

THE CASCADE

Written by

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INT. CABIN - SUPERTANKER - NIGHT

Darkness. Light erupts:

CLOSE on the head of a MATCHSTICK igniting into flame. Two rough hands light an earthenware OIL LAMP.

CHANTING starts as the hands place the lamp before a framed postcard of Lakshmi--*Hindi goddess of fortune and prosperity*.

Sitting on the floor of his tiny cabin, the INDIAN SAILOR continues chanting as he adds to his shrine: mango leaves, dried fruit, rose petals, and Kuwaiti dinar bills.

LOUD KNOCKING on the cabin door.

Persisting, until the sailor, annoyed, gets up and opens it. He speaks to the MAURITIAN SAILOR before him in Hindi:

INDIAN SAILOR  
**I'm in the middle of Diwali prayers.**

[NOTE: All dialogue in **BOLD** will have English subtitles.]

MAURITIAN SAILOR  
**Tariq is challenging you.**

The Indian sailor sighs, thinks it over.

MAURITIAN SAILOR (CONT'D)  
**He has a lot of supporters.**

INT. MEDIA ROOM - SUPERTANKER - NIGHT

The familiar DIGITAL JINGLE of Nintendo's *Mario Kart*.

The Indian sailor and TARIQ sit on a ratty couch, controllers in hand, their focused faces lit by a wide-screen TV.

Watching are NINE SAILORS who stand, sit on furniture pocked with cigarette burns. They are Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Iraqi, Turkish. Career sailors wearing track suits and flip-flops.

Tariq is getting desperate. The Indian sailor smiles coolly.

On TV: Yoshi zooms across the finish in first place.

CRIES of victory and disappointment across the room.

CLOSE on bills of various currencies being exchanged.

Tariq and the Indian sailor shake hands. In Arabic:

TARIQ  
**You got lucky that last lap.**

INDIAN SAILOR  
**Even luck can be seduced.**

An ALARM BLARES LOUDLY.

The sailors stop their post-game payouts and look up at the RED LIGHT winking in a ceiling corner.

VARIOUS SHOTS OF A FRANTIC FIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSE:

- Sailors pulling hoses down metal stairs.
- Sailors throwing on fire-proof pants and jackets.
- Fire extinguishers being passed through deck hatches.
- The DAUNTING BLAZE has leapt across the cabin corridor. Sailors battle it from both sides.

EXT. SUPERTANKER - NIGHT

The fire has spread. Flames shoot up from the deck near the bridge and sideways out the tanker's hull.

SCREAMED ORDERS in English and Arabic between OFFICERS and SAILORS as they SPRAY fire suppressant foam.

Pulling back: the immense deck of the T1-CLASS SUPERTANKER comes into full view. *It has the surface area of four football fields.*

The tanker's prow cleaves through the water. On its hull is the name: **SAMSON.**

INT./EXT. IRANIAN NAVY PATROL SHIP - NIGHT

The 100-foot patrol ship motors through DENSE FOG.

On the bridge, a PETTY OFFICER is alone at the helm. A SECOND PETTY OFFICER enters with two styrofoam boxes. In Farsi:

PETTY OFFICER #2  
**Lasagna or... lasagna?**

PETTY OFFICER #1  
**What happened to the chicken kebab?**

PETTY OFFICER #2  
**New catering. More 'international'.**

Petty Officer #1 locks their course, takes one of the boxes, places it on top of the RADAR SCREEN.

EXT. SUPERTANKER - NIGHT

On deck: sweating, coughing, exhausted TEAMS OF SAILORS douse the remaining flames. The fire has been contained. Expressions of relief give way to CHEERS and EMBRACES.

A KUWAITI SAILOR makes his way to mid-ship, starts the electronic winch to retract fire hoses. He looks out at the LARGE FOG BANK, two hundred yards off on the starboard side:

*From out of the fog, shooting directly toward him, comes the Iranian Patrol Ship.*

The sailor whips around, screams back at the crew in Arabic:

KUWAITI SAILOR  
**SHIP TO STARBOARD!**

INT./EXT. IRANIAN NAVY PATROL SHIP - NIGHT

The two Petty Officers are struggling to eat their leathery, half-frozen lasagna with plastic forks.

PETTY OFFICER #1  
**Fuck international.**

Petty Officer #1 grabs the lasagna and starts eating it like a sandwich. Petty Officer #2 laughs at the instant mess. He holds out a napkin. Petty Officer #1 doesn't take it...

...he's looking straight ahead, transfixed, lasagna sauce dripping from his fingers. Petty Officer #2 turns to see:

*The looming metal wall of the supertanker, 50 feet away.*

The napkin falls from his hand.

**COLLISION.**

The ERUPTING FIREBALL shoots 500 feet into the night sky, lighting up the waters for a mile around.

The Patrol ship has vanished into the side of the supertanker. A quarter of the 1,300 foot-long supertanker is engulfed in flames.

From its gaping side, CRUDE OIL PULSES into the sea. Gallon after gallon, *shimmering* in the light of the towering blaze.

OPENING TITLES:

CLOSE shots of oil *spreading* across water. Viscous black tentacles growing, rippling, splitting, converging.

MOLECULAR LEVEL shots of large oil molecules *bouncing* off smaller salt water molecules. A striking, frenetic dance.

UNDERWATER shots looking up at the water's surface as the encroaching oil *blots out* the dawn sunlight.

SATELLITE shots of the oil spill. Starting close to the water, *punching* up, up, up... Until we see:

SHORELINES on either side of a NARROW STRAIT. Right in the middle: *the hazy amoeba of oil expanding...* END TITLES.

EXT. AIR BASE - SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST - DAY

A SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTER lands on the tarmac.

TWO MIDDLE EASTERN MEN in civilian clothes duck under the blades. A handcuffed FIGURE wearing slacks, a fire-proof jacket, and a BLACK HOOD is passed out to them.

They escort the figure across the tarmac.

SUPER: **DAY 1**

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AIR BASE - DAY

The two men cuff the hooded figure to a metal chair, bolted to the concrete floor. A TV SCREEN is set in the wall behind plexi-glass. CAMERAS stare down from all corners. No windows.

One of the men pulls the hood off. *The figure is a woman:*

VERA AIKEN, 39. Fierce eyes set in a smoke-blackened face. Her beauty worn down by the trauma she's just survived and by years of grueling work at sea. *She's a shipping captain.*

A LARGE GASH in her forehead bleeds steadily. DUCT TAPE covers her mouth. She can't move. Can't speak.

The two men walk out. Leaving the door open.

The TV turns on. Vera watches, struggling to focus through the delirium of blood loss.

CNN shows LIVE AERIAL SHOTS: *the Samson, partially submerged, still burning.* OMANI COAST GUARD SHIPS spray water into the blaze. U.S. NAVAL SHIPS approach.

CNN CORRESPONDENT (V.O.)  
 ...collided with an Iranian Patrol Ship in the Strait of Hormuz: the narrow channel through which...

CNN MAP GRAPHIC of the strait. IRAN labeled on one side, the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES and OMAN on the other.

CNN CORRESPONDENT (V.O.)  
 ...*forty percent* of the world's oil is shipped out of the Persian Gulf every day. Traffic in the strait's shipping lanes--which are a mere *two miles wide*...

SHOTS of tankers, cargo ships in the strait turning around.

CNN CORRESPONDENT (V.O.)  
 ...will have to be halted until the spill is contained. The big question: *how long will that take?*

CNN GRAPHICS show oil *rising* and stock markets *falling*.

CNN CORRESPONDENT (V.O.)  
 This is *by far* the world's most critical economic 'chokepoint' and markets are already in shock as--

The TV turns off. A man stands in the open door. Watching her. Controlling the TV with his cell phone. This is:

JOEL SYKES, 34, unshaven, bull-headed, fit from years of military training. He wears U.S. Army-issue pants, T-shirt. His eyes flicker with a shrewd, mischievous intelligence.

JOEL  
 Pretty heavy shit.

He comes to Vera and RIPS the tape off her mouth. She coughs, spits. *Her head is spinning. Her words becoming slurred.*

VERA  
 Where am I?

JOEL  
 Alive.

Joel hands her a bottle of water. She drinks desperately.

JOEL (CONT'D)

What happened on the Samson?

VERA

My crew? What about my crew?

JOEL

Right now you need to concentrate and tell me exactly what happened.

VERA

Is there a doctor? I need a cell phone. With email.

Joel takes a look at the gash in her forehead. *It's bad.*

JOEL

Email is for people with rights. First amendment, second, so on.

Joel walks to the open door, SIGNALS down the hall.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Pursuant section ten twenty-two, article C, of the National Defense Authorization Act, you have been designated an enemy combatant.

VERA

There's been some mistake. I'm an American citizen.

JOEL

For the time being, you have no rights. Your writ of habeas corpus has been suspended and...

VERA

I'm a career captain for an American shipping company. My husband and I live in Chicago.

JOEL

...you may be kept...

Joel waits for silence. Vera's eyes are confused, panicked.

JOEL (CONT'D)

You may be kept without trial, or legal representation until the end of hostilities.

VERA

What hostilities? Who are you?

A U.S. ARMY GUARD appears at the door. Joel nods to him.

JOEL  
I work with the High-Value Detainee  
Interrogation Group.

The guard uncuffs Vera, pulls her toward the door.

VERA  
Military? CIA?

JOEL  
Contract.

VERA  
(to guard)  
GET OFF OF ME!

Vera struggles against the guard who drags her from the room and down a windowless hall. Over her shoulder:

VERA (CONT'D)  
Where the fuck is he taking me!?

JOEL  
To the doctor.

EXT. STREETS - DOWNTOWN BEIJING - DAY

A STREET VENDOR hands over a Jianbing (Chinese crepe) to ROBERT AIKEN, 44--tall, spectacled, strong-jawed, American. He's averaging 2 hours of sleep a night and looks it.

SUPER: **DAY 2**

Eating, Robert wades through CROWDS on the sidewalks. They're all struggling for a glimpse of bar/store TVs showing *Chinese news coverage of the collision in the Strait of Hormuz*.

INT./EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DOWNTOWN BEIJING - DAY

Robert enters, stopping in the lobby to watch CNN INTERNATIONAL with BUSINESS PEOPLE. Over ANIMATED GRAPHICS:

CNN ANCHOR (V.O.)  
...appears the American-owned  
supertanker could be at fault. It  
veered from its outbound lane...

Robert puts in an earpiece, dials a number on his cell.

CNN ANCHOR (V.O.)  
 ...and crossed over into the  
 inbound lane, where it was struck  
 by the Iranian Patrol Ship.

CNN shows a photo of a RED-HAIRED CAPTAIN.

CNN ANCHOR (V.O.)  
 The Samson's Captain, *Jim Connolly*,  
 is being questioned by...(cont.)

Robert's call picks up. He heads toward a door.

ROBERT  
 (into earpiece)  
 What is this?

MAN'S VOICE THROUGH EARPIECE  
 Probably a drunk Irishman.

The voice belongs to Robert's friend, TERRY, 43, head of  
*Private Contract Management* for the Defense Department.

TERRY (V.O.)  
 As long as it doesn't interfere  
 with the National Football League.

Robert walks outside and traverses a CONSTRUCTION ZONE.

ROBERT  
 I can't make it, Terry.

TERRY (V.O.)  
 Don't fuck with my emotions. And...

TERRY (V.O.) ROBERT  
 ...don't tell me you're still I'm still in China.  
 in China.

ROBERT  
 I'm pulling all-nighters. It's like  
 college without pizza.

TERRY (V.O.)  
 I hand you a very cushy DoD  
 contract in your hometown and you  
 go to the opposite side...

Robert arrives at a FREIGHT ELEVATOR.

TERRY (V.O.)  
 ...of the globe for no overtime and  
 now: no Bears games. Brilliant.

A SITE GUARD hands Robert a *Pretac Inc* hard hat. Robert puts it on as the doors are opened for him.

ROBERT

At this point I'm running on pride.  
I don't kill myself, we're liable  
to become *The Big Dig, Beijing*.

TERRY (V.O.)

Market shitstorm like this? Killing  
yourself might not be enough.

ROBERT

Oil at one-twenty isn't unheard of.

Robert steps into the elevator.

TERRY (V.O.)

One-twenty? That was last night.  
Oil's at a *hundred and sixty*  
*dollars a barrel*, Robert.

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The doors close on Robert's POV through a construction fence:  
*a loud, heavily-trafficked intersection.*

TERRY (V.O.)

We're making history by the hour.

ROBERT

Fuck me...

As the elevator descends:

ROBERT (CONT'D)

We're going to get cut-off in a  
second, can you do me a favor? Can  
you call Vera? See if she's OK?

TERRY (V.O.)

She wasn't on board, was she?

ROBERT

God, no. But she's in the gulf. She  
ships out at the end of the week.

TERRY (V.O.)

How are things between you two?

A sore spot for Robert. The biggest in his life.

ROBERT

Turbulent. She isn't always picking up my calls these days. Still, you'd think that at a time like this we could forget... Terry?

*The line's gone dead.* Robert is too far underground. A moment later, the elevator stops. The doors open.

INT. PRETAC TUNNEL CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Robert exits into a HUGE CAVERN bustling with WORKERS. The ROAR of TBMs (tunnel boring machines) is deafening. This will be his office for the next 16 hours.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AIR BASE - DAY

Vera is back in the same metal chair. Cuffed. The gash on her head is stitched and BANDAGED. She looks lucid. Recovered.

Joel paces around her.

JOEL

How's your head? Better? We need this head.

VERA

I wasn't contracted for the Samson. You know that, right?

Joel places a chair opposite Vera. Sits.

JOEL

I don't know anything until you tell me. Tell me Vera's story.

She looks up at him...

INT. MÖVENPICK HOTEL - KUWAIT CITY - DAY (*VERA'S STORY*)

JIM CONNOLLY, 38, the red-haired captain, RUSHES into the lobby. He spots Vera at the front desk. She's just arrived.

VERA (V.O.)

Jim's wife gave birth a month early. It was their first.

Jim gives her a massive bear hug. Very emotional.

EXT. THE SAMSON - PORT, KUWAIT CITY - DAY (VERA'S STORY)

Vera walks by the faces of SAILORS lined up on deck, shoulder to shoulder. The FIRST MATE and SECOND MATE walk beside her.

VERA (V.O.)  
We were at the academy together. He would've done the same for me.

INT./EXT. THE SAMSON - PERSIAN GULF - NIGHT (VERA'S STORY)

The FIRE ALARM BLARING on the bridge. Too loud to hear Vera's orders as she BARKS them into the ship's PA system.

VERA (V.O.)  
The fire started in the bunks our second night out.

Vera YELLS at her THIRD MATE, rushes out with her first and second mate. She throws on a fire-proof jacket at a SPRINT.

VERA (V.O.)  
I left my third mate at the com.

Vera putting out the last flames, side-by-side with her crew. A SAILOR grabs her arm, points down a hatch. In Arabic:

SAILOR  
**He is wounded! Down there, Captain!**

She climbs into the open hatch. Half-way down, the LADDER SHAKES VIOLENTLY. (*The collision with the patrol ship.*) She loses her grip. Falls fifteen feet. KNOCKING her head.

VERA (V.O.)  
That was the last thing I remember.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AIR BASE - DAY

VERA  
Strait of Hormuz... I should've stayed on the bridge...

JOEL  
Sounds like you were dealt a bad hand. What can you do?

Vera eyes him warily. Joel stands. Starts circling her...

JOEL (CONT'D)  
Who you know, who they know. Who's dying, who's being born. *When.*  
(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)

It's all interaction and incident, isn't it? Thousands of little causes and effects, every second, all the time, adding up to one big picture. My job is to pick that picture apart. So I can see the patterns. Maybe even the reasons. Interaction and incident: make the world go round, don't they?

VERA

Sure.

JOEL

Make it stop too. How long have you known Ashi Golkar?

Vera is silent. Joel cocks his head. Smelling blood...

JOEL (CONT'D)

When's the last time you saw her?

Vera looks away. Joel turns on the TV using his cell phone. CCTV VIDEO FOOTAGE of: *TWO WOMEN walking down a pier.*

JOEL (CONT'D)

This is from port surveillance cameras in Kuwait three days ago.  
(pointing at the women)  
You. Ashi.

Vera glances at the video. Joel touches his cell. A SECOND VIDEO: *Vera and Ashi at a luxury hotel's outdoor cafe.*

JOEL (CONT'D)

You spent twenty-two minutes at The Mövenpick Hotel. Ashi had coffee. You had scotch. You left alone. An hour later, you raised anchor.

On TV: *a grey-bearded IRANIAN GENERAL in uniform.*

JOEL (CONT'D)

Major General Mohammed Ali Jafari. Commander of the Revolutionary Guards. One of the students...

On TV: *news footage of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran.*

JOEL (CONT'D)

...who stormed the U.S. Embassy in '79. Along with his best friend, Mohsen Golkar--Ashi's father.

On TV: *footage of Jafari with MOHSEN GOLKAR at a rally.*

VERA

Ashi works for a phone company in Abu Dhabi. She's as much an Islamic hardliner as Britney Spears, if that's what you're asking.

Joel continues. On TV: *video of a fancy wedding in Tehran.*

JOEL

In 2004, she was a bridesmaid at the wedding of Jafari's daughter to a Navy Admiral. Ashi herself was engaged to a Captain but never--

VERA

ENOUGH. You want to know what she was doing in port that day? She came to apologize to me for having an affair with my husband. Happy?

Surprise flashes across Joel's face. He studies Vera hard.

INT. 'GATOR PIT (*FROM: INTERROGATOR*) - AIR BASE - DAY

Joel storms into the hastily-assembled office. 9 MEN AND WOMEN, some in uniform, some in civies, work around laptops.

They're with the *High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG)*: an elite team of CIA, military, private contractors, formed in 2010 to handle the most sensitive terrorism cases.

JOEL

(to ALL)

We know the brand of scotch she was drinking with Ashi, but we don't know that Ashi was fucking her husband. That is called: *failure*.

OPERATIONS OFFICER

Could be bullshit.

CIA ANALYST #1

We're going through Tehran phone records but it could take a while.

OPERATIONS OFFICER

It would be a slick alibi.

CIA ANALYST #2

Affairs are tricky to verify.

JOEL  
 ASHI WAS FUCKING THE HUSBAND.

Silence. Group members glance at each.

