hasn't done *me* a favor  
 in --

EVAN  
 Gordy, we gotta go!

He hangs up. They rush out.

GORDY'S CUBICLE

Gordy realizes the line is dead.

GORDY

Evan?

He looks at the phone. Sets it slowly back in its cradle.

LONG SHOT LOOKING OVER A SEA OF EMPTY CUBICLES

in the dark office. An old, African American JANITOR (60s) pushes his cart out of the elevator.

Gordy, tiny in the OTHER CORNER OF THE SCREEN, jumps to his feet and sticks both fists in the air.

GORDY

WOOOOOOOOOO!!!

ON THE JANITOR

Surprised, he stops his cart for a second and listens.

GORDY (O.S., CONT'D)

WOOOOOOOOOO!!!

The Janitor shakes his head slowly and starts pushing again.

INT. FIONA'S CAR - DAWN

The sun is up now. Fiona drives fast down the Beltway, weaving between other cars. Evan's cell phone rings. He grabs it.

EVAN

What's going on?

(beat)

You did? He's -- ?

(beat)

Oh, that's *great* news. And Malik

-- ?

(look of relief)

Thank God. Thank God.

FIONA

They got him?

EVAN  
 (into phone)  
 Of course, right. We're on it,  
 Dad. Yeah, we're close.

Evan hangs up the phone.

EVAN  
 Banged up, but he's alive. And the  
 militia want him out of the  
 country yesterday.

EXT. BLANCA ESPINOZA'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Fiona rings the doorbell of a white, two-story house. Suburban subdivision, quaint shutters, perfectly trimmed hedges. She and Evan wait. Their car is double parked behind them.

Blanca Espinoza answers the door. She wears a fuzzy, purple bathrobe. A steaming cup of coffee's in her hand.

BLANCA  
 I guess you freed your friend.  
 (ironic)  
 Congratulations, Webb. You just  
 successfully negotiated with  
 terrorists. How's that feel?

EVAN  
 (misses just one beat)  
 I... just need you to approve --

BLANCA  
 You *need* me? Well, let me get  
 right *on* that. See, I thought I  
 was *your* boss, but considering the  
 way you disobeyed my orders and  
 made America's enemies fifty  
 thousand dollars richer, I guess I  
 must've been wrong.

FIONA  
 (c'mon, be reasonable)  
 Blanca... All we need is --

BLANCA  
 American safe houses are for  
 American government assets.

FIONA  
 But his life's still in danger.  
 He's not gonna make it eight  
 weeks.

BLANCA

And I'm saying I can't help you.

FIONA

That's bull, Blanca. You're pissed we went behind your back.

BLANCA

Well, yes. As a matter of fact.

FIONA

Okay. Let us make it right.

BLANCA

(snorts contemptuously)  
Get the hell off my property!  
(to Evan)  
We're gonna talk about this later.

Blanca shuts the door.

FIONA

My God, that woman needs a good  
-- !

Fiona breaks off. Visibly, she has an idea. She rings the doorbell. No answer. She presses the button over and over. The door opens a crack. Blanca's face appears.

BLANCA

I'm calling the cops.

FIONA

We've got this baby dyke in Development. Twenty-four years old. She's got seven tattoos, four piercings, a smartass wit, and a thing for older women. Do this, and she'll go to dinner with you.

Blanca opens the door wider. Considers.

BLANCA

Has she got a pierced tongue?

INT. MOSQUE - SADR CITY - EVENING

Evening prayers have just ended. The Sheik shares some private words with congregation members. Salim approaches. The Sheik sees him and lights up.

SHEIK

Salim! Hello! Shake my hand!  
(MORE)

SHEIK (CONT'D)

You have done a magnificent job,  
Salim -- a *magnificent* job! Fifty  
thousand dollars!!

SALIM

Oh. Yes.

SHEIK

Oh? Oh?!? Is this modesty, Salim?  
Because there's really no need.

SALIM

It was nothing. They paid the  
ransom. We let a puppy go free.

SHEIK

Salim, America is full of  
homosexuals and degenerates. They  
have money, and you've made  
contact with them. That's nothing  
to be modest about! Maybe they'd  
be interested in paying for some  
of the other *tantas*. The ones you  
haven't killed yet.

Salim is unable to hide his disgust at this suggestion.

SALIM

I don't think they would, sir.

SHEIK

Try. You never know till you try.

EXT. LEYLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The street is quiet. Inside, all the lights are on.