Joel sits before screens showing NEWS (*Massive protests across India following factory closures*) and LIVE FEEDS OF VERA in her cell. As he watches her, lights a cigarette:

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 It's about the only thing I'm  
 certain of right now.

MILITARY INTERROGATOR  
 Sam and I are due up. Maybe you  
 should get some shut eye.

VOICE IN THE BACK  
 No, you should not.

The group's Commander, ERIK, 48, stands at the back, a FILE in hand. Preppy-looking, all muscle, dip in his mouth.

ERIK  
 Joel is going to run this solo.

Confused looks all around. Joel too. This is *not* protocol. As Erik heads for the door, SAM (SAMANTHA), 37, intercepts him.

SAM  
 Sir, we need more 'gators in there.  
 And at least one female.

ERIK  
 Not my call. It's from up top.  
 (to Joel)  
 Come with me.

EXT. AL DHAFRA AIR BASE - UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - DAY

Erik and Joel cross a dirt courtyard between concrete buildings under the brutal desert sun.

ERIK  
 FBI is letting the other captain  
 go. Media will ID her by tomorrow.  
 World is swarming for answers. Fuck  
 the world. You focus, you extract,  
 you report to me. Alone.

JOEL

Who, exactly, is calling this, Sir?  
Because it doesn't sound like they  
know their ass from their...

Joel drifts off. He's following Erik's gaze: in an open tent 20 yards away, a *BEAR OF A MAN* towers over assembled MILITARY BRASS. The bear is U.S. DEFENSE SECRETARY FRANKS, 64.

Joel is stupefied. The Secretary was *not* expected here.

ERIK

Defense Secretary wants muscle and  
results. Plus you're former SEAL.  
So is Franks. You're his type.

JOEL

Jesus... He picked me?

Erik hands Joel the file he's been carrying.

ERIK

If this is *Dark Waters*, the  
Secretary wants to know Jafari got  
to her, how she was trained, and  
what she knows about his next move.

Joel nods. *Absorbing the enormity of his singular burden...*  
Erik claps him on the shoulder, like a father.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Crazy Iranian Generals. Stage an  
accident, fuck every economy on the  
planet--including your own--for  
what? Is anyone lifting sanctions?  
They want war, you can smell it...

JOEL

Erik: where are we on the husband?

ERIK

We're tracking him. Bit of a  
cluster-fuck with CIA and Justice.  
They want him first, we want him  
first. We'll get him of course.

Erik heads to the tent.

ERIK (CONT'D)

But don't worry about that. And  
Try not to watch the news. Shit  
will get you down these days.

Joel watches him enter the tent and greet Secretary Franks.

INT. TUNNEL CONSTRUCTION SITE - UNDER BEIJING - MORNING

VERY CLOSE on fingertips moving over a seemingly vast wall of ELECTRONICS. The micro-chips that control our macro-world.

WIDE: Robert and an ENGINEER peer at the tunnel boring machine. Robert's been working all night. He looks awful.

A MANAGER takes Robert aside. The NOISE OF MACHINERY and SHOUTING IN MANDARIN blocks out their conversation. Robert's reaction evolves from: *confusion to disbelief to anger.*

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR - MORNING

Robert is alone in the elevator as it rises. He looks despondent, utterly drained. He closes his eyes.

SUPER: **DAY 3**

The elevator comes to a stop at ground level. Doors part. Robert opens his eyes on a *very strange, unexpected sight...*

EXT. DOWNTOWN BEIJING - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

...Robert's POV as he walks out of the elevators:

The same packed intersection, *only now there's NO NOISE because there's not a single car or gas-operated vehicle.*

***Every person in the crowd of thousands is riding a bicycle.***

Robert hands his hard hat to the Site Guard. In Mandarin:

ROBERT

**What is this?**

SITE GUARD

**Temporary ban on civilian vehicles.**

Robert watches CHINESE MILITARY patrol the bicycling masses.

INT. INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - BEIJING AIRPORT - DAY

Robert pulls a roller-bag through an *eerily empty* terminal. The very shaky voice of a CNN ANCHOR plays on TVs overhead.

CNN ANCHOR (V.O.)

...oil has passed the *two hundred* dollar mark. Truly: unchartered territory. And still no word on...

Robert sits at his gate amid rows of *vacant seats*.

CNN ANCHOR (V.O.)  
 ...when the strait will reopen.

The ominous emptiness is getting under his skin. Robert pulls out his cell. Hits the same number he's been dialing all day.

CNN ANCHOR (V.O.)  
 Some officials in Iran are starting to demand the United States assume responsibility for the spill...

Robert's call goes to *voicemail*.

VERA (V.O.)  
 Hey, it's Vera. I'm probably in the middle of the ocean somewhere, so send me an email or a carrier pigeon with good endurance. Thanks.

Robert's heard it a thousand times, *but can't help smiling...*

JOEL (V.O.)  
 Get up.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AIR BASE - DAY

Vera's POV: her eyes blinking slowly open on Joel's face as he hoists her to her feet. She'd been asleep in the chair.

The two middle-eastern men from before are running CHAINS through pulleys in the ceiling.

JOEL  
 I want you to appreciate something: there is nobody coming for you. No lawyer. No family. No one knows where you are. No one will know.

The two men LOCK her wrists into MANACLES. They pull her arms apart, angling them forward and upward. They begin locking her ankles to chains stretched across the floor.

VERA  
 What is this?

JOEL  
 Whether your isolation lasts one day or one year, is up to me alone. I'm the only one who can end it.

The two men finish, exit. Vera is left chained such that if she tries to sleep, she'll dump all her weight on her wrists.

JOEL (CONT'D)

You want rights? You will earn them by giving direct answers. The right to eat. The right to sleep. The right not to piss yourself. Do we have an understanding?

Fear overcomes her fast in this new position.

VERA

Yes.

Joel turns on the TV: a *headshot of a YOUNG IRANIAN MAN*.

JOEL

Do you know this man?

VERA

I think he worked at... the grocery store near our apartment in Tehran.

Joel switches to: a *headshot of an OLDER IRANIAN MAN*.

JOEL

What about him?

VERA

No.

Joel changes the image. *This is going to take a while...*

INT. CUSTOMS - O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CHICAGO - DAY

CLOSE on Robert's passport. The pages flipping.

The customs area is *vacant*. Robert stands across from the CUSTOMS AGENT who reviews his passport and SCANS it.

From beyond frosted walls, comes LOUD PROTESTING of ANGERED CROWDS at airline desks--their dark masses vaguely visible.

CUSTOMS AGENT

Airport's closing tomorrow.  
(handing him the passport)  
Welcome home, Mr. Aiken.

INT. TAXI CAB - CHICAGO STREETS - DAY

Robert sits in a taxi rubbing his hands, shivering--*it's early November and freezing.* The DRIVER, an elderly Afghan man, watches him in the rearview. Radio plays on low volume.

SUPER: **DAY 4**

Robert watches a FIVE-MILE LINE of cars leading to a gas station. The price is at **\$7.15 per gallon.**

They pass a SUPERMARKET that looks like a packed third-world soccer stadium. Crowds oozing out. Shelves going bare fast.

The driver notes Robert's astonishment. As they pass a park:

TAXI DRIVER

You see those trees? Soon people will chop them down for firewood. It is like this in Afghanistan.

The radio switches from music to NEWS.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)

That is why there are no trees on the streets leading from Kabul.

Robert catches the words '*another captain*' on the news.

ROBERT

Could you turn that up?

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

...Jim Connolly is in Boston with his newborn son. FBI has confirmed that Connolly gave over his duties to a *female* captain named--

INT. AIKEN HOME - CHICAGO SUBURBS - DAY

Robert bursts through the door, cell to his ear. He turns on the TV. He flicks furiously to CNN: A PHOTO OF VERA.

CNN ANCHOR (V.O.)

...five of the Samson's crew survived along with Aiken...(cont.)

Robert's call picks up.

TERRY (V.O.)

I know. I'm watching.

ROBERT  
Is she hurt? Where is she?

TERRY (V.O.)  
I have no idea.

ROBERT  
*Well who the fuck does?!*

TERRY (V.O.)  
Slow down. Where are you?

ROBERT  
Home. Beijing was suspended. I'm sorry. I... You're the only friend in government I have, Terry.

TERRY (V.O.)  
State Department hasn't called you?

ROBERT  
No.

TERRY (V.O.)  
She's probably safe at the Dubai Consulate. Or she's already on a flight to Andrews Air Force.

ROBERT  
Is that where they'll take her?

TERRY (V.O.)  
There will be some debriefing, yes.

ROBERT  
What do I do? Sit at fucking home?

TERRY (V.O.)  
Absolutely. And tell everyone else to do the same while you're at it.

ROBERT  
Getting messy out there, isn't it?

TERRY (V.O.)  
You should see the halls of power. I'll try and find out more about Vera and call you back. OK?

ROBERT  
Thanks.

Robert hangs up. His mind churning. The news still going...

CNN ANCHOR (V.O.)  
 ...every major commodity rising now  
 at unprecedented rates...(cont.)

On TV: a GRAPHIC with the *prices of COAL, CORN, SOY, NATURAL GAS, GOLD, SUGAR* all shooting up.

Robert surveys the clean, sparse living room--hardly 'lived-in'. *This is the house of two workaholics without children.*

He picks up a FRAMED PHOTO: he and Vera (wearing a head scarf) standing in front of the IMAM MOSQUE in Isfahan, Iran. Vera looks beautiful and happy. He looks more distant.

Robert touches her face through the glass. Tears well up.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AIR BASE - DAY

Joel stands over the table--*now covered in STACKS of documents and photos.* He smokes as he rifles through the stacks. He's on edge. He hasn't been making progress.

He looks up at Vera: locked into her standing position. Her pants wet down the leg with urine. She's swaying slightly, eyes closed. She's falling asleep. Again.

Her body collapses, all the weight on her wrists. The SHARP PAIN immediately wakes her. She stands. Delirious. In hell.

SUPER: **DAY 5**

Joel selects a FOLDER of photos. Time for a strategy change.

JOEL  
 I have a story for you. Once there  
 was a happy, all-American couple...

INT. BALLROOM - CHICAGO - DAY (*JOEL'S STORY*)

A young Robert and Vera on their wedding night. Dancing their first song: *Baby I'm Yours* by the Arctic Monkeys. A ring of friends/family around them. Eyes locked. The future bright.

VERA (V.O.)  
 The reception was outside.

The background changes to willow-trees and chili lights.

EXT. OIL TANKER DECK - AT SEA, MID-STORM - DAY (*JOEL'S STORY*)

Vera shivers as waves CRASH against the hull and rain POUNDS down on her. Under her raincoat, she thumbs through photos on her cell of Robert making *funny/sexy faces*. She smiles sadly.

JOEL (V.O.)

Life was not easy. Six months apart every year. Year after year.

INT. APARTMENT - TEHRAN, IRAN - DAY (*JOEL'S STORY*)

A BROKER shows Robert and Vera around a modern apartment. Out the windows: *views of downtown Tehran*. Robert and Vera stop and hold each other. Kiss. Look down on the city.

JOEL (V.O.)

The wife shipped out of Kuwait so they'd be able to see each other more. It was a good opportunity.

INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - IRAN - DAY (*JOEL'S STORY*)

Robert walks IRANIAN BUSINESSMEN through a warehouse of *tunneling equipment*: boring machines, drills, etc.

JOEL (V.O.)

The husband's job was to oversee the sale of tunneling equipment to an Iranian subsidiary. Lovat.

Trucks carrying the same equipment travel a highway toward...

JOEL (V.O.)

Some of the equipment was used for train tunnels. Car tunnels.

...HIGH MOUNTAINS.

IRANIAN SCIENTISTS at work in a uranium enrichment facility.

JOEL (V.O.)

But most of it was used to build a network of nuclear weapons labs in the mountains near Isfahan.

VERA (V.O.)

Stop.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AIR BASE - DAY

VERA

We never knew about Isfahan.

Joel places his cell in the palm of his hand. Holds it out.

JOEL

With that much enriched uranium I  
can blow up Chicago. Apocalypse  
hides in the smallest of things,  
doesn't it?

Joel opens the folder, shows her PHOTOS OF ROBERT IN IRAN.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Robert signed on with Lovat for  
seven months but stayed for ten.  
What was he doing for three months?

VERA

I've told you what his attachment  
to Iran was.

JOEL

Did Ashi tell him about the labs?

VERA

WE DIDN'T KNOW! No one knew!  
Certainly not the guy selling the  
big shovels! It was a job. You're a  
contractor. You take jobs you later  
learn were fucked up. Don't you?

Joel approaches. His face inches from hers. All intimidation.

JOEL

We had an understanding about  
direct answers. Do we still?

Vera nods.

JOEL (CONT'D)

What was your deal with General  
Jafari?

VERA

I've told you a hundred times: I  
never met Jafari.

JOEL

Has Robert had a lot of affairs?

VERA  
Not that I know of.

JOEL  
Did you deliberately steer the  
Samson off course?

VERA  
Why would I do that?  
(off Joel's look)  
No!

JOEL  
Have you cheated on your husband?

VERA  
Yes.

JOEL  
Why was the Samson in the wrong  
shipping lane?

VERA  
I don't know. I wasn't at the com.

JOEL  
Because you were battling the fire?

VERA  
Yes.

JOEL  
Did you cheat on him for revenge?

VERA  
Probably.

JOEL  
Are you an Iranian agent?

VERA  
No.

JOEL  
Did you enjoy your revenge?

Vera glares at him with cold disdain.

VERA  
Yes.

Joel considers her. Finally, he walks away, opens the door.  
He waves in the two middle-eastern men. In Arabic:

JOEL  
**Let her down.**

The two men unlock Vera's wrists. She CRUMPLES to the ground.

INT. AIKEN HOME - CHICAGO SUBURBS - DAY

MOVING ACROSS: *photos of Robert and Vera* on the fridge.  
 Skiing, scuba-diving, hiking. A life hanging on magnets.

VOICE #1 THROUGH A RADIO  
 That's his car.

VOICE #2 THROUGH A RADIO  
 Copy. We are a go.

**CRACK.** The front door *splinters* and swings open. A S.W.A.T. TEAM moves quickly into the house. Clearing every room downstairs and heading upstairs. SHOUTS of '*CLEAR!*'

Behind them: TWO MEN in civilian clothes enter. One takes out a CAMERA and starts clicking photos of the living room. We stay with him while the other confers with the S.W.A.T. Team.

S.W.A.T. TEAM LEADER (O.C.)  
 He's not here, Sir.

The man with the camera picks up the photo of Robert and Vera at the Imam Mosque. He CLICKS a photo of it.

INT. HYDE PARK STEAKHOUSE - CLEVELAND, OHIO - DAY

TERRY (V.O.)  
 This is Terry, leave a message.

Robert is finishing lunch at an upscale steakhouse.

ROBERT  
 (into earpiece)  
 It's Robert. I'm coming to D.C. I want to be there for Vera when she lands. I have my mom's hybrid. Trying to get an edge out here...

Robert drifts off as: a large rack of WINE BOTTLES begins to RATTLE. A LOW RUMBLING. Robert can feel it through the floor.

CUSTOMERS and WAIT STAFF start funneling toward windows at the front. Robert follows, looks outside:

*A NATIONAL GUARD TANK is rolling slowly through Cleveland's commercial district.*

SUPER: **DAY 6**

EXT. STREETS - CLEVELAND - DAY (A MOMENT LATER)

Robert joins BYSTANDERS on the sidewalk. They watch as more TANKS and ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS rumble by. A GUARDSMAN'S VOICE comes through speakers on a carrier:

NATIONAL GUARD SPEAKERS (V.O.)  
 ...oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve will stabilize prices at the pump. Until that time, Ohio National Guard will be assuming control of all gas stations in the Cleveland area...(cont.)

Robert scans FACES BESIDE HIM. Filled with fear, anger, and above all: *the shock of seeing military in urban America.*

EXT. PARKING LOT - CLEVELAND - DAY

Entering the lot, Robert spots: TWO TEENAGE BOYS squatting, half-concealed, behind the HYBRID he's borrowed. As he jogs toward them, the boys come into view:

*They're siphoning gas from the hybrid with an electric pump.*

ROBERT  
 HEY! GET AWAY FROM THAT CAR!

Boy #1 pulls out a SEMI-AUTOMATIC HANDGUN, levels it at Robert's head. He guides Robert to his knees at gunpoint.

BOY #1  
 Wallet.

Robert gives him his wallet. Boy #1 takes the cash out, throws it back. Then they finish siphoning *every last drop* from the hybrid.

Robert doesn't look up until he hears them jogging off.

EXT. GAS STATION - CLEVELAND - DAY

A LINE OF CARS stretches for miles. NATIONAL GUARDSMEN operate the station. Gas is at **\$9.20 per gallon**. Robert approaches the pumps on foot, carrying an empty CONTAINER.

GUARDSMAN  
 Only vehicles now, Sir. City-wide.

ROBERT  
The gas was stolen out of my car.

GUARDSMAN  
We recommend a lock on your tank.

ROBERT  
Where can I go?

GUARDSMAN  
Walk-ups start at six.

ROBERT  
That's four hours.

GUARDSMAN  
(pointing)  
Line's right over there.

Robert looks over at a LINE OF PEOPLE already forming.

CUT TO:

Robert in the 'walk-up' line. *He has no other option.* Some people have brought folding chairs. A MOTHER in front of him reads a picture book to her SON, curled in her lap.

MOTHER  
...Mike Mulligan was very proud of Mary Anne. He always said she could dig as much in a day as a hundred men could dig in a week...

CLOSE on Robert, thinking of his wife--*the woman who can out-work a hundred men. Wherever she might be...*

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AIR BASE - DAWN

The dark form of Vera, curled up in the corner. As the door opens we see her face: dried blood on her lip, eye. She wakes as Joel comes to her. He sets down a bucket of water.

JOEL  
Your chief mate and second mate are dead. Five crew lived. The AB who was at the helm just came out of surgery. He wants to talk to you.

Joel hands her a rag. She starts cleaning her face.

JOEL (CONT'D)

He wants to talk about the third mate you left in charge. He wants to talk about *Ibrahim*.

EXT./INT. PAVE HAWK HELICOPTER - UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - DAY

The Pave Hawk flies out over endless miles of blinding dunes.