INT. LEYLA'S HOUSE - HALL OUTSIDE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Malik and Morris wait. Leyla comes out of the bedroom.

MALIK

Is he resting?

LEYLA

(nods)

He wouldn't let me turn out the  
lights.

A loud KNOCK on the door. Malik, Leyla and Morris tense.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

They inch into the living room. The knock repeats. Morris exchanges a look with Malik. He takes his gun out of the holster as Malik answers the door.

Ehsan is on the doorstep.

EHSAN  
(urgently)  
Is he here?

Malik scowls. Leyla comes up behind him.

LEYLA  
Come inside.

Reluctantly, Malik gives way. Ehsan enters the house.

EHSAN  
(to Leyla)  
I was almost to Baiji when you called.

LEYLA  
You drove fast.

EHSAN  
(to Malik)  
You're Malik?

Arms crossed, Malik nods. Ehsan can't meet his eyes.

EHSAN  
Look, I...

Malik walks out of the room. Ehsan turns to Leyla. For absolution. She sighs.

LEYLA  
He wants to see you.

INT. LEYLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ehsan enters. Nori's in bed, his back is to Ehsan. Ehsan stops in the doorway. In his face, a mixture of relief, gratitude and shame. He's on the verge of bolting.

Then Nori ROLLS OVER and their EYES MEET.

Ehsan GASPS SOFTLY. Nori's face is all cuts and bruises. Nori stands. Ehsan takes several steps forward. A few feet from Nori, HIS LEGS GIVE WAY and he FALLS TO HIS KNEES. He wraps his arms around Nori's waist. He's BAWLING. Abjectly.

Nori doesn't know what to do. He starts stroking Ehsan's hair.

NORI

It's okay. It's okay.

Ehsan is wracked by a new wave of sobs.

Leyla and Malik come softly into the room, watch wordlessly.

INT. LEYLA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dark except for one lamp by the sofa. Malik sits reading a book. Nori comes in.

MALIK

Couldn't sleep?

NORI

Nightmares. You?

MALIK

I'm still on US time.

NORI

What would you be doing right now  
if you were there?

MALIK

Dunno. Planning my dissertation, I  
guess.

NORI

You chose a subject!

MALIK

(nods)

Mercantilism in the...

(pauses, gets a funny look)

...North African provinces of the  
Ottoman Empire. You know, I just  
this second realized how dull that  
sounds.

(off Nori's smile)

What?

NORI

Reminds me of when we met. You  
remember what you were like?

Malik shakes his head.

NORI (CONT'D)

A stack of books with legs.

MALIK

I wasn't!

NORI

And God were you shy! I wouldn't have recognized you at the prison today.

MALIK

I guess I was... studious.

NORI

It's how you used to avoid dealing. We've all got our ways.

Malik nods thoughtfully -- what he's thinking, we can only guess. Then he smiles at Nori, with a twinkle in his eye.

MALIK

Then yours must've been sleeping with literally anybody.

NORI

(mock offense)

It was a slutty phase!

MALIK

You know, I always wondered. How come we, um...

NORI

-- we never... ?

MALIK

Yeah.

NORI

You were too innocent. It would've been like doing it with a child!

MALIK

(swats Nori's arm)

Shut up!

NORI

A retarded child.

They're both laughing, trying to keep quiet so they won't wake anyone.

NORI

You were still a virgin then, weren't you?

MALIK  
(hesitates)  
Yes.

NORI  
(laughing)  
I knew it! You lying sack of shit,  
I knew it! Wait -- that means Ali  
Atta was your *first*?

Malik is quietly laughing so hard he can only nod.

NORI (CONT'D)  
Well, we all made that mistake at  
least once. Ugh!!! He *smelled!*

MALIK  
That cologne...!

NORI  
What was that?!?

They're both laughing so hard they can hardly contain it.  
Then, suddenly, Nori stops.

MALIK  
(laughing)  
What?  
(stops laughing)  
Ali's dead.

NORI  
I didn't know if I should tell  
you.

Malik looks at the floor. Shakes his head. It's hard to tell  
what he's thinking -- even he probably doesn't know why he  
feels so crushed.

Nori takes his hand, holds it companionably.

EXT. LEYLA'S HOUSE - DAWN

The sun is rising.

INT. LEYLA'S LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Malik is asleep on the sofa. Nori uses the Internet on Leyla's  
ancient desktop computer. Leyla brings breakfast to Ehsan.