SUPER: **DAY 7**

Vera sits across from Joel inside the helicopter. She wears fatigues, a size too big. Joel hands her a BODY ARMOR VEST.

VERA

Protection from you?

JOEL

Al-Qaeda. Hezbollah. If you hate the west and love things that go boom, this is prime time.

VERA

The straits: when do they open?

Joel is silent, his eyes hidden by dark glasses.

VERA (CONT'D)

Whatever bullshit you're still entertaining about me--*it's my ship, my spill, my conscience*. Don't think I don't feel guilty.

JOEL

Traffic starts up again in an hour.

EXT. ROOFTOP - EMIRATES HOSPITAL - DUBAI - DAY

The Pave Hawk lands on the roof of the hospital. TWO U.S. SPECIAL FORCES SERGEANTS meet Vera and Joel, direct them away as the helicopter lifts off. Vera's hands are cuffed again.

INT. EMIRATES HOSPITAL - DUBAI - DAY (A MINUTE LATER)

Vera is escorted between Joel and the sergeants down a LOUD HALLWAY crowded with NEW PATIENTS and FRANTIC NURSES/DOCTORS. Most patients suffer from knife wounds and/or bludgeoning.

VERA

What happened?

JOEL  
Fighting over gas.

In shock, in disbelief, Vera watches a NURSE staunch the bleeding from a BOY's stomach. *This is her first glimpse of how the world has begun to tear itself apart.*

The sergeants usher her through it into a SECURE WING. They advance down the EMPTY HALL. Stop at a door. A sergeant swipes a keycard. Vera is led into...

INT. SECURED ROOM - EMIRATES HOSPITAL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

...an intensive care room with TWO NURSES ministering to the sole patient: a MAN covered by a sheet to his chin. His face layered with bandages. Only his eyes and mouth visible.

This is FARRAJ, 19. *He's the 'AB' (able-bodied seaman) who was steering the Samson at the time of the collision.*

The sergeants, nurses exit. Joel uncuffs Vera. As he exits:

JOEL  
I'm watching.

Vera looks up at the CAMERAS. She sits by the bed. Farraj turns his head a little. His bandages cover THIRD-DEGREE OIL-FIRE BURNS. His breathing is ERRATIC and PAINED.

VERA  
It's Farraj, isn't it?

FARRAJ  
Captain. It was not my fault.

VERA  
I believe you. Tell me what happened.

FARRAJ  
You remember: we changed to manual for the turn in the straits. At first Ibrahim gave me no orders...

INT. AL-QAEDA SAFEHOUSE - DUBAI - DAY (SAME TIME)

CLOSE on MULTIPLE HANDS taping C-4 PLASTIC EXPLOSIVES to the chest of a SUICIDE BOMBER, a young, blue-eyed Wahhabi man.

FARRAJ (V.O.)  
...he smoked one cigarette and then another...

CLOSE on the loading of OLD MUNITIONS onto the back of a flat-bed truck in a garage underneath the safehouse.

FARRAJ (V.O.)  
 ...we were all nervous about the  
 fire, yes, but with him...

The suicide bomber, kneeling, is blessed by a CLERIC.

FARRAJ (V.O.)  
 ...there was something else...

INT. SECURED ROOM - EMIRATES HOSPITAL - DAY

Vera puts an encouraging hand on Farraj's shoulder. The sheet slips, revealing: FOLDS OF PINK SCAR TISSUE down his arm.

FARRAJ  
 When I told him we needed to turn,  
 he became angry. He said he would  
 report me if I didn't shut up...

INT. DORM - U.S. CONSULATE COMPOUND - DUBAI - DAY (SAME TIME)

A MARINE SECURITY GUARD walks smartly down a polished corridor. His black shoes CLICKING.

FARRAJ (V.O.)  
 ...finally, he gave me orders...

Sitting on the floor of a HOLDING ROOM are the FOUR OTHER SURVIVING CREW of the Samson. Playing *dominoes* and smoking. All have minor injuries: burns, broken bones, bandaged cuts.

FARRAJ (V.O.)  
 ...fifteen degrees hard  
 starboard...

The marine guard unlocks the holding room door and enters.

FARRAJ (V.O.)  
 ...I am a young sailor...

MARINE GUARD  
 Ibrahim Zain.

One of the men looks up: IBRAHIM ZAIN, 42, the Samson's third mate. He's a heavy-set Lebanese man with one arm in a sling.

FARRAJ (V.O.)  
 ...but I knew...

INT. SECURED ROOM - EMIRATES HOSPITAL - DAY

Farraj reveals his most sensitive information to Vera:

FARRAJ  
...*fifteen degrees was too much.*

BEGIN INTERCUTTING VERA AND FARRAJ/SUICIDE BOMBER/IBRAHIM:

The suicide bomber drives his truck out of the underground garage. FOUR MEN on motorcycles follow him out.

FARRAJ  
I told Ibrahim we needed to trim  
back but again he grew angry...

Ibrahim is led down a hallway by the marine guard.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
...he kept staring at the radar...

Farraj squints his eyes.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
...like he was thinking hard...

Ibrahim is led out onto the consulate grounds by the guard. He shields his eyes--he hasn't been in the sun in days.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
...we could see fog ahead, and I  
knew we were heading off course...

The motorcycles speed up and overtake the suicide bomber in his truck as they navigate the flashy, modern Dubai streets.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
...I should've looked sooner at the  
radar. God knows I wish I had...

The marine guard directs Ibrahim toward an ARMY JEEP waiting for them by the consulate's front entrance.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
...but he was so agitated.

The motorcycles and bomb-laden truck come within sight of the U.S. CONSULATE. Security at the consulate gates has been reinforced with a DOZEN MARINES in body armor carrying M16s.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
...and I did not know him. I had  
never worked with him...

The marine guard opens the Jeep door for Ibrahim, shuts it. Ibrahim looks out the window at the consulate gates.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
 ...when I did finally see the  
 Patrol Ship on the radar...

One of the motorcyclists reaches into his jacket, half-removes an UZI SUBMACHINE GUN. Abruptly, the four motorcycles turn toward the consulate gates and speed up.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
 ...it was too late...

Farraj beseeches Vera with his eyes.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
 I followed bad orders, Captain.

Through the Jeep window, Ibrahim's eyes go WIDE as the sound of MACHINE GUNFIRE erupts. He watches as...

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
 That was my only sin.

...the marines at the gates SHOOT DOWN the motorcyclists. Behind them, the truck is still barreling toward the gates.

FARRAJ (CONT'D)  
 Don't let them put me in jail.

Joel enters, comes to Vera's side. The session is over.

VERA  
 I won't. I promise.

IBRAHIM'S POV: the truck careening over flower beds, passing close enough to see the suicide bomber inside--slumped over the wheel, a bullet through his head.

But his payload is on target: *the truck is headed straight toward the consulate's front door.*

END INTERCUTTING.

Joel leads Vera into an adjacent LISTENING ROOM.

VERA (CONT'D)  
 I never worked with Ibrahim.

JOEL  
 We're going to sort that out. He's being brought over here.

VERA

So now you have two Iranian spies  
in your conspiracy theory?

Joel chews something over. He's looking at her differently...

JOEL

Listen: I think you're--

**MASSIVE EXPLOSION.** Distant, but *very loud*.

Joel rushes to the window. Vera follows. POV over the city: a mile away is an EXPANDING DOME OF SMOKE. *The consulate.*

Joel's cell RINGS as the two special forces sergeants enter.

SERGEANT

Sir, we need to leave.

INT. DELANEY'S PUB - YOUNGWOOD, WEST PENNSYLVANIA - NIGHT

Robert sits at the bar by the window. If he wasn't so on edge, he'd be hammered. His glazed eyes dart between his cell-lying between empty tumblers--and the TV overhead:

*CNN shows LIVE AERIAL SHOTS of the BLASTED-OUT CONSULATE.*

His cell BUZZES. He answers it as though drawing a gun.

ROBERT

Terry.

TERRY (V.O.)

She wasn't there.

Robert collapses on the bar. Pushing back tears.

ROBERT

You said the Consulate...

TERRY (V.O.)

I know. I'm sorry. We need to talk--

ROBERT

I've been drunk-dialing the CIA,  
White House, Commerce Department...

The barman delivers another scotch. Robert throws it down.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

So she's at Andrews already.



ROBERT  
Your best guess: *where is she?*

DIAL TONE. Terry's hung up.

Robert looks out at the OLD WOMAN being taken away. BLUE POLICE LIGHTS pulse across his face--*stricken with panic.*

EXT. JUMEIRAH BEACH - DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - SUNSET

Dubai's Miami beach. Covered with thick, black TAR BALLS. Oily waves leave purple trails along the white sand.

CLEAN-UP CREWS wearing full-body plastic suits, gas masks, and goggles pick up DEAD BIRDS, DEAD FISH, smothered in oil.

INT. ARMORED HUMVEE - JUMEIRAH BEACH ROAD - SUNSET

Through the humvee window, Vera looks out at the crews, the ruined beach. *It's the closest to tears we've seen her.*

Joel, sitting next to her, ends a phone call.

JOEL  
Ibrahim is dead.

VERA  
Where are we going?

JOEL  
The USS Nimitz. Where I told them from the beginning we should've been keeping your crew. FUCK.

EXT. JEBEL ALI PORT - SUNSET

FROM ABOVE: the humvee with Vera and Joel proceeds through a U.S. NAVY CHECKPOINT and down a pier. Docked by the pier is a gargantuan aircraft carrier--*the USS NIMITZ. 1,100 feet.*

INT. ARMORED HUMVEE - PIER - JEBEL ALI PORT - SUNSET

The humvee stops. A sergeant hands Joel a BLACK HOOD.

VERA  
A hospital full of civilians can see my face but not the U.S. Navy?

Joel puts the hood over her head--*carefully.* His treatment of her noticeably more attentive...

EXT./INT. USS NIMITZ - JEBEL ALI PORT - SUNSET

A NAVY LIEUTENANT is waiting on the gangplank of the Nimitz. He salutes Joel, who leads the hooded Vera by her cuffs.

LIEUTENANT  
This way, please.

The Lieutenant directs Joel up the gangplank, busy with SAILORS loading gear.

They pass down a corridor, stop at the locked door to the BRIG. The Lieutenant opens it, and then a HOLDING CELL:

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)  
Leave the detainee here.

Joel walks Vera into the holding cell, closes the door.

As they exit the brig:

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)  
The CO will see you shortly.  
Anything you need?

CUT TO:

Joel standing over an INTELLIGENCE SPECIALIST who reads off a computer screen. *Documents* slide from a printer next to him.

INTELLIGENCE SPECIALIST  
Born in Beirut. Lived in London  
with wife and son. Dad's dead...

Joel picks up a FUZZY PRINTOUT OF IBRAHIM ZAIN'S FACE.

INTELLIGENCE SPECIALIST (CONT'D)  
...mom and brother are alive. Nine  
years crewing tankers. No criminal  
record. No ties to Iran.

JOEL  
(frustrated)  
Yeah. That's what we have too...

The Lieutenant from before enters:

LIEUTENANT  
Admiral Lyons will see you now.

Joel balks at the name 'Lyons'. *Not* welcome news for him.

JOEL  
Lyons? The *fleet* commander.

LIEUTENANT

Yes, Sir. He just arrived.

CUT TO:

Joel heads for an open door carrying his Ibrahim file. He stops on the threshold, SALUTES. On the other side, stands ADMIRAL LYONS, 59. Tall, rosy, wearing *all* his medals.

JOEL

Admiral.

The tension of some fraught history is thick between them.

ADMIRAL LYONS

Enter, Mr. Sykes.

Joel steps into the OPERATIONS CENTER: a large room with an interactive map of the middle-east on a table-screen in the middle. The consuls are empty--the two men are alone.

JOEL

I was instructed not to reveal the identity of my detainee without--

ADMIRAL LYONS

I know who she is.

JOEL

You belong to a small group then.

ADMIRAL LYONS

Very small.

JOEL

It's my belief that the safest place in the region to conduct my interrogation is here, on board the Nimitz. After the bombing--

ADMIRAL LYONS

Your orders are to return with your detainee to Al Dhafra.

JOEL

Al Dhafra's security is run by Emirates Air Force, Sir. Compared to the marine guard that *failed* our consulate today, Emirates Air Force is fucking swiss cheese.

ADMIRAL LYONS

Your respect for chain of command has not improved.

JOEL

My understanding was that *all* U.S. Military resources were going to be at my disposal.

ADMIRAL LYONS

Not the ones deploying.

JOEL

Deploying?

ADMIRAL LYONS

At 2200 the Nimitz will raise anchor and reposition to defend against the fleet of Iran's Imperial destroyers assembling...

Lyons points to a location on the table-map, near the Strait.

ADMIRAL LYONS (CONT'D)

...here.

Joel is confused. Lyons types at a consul. The map ZOOMS on a scattering of RED DOTS across the Strait. Pointing to dots:

ADMIRAL LYONS (CONT'D)

These are *approximate* locations of naval mines Iran has activated.

JOEL

There are tankers heading through.

ADMIRAL LYONS

Not anymore. The first one was ordered back fifteen minutes ago.

JOEL

(getting it now, *stunned*)  
They're blocking the strait.

ADMIRAL LYONS

The Ayatollah has ordered martial law. The Revolutionary Guard is in charge of Iran now. Closing the straits is their first move.

Arriving at why he wanted to talk to Joel in the first place:

ADMIRAL LYONS (CONT'D)

We'd like more specific intel on the location of those mines, if your detainee can provide it.

JOEL

I very much doubt she can.

Lyons heads for the door, holds it open for Joel:

ADMIRAL LYONS

(caustically)

If anyone could find out, I'm sure  
it would be you, Mr. Sykes.

Joel steps through. Turning back:

JOEL

Admiral: is this war?

ADMIRAL LYONS

We're giving them four days. Then  
we open the straits by force.

INT. ARMORED HUMVEE - PIER - JEBEL ALI PORT - NIGHT

Joel has a laptop open. He's video chatting with Erik.

ERIK

President's making a televised  
address soon so hustle back. Middle  
East does *not* like ultimatums.

JOEL

Or tomahawk missiles...

ERIK

Lyons give you grief?

JOEL

What a prick. I'd still be in jail  
if he'd had final vote that day.

ERIK

Prick. So our third mate, Ibrahim:  
he's all over the Consulate's front  
yard now, huh? You think he was in  
on it with her?

JOEL

We don't know she was in on it.

A *new tension* flickers between Joel and Erik...

ERIK

Of course.

Joel sees Vera being escorted toward him by the SF sergeants.

JOEL  
I have to go, Sir.

ERIK  
We'll talk when you're back. We  
should have the husband by then.

Erik's face disappears. Joel closes the laptop. *Brooding...*

EXT./INT. HUMVEE - HIGHWAY THROUGH SHANTYTOWN - NIGHT

The humvee rolls through a SHANTYTOWN south of Dubai--the dark side of paradise, where migrant workers responsible for Dubai's skyline are housed in squalid huts with tin roofs.

VERA  
(muffled)  
Would you mind?

Joel pulls the hood off her. She takes a deep breath.

VERA (CONT'D)  
So? Navy didn't want us?

Joel doesn't respond. He's watching a GROUP OF BANGLADESHI KIDS roll an oil drum between heaps of BURNING TRASH. He spots a TEENAGER running across a rooftop. Strange.

VERA (CONT'D)  
Do we have any food?

He leans across Vera, looks through the other window: THREE MORE TEENAGERS are running across roofs on the other side.

VERA (CONT'D)  
I haven't eaten all day.

Joel leans forward. Through the windshield, he sees: an 18-WHEEL TANKER TRUCK heading toward them on the other side of the highway. He scans the rooftops ahead of them...

...there: a GROUP OF TEENAGERS pointing AK47s at the truck.

JOEL  
Get off, Sergeant.

SERGEANT  
(not following)  
Sir? I can't turn here.

VERA  
Whatever your name is! I'm hungry!

Joel whips around, looks at Vera intensely, as...

...the teenagers OPEN FIRE on the truck, riddling the DRIVER with bullets. The driver slumps over the wheel, DEAD.

The truck veers hard to the left, SMASHING easily through the concrete barrier, heading straight for the humvee.

The sergeant driving hits the brakes far too late: *the truck SLAMS into the humvee head on, completely crushing its front half and killing the two sergeants instantly.*

Vera and Joel are thrown into the back as the humvee--smothered against the truck's grill--is plowed into a deep roadside ditch and left standing upright, smoking.

EXT. HIGHWAY THROUGH SHANTYTOWN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

HUNDREDS OF BOYS AND YOUNG MEN stream toward the tanker. They carry buckets and plastic bottles. Some push wheelbarrows.

*They've been lying in wait for this planned attack.*

They swarm around the tanker, clambering over each other to get at the precious fuel inside.

CLOSE on *hands* opening valves on the tanker's side, gasoline gushing out into containers.

The CHEERS OF SUCCESS mingle with CRIES OF FIGHTING.

A LITTLE BOY, 7, is pushed out of the fray empty-handed. He wanders into the ditch at the tanker's front. He begins inspecting the upturned humvee, looking for the gas cap.

*He sees: a fist, banging against the back window from inside.*

It's Vera, her head bleeding, trying to punch through the glass. The boy pulls on the stuck door, finally opens it.

Vera tumbles out, COUGHING BLOOD, GROANING. She has multiple broken ribs and head lacerations but is otherwise intact.

Joel is *far* worse off: as she pulls him out of the humvee, SPUTTERING SICKLY, we see that a piece of metal has LANCED straight through his stomach. Blood runs from both sides.

Vera takes a quick look at the sergeants up front: their mangled bodies look barely human. No saving them.

Vera goes through Joel's pockets: she keeps his wallet, and SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOL, and *chucks his cell phone to the little boy who opened the door.* He grins and runs off.

She slings one of Joel's arms around her, hoists him to his feet. Half-carrying him, she walks him around the FEEDING FRENZY at the tanker and back onto the desolate highway.

HEADLIGHTS approach. Vera conceals the pistol, waves the car down--a LUXURY RENTAL CAR driven by an EGYPTIAN BUSINESSMAN.

When he sees Vera's blood-covered face and Joel's gruesome wound, the businessman starts turning around. Vera pulls out the pistol, FIRES at the back windows, shattering them.

The businessman stops. Raises his hands. Vera directs him out of the car at gunpoint and installs Joel in the passenger side. To the businessman as she gets into the driver's seat:

VERA  
Assalamu Alaikum.