Morris enters, cell phone in hand. He shakes Malik awake.

MORRIS

That was Evan. They got it!

NORI

Got what?

MALIK

(standing)

Green Zone permission. We're going to the airport.

NORI

No.

EHSAN

Nori --

NORI

I can't go anywhere yet.

EHSAN

You've got to!

MALIK

Salim said if they see us --

NORI

(re: computer screen)

Look! Maha and Karim are still missing. So are Mohammad and Ahmed. There are more! Hussein, Abdul. You remember Abdul! The ransom on most of them's only five thousand dollars!

MALIK

Nori --

NORI

Twelve men! We could save them all for just a little more than you paid for me!

Malik looks conflicted. Seeing this, Morris jumps in.

MORRIS

(to Nori)

That was all the money we could raise.

NORI

We can get more! There's gotta be people in America who wanna help!

(MORE)

NORI (CONT'D)  
 (off Morris's doubtful  
 expression)  
 There *must* be somebody!

EHSAN  
 You can't buy off Salim. It was a  
 miracle Malik saved you. A  
*miracle*.

MORRIS  
 These are bad people, son. All  
 that money -- it just encourages  
 them.

EHSAN  
 They'll hurt more people!

NORI  
 I don't care! I don't care! I care  
 about *these* people!  
 (searching for a sympathetic  
 face)  
 I'm responsible for them! I'm  
 responsible! It's my fault this is  
 happening! It's --

LEYLA  
 (softly)  
 Hush.

Leyla takes Nori by the shoulders.

LEYLA (CONT'D)  
 I've never understood the...  
*choices* you've made, Nori, but...  
 I can see how you care for others,  
 and... and I know, whatever  
 your... *lifestyle*... you're a good  
 man. I can't bear to watch you go  
 on being good... until they kill  
 you for it.

Nori looks from Leyla, to Ehsan, to Morris. The only face he  
 finds that still looks conflicted is Malik.

NORI  
 (weakly)  
 Malik, please. You thought you  
 could walk away. But you're here.  
 You came back. I know you  
 understand.

Malik looks STRICKEN. But Leyla puts a hand on Nori's cheek  
 and gently turns his head back towards her.

LEYLA

Nori, please. Go. Please. For me.

I/E. EHSAN'S CAR - GREEN ZONE CHECKPOINT - DAY

The car is lined up behind six others at the checkpoint. Ehsan drives, Morris in the passenger seat. In back, next to Nori, Malik looks out the left-side window.

We STAY ON MALIK, as others speak in the background. His CONFLICT is obvious -- he's WRESTLING WITH A DECISION.

MORRIS (O.S.)

Okay, passports ready. You got your badge?

EHSAN (O.S.)

I got it.

Malik's face hardens. Becomes resolute. Calm.

MORRIS (O.S.)

Good. The checkpoint has Nori's info, so we should be all right. If they ask you any questions --

Malik OPENS THE DOOR and GETS OUT.

Alarmed, Nori MAKES A GRAB, but his SEATBELT PULLS HIM UP JUST SHORT.

NORI

Malik!!!

Morris turns, agape. He fumbles with his door handle. Gets out just in time to see MALIK DISAPPEAR INTO THE CROWD. Morris SLAMS his door in frustration.

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S KITCHEN - ARLINGTON - DAWN

Bacon and eggs frying. Susannah slices a cantaloupe for fruit salad. Evan's iPad, sitting on the counter, chimes. Susannah glances absently at it. She DROPS HER KNIFE, picks up the tablet.

On the lock screen is an e-mail from Malik. The subject: **IMPORTANT!!!**

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Susannah shakes Evan awake and puts the iPad in his hands. He blinks, disoriented. She puts the iPad in his hand.

Evan's eyes widen. His mouth drops open.

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - MORNING

Susannah and Evan (in a bathrobe) are mid-video conference with Morris.

EVAN

Why didn't you go after him?!?

MORRIS

He was too fast. Orr traced the e-mail to an Internet café in Sadr City.

EVAN

(hand over eyes)  
Oh God...

MORRIS

Ehsan's looking, but --

EVAN

Three days! We have three days to find him!

SUSANNAH

(calm)  
We should do what he asks.

Morris and Evan give Susannah disbelieving looks.

EVAN

You wanna let him walk up to Salim Fakhoury's door and offer him sixty thousand dollars for those twelve men?!