EXT./INT. RENTAL CAR - HIGHWAY - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Speeding off, Vera looks down at Joel. He's lost a lot of blood. She puts pressure on his wound with one hand.

JOEL  
(delirious, struggling)  
Where are you taking me?

VERA  
To somebody who's going to keep you alive. I have questions of my own.

JOEL  
My name is Joel.

Vera looks out at the dunes, flitting through the headlights. When she looks back at Joel, he's lost consciousness.

EXT./INT. GAS STATION - BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, PA - DAY

Pennsylvania's Appalachian region. PARKED CARS stretch from a lone gas station down the shoulder of a two-lane highway.

**SUPER: DAY 8**

A NATIONAL GUARDSMAN walks the line of cars with a megaphone:

NATIONAL GUARDSMAN  
...the re-supply truck will be arriving shortly...(cont.)

Inside the station, a line of people wait to buy food/water from the near-empty shelves. Robert is among them. Everyone is watching the LIVE WHITE HOUSE PRESS CONFERENCE on TV:

REPORTER

Is there going to be any dialogue over these demands--that we pay for the spill, end all sanctions?

WHITEHOUSE SPOKESMAN

Not as long as Iran's Revolutionary Guard is preventing the flow of oil to the world. The President...

Robert reaches the front, sets down his jugs of water.

WHITEHOUSE SPOKESMAN (CONT'D)

...was very clear: *open the strait, or we will launch air strikes.*

Impulsively, Robert grabs a handful of CANDY BARS.

ROBERT

These too.

CASHIER GIRL

Hard to stay on that diet with the world ending, huh?

Heading for the door, he sees: a STATE TROOPER and TWO MEN in civies talking to the passengers of a car. (*The same two men who broke into Robert's house with the S.W.A.T. Team.*)

Robert's POV: the three men proceed to the next car. They show a DIGITAL TABLET to the passengers, and move on again.

A BOY they've just questioned walks into the station.

ROBERT

Hey, Buddy. Did those men just show you a photo of me?

The boy nods.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

They tell you to tell your parents if you saw me?

The boy nods again.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

OK. We're going to do a little basic bribery here. Chocolate...

Robert hands the boy his candy bars. The boy looks unmoved.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
...plus cash...

Robert counts out fifty dollars, hands it to the boy.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
...in exchange for *silence*. Deal?

The boy shrugs, gets in line. Not the insurance Robert would like... He slips outside with a LOUD FAMILY.

Keeping an eye on the three interrogators, he moves with the family (and hidden by them) down the line of parked cars.

Back in the hybrid, he starts the engine. The gas light BLINKS together with an annoying BLEEP. There will be no driving escape. He sees the three men progressing toward him.

Acting on instinct, Robert grabs his shoulder bag and WALKS AWAY FAST. Once past the last parked car and around a bend, he stops. Assessing the decision he's just made.

The road ahead is empty, flanked by forests. No residences, no side roads. A car approaches. *He raises a thumb.*

SHOTS of cars passing Robert by. Drivers don't look at him. *In this climate of fear, no one is willing to stop...*

Robert trudges on. Getting anxious. Cold. The winter sun going fast. He takes out a CHICAGO BEARS JACKET, pulls it on.

The next car is a FLATBED TRUCK. It pulls over. He hops in.

INT. FLATBED TRUCK - DAY (A MOMENT LATER)

The driver is COLEEN BISHOP, 47. The survivor of a hardscrabble, blue-collar life. Her beauty worn down by it.

COLEEN  
My first crush.

ROBERT  
Sorry?

COLEEN  
Jim McMahon. '85 Bears. Hm-hm...

*Robert looks down at the jacket that has just saved his ass.*

ROBERT  
I'm headed to D.C.

COLEEN

Not with me. There's a station up here. You'll find somebody. Now, will they have any gas?

Robert can see the parked cars ahead. Coleen slows down.

ROBERT

Truth is... I'm pretty tired out...

Robert takes out his wallet, counts out FIVE TWENTIES.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

...from traveling. I could really use a meal and a bed right now.

Coleen eyes the money, studies her unlikely hitch-hiker. Robert glances up at the station: *the two men and the state trooper are talking to the boy he tried to bribe.*

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Plus another hundred tomorrow.

Colleen takes the money and speeds up.

COLEEN

You turn out to be squirrelly I will chop you up and feed you to my goats. Understand?

ROBERT

Yes, Ma'am. Thank you.

EXT./INT. BISHOP HOUSE - BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, PA - DAY

The truck drives through a HIGH CHAIN-LINK FENCE with a sign that reads: *STAY THE FUCK OUT*. Continues up to a clapboard house standing alone on a hilltop.

They park. ROTTWEILER MUTTS assault Robert's door till Coleen CALLS them off. He's slow to step out. *What is this place...*

FOUR LONG-HAIRED KIDS bouncing on POGO STICKS surround him.

COLEEN

Luther!

LUTHER, 28, unkept and burly, emerges from the house. He starts unloading groceries from the truck, eyeing Robert.

COLEEN (CONT'D)

What's your name?

ROBERT

Sam.

COLEEN

Say hi to Uncle Sam, everybody.

ALL KIDS ON POGO STICKS

*Hi, Uncle Sam!*

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, PA - NIGHT (LATER)

Dinner is over. Robert's on dishes. He's barely dented the huge stack. Coleen's brood is visible through an open door, playing video games on one screen, watching TV on another.

In addition to Luther and the pogo-sticking kids, there are TWO TEENS. *Six children in all.*

Coleen comes in, sits with her work boots on, lights a cigarette. TRAVIS, 4, is chased past by an OLDER SISTER.

COLEEN

Fight back, dammit!

ROBERT

Is their father around?

COLEEN

When Chickenshit left--  
Chickenshit's my husband--I was  
third trimester with Travis. He  
didn't even call to see if his kid  
was born retarded. Wife?

ROBERT

Yes.

COLEEN

Where's she at?

ROBERT

I don't know. I'm looking for her.

COLEEN

Man looking for wife: noble.

ROBERT

I haven't been the best husband.

COLEEN

Hah! So she's running from you.

ROBERT

No. I was the one running. I nearly left her for another woman.

COLEEN

Younger, thinner, richer?

ROBERT

Yes. But that wasn't it. My wife doesn't want children. Her life is her work. And her work is... demanding. She's overcome... a lot... to get where she is.

COLEEN

World's crowded, dirty, and now it's sputtering out altogether. What do you want kids for?

ROBERT

Same as you. I imagine. Keep some hope for the future alive.

Coleen LAUGHS: a "you have no clue what you're saying" laugh.

TRAVIS

The Injuns have no lights!

Travis stands in the open door, jabbing a finger at the TV. Robert and Colleen join the brood, *watching with great excitement the latest apocalyptic news:*

CNN shows THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE MOVING IN DARKNESS through the crowded streets of Bombay, not a single light on:

CNN CORRESPONDENT (V.O.)

...not just India. We're getting reports of blackouts from Southeast Asia, the middle-east--all regions that rely on diesel generators...

EXT. PORT TOWN OF KHASAB, OMAN - PRE-DAWN

CLOSE on a loudspeaker, fixed to the minaret of a white-washed MOSQUE, playing a hauntingly beautiful *ADHAN--the Muslim call to the day's first prayers*. Continuing over:

WIDE on this small port town nestled between mountains and the *Strait of Hormuz*. Stone streets and limestone buildings.

SUPER: **DAY 9**

CLOSE on a street lamp *flickering*, and *dying out*.

In succession, all lights/street lamps in the town GO OUT. The *adhan cuts out* in mid-song. Silence. Near darkness...

INT. LAURENT'S HOUSE - KHASAB, OMAN - PRE-DAWN (SAME TIME)

...*total darkness*. A man's voice with a French accent:

MAN'S VOICE

Shit. They said this might happen.

VERA'S VOICE

Do you have candles?

SCUFFLING sounds. The opening of a drawer.

CLOSE on a lighter's flame catching on a candle wick.

The flame illuminates: a LINE OF MEDICAL STAPLES across a human torso. Blood and puss ooze from the newly-closed wound. The flame moves up to reveal: *Joel's unconscious head*.

MAN'S VOICE

Open his eyes.

FINGERS pry open Joel's eyelids. The pupils constrict.

MAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

He is fine for now. Come.

EXT. TERRACE - LAURENT'S HOUSE - PRE-DAWN (A MOMENT LATER)

LAURENT, 51, pot-belly and kind eyes, steps onto a terrace, studying a *cell phone*. He's a former sailor from Madagascar.

Vera follows, watching him anxiously. She wears the same army fatigues, covered in blood. Laurent shakes his head:

LAURENT

The towers must also be down.

Vera looks despondent. Laurent puts a comforting hand on her.

LAURENT (CONT'D)

Stay. We will reach your husband.

VERA

I've already put you and your family in danger. When he wakes up, we're leaving.

Laurent glances inside as he unfurls a *prayer mat*, kneels.

LAURENT

And where will you go? What place  
is safe from men like him?

VERA

I don't know.

LAURENT

You a *terrorist*? Insanity. Are  
their brains so small, so consumed  
with politics they cannot see the  
world is made also of accidents?

VERA

Yes. But there's something else...  
I know the security business: you  
always use multiple interrogators--

Vera stops. A LITTLE GIRL in a nightgown stands in the door.

LAURENT

(in French)

**And here is another accident!**

Laurent collects his youngest, MOIRA, 4, into this arms.

LAURENT (CONT'D)

**Remember Vera? Can you say hi?**

Moira is too shy to say it. Vera addresses her in French:

VERA

**Hello, Moira. You are so big now!**

MOIRA

**Papa, all my lamps are broken.**

LAURENT

**If you go back to sleep you will  
soon have the biggest lamp of all--  
the sun! Now let Papa do his fajr.**

Laurent kisses his daughter. She pads off adorably.

VERA

Is that true? She was an accident?

LAURENT

The greatest in my life. I thought  
I could not love more. I was wrong.  
**Don't tell the other children!**

Vera smiles. Deep in thought, she walks to the edge of the  
terrace as Laurent prostrates himself, begins his PRAYERS.

Vera's POV: the empty Strait, the SUNRISE over mountains on the Iranian side. Stunning. But also *very wrong*...

VERA

Laurent? Where are the ships?

Laurent stops praying, sits up. Vera turns back to him.

VERA (CONT'D)

Sorry to interrupt you. Shouldn't there be ships in the strait again?

LAURENT

Hah! Only if they are willing to fight their way through.

*Vera's face is a blank.* Laurent ducks inside and comes back with a pair of binoculars, hands them to her.

LAURENT (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Look to the east. Directly beyond the edge of our harbor.

Vera's POV through binos: focusing, tracking across the waterline according to Laurent's directions, settling on...

...FOUR IRANIAN WARSHIPS peaking out from behind the rocks.

LAURENT (CONT'D)

They are *Sina*--Iran's new missile class. Capable of hitting Jerusalem, Athens, even London.

Vera lowers the binos, stares at Laurent in shock. *Laurent can see she has a lot of catching up to do.*

INT. LAURENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Joel's POV as his eyes open: a ceiling fan. *Pain hits.* He looks down at his stapled mid-section. Trying to touch it, he realizes that his wrists are *tied to bedposts.*

Then he sees Vera: tying his ankles. He's too weak to resist.

VERA

Iran's Revolutionary Guard, who blame me for the spill, have closed the strait. Meanwhile, the State Department refuses to say anything about me even though we're four days away from war.

Vera finishes her last knot. She looms over Joel.

VERA (CONT'D)

Talk.

JOEL

Where are we?

VERA

Alone. Shout: no one will come. Why was I detained? What were you told?

Joel is silent. Vera picks up MEDICAL PLIERS from a tray. She grips one of the staples holding Joel together, YANKS it out.

Joel HOWLS. It's the worst pain he's ever endured. Which is saying a lot. Vera pulls a second one. He nearly passes out.

VERA (CONT'D)

I wonder: how many do I need to...

Vera pulls a third staple. Joel can see his liver protruding.

VERA (CONT'D)

...pull before it all comes apart?

Vera grips another staple. If this one goes, his organs are likely to fall out. Vera starts to pull...

JOEL

*Dark Waters.*

She stops.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Leaked to CIA a few months ago. General Jafari. It was his plan. Crash a foreign oil tanker. Close the straits. Hold the world hostage. Fucking crazy. No one took it seriously. And then it happened.

VERA

But it didn't happen.

JOEL

That's what I was brought in to determine. Ashi's ties to Jafari, Robert's connection to the nuke tunnels. Now the generals taking power. It looks bad on paper.

VERA

And in person?

A long look between them.

JOEL

Let me bring you in. You have no chance of running. You know that. Come in and I'll tell them--

VERA

That I'm a regular, hardworking woman, caught up by unfortunate turns of fate and thorny webs of political suspicion.

JOEL

Yes. I'll draft an email to the DoD right now. You'll read it first.

VERA

How kind of you. But email's for people with electricity. And we don't have any.

Vera walks out. Leaving Joel with his stomach gaping open.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, PA - NIGHT

CLOSE on a CHILD'S HAND reaching toward a tub of ice cream...

4 year-old Travis Bishop, illuminated by the open freezer, is balanced precariously on a stool placed on pillows.

Travis grabs the ice cream just as the stool tips sideways. His head hits the kitchen floor with a SHARP CRACK.

*Lying in bed upstairs, Luther opens his eyes at the sound.*

The resilient Travis stands, wobbling, rubbing his head. He snatches up the ice cream and scurries away.

Luther looks out the window at the moon-lit barn, the yard, the woods beyond. Just as his eyes close, he sees: a LIGHT FLASHING at the edge of the woods. Joined by a SECOND LIGHT.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - NIGHT

Following TWO FLASHLIGHTS through tall grass toward the house. They're carried by DARK, INDISTINCT FIGURES.

With a high-voltage CRACKLE, the yard ahead is lit up by FLOODLIGHTS set in tree branches. The MUFFLED BARKING OF DOGS starts up. Luther's voice BOOMS out through speakers:

LUTHER (O.C.)  
 You are on private property. Under  
 state law, we have the right to  
 fire on you, which we will do...

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - NIGHT (SAME TIME)

Luther's voice wakes Robert, asleep on a couch.

LUTHER (O.C.)  
 ...unless you promptly fuck off.

Robert gropes for his glasses, gets up, peering into the dark. The sound of PATTERNING BARE FEET and TENSE WHISPERS. He finds Coleen ushering her children down basement stairs.

COLEEN  
 You get on down too.

ROBERT  
 Who's out there?

COLEEN  
 Don't let them drink any sodas.

Coleen pushes him through the door. The stairs lead down into: *an UNDERGROUND TUNNEL lit by halogen lamps.*

Robert follows the five barefoot children through the tunnel and a door at the end, opening into...

INT. THE VAULT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

...a LARGE BUNKER--*the Vault*. Shelves are loaded with canned goods, water, gas, and guns. Robert stands in awe: *he's never seen 'doomsday prepping' like this.*

TEEN GIRL  
 Granddad built the vault against  
 the communists. Mom kept it going  
 for the jihadis.

Robert turns to the teen girl. She's sipping a coke already.

ROBERT  
 Your mother said no soda.

Robert realizes that every kid is drinking one already.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
 Hey! No sodas!

The Rottweilers' muffled barking overhead becomes suddenly LOUD--*they've been let out*. The children look up with puckish smiles. Robert follows their gaze.

Coleen enters, bolts the door, surveys the soda-gulpers.

COLEEN

You got a long way to go if you want to be a daddy.  
(snatching sodas away)  
People make fun of us because we're preppers. Now doomsday's here and they're all at our throats.

ROBERT

Whoever's out there--they may not have come for fuel...

GUNSHOTS. Then the PAINED YELPS of dogs and CHILLING SILENCE. *The Rottweilers have all been shot and killed in a matter of seconds*. Travis starts crying. Coleen looks at Robert anew:

COLEEN

What did you do, Uncle Sam?

Coleen doesn't wait for him to answer. She spins open the gun cabinet lock, pulls out a LOADED SHOTGUN, thrusts it at him.

ROBERT

I've never used one.

COLEEN

Safety's off. Pull the trigger when I say and don't shoot me.

Coleen loads an AR-15 SEMI-AUTOMATIC for herself, and hands rifles to the two teens as she gives them marching orders:

COLEEN (CONT'D)

Anyone not me, Uncle Sam, or Luther comes down those stairs you put two in the chest, one in the head.

Coleen directs Robert up stairs, through a hatch, into...

INT./EXT. BARN / BISHOP HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

...the barn. Coleen advances with Robert following, their footsteps covered by BLEATING GOATS. They stop at a window.

Robert's POV: the floodlit yard, the house in darkness. The silhouette of a rifle emerges from a second story window. BLASTS from the muzzle--*Luther firing on the trespassers*.

The RETURN FIRE comes fast and heavy, peppering the entire second story. A GROAN from the window. Luther's been hit.

COLEEN  
Sons-of-bitches...

Coleen leads Robert through a stall and outside into an ANIMAL PEN. They kneel in manure, rifles balanced on the fence boards. Disguised by the dark. Watching.

The TWO TRESPASSERS enter the light, converge on the porch.

COLEEN (CONT'D)  
Take the tall one.

CLOSE on the shorter man's combat boots nearing the porch, feeling out the first step, testing it. The step CREAKS.

Coleen's AR-15 EXPLODES with RAPID GUNFIRE. The shorter man is HIT through the throat, slumps onto the porch, DEAD.

Robert FIRES WILDLY. Missing by a mile. The taller man, pivots, drops to a knee and SPRAYS BULLETS into the darkness.

Fence boards SPLINTER as Coleen pulls Robert into the mud. Coleen FIRES back, *striking the taller man in the thigh, side, hand, ear.* He crawls behind the house.

SILENCE. *Coleen is gripping a bloody shoulder.*

ROBERT  
Holy Shit. Are you OK?

COLEEN  
Fucker hit me in the dark at sixty yards. He definitely isn't local.

Coleen pushes through the shattered fence. Robert hurries after her, passing the dead man sprawled on the porch steps.

They find the taller man--*bleeding from multiple wounds.* Coleen KICKS his gun away. As she heads into the house:

COLEEN (CONT'D)  
Shoot him if he moves.