MORRIS

Salim will probably kill him, Susie.

SUSANNAH

And you just said we can't find him in time. Salim will definitely kill him if we haven't got the money together, right?

(MORE)

SUSANNAH (CONT'D)

(beat)

Then we're wasting time.

EVAN

How are we supposed to raise another sixty thousand? Jim and Saul might be good for a little more but...

Evan stops. He has noticed Susannah staring pointedly at Morris on the computer screen.

MORRIS

(unwillingly)

Fine! Call Zach Conrad. Tell him I'll sell the damn boat.

EVAN

(beat)

Dad...

MORRIS

No, Malik's family. Besides, I... I couldn't sail it again if I knew it cost twelve men their lives.

EXT. HARBOR - CHESAPEAKE BAY - DAY

LONG SHOT of Susannah, getting out of her car and walking toward ZACH CONRAD (65), who waits on the dock. He's distinguished older man wearing khaki pants and a sweater. Morris's beloved sailboat is docked behind him.

PRE-LAP of a cell phone RINGING...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BAGHDAD - EVENING

Nori answers his phone.

MALIK (ON PHONE)

Nori?

NORI

Malik, where the fuck are you?

INT. RUNDOWN HOTEL CORRIDOR - EVENING

Malik is talking on the hall phone. The paint's peeling. A lightbulb flickers.

MALIK

How's the money coming?

BACK ON NORI

NORI

There's not enough time, Malik.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

Same LONG SHOT of Susannah and Zach Conrad. They're on the dock together now. Conrad hands Susannah a check. She takes it out of the envelope, looks at it, slides it in her purse.

She holds out the keys. They dangle from her finger from a moment. Then drop into Conrad's open hand.

NORI (V.O., CONT'D)

You were lucky to do it once, you said so yourself.

MALIK (V.O.)

We weren't lucky, we were motivated. Well, in forty-eight hours, I'm knocking on Salim's door.

BACK ON MALIK

MALIK (CONT'D)

So you've got your motivation. You'll will find a way.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BAGHDAD - DAY

Morris talks with Orr and Pembleton.

PEMBLETON

Jesus buttfucking Christ, *again!?!?*

MORRIS

That's right, and I'm gonna need more from you guys this time.

(MORE)

MORRIS (CONT'D)

I need transport for twelve.

PEMBLETON

How many of these cocksuckers you gonna buy back from those assholes? Is a colonel's pension really that good?!?

INTERCUT MALIK AND NORI

NORI

You were right before, it's too dangerous.

MALIK

No, you were right. We started this together.

INT. FIONA'S OFFICE - GAY RIGHTS NOW OFFICE - DAY

Fiona answers the RINGING PHONE. She keeps shuffling papers as she talks.

FIONA

I'm kinda busy, Evan! Don't tell me something's wrong with the Green Zone pass?

EVAN (ON PHONE)

Everything's fine, except we need twelve more.

Fiona stops what she's doing.

FIONA

That's not funny, dude.

INTERCUT MALIK AND NORI

NORI

Then let *me* go!

MALIK

I came all the way back here to save you. You think I'm gonna lose you now?

INT. GORDY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Gordy's on the phone.

GORDY  
How many? Oh, man.  
(beat)  
Oh, *man!*

He hangs up.

GORDY  
(to himself)  
I'm gonna need more Red Bull.

INTERCUT MALIK AND NORI

MALIK  
Forty-eight hours, Nori.

NORI  
(beat)  
We'll be ready.

Malik hangs up. We can see in his face exactly how SCARED SHITLESS he is.

INT. BANK LOBBY - WASHINGTON, DC - DAY

Susannah and Evan hand the check over to a BANK TELLER (40s, female).

EVAN  
Mom, I'll pay you back for this,  
somehow.

SUSANNAH  
Wanna know a secret? I don't  
really like sailing.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BAGHDAD - DAY

Back with Morris, Orr and Pembleton.

MORRIS  
We need four cars, we need  
drivers, we need an extra two guys  
with rifles --

ORR

I told you before, Webb, there's  
no way --

MORRIS

(in booming "colonel" voice)  
I don't wanna hear that horseshit,  
Orr!

INT. BANK LOBBY - DAY

The Teller processes the check. Susannah and Evan wait anxiously.

MORRIS (V.O., CONT'D)

My son-in-law's out there! His  
head's on the block!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BAGHDAD - NIGHT

Nori, Morris and Ehsan crowd around a laptop. On the bank website, a STATUS BAR shows the transfer in process. 85%. 95%. TRANSFER COMPLETE. FUNDS NOW AVAILABLE.