Robert presses the shotgun to the man's forehead. Too close. With trained speed, the man yanks the shotgun free. It *sails* across the yard. He pulls Robert down, starts PUMMELING him.

Robert worms his way free. The two men scramble to their feet and CLASH. Robert's never thrown a punch in his life. With his opponent limping, using one arm--*they're about even.*

They kick, claw their way toward the shotgun. Robert loses out. He finds himself next to a POGO STICK. As the man grabs the shotgun, Robert seizes it and SWINGS:

The heavy metal spring at the base connects with the man's jaw. A SICKENING SNAP--*the man's neck breaking*. He drops. Robert stares at the DEAD BODY. *In total shock*.

He touches a PAIN at his thigh. He pulls his SMASHED CELL PHONE from his pocket. He looks over at the dead man...

...quickly, loathe to touch the body, he retrieves a wallet from the man's pants. A DRIVER'S LICENSE in it. No other ID.

Coleen helps Luther out onto the porch, his stomach hastily wrapped. Luther tosses Robert's bag off the porch.

LUTHER

Get the fuck off our land.

Robert picks up the bag, starts off in a daze. Coleen watches him shamble away, covered in blood. She sighs to herself:

COLEEN

No one's picking you up looking like that...

CUT TO:

Coleen stuffs SOUP CANS into a backpack stocked with food and water and hands it to Robert. He's wearing *borrowed clothes*.

He takes out the other hundred he promised. Adds more. Colleen shakes her head. Refusing it.

ROBERT

Please. It's the least I can do.

COLEEN

Go find your wife.

Robert nods. He turns on a FLASHLIGHT and walks out into the dark. Coleen watches *Robert's light shrinking, becoming...*

INT. LAURENT'S HOUSE - KHASAB, OMAN - TWILIGHT

...a LIT CANDLE on the table by Joel's bed. Vera lights three more as Joel wakes. His hands and legs have been untied. His stomach re-stapled. He looks like death.

VERA

Stand.

Joel eases his feet off the bed and nearly collapses. Vera grabs him. Leaning on her, Joel manages to stand feebly.

Laurent comes forward from the darkness of the open door. He carries HANDCUFFS. As he cuffs Joel's hands behind his back:

VERA (CONT'D)

This is Laurent. He's going to take us across.

JOEL

Across... what?

VERA

The straits. To the Iranian side.

To his horror, Joel sees that Vera is serious.

JOEL

They'll torture us both.

VERA

Whereas if we stick with the good guys it's just me getting tortured.

JOEL

This is fucking crazy.

VERA

If I turn myself in to our government, will it help de-escalate this situation? *WILL IT?*

Joel doesn't answer.

VERA (CONT'D)

I didn't think so.

Vera drops his BOOTS on the floor. Joel struggles into them.

VERA (CONT'D)

Iran believes I'm to blame for the spill--let them have me. If there's a chance it will walk the world back from the brink of war...

JOEL

*Very small chance.*

VERA

...I HAVE TO TAKE IT. How would I ever sleep at night if I didn't?

Vera nods to Laurent, who begins leading Joel out.

VERA (CONT'D)

Who knows: I arrive with a high-end American interrogator to sweeten the deal, maybe our chances go up.

The room's lights FLICKER ON. *Electricity is back.*

VERA (CONT'D)

(to Laurent)

Your phone.

Laurent checks his cell--it's working. He hands it to her.

LAURENT

I will bring him to the car.

Vera is already punching in Robert's number.

EXT. LAURENT'S HOUSE - TWILIGHT (A MOMENT LATER)

Laurent leads Joel to an open-top Jeep waiting outside the house. Laurent's oldest son, PASCAL, 16, is behind the wheel. Laurent installs Joel in the backseat, gets in beside him.

JOEL

Iran's sea mines are active. We'll be dead before we get to the other side. You have family.

LAURENT

Yes. And if there is war, my family is on the front lines. Also: I know where the mines are.

JOEL

Are you a smuggler?

Laurent laughs. He takes a BROCHURE from the seat-back, opens it up and places it on Joel's lap.

CLOSE on photos of tourists marveling at leaping dolphins from a wooden boat. A caption reads: *Premiere Dolphin Tours*. One photo shows Laurent, smiling, steering the boat.

LAURENT

Sometimes a dolphin is injured in the strait. I stitch them up.

Joel touches his stapled torso with new apprehension. Vera arrives, jumps in the front. She looks troubled...

LAURENT (CONT'D)

Did you reach him?

VERA

His number's not in service.

LAURENT

We will try again. On y va, Pascal.

Pascal starts the Jeep, steers them down the street.

EXT. PIER - KHASAB PORT - NIGHT

The Jeep is parked on an empty pier. Joel is cuffed to the chassis. Spun round in his seat, Pascal points a gun at him.

Joel's POV: Laurent and Vera walking toward a BARRICADE. A sign in Arabic reads: **MARITIME TRAFFIC PROHIBITED**. They engage with TWO POLICEMEN. Laurent takes out cash.

JOEL

Pascal. Like the mathematician.

Pascal is sending a text with his free hand. Joel plants a boot next to him.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Pull the bottom off the heel.

Pascal cocks the handgun. Levels it at him.

JOEL (CONT'D)

There's seven thousand U.S. dollars in there. It's yours.

Pascal hesitates. Curiosity gets the better of him: he inspects the heel of Joel's boot, pries at it, pulls a portion of it free. Inside: *a thick wad of hundreds*.

JOEL (CONT'D)

The other one's yours too if you send a text to my wife. She's very worried about me. I just want her to know I'm alive and getting on a boat to Iran. That's all.

Pascal peers down at the other boot. Joel switches to Arabic:

JOEL (CONT'D)

**With fourteen thousand dollars you can buy a house here in Khasab bigger than your father's.**

Pascal stares at his cell phone, the gun, Joel. Thinking.

CUT TO:

Laurent and Vera escort Joel past the BARRICADE. The Omani police are playing DOMINOS, don't look up--*paid not to see this*. Over his shoulder, Joel watches Pascal drive away.

Laurent directs Joel across a gangplank and onto the WOODEN BOAT from the brochure. Forty feet long. Canvas covering. Laurent seats Joel near the bow and cuffs him to a grab-rail.

EXT. STRAIT OF HORMUZ - NIGHT (A MINUTE LATER)

WIDE on the boat steering out of the harbor into the Strait, its lights off. Laurent at the helm. It's the only boat coming or going. Vera sits across from Joel.

She holds up Joel's INTEL REPORTS on Ibrahim.

VERA

There's nothing here.

(pushing her case)

A fire on an oil tanker is like playing Russian Roulette with five rounds in the cylinder. Men literally shit themselves. Ibrahim fucked up under pressure.

Joel is silent. Vera studies him.

VERA (CONT'D)

I'm curious: at what point did you know that I was telling the truth?

Joel smiles. Approving of her people-reading skills.

JOEL

In the SEALS, we used to show videos to suspected Al-Qaeda of IED carnage--fingers, genitals. We'd watch them react, see if they were moved. Militants are trained to be numb to other people's pain. And empathy is a hard emotion to fake. I left the hood off at the hospital so I could see how you reacted to other people's suffering.

VERA

And you saw I was affected.

JOEL

Yes.

VERA

But you haven't told anyone.

JOEL

No.

VERA

Withholding information from the military? You could go to prison.

JOEL

Wouldn't be the first time.

Vera waits for the story.

JOEL (CONT'D)

It was my sixth tour. Detainee croaked half-way through our first water-boarding session. Navy ruled it was my fault.

VERA

Was it?

JOEL

We did nothing different. Coroner said he had a bad heart. But the Admiral at the court-martial was busy making his career *tidying up* the War on Terror. I did two years in Fort Leavenworth. When I got out, my old commander found me a job doing the same thing I was jailed for. Only now I was contractor, so I got paid double.

VERA

I'm having a hard time feeling sorry for you.

Joel and Vera share a smile for the first time. *Each has now been prisoner and jailer to the other--a bond is forming...*

LAURENT (O.C.)

Regardez!

They turn to Laurent. He's pointing north to where A SERIES OF FIRES on the water illuminate a MASSIVE BLACK MONOLITH jutting from the surface: *the bow of the Samson.*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

They are still burning off the oil.

Vera climbs forward and sits staring at the *haunting image of her half-sunk ship*. Joel watches her. He looks south at the DARK SHAPES of Iran's Naval fleet. Calling back to Laurent:

JOEL  
Iranian radars can see us.

LAURENT  
Absolument.

JOEL  
If they get suspicious, they'll  
take us out.

LAURENT  
We are in the clean-up zone. If we  
go no closer, we will cross.

VERA  
The fires, Laurent!

Laurent and Joel look north: the fires around the Samson's hull are *following rivulets of oil on the water*. These **LOW WALLS OF FIRE ARE SPREADING STRAIGHT TOWARD THEIR BOAT**.

Laurent puts the motor in high gear. Their top speed is 15 MPH. *It doesn't look like they're going to outpace the fires.*

LAURENT  
In the forward hatch, Capitaine!

Vera goes for the hatch. Joel tracks PURPLE STREAKS on the water. A BUMP against the hull--*an oil-smothered dolphin*. Vera returns to the stern with BUCKETS, FIRE EXTINGUISHERS.

JOEL  
Uncuff me.

Vera looks at the fast-approaching fires, back to Joel. She nods to Laurent. He gives her the key. She frees Joel.

LAURENT  
Take the ceiling down! Quickly!

Joel and Vera untie the sheets of (flammable) canvas. They fill buckets with seawater. Ready themselves. The first flame-wall crosses the boat's path twenty yards ahead...

JOEL  
That night on the Samson. If it  
wasn't you setting a fire as a  
diversion, how did it start?

VERA  
Crew said it was prayer candles.

They motor through the low flames. A ROPE catches fire. Joel and Vera put it out with seawater. Easy enough. But the fire just ahead is higher, more formidable...

JOEL

Prayers would be good about now.

The boat enters the 6 FOOT WALL OF FLAMES. All three hunch over, shielding their eyes, faces. Emerging on the other side, the canvass ceiling's wooden framework is IN FLAMES.

Vera and Joel can only contain it. And a THIRD WALL looms ahead, this one *wider*. Laurent lashes the wheel, lies flat.

Vera goes on dumping buckets. Joel pulls her down. He *holds* her as smoke, then flames fill the air above them. ROARING.

When the air clears, Joel and Vera rise, coughing, Joel's arm around her. Laurent is attacking a NEW FIRE across the bow.

Joel and Vera rush to help him. The three battle the fire--dousing it with water, blasting it with fire extinguishers.

Dizzy from the smoke, Laurent collapses as he pulls in a bucket of water. Joel helps him up. As Joel starts back:

LAURENT

(nodding at Vera)

There is no need.

The two men watch Vera empty the last extinguisher and STAMP OUT the remaining flames--*killing it impressively on her own*.

LAURENT (CONT'D)

Once, in the port of Cartagena, I saw her make peace between six drug lords. She saved many lives.

JOEL

How?

LAURENT

She offered to smuggle their product. She is the best, the strongest Captain I ever had.

Vera turns to them, sweating, smoke-covered--*an image of raw, beautiful tenacity*. Joel is taken by it.

A POWERFUL SPOTLIGHT suddenly blinds them. Silhouetting Vera on the bow. A VOICE THROUGH A MEGAPHONE resounds in the dark:

MEGAPHONE VOICE

Cut your engines. I repeat, cut your engines.

All three peer into the light to see:

*The sleek hump of the **USS SPRINGFIELD ATTACK SUBMARINE** rising from the water twenty yards in front of them.*

Vera nods to Laurent. Laurent cuts the engine. Their boat drifts toward the submarine and KNOCKS against it.

A SAILOR jumps on board, ties the boat to the submarine's bridge. Another SAILOR places a gangplank. As SEVEN NAVY SEALS stream onto the boat, Vera squares herself to Joel.

VERA

Was this you?

Joel doesn't respond.

VERA (CONT'D)

What are you going to tell them?

Vera and Laurent are dragged onto the sub by the SEALS.

VERA (CONT'D)

JOEL!

Joel makes his way across the charred boat alone. Climbing onto the sub's deck, he sees a DARK FIGURE standing in front of the spotlight. The figure *spits tobacco*. It's Erik.

EXT. TERRY'S HOUSE - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA - MORNING

A PORTLY MAN in a suit hurries out the front door. He BLOWS KISSES to his THREE DAUGHTERS and his WIFE, standing at french windows, watching him with worried faces.

SUPER: **DAY 10**

He steers his luxury sedan down the driveway, stopping before ELECTRONIC GATES. As the gates open, he sees a SHOPPING CART turned over on the other side--*blocking his way out*.

He takes a HANDGUN from his briefcase, gets out. At a crouch, he steps forward. Clearing the empty road in both directions.

*Something straight ahead catches his eye*. He levels the gun... only to lower it in relief. We recognize his voice:

TERRY

You could've rung the doorbell.

*Robert walks out of the woods. He looks exhausted, delirious.*

ROBERT

I was waiting till the kids went to school... schoolbus never came...

TERRY

The schools are closed.

The two old friends embrace. Terry looks him over. Concerned.

ROBERT

You were right: two men came for me last night.

TERRY

Fuck. Where?

ROBERT

Pennsylvania somewhere. I've been walking and hitch-hiking all night.

Robert hands Terry the DRIVER'S LICENSES of the two men.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

They're dead. One of them... I broke his neck I think.

TERRY

Jesus, Robert.

ROBERT

A woman I was staying with shot the other one. They were firing on us.

TERRY

I have to be at work. Come on.

INT./EXT. TERRY'S CAR - VIRGINIA STREETS - MORNING

Terry's car drives through upscale D.C. suburbs.

ROBERT

Tell me you have news.

TERRY

(hedging)

We're on the verge of war.  
Pentagon's full of news.

ROBERT

*I just killed a man. What the fuck is going on?*

TERRY

Defense Secretary is giving a press conference today. He's going to say that Vera is an Iranian agent working for a hardliner general who planned to crash the Samson.

Robert is silent. Absorbing the blow.

ROBERT

What did you tell Franks?

TERRY

Me? Robert: I have no clearance above Contract Management.

ROBERT

My wife is charged with an act of sabotage that has brought...

TERRY

There are no formal charges yet.

ROBERT

...the world to its knees and your reaction is to keep fucking quiet?!

TERRY

I'd be fired! I have a family too!

The argument is suspended as they come to a NATIONAL GUARD CHECKPOINT. GUARDS walk by their car, studying them. Drivers coming the opposite direction are having their IDs checked.

As they're waved through, Robert looks back at a sign that reads: **RESIDENTS ONLY**.

TERRY (CONT'D)

State Department guy was shot in his home last night by looters. His daughter is best friends with my oldest. Ballet, ski club, camp.

Robert can see real fear in Terry's eyes. His anger abates. They pull onto a near-empty highway. Robert watches a NATIONAL GUARD HELICOPTER soar by.

ROBERT

Will the Iranians back down?

TERRY

Maybe. The real question is: will it make any difference to Franks. He's always been hawkish on Iran but lately... it's been building.

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

He thinks they're close to a nuke.  
Months. Maybe less.

ROBERT

What are you saying?

TERRY

I'm saying my boss is pushing us  
into war with Iran and everything  
else has been, and will be, PR.

ROBERT

Accusing my wife of treason? PR?

TERRY

Would it be the first time we  
cooked the books?

ROBERT

These aren't white lies about  
foreign intel. These are American  
citizens...

Robert is speechless. *Is it possible? He thinks it through...*

TERRY

I know. I could be wrong. But after  
what just happened to you...

*...and the reality of his situation begins to unveil itself.*

ROBERT

Jesus. It's me too... Engineer in  
Iran... The tunnels... The Lovat  
contract you set me up with...

TERRY

(getting defensive)

I didn't close that deal. All I did  
was suggest your name to--

ROBERT

Easy, Terry. I was just hoping you  
could appreciate the irony with me.

TERRY

This town killed my sense of irony  
a long time ago.

Terry pulls over at the ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY entrance.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I have to let you out.

They can see the Pentagon half a mile ahead.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
Where will you go?

ROBERT  
To the media.

TERRY  
You'll be arrested.

ROBERT  
I don't care. As long as they put  
me in a cell with my wife.

TERRY  
She's not here, Robert. She's at an  
air base in the Emirates.

Robert thinks it over.

ROBERT  
Then I'll go to the Emirates.  
You'll fly me over there.

Terry is flabbergasted to see that Robert is serious.

TERRY  
I can't fly you to *Baltimore*. There  
are no flights--from anywhere, to  
anywhere.

ROBERT  
No commercial flights.

<p>TERRY In the eyes of our military, you are now a traitor. Which means--guess what--you can't hitch a ride on a C-130!</p>	<p>ROBERT What time do you get off?</p>
--	---

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
What time?

TERRY  
Six.

ROBERT  
(pointing)  
I'll be standing at those gates at  
six. Get me on a plane. Please.

TERRY

You want to get yourself killed?  
Fine. I'm not going to help you.

Robert pats him on the shoulder and steps out.

ROBERT

I'll be right here.

Robert watches Terry drive off toward the Pentagon.

EXT. UNDERWATER IN THE PERSIAN GULF - NIGHT

The huge and menacing form of the USS SPRINGFIELD SUBMARINE hurtles silently through the water.

INT. USS SPRINGFIELD - NIGHT

Joel stands at a cabin door, buttoning his shirt over NEW BANDAGES on his stomach wound. He KNOCKS. The door opens.

Erik ushers him into the officer's cabin, points at a chair and pours him a whiskey.

ERIK

Your guts intact? Or did she take a  
kidney for ransom?

JOEL

She saved my life.

Erik studies him. Joel can sense some hidden agenda...

ERIK

You didn't fuck her, did you?

JOEL

No.

Erik grins playfully, nods at Joel's stomach wound.

ERIK

Guess you're not in peak form.

JOEL

Erik: she's innocent.

Erik drinks. The playfulness leaving his face.

ERIK

A woman kidnaps an elite U.S. Interrogator and tries to cross heavily-mined waters blazing with oil fires to get to Iran. Does that sound to you like typical innocent behavior?

JOEL

I didn't say she was typical.

ERIK

Let me show you something.

Erik comes beside him with a DIGITAL TABLET. He opens a PHOTO OF A DEAD BODY--*one of the two men killed at Colleen's house.*

ERIK (CONT'D)

His son plays soccer with my son.