MORRIS (V.O., CONT'D)

So the two of you are gonna get  
off your lazy asses, and get this  
done!!!

EXT. SALIM'S HOUSE - DAY

A fist POUNDS on the door. Jabar answers. He looks down contemptuously.

REVERSE ANGLE ON MALIK

trying to master his fear.

INT. SALIM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Salim sits on the sofa reading his Koran. Jabar leads Malik in by the arm. Salim removes his glasses. Surprise and interest.

SALIM

Malik, right?

MALIK

That's right.

SALIM

I think I was clear what would happen if I saw you again.

MALIK

Can I sit?

After a hesitation, Salim gestures to a chair.

SALIM

You'll forgive me if I don't offer you tea.

MALIK

I'm not really thirsty anyway.

SALIM

(smiles, to Jabar)

Look what happens. A few years in America makes *tantas* bold.

JABAR

Should I take him out back and --

Jabar mimes shooting Malik in the head. Salim laughs.

SALIM

Let's hear this first.

MALIK

There are still twelve men from Nori's club.

SALIM

You're here to pay?

MALIK

(nods)

Seven million dinars apiece.

SALIM

And then you'll take them away with you?

MALIK

That's right.

Salim thoughtfully drums his fingers on the arm of the sofa.

SALIM

Seven million apiece. You paid fifty-five million for your friend. Now you want twelve more for --

Salim looks at Jabar for the figure.

JABAR  
Eighty-four million.

SALIM  
(clicks his tongue)  
Doesn't seem right.

MALIK  
That's what you asked from their families.

SALIM  
Their families are poor.

MALIK  
Their families would only pay one ransom. I'll pay all twelve.

SALIM  
(laughs)  
We don't have a bulk rate for puppies. One hundred fifty million dinars.

Malik stands up abruptly.

MALIK  
(to Jabar)  
You can take me out back now.

Jabar looks at Salim.

SALIM  
(quietly, to Malik)  
Sit back down.

MALIK  
(sits)  
My father-in-law is in the Green Zone with sixty thousand dollars. Bring the men outside the prison. When he sees they're alive, he'll send Nori here with the money. Then you never see any of us again.

Again, Salim drums his fingers, deep in thought.

SALIM  
If it were up to me, there'd be no ransoms. We'd kill you all.

Salim's eyes bore into Malik. For the first time, Malik seems afraid.

SALIM (CONT'D)

But --  
 (shrugs)  
 -- I've got orders.  
 (to Jabar)  
 Call the prison.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A cell phone on the table. Nori, Ehsan and Morris all wait, tense. The phone RINGS. Nori snaps it up.

NORI

Malik?

MALIK (ON PHONE)

I made the deal.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

Four BLACK S.U.V.s pull up. AMERICAN ARMED GUARDS get out, keeping the car between them and the prison. They wear BLACK HELMETS AND BULLET-PROOF VESTS, and carry RIFLES.

MILITIA GUYS approach from the prison, also armed.

Morris and Pembleton, in vests and helmets, get out of the first car. They size up the situation.

PEMBLETON

Great, colonel. Real promising.  
 Y'know, if we live through this,  
 Consolidated's gonna fire my ass?

The PRISON DOORS OPEN and more MILITIA GUYS escort TWELVE BADLY BEATEN MEN out of the prison. Among them, we recognize Aziz, the queen who fought with Nori at the beginning.

Morris dials his cell phone.

INT. SALIM'S HOUSE - DAY

Salim has started pacing, and it's making Malik nervous. Jabar looms nearby. Malik's phone RINGS.

MALIK

Yes?

INTERCUT MALIK AND MORRIS

MORRIS

I've got eyes on the twelve guys.

MALIK

Okay. Send Nori.

Salim grabs Malik's phone out of his hand.

SALIM

Hello?

MORRIS

Who is this?

SALIM

Salim Fakhoury.

MORRIS

Put Malik back on.

SALIM

Have Ehsan bring the money. I'll kill anyone but him. Then I'll kill Malik, and order my men to shoot those twelve faggots. Ehsan Samir. Do you understand?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Ehsan has the money case. Nori grabs his wrist to keep him from going.

EHSAN

He'll kill Malik.

NORI

No, he's bluffing. He wouldn't throw away --

EHSAN

I know him, Nori! He doesn't care about money! Not really.