Erik thumbs to a photo of the SECOND MAN'S DEAD BODY.

ERIK (CONT'D)

I went to his wedding. Outstanding soldiers. Both shot and killed twelve hours ago by Robert Aiken. We're still looking for him.

JOEL

I'm sorry.

ERIK

Me fucking too.

JOEL

Robert Aiken has no record of firearms training.

Erik bristles at the challenge to his authority.

ERIK

Another thing: this was taken in London...

Erik opens a PHOTO OF A LEBANESE MAN exiting a London apartment. Joel recognizes the face.

JOEL

I've seen the file on Ibrahim.

ERIK

...three hours ago.

Joel isn't following. *Ibrahim died at the consulate...*

ERIK (CONT'D)

The third mate on the Samson wasn't Ibrahim Zain. It was his brother-- Rafiq.

Erik scrolls through PHOTOS OF THE ZAIN FAMILY...

ERIK (CONT'D)

When the family moved to London, Rafiq stayed in Beirut...

...to a PHOTO OF RAFIQ--*the man we thought was Ibrahim--* working at a Beirut cafe.

ERIK (CONT'D)

...where he continued working at his cousin's shisha cafe, and...

Erik scrolls to: 20 HEZBOLLAH MILITANTS in fatigues standing for a photo shoot. He ZOOMS on Rafiq in the back row.

ERIK (CONT'D)

...for Hezbollah. He flew to Kuwait and took the Samson job using Ibrahim's passport.

JOEL

Fuck. MI5 pick up the real Ibrahim I'm assuming? What's he saying?

ERIK

They haven't talked to him yet. They're waiting on you.

JOEL

With three days till we go to war?

ERIK

It's your gig, Joel. You're the one with all the puzzle pieces.

JOEL

Am I?

*If Joel was suspicious of Erik's attitude at the start this meeting, now he knows something is very fucked up.*

ERIK

And I know you'll put them together in the right way.

JOEL

What way is that?

Erik downs his whiskey, smiles, shows Joel to the door.

ERIK

I went to that crash site myself--  
looked like a fucking RPG attack.  
You're lucky to be alive.

Joel exits into the corridor. Erik gives him the tablet.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Take it. Catch up on the news.

Erik closes the door. Joel opens a NEWS APP and reads the top headline over a photo of Vera: **THE SAMSON'S CAPTAIN IS IRANIAN AGENT SAYS DEFENSE SECRETARY FRANKS.**

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - ARLINGTON, VA - DUSK

Robert stands by the gates. Shivering. Stomping to stay warm. Finally, Terry's car pulls up. Robert jumps in.

INT. TERRY'S CAR - VIRGINIA/D.C. STREETS - DUSK (CONTINUOUS)

Terry steers onto the highway. He SIGHS. *He can't believe what he's doing...* He hands Robert a plastic bag. Inside, Robert finds MILITARY FATIGUES and an ID for *Greg Salsbury*.

TERRY

You are Marine Lieutenant Greg  
Salsbury. DoD's liaison with Al  
Dahfra's waste management company.  
You're the porta-potty guy.

EXT./INT. TERRY'S CAR - ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

Terry's car heads onto the tarmac where TRANSPORT PLANES are being loaded. Terry parks near a massive HERCULES C-130.

The two men watch a MARINE PLATOON filing into the C-130. Robert wears the military fatigues, the ID on his breast.

TERRY

Your face hasn't been circulated at  
the grunt level. You should be OK  
till you land. Unless any of these  
guys are on board.

Terry hands back the *two driver's licenses* Robert gave him.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
 High-Value Detainee Interrogation  
 Group. CIA, Delta Force, private.  
 Authorized to 'incapacitate' you.

Robert nods. He puts a hand on his friend's shoulder.

ROBERT  
 You came through for me.

TERRY  
 If you say so.

ROBERT  
 I'm getting you season tickets next  
 year. Fifty-yard line.

TERRY  
 I'm not flying to Chicago every  
 other weekend. I want Superbowl.

ROBERT  
 Done.

Robert gets out. Terry watches him walk out toward the C-130.

EXT. AL DHAFRA AIR BASE - UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - NOON

Joel and a team of 7 NAVY SEALS escort Vera across the tarmac toward a C-27J SPARTAN--a mid-sized military transport plane. Vera is cuffed again. She watches Laurent being led away.

INT./EXT. C-27J SPARTAN - NOON (A MOMENT LATER)

Joel and Vera buckle their chest belts as the plane taxis out. All 7 SEALS are on the plane, seated toward the back.

VERA  
 My husband. Will I get to see him?

JOEL  
 I didn't think you wanted to. You  
 sounded pretty pissed with him.

VERA  
 I am.

JOEL  
 More than you are with me?

VERA  
 I don't think that's possible.

JOEL  
We're not going back to the States.

The plane starts its take-off. Shouting over the engine roar:

JOEL (CONT'D)  
WE'RE GOING TO LONDON!

VERA  
YOU'RE REALLY HOT ON THE FUCKING  
TRAIL, AREN'T YOU?!

The Spartan lifts off, soaring out over the burning dunes.

Joel watches Vera's dejected expression. He takes out a notebook, tears out a SHEET OF PAPER. He comes and sits beside her. As he furtively passes her pen and paper:

JOEL  
(into her ear)  
Write a note to your husband. I'll  
send it to him. Do it now.

The gesture surprises her. Joel blocks the SEALS' sight-lines as she scrawls a quick note, hands it to him.

Joel returns to his seat. He takes out a cell, starts typing the note into an email. He pauses--*moved by something Vera wrote*. He looks up at her: resting her head, eyes CLOSED.

INT. C-130 HERCULES - OVER THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - SUNSET

Robert OPENS his eyes. His head lies on the shoulder of the MARINE CORPORAL he's been sleeping on. He sits up, MUMBLES an apology. The marines seated all around him *smirk, chuckle*.

EXT. C-130 HERCULES - AL DHAFRA AIR BASE - SUNSET

The C-130 lands on the same runway Vera took off from seven hours ago--*husband and wife have crossed paths in the air*.

CUT TO:

Marines deplaning the C-130. Robert appears at the door, surveys the desert base, *buzzing* with preparations for war.

**SUPER: DAY 11**

Steeling himself, he walks down the ramp into the lion's den.

EXT./INT. AL DHAFRA AIR BASE - SUNSET (MINUTES LATER)

Robert makes his way between tents and barracks. He asks directions from an AIRMAN, who points him toward a *cement building*. TWO USAF SERGEANTS stand guard in front of it.

Robert pulls out the ID Terry gave him, shows it to the sergeants. They wave him into an *antechamber* where a LIEUTENANT sits behind a computer.

ROBERT  
I'm here to see the CO.

Robert hands him the ID. The Lieutenant looks it over.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
DoD Contracts. He's expecting me.

LIEUTENANT  
Wait here.

The Lieutenant takes the ID with him into another room, closing the door behind him. *Robert eyes his computer.*

CUT TO:

The Lieutenant comes back in with the BASE COMMANDER.

BASE COMMANDER  
...first we can't get him on the phone, now the guy's flying here...

The antechamber is empty.

BASE COMMANDER (CONT'D)  
Where is he?

The Lieutenant shrugs. As the Base Commander talks to the sergeants out front, the Lieutenant spies a NEW EMAIL WINDOW open on his computer.

LIEUTENANT  
Sir? Wasn't our HVD flown to London this morning?

As the Base Commander comes and reads the email too:

VERA (V.O.)  
*I'm alive.*

CUT TO:

Robert hurries fast through the air base, weaving between tents, not knowing where he's going, bumping into AIRMEN.

VERA (V.O.)  
*I don't know what's on the news,  
 they won't tell me, but I'm a  
 prisoner to our own military.*

Robert comes into the open by the base's FRONT GATES. He sees an EMIRATES ARMY DUMP TRUCK headed for them, jogs toward it.

VERA (V.O.)  
*They're taking me from the Emirates  
 to London. I've stopped asking **why**.*

Robert comes alongside the dump truck as it joins the line of vehicles waiting to exit. He knocks on the window.

ROBERT  
 Mind if I catch a lift?

The LOCAL DRIVER opens the door, Robert hops inside.

VERA (V.O.)  
*I don't care anymore. I just want  
 to see you.*

The DUMP TRUCK rolls up to the EMIRATES SECURITY GUARDS. Robert flashes his ID. A guard waves them through.

VERA (V.O.)  
*I love you. I hope to God you're  
 somewhere safe...*

The dump truck pulls onto a highway. Desert stretching on either side. Ahead, the distant spires of Abu Dhabi.

VERA (V.O.)  
*And Robert: I forgive you.*

EXT. HEATHROW AIRPORT - LONDON - AFTERNOON

The C-27J Spartan lands and taxis through a *completely deserted* Heathrow airport. A light snow is falling.

The plane's ramp lowers. The 7 SEALS escort Vera and Joel out toward a SQUAD OF ROYAL MARINES standing by THREE HUMVEES.

INT./EXT. HUMVEE MOTORCADE - DOWNTOWN LONDON - AFTERNOON

A DOUBLE-DECKER BUS ENGULFED IN FLAMES stands in the middle of the road. No fire trucks, no one rushing to put it out. Flames melt the accumulating snow around the bus.

The three Humvees negotiate past it. Vera's face is glued to the window, watching in stunned horror--*what's become of the world in the eleven days since the Samson collision?*

The motorcade slows as it approaches **PICCADILLY CIRCUS**, where SOLDIERS at FUEL AND FOOD DONATION CENTERS are trying to organize lines from SHIFTING, COLD, HUNGRY CROWDS.

In place of ads, the famous digital billboards show NEWS ANCHORS, DIVING STOCK GRAPHS, and a GIANT TICKER following the price of oil--*350 dollars per barrel. 351, 352, 353...*

They inch through Piccadilly, passing: RELIGIOUS ZEALOTS condemning the crowd, skittish BUSINESS MANAGERS in line with HOMELESS PEOPLE, smashed store fronts, FIGHTS breaking out.

VERA

Is it like this... everywhere?

JOEL

In Europe, yes. Russia cut off their gas lines, started hoarding. Other places are worse. Venezuela's being ransacked for oil. West Africa can't import food. India is... chaos. It's the largest cascading failure we've ever seen.

Vera looks dizzy. Like she's going to throw up.

VERA

What did you say? Cascade what?

JOEL

Cascading failure. It's like the domino effect for energy networks. Branch falls on a power line in Baltimore the same day a software bug hits the grid in New York. Suddenly the lights go out on the whole eastern seaboard.

VERA

(quoting Joel)

*Apocalypse hides in the smallest of things, doesn't it?*

Guilt on Joel's face, remembering how he'd treated her...

Vera is distracted by a NEW IMAGE on the digital billboard: *her own face*. The headline reads: **AIKEN IS IRANIAN AGENT, 'SAMSON SPILL AN ACT OF WAR' SAYS DEFENSE SECRETARY FRANKS.**

VERA (CONT'D)

My God...

She turns back to him. Panic, terror, and *fury* in her eyes.

VERA (CONT'D)

Joel. You have to do something.

JOEL

Give me your hands.

Vera raises her hands. Her eyes pleading. Joel CUFFS her.

EXT./INT. NEW SCOTLAND YARD - VICTORIA STREET - AFTERNOON

The SEALS and Royal Marines lead them from the Humvees and in through a secure side-door of Scotland Yard's HQ building.

They traverse an empty corridor into: a VIEWING ROOM. A ONE-WAY WINDOW looks into a concrete INTERROGATION ROOM. The SEAL COMMANDER remains with Vera and Joel when the others exit.

JOEL

Leave us, Commander.

A protracted stare between Joel and the ranking SEAL on their mission. *Who's in charge?* Finally, the Commander walks out.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(into a radio)

Bring him in.

TWO ROYAL MARINES walk a HOODED MAN into the Interrogation Room, seat him on a chair. They remove the hood from:

IBRAHIM ZAIN, 42, heavier than his brother, a larger beard. *But it's easy to see how they pass for one another.*

Vera studies the man, confused... *Doesn't she know him?*

JOEL (CONT'D)

Turns out Ibrahim did not die at the consulate. That was his brother, Rafiq.

Joel hands Vera a PROFILE on Rafiq. He points to the man in the Interrogation Room:

JOEL (CONT'D)

*This is Ibrahim.*

VERA

More questions... Since it's not going to make a difference what he says, shouldn't we all just go home and watch the war on TV?

JOEL

I don't think you get much TV time in Guantanamo.

VERA

Fuck you.

Joel puts his head next to hers, speaks in a LOW WHISPER:

JOEL

Why do you think they sent an entire SEAL Team? You're not the only one under surveillance now. I have to play my part.

Joel walks out, a folder under his arm. Vera looks up at the SECURITY CAMERAS. *Her mind racing with what Joel's said...*

A DOOR BANGS in front of her. Joel has entered the Interrogation Room. He holds up a PHOTO OF VERA to Ibrahim.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Do you know this woman?

IBRAHIM

Only from the news.

JOEL

Did Rafiq know her?

IBRAHIM

Rafiq?! I have called the foreign office many times--they will not tell me if my brother lives.

JOEL

*Did he know this woman?*

IBRAHIM

Not before the Samson. No.

JOEL

Why did he take your job?

IBRAHIM

I could not leave London. Six months salary I would have lost--my family needs the money.

(MORE)

IBRAHIM (CONT'D)

Rafiq has experience on ships.  
Enough for third mate. I know it  
was illegal. I will pay the fine.  
Only tell me, please, Sir, does he  
live?

JOEL

Your family needs the money...

Joel shows Ibrahim a PHOTO OF THE ZAIN FAMILY.

JOEL (CONT'D)

This family?

Joel shows Ibrahim the PHOTO OF RAFIQ WITH HEZBOLLAH.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Or this one?

Ibrahim's heard this line of questioning before.

IBRAHIM

Hezbollah has many purposes, Sir.  
Like British social services. Rafiq  
trained farmers in proper planting.  
He has a degree in agriculture.

Vera scans down Rafiq's record, finds a line that reads:  
*AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING DEGREE, Université Libanaise.*

JOEL

Why couldn't you leave London?

IBRAHIM

My son. He lies in bed, hovering  
between this world and the next.

JOEL

What's that have to do with you?

IBRAHIM

He is the light of my life, Sir. I  
have not left his side in thirty  
days. My family can attest to it.

JOEL

OK. Let's go ask them.

Joel heads for the door and turns:

JOEL (CONT'D)

Your brother died in the bombing of  
the U.S. Consulate in Dubai.

Joel walks out. Vera watches as Ibrahim BREAKS DOWN. Joel enters the viewing room. Together they watch Ibrahim WEEP.

VERA

He's telling the truth.

Joel knows it. His face is knotted up. He looks cornered.

EXT. EDGWARE ROAD - LONDON - SUNSET

SNOW FALLS on two Humvees rolling through the Lebanese community. Store fronts boarded up, smashed. A YOUNG MAN at a window with an AK-47--*neighborhoods are protecting their own.*

The Humvees stop in front of COUNCIL HOUSING FLATS.

From inside one Humvee, Vera watches Ibrahim and Joel get out of the other and head toward the flats. She lunges across a SEAL, RAPS her cuffs on the window. The SEAL pushes her back.

*She got Joel's attention.* The SEAL lowers the window for him.

VERA

Let me come with you.

JOEL

You're not supposed to be here.

VERA

I'm glad we can agree on something.

(looking at Ibrahim)

They're still the family of my crew. And I'm still Captain.

Joel thinks it over. He looks at Vera, back out at the SEALS with Ibrahim. *A burden seems to lift from his brooding face.*

JOEL

(to the SEAL inside)

Let her out.

(when the SEAL hesitates)

*Let her out.*

The SEAL lets Vera out. Joel uncuffs her. The SEAL Commander rushes over as Joel guides Vera toward the flats.

COMMANDER

We are under strict orders not--

JOEL

In case you didn't read up, I have a tendency to break strict orders. And kill people while I'm at it.

Ibrahim has caught sight of Vera. He recognizes her from TV.

IBRAHIM

You...

The Commander preempts an encounter--leading Ibrahim by the arm toward the flats. Vera, Joel, and FOUR SEALS follow.

INT. IBRAHIM'S FLAT - LONDON - SUNSET (A MINUTE LATER)

Ibrahim KNOCKS on the door of his 4th floor flat. His MOTHER, 71, small and stern, opens it. She embraces her son, observing the four heavily-armed SEALS with disapproval.

A RAPID-FIRE EXCHANGE IN ARABIC ensues between her and Ibrahim as the group enters the cramped, and *freezing* living room. (There's no heating, the family wear coats and hats.)

Ibrahim's wife, YAZEL, 37, joins from another room. She clings to her husband. The women's relief at having Ibrahim back is soon replaced by TEARS--*he's told them about Rafiq*.

Vera steps forward. The wife and mother STARE at her.

VERA

As Rafiq's Captain, I offer you my sincerest condolences. You must know that I had nothing to do with his death, or with the--

The mother SLAPS Vera hard in face.

IBRAHIM

My mother does not speak English.

JOEL

Where's your son?

Ibrahim leads them into another room.

On a bed, surrounded by LIFE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT, lies CALEB, 11. A breathing tube runs from his nose. *He's in a coma*. The SEALS crowd around him, their M16s bigger than his body.

IBRAHIM

He was at St. Mary's after the accident. With the riots and the hospitals filling up, we were advised to take Caleb home.

Vera notices a GIRL, 11, seated in the corner under a portion of wall covered in SCRAWLED NOTES FROM WELL-WISHERS.

JOEL  
I need to speak with your wife and  
mother alone.

Ibrahim nods, leads Joel back into the living and toward the  
kitchen. When the SEALS try to follow, Joel turns on them:

JOEL (CONT'D)  
*Alone.*

Their Commander signals for them to back down. They remain in  
the living room. Two stay with Vera in the room with Caleb  
and the girl. Vera approaches the girl.

GIRL  
I've seen your face on the tele.  
Are you a terrorist?

VERA  
No. I'm not. What's your name?

GIRL  
Sabah.

VERA  
Nice to meet you, Sabah. Are you  
Caleb's sister?

SABAH  
I'm his girlfriend.  
(eyeing the two SEALS)  
We didn't steal the batteries. We  
just borrowed them. I promise.

Sabah stands, opens a closet full of CAR BATTERIES.

SABAH (CONT'D)  
This one is from my father's truck.