Ehsan strokes Nori's cheek.

EHSAN (CONT'D)

When they had you, I thought there was nothing I could do. But Malik... I was a coward. I can't be again.

Nori kisses Ehsan -- suddenly, passionately.

EHSAN  
I'll be all right.

Nori turns his back, teary, unable to watch Ehsan go.

INT. SALIM'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Jabar, holding a HANDGUN, answers the door. It's Ehsan. He raises his hands. The money case dangles.

INT. SALIM'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jabar brings Ehsan in at gunpoint. Salim comes closer. He BACKHANDS Ehsan. Ehsan FALLS and Salim SPITS on him. He picks up the money case. Carries it to the dining room table. Pops the latches. He LOOKS BLANKLY at the money.

Ehsan, holding his jaw, sits up. Jabar's pistol's right in his face.

EHSAN  
(to Salim)  
Why stop there?

Salim stares at the money. He won't look at Ehsan.

SALIM  
(quiet, dangerous)  
Don't tempt me, Ehsan.

EHSAN  
It's why you brought me here.  
Right?

SALIM  
If you think that, why come?

Ehsan glances at Jabar's gun. He gets up in spite of it.

EHSAN  
To see if you had the courage to  
speak to me first.

SALIM  
And what would I say?

EHSAN  
That I hurt you. That you loved me  
and I --

SALIM  
I loved your brother.

EHSAN

Remember when you came back from the war? You told me what happened to him. Remember what you said?

Beat. Salim still won't take his eyes off the money.

EHSAN (CONT'D)

What do you think it was like for me?

Salim rounds on Ehsan, stabbing a finger toward him.

SALIM

I named my son after you!!! And Hasoon looks up to you! He doesn't want to join the Brigades, he wants to be a cop! A cop, like Uncle Ehsan! I said I'd be proud! I'd be proud if he --  
 (his voice breaks)  
 -- turned out like you!

EHSAN

I'm a great cop.

Salim grabs Ehsan by the shirt front and SHAKES HIM.

SALIM

You're a disgrace!

Ehsan PUSHES Salim off. Salim comes back with a SCREAM OF RAGE and a ROUNDHOUSE. Ehsan crashes backward INTO JABAR. They both fall.

But Ehsan recovers faster. He TWISTS THE GUN OUT OF JABAR'S HAND.

THREE RAPID GUNSHOTS. Jabar falls dead.

Salim starts forward. Ehsan AIMS AT HIM. Salim freezes. Ehsan slowly stands. Salim spreads his arms wide: "What are you waiting for?"

EHSAN

(panting)

Call the prison. You have the money, you're releasing the men.

SALIM

I refuse.

EHSAN

Don't be an idiot.

(MORE)

EHSAN (CONT'D)  
(raises the gun)  
Think of Hasoon.

Salim takes out his phone. Dials. His eyes never leave Ehsan.

SALIM  
(into phone)  
Release them.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

The militia guys give the twelve hostages a shove to get them started. The hostages hobble toward the SUVs.

ON AZIZ

Scared and bewildered, he stumbles straight into the arms of Morris, who hurries him into a car.

ON THE LINE OF S.U.V.S

The private security guys rush the hostages into the SUVs.

PEMBLETON  
C'mon, c'mon, c'mon! Move your  
asses!

INT. LEAD S.U.V. - DAY

Morris jumps into the passenger seat. Orr's at the wheel. Pembleton piles in the back with three of the hostages.

MORRIS  
That's it, let's go!

EXT. PRISON - DAY

The SUVs hit the gas and drive away.

INT. LEAD S.U.V. - MOMENTS LATER

Pembleton is looking out the back. Satisfied, he climbs over the three hostages and sticks his head between the driver and passenger's seat.

PEMBLETON

Those S.O.B.s aren't following us.

ORR

Fifteen minutes to the Green Zone.

(to Morris)

But unless you've got a dozen passes, they won't let these fellas past that checkpoint.

PEMBLETON

You better have one helluva trick up your sleeve, Colonel.

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - GORDY'S CUBICLE - WASHINGTON, DC - DAY

Gordy shouts into the phone. He looks like he's coming undone.

GORDY

It's impossible, Evan! Impossible!

INT. FIONA'S OFFICE - DAY

Evan's on his cell phone. In the background, Fiona and Susannah are both on phones.

EVAN

I don't accept that, Gordy! You work miracles every day!