VERA  
We're not here for the batteries.

Sabah closes the door bashfully.

VERA (CONT'D)  
But tell me, what are they for?

SABAH  
They keep Caleb's machines going  
when we haven't got electricity.

VERA  
How often is that?

SABAH

Every night from nine until six in the morning. But sometimes seven so we have to be watchful.

Joel enters.

VERA

Sabah, this is Joel.

SABAH

Would you like to write your name on the wall?

JOEL

(to Vera)  
Gotta go.

VERA

(to Sabah)  
Yes, I think we would.

Sabah hands them MAGIC MARKERS, directs them to the wall, (Joel reluctantly). Side by side, they write their names.

SABAH

And now you hold his hand.

Vera takes one of Caleb's LIFELESS HANDS. Joel hesitates, takes the other. They look at each other across the bed. Sabah bows her head, starts to pray:

SABAH (CONT'D)

Allahuma rabbi-nas adhabal...

EXT./INT. AL WHADA MALL - ABU DHABI - NIGHT

Robert jogs down an alley in downtown Abu Dhabi, checking a CRUDE MAP scrawled on paper. He turns the map--confused--and ducks into a side door of the AL WHADA MALL.

SABAH (V.O.)

...ba'sa ashfi wa entashafi...

Inside, the marble floors STROBE with ERRATIC LIGHT from a damaged electrical system.

SABAH (V.O.)

...la shifa' illa shifa'uka...

Robert turns a corner to find: a BLOODIED MANAGER lodged halfway through the window of a JEWELRY STORE. Dead.

SABAH (V.O.)  
 ...shifa' la yughadiru saqama.

Inside, the jewelry is being looted by 4 INDONESIANS and 2 FILIPINOS--part of the Emirates' immigrant labor class. All are armed. They stare at Robert blankly. Robert runs.

He GLIMPSES, as he runs, the ransacking of shops on all three floors: *Gucci, Prada, Tiffanys, Montblanc, etc.*

BEDOUINS have joined forces with the immigrants. One walks down an escalator with Prada bags. CAMELS drink from a pool.

Robert feels the mounting pressure of EYES and GUNS tracking him until he bursts through a shattered revolving door into:

The mall's front parking lot. A SPORTS CAR nearby HONKS. Robert runs to it, recognizes the driver, and gets in.

INT. SPORTS CAR - ABU DHABI - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The driver is ASHI, 36, tall, elegant, Iranian--*the woman with whom Robert had an affair that nearly ended his marriage.* (We remember her face from Vera's interrogation.)

As she speeds out of the parking lot:

ASHI  
 You were on the wrong side of the mall.

ROBERT  
 They're killing people in there!

ASHI  
 Build an empire on cheap labor and the labor must have enough to live. Or they will cut off your head.

ROBERT  
 Where are the police? The military?

ASHI  
 Protecting the very rich. Like me.

EXT./INT. EMIRATES PALACE - ABU DHABI - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER)

The sports car drives down a boulevard flanked by TANKS and POLICE CARS toward the lavish EMIRATES PALACE HOTEL.

They valet the car and enter the hotel through a CHECKPOINT OF ARMED GUARDS. Ashi nods to the guards--*they know her.*

They skirt the edge of the lobby, crowded with MEDIA, EXECUTIVES, POLITICIANS who have holed-up here.

ROBERT  
(whispering)  
They might be looking for me.

ASHI  
The Americans? Of course they are.  
They've been looking for me too.

This is news to Robert.

ASHI (CONT'D)  
Mercifully, my sister is married to  
the Emir's son. The West will not  
risk relations with the Emir...

Ashi stops before GOLD-TRIMMED ELEVATOR DOORS.

ASHI (CONT'D)  
...as long as they need military  
bases on his land.

An elevator opens. They enter and start heading up.

ROBERT  
I had no idea you'd been swept up  
in this. I wouldn't have come...

Ashi embraces him. An aching history of passion and pain  
between them. Ashi puts a hand on his face. Lovingly, sadly.

ASHI  
Robert.

ROBERT  
How do I get to London?

Ashi sighs darkly. The elevator DINGS. Doors open. Ashi steps  
out, strides down the hall. Robert follows.

ASHI  
Why was she taken there?

ROBERT  
I don't know. She didn't say.

ASHI  
Have you replied to the email?

ROBERT  
No. It came from an address I  
didn't recognize.

Ashi unlocks the door to her room. They enter...

INT. ASHI'S SUITE - EMIRATES PALACE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

...the OPULENT SUITE where Ashi's been living for the past eleven days. As she opens a laptop on a crystal table, types:

ASHI

Write. Who knows? We will use one of my company's encrypted accounts.

Ashi passes the laptop to Robert, goes to the bar.

ROBERT

Your friends in Iran, your father-- they could prove that Vera never even met this General Jafari.

ASHI

Iran announcing her innocence would only legitimize your CIA's false claims. It is a game of perception.

Ashi returns with two drinks, hands one to Robert.

ASHI (CONT'D)

A game which is nearly over. Come.

She leads Robert out onto the BALCONY where he's confronted by a DRAMATIC SIGHT: *the glimmering lights of the entire U.S. FIFTH NAVAL FLEET a mile off shore, facing the Straits.*

ASHI (CONT'D)

In twenty-four hours, those ships will fire tomahawk missiles at Iran's Navy and our countries will be at war. Whether Vera is seen as guilty will no longer matter.

ROBERT

I could never leave her, Ashi. I was wrong to tell you I would.

Robert and Ashi share a pained look.

ASHI

I went to see her. The day she left port. To offer apologies for the suffering I caused.

ROBERT

We caused. What did she say?

ASHI

She did not accept them. I do not blame her. Since the collision, I have prayed for her every day. Fate has not been kind to her.

ROBERT

Fate has no fucking conscience.

ASHI

Perhaps not. But I have found that the greatest burdens often fall to those who are also strong enough to carry them.

INT. DETENTION WING - U.S. EMBASSY - LONDON - NIGHT

Vera is back in another cell--this one a white-bars holding cell for prisoners awaiting extradition to the U.S.

A BUZZ as the door to the wing opens. Joel appears carrying a tray with roast beef, mashed potatoes. She eyes it, ravenous.

Joel opens a SLOT DOOR, slides the tray through to her. He watches as she stuffs herself. *He looks clear-eyed, resolved.*

JOEL

I'm thirty-four and I've been married three times. I am a *shitty* husband. But you know what I'm really good at? Pampering.

Vera nearly chokes on her food LAUGHING.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Breakfast in bed, foot massages. I'm really good at that shit.

VERA

This your way of coming on to me?

JOEL

Here's my proposal: if both of us survive tomorrow, we go on a date.

VERA

Hah! What happens tomorrow?

JOEL

My boss is coming to take you to Guantanamo.

Vera's laughter stops.

JOEL (CONT'D)

If I want that date, I have to get you out of here.

VERA

Might have to do more than that.

JOEL

Yeah, I figured you might feel that way... So I'm going to see about stopping this war too.

Vera studies him: Joel means it.

EXT. STREETS NEAR U.S. EMBASSY - LONDON - EARLY MORNING

Grey light over empty streets. The snow has stopped, but it's FRIGID. Total quiet. Then a FAINT SCRATCHING. Coming from...

...a SAW pulled across a branch by a BOY, sitting high in a poplar tree. A SECOND BOY gathers sawed-off branches below.

The boy pauses, looks down at: TWO WOMEN wearing head-scarves hurrying toward the embassy. He goes back to sawing.

SUPER: **DAY 12**

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - LONDON - EARLY MORNING (A MINUTE LATER)

The two women receive their IDs from a GUARD at the MAIN SECURITY CHECKPOINT. They continue toward the embassy, arriving at a LINE OF PEOPLE waiting for the doors to open.

They pull back their scarves and we see their faces: *Yazel, Ibrahim's wife, and her FRIEND, 41.*

An EMBASSY GUARD unlocks the doors from the inside. The line begins filing in. Yazel and her friend move forward with it.

INT. DETENTION WING - U.S. EMBASSY - EARLY MORNING

TWO SEALS sit at the detention wing door. One cleans his gun. The other has his eyes closed. They SNAP open with the sound of WHISTLING. Joel arrives with Vera's breakfast on a TRAY.

JOEL

Morning, Boys.

The SEALS stand. One swipes a keycard. The other punches a code. The door BUZZES. Opens. Half-way through, Joel pauses:

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 (taking a FORK from tray)  
 You know what I miss most about  
 being part of the world's number  
 one badass killing team?

The SEALS don't have time to respond:

Joel pitches the tray at SEAL #1. The SCALDING COFFEE hits him in the eyes. SEAL #1 reels in pain. Joel DRIVES the fork into the collarbone of SEAL #2, who GRUNTS, knees buckling.

Twisting the fork to keep SEAL #2 in agony--Joel SMASHES SEAL #1's head against the door till he slumps down, *unconscious*.

SEAL #2 draws his handgun. Joel pulls the fork from his collarbone and STABS it into his forearm. The gun falls. Joel STRIKES SEAL #2 repeatedly till he drops, *unconscious*.

Joel tosses the bloody fork away, answers his own question:

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 Not a fucking thing.

Joel arms himself from the SEALS, takes the CELL KEYS, heads into the detention wing, *waving up at a security camera*.

Vera is sitting on her cot when Joel arrives. She has an ORANGE PRISON BLANKET wrapped around her shoulders.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - U.S. EMBASSY - EARLY MORNING

TWO EMBASSY SECURITY STAFF sit at a PANEL OF SCREENS showing security camera feeds. One sees: *the unconscious SEALS and the splattered breakfast*. Then: *Joel UNLOCKING Vera's cell*.

SECURITY STAFF #1  
 Sir!

The HEAD OF SECURITY comes over, watches the same feed.

HEAD OF SECURITY  
 Call the SEAL Commander.

BEGIN INTERCUTTING VERA AND JOEL / SECURITY ROOM / SEALS

Joel hurries Vera through the detention wing. Vera holds the blanket around her shoulders.

The SEAL Commander strides into the security room. As he watches Vera and Joel advancing across screens:

COMMANDER  
 (into his earpiece)  
 Position, Lieutenant?

The four remaining SEALS from the seven-man team, led by their LIEUTENANT, descend fast down a flight of stairs.

LIEUTENANT  
 (into earpiece)  
 Approaching west stairwell door.

Joel and Vera hurry down a CORRIDOR. Joel puts a hand up. They can hear the SEALS advancing on the far side of the door in front of them. Joel FIRES off a clip into the door.

The SEALS in the stairwell HALT at the gunfire.

Joel turns Vera around, hurries her back down the corridor as he punches a fresh clip into the SEAL-issued Sig Sauer P226.

HEAD OF SECURITY  
 Sound the alarm, Sir?

COMMANDER  
 No. Tell your people to stand down.  
 (to himself, eyes on Joel)  
 What the fuck are you doing, Sykes?

Joel advances around a corner alone, gun raised. An EMBASSY SECURITY GUARD sits behind a desk near a row of elevators.

JOEL  
 Head and hands on the desk.

The guard complies. Joel nods back at Vera. She joins him and they enter one of the elevators.

The Commander watches: a security camera feed of Joel and Vera in the elevator. Joel hits a button.

The Commander hurries out of the room, loading his Sig Sauer.

COMMANDER  
 (into earpiece)  
 Visas. Ground floor.

The Lieutenant leads his men into a BUSTLING OFFICE HALLWAY. EMBASSY EMPLOYEES stop and stare at the SEALS rushing past.

LIEUTENANT  
 (into earpiece)  
 En route.

Inside the elevator: *calm before the storm silence.*

VERA  
Three wives, huh? Any kids?

JOEL  
No. My biggest regret.

The elevator DINGS. The doors open.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
You ready?

Vera pulls the blanket over her head. Nods.

INT. VISA SECTION - U.S. EMBASSY - EARLY MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Joel guides Vera toward a LARGE HALL where LONG LINES OF PEOPLE wait in front of visa booths. Joel pulls a FIRE ALARM.

As the BLARING ALARM starts, Joel and Vera barrel into the PANICKING LINES. GUARDS SHOUT and run after them, but are quickly engulfed by the crowds, surging toward the doors.

The Commander arrives on a BALCONY. He spots Joel and Vera--*covered by the prison blanket*. On the hall's far side, the other four SEALS are pushing through toward them.

The Commander races down a flight of stairs:

COMMANDER  
(into earpiece)  
Orange blanket, Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT (V.O.)  
(through earpiece)  
We have a visual.

Joel pushes through crowds, an arm around the cloaked Vera.

The Lieutenant's team TOSS people aside as they advance.

The Commander charges from the other side.

*It's a race to the front doors, and it looks like Joel and Vera are going to get there first. Then:*

A LARGE MAN, caught up in the stampede, falls in front of them--they lose precious seconds negotiating by him.

SEALS intercept them *feet* from the door. Guns drawn. SHRIEKS from the scattering crowd. Joel shields Vera with his body.

Three SEALS pull Joel away and cuff him. Vera remains on her knees, covered. The Commander pulls the blanket from her:

*The woman isn't Vera. It's Yazel's friend.*

The Commander wades back into the mayhem, *searching for Vera*. Nothing. Turning back, he spies, through the window:

Two women wearing head scarves out front. They turn for a moment as they cross the street--*it's Vera and Yazel*.

The Commander SHOTS through the window and...

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - LONDON - EARLY MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

...BURSTS outside. VAULTING over cement barriers, he tracks the two women as they get into Yazel's car.

He reaches the curb as the car speeds past. He walks calmly into traffic and holds out a hand. The next oncoming car, a BLACK CAB, SCREECHES to a stop inches from him.

The DRIVER lowers his window, SWEARING. The Commander plucks him out, gets into the cab, takes off after Vera and Yazel.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - EARLY MORNING (SAME TIME)

CLOSE on rattling poplar branches.

TWO BOYS ON A MOTORBIKE are being pursued by a COP CAR. A BUNDLE OF BRANCHES is tied to the back of their bike.

*These are the boys who were sawing the poplar tree earlier.*

BEGIN INTERCUTTING BOYS ON MOTORBIKE / SEAL COMMANDER

COMMANDER  
(into earpiece)  
Pursuing the detainee east on...

The boys on the motorbike face a RED LIGHT. The one driving looks over his shoulder at the oncoming cop, speeds up.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)  
(into earpiece)  
...Brook Street. Detainee is  
traveling with--

The motorbike runs the red light and FISHTAILS HARD through the intersection. Branches FLY off the bike, *landing right in front of the black cab*. The Commander SLAMS ON HIS BRAKES...

...but at 70 MPH he has no chance. The cab skids over the branches, hurtles into the STONE COLUMNS of a bank entrance.

The Commander careens through the windshield, hitting a column head first. His skull CRACKS open. He DIES on the sidewalk among the tree branches.

EXT./INT. YAZEL'S CAR - LONDON STREETS - EARLY MORNING

Four blocks beyond (too far to have seen the crash), Yazel maneuvers through minimal traffic. Vera takes off her scarf.

VERA

So you believed me yesterday? When I told you I was innocent?

YAZEL

I believed the man who spoke to me and my mother-in-law. He encouraged us to help you. He was persuasive. And his Arabic was very good.

Vera smiles, thinking of Joel.

VERA

You've saved my life. Call me Vera.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - U.S. EMBASSY - LONDON - EARLY MORNING

Joel sits cuffed to a chair at the front. The seats are all empty. THREE SEALS guard him--one has a bandaged collarbone.

Erik enters through a door straight ahead. He ushers in: *U.S. Defense Secretary Franks*, and the BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY, 54. Slim and bald. A waif beside Franks' imposing figure.

They sit in the front row, a few yards from Joel. Erik stays standing. Eyeing Joel.

FOREIGN SECRETARY

Tell us: what do you think happened in the Straits of Hormuz?

JOEL

*Al-qasha altee gasamat thahra al-b'eer.* The straw that broke the camel's back.

FOREIGN SECRETARY

What about *intent*?

JOEL

The only intent I see is yours, Mr. Foreign Secretary: the crown following us into battle once more.

The Foreign Secretary looks to Franks.

FRANKS

Joel: you've aided in the escape of an alleged terrorist. You'll face treason charges. You don't want to go back to Fort Leavenworth.

JOEL

That's a solid threat to have on hand. I see why you picked me now.

FRANKS

I picked you because you're a professional, and right now we need your professional opinion.

JOEL

The straits are still closed. Isn't that enough for war?

FRANKS

The Revolutionary Guard is folding. They open the straits tonight.

JOEL

I see... You need to blame Iran for the camel's back so you can strike anyway. Is that it?

Franks stands, comes to Joel's side. He squats on his haunches, interlacing his enormous hands. His tone is intimate, trusting, as if he and Joel were collaborators:

FRANKS

Nuke deals were bullshit, Joel. Iran pulled the wool over the world's eyes. They'll have a bomb by Christmas. We send in a hundred thousand troops right now, take out their underground installations. This is our last chance. Or the whole Middle East will burn.

JOEL

*A war to stop future wars...* Not a new line. I can see why you're anxious about selling it. Given my vocation, guess I should see it as a business opportunity.

FRANKS

Positions are open in my office. Higher pay, less field work.

(MORE)

FRANKS (CONT'D)  
 (smiling)  
 More time to find number four.

JOEL  
 I think I'm stopping at three. All  
 the good women are taken. I just  
 met a great one.

FRANKS  
 Who?

JOEL  
 She's a ship's captain.

Franks' smile fades. He stands. Eyes cold.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 She's been through hell. She was  
 framed by her own country. But  
 she's a very resilient woman. And  
 honorable. More than I can say for  
 the people who have slandered her.

Franks nods to the Foreign Secretary who prepares to leave.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 IT IS MY *PROFESSIONAL OPINION* that  
 those people will suffer greatly at  
 the hands of God, Shiva, Allah, or,  
 for the atheist, the brutal  
 calamities of everyday life.

FOREIGN SECRETARY  
 Taken with your actions this  
 morning, your obvious bias toward  
 Mrs. Aiken renders your testimony  
 unusable. Good-day, Mr. Sykes.

Franks and the Foreign Secretary walk out. Erik comes behind  
 Joel, puts a hand on his head--*like a father*. He sighs.

ERIK  
 You let me down.

INT. HOLDING CELL - U.S. EMBASSY - MORNING (MOMENTS LATER)

SEALS lead Joel into the cell and lie him on a GURNEY. They  
 lock down his hands, feet, waist, and forehead with straps.