INTERCUT EVAN AND GORDY

GORDY

One was a miracle! Twelve?!? My guy at USCIS laughed right in my face! I've twisted every arm, called in every favor! Audrey at DHS threatened to throw me out of the building! It can't be done!

EVAN

(looks at his watch)

Okay, okay. Call me if anything changes.

END INTERCUT. We STAY WITH EVAN, who exchanges a look with Susannah. She shakes her head.

We PICK UP FIONA as she crosses in front of Evan.

FIONA  
 (into her phone)  
 That's not what I want to hear!

INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - BLANCA'S OFFICE - DAY

Blanca sits at her desk, phone to her ear.

BLANCA  
 I don't really give a shit, Fiona.  
 One guy -- yeah, I can bend a  
 rule. But now you've pushed it way  
 past the breaking point!

INTERCUT BLANCA AND FIONA

FIONA  
 Who set you up with the baby dyke?  
 Three hours of continuous ecstasy,  
 those were your words!

BLANCA  
 So what? You don't have any more  
 dates to sell, Fiona. The US  
 government can't help you.

Fiona's eyes light up! An idea has struck her.

BLANCA (CONT'D)  
 (beat)  
 Fiona? Did you hear what I -- ?

FIONA  
 Yeah, yeah, Blanca, gotta go.

Fiona hangs up.

FIONA (CONT'D)  
 (to Evan)  
 I got an idea.

INT. SALIM'S HOUSE - BAGHDAD - DAY

Ehsan covers Salim. Malik lays a blanket over Jabar. Malik's  
 phone CHIMES. He looks.

MALIK  
 They're almost to the Green Zone.  
 We gotta go.

EHSAN

You go.

(before Malik can object)

One phonecall and he'll have the whole militia after us. Get a head start, I'll be right behind you.

Unwillingly, Malik nods. Starts to go.

EHSAN

Malik?

Malik turns.

EHSAN (CONT'D)

Take the money.

Malik goes back for the case. Shuts it. Takes off.

EXT. GREEN ZONE CHECKPOINT - DAY

The SUVs are stopped. Orr argues with an IRAQI ARMY PRIVATE (22).

PRIVATE

They don't have papers! Turn around!

ORR

No, you don't understand --

In the sandbagged GUARD HOUSE, an IRAQI SERGEANT hangs up his telephone. He approaches the car. The Private steps aside.

SERGEANT

(to Orr)

Their passes have been approved.

He nods to the Private, who raises the gate.

INT. LEAD S.U.V. - CONTINUOUS

Orr pulls forward. He and Morris exchanges a look.

ORR

How the hell did your son pull that off?

EXT. UNITED STATES EMBASSY - GREEN ZONE - DAY

The SUVs come to a stop beneath a large AMERICAN FLAG. Nori is waiting. The hostages, security guys, Morris, Orr and Pemberton all get out. Aziz sees Nori, falls into his arms, and SOBS.

AZIZ

(barely comprehensible)

Thank you. Thank you. I'm so sorry.

NORI

(stroking Aziz's head)

It's okay. Shhhh.

MORRIS

Let's get them inside.

But Nori points the other direction.

NORI

No. That way.

Morris look confused.

INT. EMBASSY WAITING ROOM - DAY

The twelve hostages, Nori and Morris on a bank of benches. An EMBASSY ATTACHÉ (60) approaches the group. White-haired, aristocratic, he wears a gray, three-piece suit, complete with golden watch-chain.

ATTACHÉ

(strong British accent)

Gentlemen, everything's in order. Step this way and we'll begin the paperwork. Welcome to the United Kingdom.

INT. SALIM'S HOUSE - DAY

Salim sits on the sofa. Ehsan, standing, holds the gun on him. He looks at his watch.

SALIM

Stop drawing it out.

EHSAN

Drawing what out?

SALIM

You've got to shoot me. We both  
know it.

Ehsan sighs. He collapses onto the chair opposite Salim.

EHSAN (CONT'D)

And what then? Can you picture me  
in America?

(humorless laugh)

Waving a rainbow flag in a Pride  
parade?

Ehsan flips the safety on with his thumb, and TOSSES THE GUN  
onto the sofa next to Salim. A moment of disbelief. Salim  
GRABS IT. Runs to the phone.

EHSAN

Stop it. They're safe by now.

SALIM

(dialing)

Maybe not.

EHSAN

What do you care? You'll never see  
them again. I'm the one you wanted  
anyway.

The phone RINGS in Salim's ear. Pause. He sets the receiver  
back in the cradle.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WASHINGTON DULLES AIRPORT - DAY

POV from an ESCALATOR, descending. At the bottom, Evan, Fiona  
and Susannah are waiting. They look up, expectantly.

REVERSE ANGLE

Malik and Morris are coming down the escalator. It's plain  
from the LOOK ON THEIR FACES that something's wrong. They step  
off at the bottom.

EVAN

Where's Nori?

Malik just stares at Evan, not able to answer.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - BAGHDAD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Malik enters the suite, carrying suitcase.

MALIK

Nori! We're going to miss our  
plane!

The room's empty.

MALIK

Nori?

INT. WASHINGTON-DULLES AIRPORT - DAY

Back with Malik and Evan.

MALIK

He wouldn't get on the plane.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Malik sits on the bed with his knees drawn up against his chest, dosing. The door opens. He starts awake. It's Nori.

MALIK

(jumping up)  
You scared the hell out of me!

Malik hugs him. Nori doesn't react, just takes it passively. Malik releases him. Something's wrong.

MALIK

Where were you?

NORI

The Killing Spot.

EXT. THE KILLING SPOT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

CLOSE ON NORI'S FACE

as he pushes through the crowd. We can see them jeering but WE CAN'T HEAR them. There is NO SOUND.

## A WIDER ANGLE

Nori is near the front of the crowd. He doesn't dare get any closer. He cranes his neck to see.

## NORI'S P.O.V.

of Ehsan, kneeling, hands tied, the wall at his back. He stares straight back at the crowd. Defiant. He turns his head -- and sees

## NORI

his eyes brimming with tears.

## EHSAN'S FACE

looking back, eyes clear. He nods almost imperceptibly. SOMEONE'S SHADOW falls on him. His eyes stay with Nori just a second longer. He looks up. Standing over him is

## SALIM

Hate in his eyes. He SPITS ON EHSAN. Then he steps to the side -- REVEALING HASOON behind him.

Hasoon has tears on his face. Salim hands him a brick. He puts one hand on his son's back, says something WE CAN'T HEAR, gently pushing Hasoon forward toward Ehsan.

## EHSAN AND HASOON

Hasoon is working hard the steel his expression. It reveals nothing and everything. They look at one another for a long moment.

Ehsan CLOSES HIS EYES.

## CLOSE ON HASOON

As he lifts the brick over his head. HIS FACE CONTORTS WITH HATE and he screams as he brings the brick crashing down.

BACK TO NORI

turning away, groping his way back through the crowd.

CUT TO:

INT. WASHINGTON-DULLES AIRPORT - DAY

Evan is speechless. Susannah has tears in her eyes. Morris wraps his arms around her.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Back to Malik and Nori.

MALIK

I...

(beat)

Nori, I don't know what to...

(quieter)

He said he'd be right behind me.

NORI

It's not your fault.

MALIK

He knew he wouldn't?

NORI

He knew what happens when one of us sticks our neck out.

(beat)

I can't leave.

(before Malik can object)

No more parties. No stupid risks. But my people still need my help. I've got to get them someplace safe.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Back in the present.

EVAN

Where?

MALIK

Turkey, Germany... Canada, maybe?

EVAN

Couldn't you talk him out of it?

MALIK

(beat)

I didn't try.

I/E. MALIK AND EVAN'S CAR - DAY

The car is on a parkway along the Potomac River. Evan drives in silence. Malik gazes out the window. The stately buildings of Washington, DC, pass on the opposite bank, but Malik doesn't seem to see them.

Evan glances over at him. He says nothing.

INT. MALIK AND EVAN'S DINING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Malik sits at the table. It's covered with thick textbooks. But Malik isn't working. He taps his pen on the blank page of a notebook under the words "DISSERTATION OUTLINE."

He closes the notebook and goes to the phone.

INT. FIONA'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Fiona answers the ringing phone.

FIONA

Fiona Blakeney.

INTERCUT MALIK AND FIONA

MALIK

We need to talk about how we're going to help Nori.

FIONA

I've been waiting for your call. I knew this wasn't over for you.

MALIK

Nothing's ever over.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE KILLING SPOT - DAY

We end as we began: with a dead body lying in the street at the Killing Spot. This time, it's Ehsan. Tomorrow it will be someone else.

FADE OUT.

THE END