Erik enters carrying a MEDICAL KIT. He opens it, takes out  
 THREE VIALS and THREE SYRINGES, and loads the vials:

JOEL  
Franks and the Foreign Minister  
know you're killing me?

ERIK  
They want you quiet. This is my way  
of personally guaranteeing silence.

JOEL  
What's the official line?

Erik finds a vein in Joel's arm. SLAPS it.

ERIK  
You died in the car with the SEAL  
Commander this morning while  
chasing a fugitive terrorist.

Erik PLUNGES the contents of the first syringe into the vein.  
Joel clenches his teeth. Struggles to stay conscious.

ERIK (CONT'D)  
As a contractor, we can't put you  
up for a Purple Heart. But you may  
get a Defense of Freedom Medal.

JOEL  
That's nice.

ERIK  
Pretty fancy, by the way--pulling  
out that Arabic. I was impressed.

Erik STABS a second syringe into Joel's bicep. This drug  
constricts Joel's breathing, makes his muscles CONVULSE.

JOEL  
(gasping)  
I know another one: *een albaawdh*  
*tdminqlh alasd.*

ERIK  
What's that mean?

Erik STABS the third, final syringe into Joel's other bicep.  
Joel has approximately fifteen seconds to live.

JOEL  
(breathing rapidly)  
*A mosquito can make the lion's eye  
bleed.*

Erik frowns. *Joel's smile--persisting through his death  
rattle--insinuates some upper hand...*

ERIK  
What did you do, Sykes?

Joel weakly raises a finger, points toward a security camera in the corner. The camera's light is off.

ERIK (CONT'D)  
The cameras are dark.

JOEL  
Not all of them.

Joel GASPS VIOLENTLY--once, twice. Then his breathing stops. His arms and legs SPASM. FOAM RISES from his lips. He DIES.

Erik's inspects him. A BUTTON on Joel's shirt catches his eye. Larger than the others. His hand reaches toward it...

CUT TO:

INT. IBRAHIM'S FLAT - LONDON - MORNING (SAME TIME)

CLOSE on a laptop screen as Erik's hand fills the STREAMING VIDEO WINDOW, turning it *black* for a moment...

...then the video shows Erik's face, CLOSE on his eyes, as he inspects the *miniature camera made to look like a button*.

Vera sits at the Zain's kitchen table staring at the laptop. *Trying not to cry*. Ibrahim and Yazel stand behind her.

The video goes black, this time for good. Erik has destroyed the camera. Yazel shakes her head with disgust. In Arabic:

YAZEL  
**They are truly monsters.**

VERA  
I'd like to email my husband.

INT. ASHI'S SUITE - EMIRATES PALACE - ABU DHABI - MORNING

Robert asleep on the couch, clothed. MORNING LIGHT wakes him. He checks the open email on Ashi's laptop. Sits up. *Riveted*.

CUT TO:

Robert has a video chat window open. He holds his breath through DIAL TONES. *Four, five, six*. Finally, Vera's face appears. *Husband and wife are too overwhelmed to speak*.

SILENCE as they beam at each other. Then sighs and laughter.

VERA  
Abu Dhabi...

ROBERT  
Must have just missed each other.

VERA  
(smile fading)  
Listen: I'm sending you a video.  
Watch it right away and Skype me  
back. I don't have much time.

ROBERT  
Wait! Time until what?

VERA  
I escaped. This morning, from the  
embassy. They could find me any  
minute. They will find me.

ROBERT  
Jesus, Vera....

ASHI (O.C.)  
Robert?

Ashi enters the living room. Robert casts her a glance that  
stops her dead. But it's too late--*Vera heard her voice.*

VERA  
Where are you?

ROBERT  
A hotel room.

VERA  
Whose?

ROBERT  
Ashi's.

Vera looks away, *suffering the unexpected dagger.*

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
I'd be in jail if she hadn't taken  
me in. You said you forgave me.

VERA  
Yes, I did. I didn't say *feel free  
to run back into her fucking arms.*

ROBERT  
It's over. Vera. Look at me. Over.

VERA  
Watch the video.

Robert's chat window goes black. Vera's hung up.

INT. IBRAHIM'S FLAT - LONDON - MORNING (A MINUTE LATER)

Vera paces. Trying to calm her fury. Through the open door to Caleb's room, she hears Yazel and Ibrahim ARGUING. Sabah, looking scared, makes eye contact. Vera beckons her over.

SABAH  
(whispering)  
We're running out of batteries.

Vera kneels, pulls Sabah to her, kisses her head.

CUT TO:

Vera sits at the laptop. Staring at the screen. Waiting. A DIAL TONE starts. She answers the request. Robert appears in the video chat window. He looks rattled to the core.

ROBERT  
Who was he?

VERA  
My interrogator. He died so the world could see this. You need to canvas the Internet. Get it on CNN, BBC, TF1, Al Jazeera, Das Erste--

ROBERT  
What about you?

VERA  
I'm going to Geneva. Show it to the U.N. Assembly before midnight, before the bombs start dropping.

ROBERT  
That's sounds impossible, dangerous, and stupid.

VERA  
You have a better idea?

ROBERT  
Stay safe. Stay alive. Wait for me.

VERA

To stay alive, I have to run. I might as well run to Switzerland. It's an eight hour drive.

ROBERT

When the world isn't falling apart.

VERA

Your wackjob friend in Shoreditch, the engineer, what was his name?

ROBERT

Daniel Cook.

VERA

Send me his cell. They've closed the Chunnel. I'll need his help.

ROBERT

This is fucking crazy.

VERA

Crazier than you flying to the Emirates with a Marine Platoon?

Robert tries to calm his nerves. She has a point...

ROBERT

I'll call him.

INT. ASHI'S SUITE - EMIRATES PALACE - MORNING (SAME TIME)

Robert hangs up. He looks across the table to Ashi, sitting at a second laptop. She's been silent through their Skype. Ashi has also seen the video from Joel's chest-cam.

ASHI

It lasted fifteen seconds before it was taken down.

ROBERT

By Youtube?

ASHI

Or NSA, MI6, Mossad. Without doubt, they are all watching for it.

ROBERT

Send it to the networks.

ASHI

And if TV won't run it?

ROBERT

Vera better get to Geneva.

Robert picks up Ashi's cell. Dials an international number.

ASHI

If she does? How will she get in the door? Her face is everywhere.

DIAL TONES start through the cell at Robert's ear.

ROBERT

What's the flying time to Geneva?

ASHI

Seven hours.

ROBERT

Can you pull anymore favors with the Emir?

ASHI

No. But I do know people in the service industry...

ROBERT

(into cell phone)  
Daniel? It's Robert.

EXT. SHOREDITCH - LONDON - LATE MORNING

Vera walks down an alley, wearing sunglasses, head scarf. Carrying a backpack. She looks back at the road where Yazel sits in her car. The alley is a dead end. No one's there...

VOICE FROM ABOVE

Back door, Love.

She looks up to see DANIEL COOK, 59, a long-haired engineer leaning out of a 3rd story window. He pats the FIRE ESCAPE.

VERA

I'll be right there.

Vera jogs back to Yazel's car, leans in the open window.

VERA (CONT'D)

I'm OK. Yazel: they will come to your flat asking about me.

YAZEL

My family are excellent liars.

The two women smile at each other. Yazel drives off.

INT. HANDICAP RESTROOM - ABU DHABI AIRPORT - LATE MORNING

Robert stands at the mirror in a FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S UNIFORM. Ashi puts the finishing touches on a FAKE BEARD AND MUSTACHE. Her friend, FAAZ, the owner of the uniform, quizzes Robert:

FAAZ  
Champagne?

ROBERT  
Bottom right. Under the PA.

FAAZ ASHI  
Bottom *left*. Hold still.

FAAZ  
(in Arabic)  
**He has to go, Ashi. He must be  
there before the diplomats board.**

Ashi presses on a piece of detached beard.

FAAZ (CONT'D)  
**NOW, ASHI!**

She kisses Faaz on the cheek, pushes Robert out the door.

INT. ABU DHABI AIRPORT - LATE MORNING (A MOMENT LATER)

Robert pulls a roller bag through the PRIVATE AIRCRAFT TERMINAL. Ashi walks beside him, checking her cell:

ASHI  
CNN rejected it. BBC too.

ROBERT  
Fuck. Get your boss to call them.  
He must know all the media moguls.

ASHI  
So do the intelligence agencies.

Ashi stops 20 yards from the doors leading out to the tarmac.

ASHI (CONT'D)  
I have another plan. A longshot.

ROBERT  
What?

ASHI  
If I can manage it, you will know.

Ashi embraces him quickly.

ASHI (CONT'D)  
Remember: *Navid Reyhani*. Bald,  
short, thick eyebrows.

Robert nods. She watches him flash Faaz's badge at a GUARD,  
head through doors toward a GULFSTREAM V JET on the tarmac.

ASHI (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
God be with you.

EXT./INT. DANIEL'S CAR - COUNTY KENT - SOUTH OF ENGLAND - DAY

A MINI COOPER winds through country lanes at *breakneck speed*.  
Daniel drives. Vera sits petrified in the passenger's seat.  
Daniel steers calmly around a FLOCK OF SHEEP at 80 MPH.

DANIEL  
Part of me wants it all to end.  
Faster, better, sleeker. *Fuck off*.

Daniel swings down a MUD TRACK--*slipping behind GUARDED  
BARRIERS that block off the CHUNNEL ENTRANCE*. The mini  
hurtles downhill. Their heads THUMP the ceiling.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Let us go back to raising sheep!

VERA  
Sure!

The mini THUDS onto an access road. Vera breathes in relief.

DANIEL  
Funny thing for an engineer to say.  
Could be retirement calling, hey?

Daniel parks at the SERVICE TUNNEL DOOR set between the two  
train tunnels. He hops out, opens a panel by the door,  
punches keypad numbers. The door RISES. He waves at Vera.

She shifts into the driver's seat, steers the mini into...

INT. CHUNNEL SERVICE TUNNEL - ENGLISH SIDE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

...darkness. She turns the headlights on. Daniel closes the  
tunnel door, gets in beside her. Vera puts the mini in drive.

She glances at Daniel as he pulls a duffel bag to his lap from the backseat--*stocked with gas containers for the trip*. He takes out WIRES, DETONATORS, and LOOSE BAGS OF ORANGE GEL.

DANIEL

Trouble with the Chunnel, is that one side is French. Never gave us access to *their* end. Silly Frogs.

Vera wipes her brow. She's in a small tube 250 feet under the English Channel with a wild-eyed man handling explosives...

VERA

Good of you to do this, Daniel.

DANIEL

Of course, Love! I may want the end of civilization as we know it, but I don't want war.

INT. GULFSTREAM V - OVER THE PERSIAN GULF - DAY

Robert lifts a TRAY OF DRINKS, turns, and walks gingerly into the cabin of the *luxury jet*. Concentrating hard not to spill.

A DELEGATION OF 9 DIPLOMATS from the United Arab Emirates talk loudly over each other in Arabic. Robert passes out drinks. Nearly succeeds. Then he sees a NEW YORK TIMES.

On the front page is the PHOTO OF HE AND VERA AT THE IMAM MOSQUE--*copied from the framed photo at their Chicago home*.

The headline reads: *The All-American Couple Behind Iran's Underground Nuke Network*. Robert looks sick. He forgets he's carrying a tray...

...the *last drink* slides into the lap of a FLESHY DIPLOMAT. The diplomat stands, enraged. CURSING in Arabic, he shoves Robert hard. Robert TOPPLES over an empty seat.

An OLDER DIPLOMAT calms the belligerent man, helps Robert up.

OLDER DIPLOMAT

You must excuse my colleague. We are all a little on the edge.

ROBERT

It was my fault.

Robert heads back to the front of the plane.

OLDER DIPLOMAT (O.C.)  
I have not seen many flight  
attendants with facial hair.

Robert freezes. Turns half-way around.

ROBERT  
It's fashionable in America now.

The diplomat studies his profile. Seems to buy the line.

OLDER DIPLOMAT  
Like the Boston baseball team.

Robert smiles, nods, and returns to the front, *exhaling...*

INT. CHUNNEL SERVICE TUNNEL - FRENCH SIDE - DAY

**...EXPLOSION.**

Inside the mini, Vera and Daniel shield their eyes from the blast. The smoke clears. DAYLIGHT streams toward them.

DANIEL  
Best push on before the Gendarmes  
arrive.

Vera accelerates toward the bombed-out door.

INT./EXT. DANIEL'S CAR - CALAIS, FRANCE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The mini shoots out of the tunnel. POLICE at the barricade a hundred yards ahead run toward them, SHOUTING. Steep concrete walls on either side of the mini. No way out.

DANIEL  
Use the tracks!

Vera steers onto the train tracks, drives toward the oncoming police. She spots an access road ahead--*will she get there before the police?* She speeds up, the mini bouncing wildly.

The POLICE stop, draw their guns, and OPEN FIRE. *Now Daniel is the terrified passenger.* Vera and Daniel duck their heads.

*Driving blind,* timing it perfectly, Vera swings the wheel hard. The mini rockets up the access road. A few more turns and they're off into the French countryside, the police beat.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
I can see why you're captain.

VERA

She turns quicker than a tanker,  
I'll tell you that.

INT. GULFSTREAM V - OVER BELGRADE, SERBIA - NIGHT

The cabin has quieted. Robert is cleaning up. Something out the window catches his eye. He peers down at: what looks like a HUGE, RED EMBER on the ground 30,000 feet below.

The OLDER DIPLOMAT who helped him notes Robert's confusion.

OLDER DIPLOMAT

What you see is the Cathedral of San Sava in Belgrade. The largest Orthodox Church in the world. It has been burning for two days.

ROBERT

Who would do that?

OLDER DIPLOMAT

Us. Muslims. From Bosnia and Kosovo. Avenging the past. Turn off the tap on black gold, and you unleash not one war but all wars.

EXT./INT. DANIEL'S CAR - OUTSKIRTS OF DIJON, FRANCE - NIGHT

The mini's headlights wind through forested hills.

OLDER DIPLOMAT (V.O.)

The new wars, and the old.

Vera drives. Daniel is asleep next to her. She comes around a bend to see: a GAS STATION *burnt to the ground*.

OLDER DIPLOMAT (V.O.)

Wars between nations...

Vera sees: a CHARRED CORPSE draped over the window sill.

OLDER DIPLOMAT (V.O.)

...and between villages.

A SECOND BODY beyond the station is unburned but *riddled with bullets*. It's a GIRL. It looks like she was trying to run.

OLDER DIPLOMAT (V.O.)

As we connect our world, so too we make it more fragile.

Vera speeds past the *haunting scene* into the forest.

EXT. RUNWAY - GENEVA AIRPORT - GENEVA, SWITZERLAND - NIGHT

SWISS INFANTRYMEN manning TANKS and HOWITZERS watch as the Gulfstream V carrying the UAE delegation and Robert lands.

EXT. GENEVA AIRPORT - NIGHT (A FEW MINUTES LATER)

Robert hurries after the diplomats as they head toward waiting SUVs. He catches up to the Older Diplomat.

ROBERT

Sir, can I ask you a favor? I need to speak to a man with the Iranian delegation. *Navid Reyhani*.

EXT. PARK - NEAR THE PALACE OF NATIONS - GENEVA - NIGHT

Vera stands typing on YAZEL'S LAPTOP, open on the mini's roof. Daniel finishes a phone call.

DANIEL

My mate's on his way to Edgware Road with a generator now.

VERA

(hugging Daniel)  
You're a Saint. Thank you.

She takes the laptop down, shoulders her backpack. Walk off.

DANIEL

You just going to march up there alone?

VERA

(over her shoulder)  
Not alone.

As Vera walks into the park, we see that its packed with THOUSANDS OF ANTI-WAR PROTESTORS. Camped out in the cold.

WIDE on Vera weaving between tents, stopping at a CAMPFIRE, and engaging TWO MEN--pointing at her open laptop.

Beyond, BLACK SUVs shuttle into the Palace of Nations--the U.N.'s International Headquarters. They pass by...

EXT./INT. PALACE OF NATIONS - GENEVA - NIGHT (SAME TIME)

...Robert. Waiting in the *no man's land* between PROTESTORS and the HEAVILY GUARDED GATES.

Walking the 50 yards from the Palace to the gates, Robert spots a *small, bald man with thick eyebrows*.

Robert comes to the LINE OF GUARDS, calls to him.

ROBERT  
MR. REYHANI!

NAVID REYHANI, 54, shows his BADGE. Points to Robert.

REYHANI  
He is with me.

The guards are not letting Robert through.

REYHANI (CONT'D)  
*And I am in a hurry!*

A SENIOR GUARD nods to another guard, who pats Robert down, waves him through. Robert follows Reyhani toward the Palace.

REYHANI (CONT'D)  
An inauspicious time, Mr....

ROBERT  
Sam. My apologies.

REYHANI  
*Urgent news from Ashi. Does this mean my niece has stopped seducing foreign men and found a husband?*

ROBERT  
I believe she is still unmarried.

SCREAMING and CHANTING behind them. Both men turn to see a WAVE OF PROTESTORS throwing themselves at the guards. TEAR GAS is fired. BATONS come out. *Heads crack, blood flows*.

Over the fray, a HAND holds up an OPEN LAPTOP.

REYHANI  
The way things are going, I have half a mind to join them.

As Reyhani turns toward the Palace, Robert catches a glimpse of the woman holding up the laptop--Vera.

*He watches as she's BEATEN and ARRESTED 30 yards away from him. It takes all his powers of restraint not to run to her.*

When Robert catches up to Reyhani, he's been joined by another IRANIAN DIPLOMAT. They talk in low, intense tones.

The three men enter a LOBBY full of DIPLOMATS mingling between sessions. Reyhani, preoccupied, turns to Robert.

REYHANI (CONT'D)

Whatever news you have must wait until after the next session.

ROBERT

I'm sorry, Sir, it can't wait.

But Reyhani is already hurrying into the MAIN CHAMBER. When he tries to follow, Robert is stopped by U.N. SECURITY.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Mr. Reyhani! MR. REYHANI!

Robert watches his only connection slip away. He backs off from the guards, at a loss. Only one avenue left to him...

Peeling off the fake beard, he finds a CATERING TABLE covered in wine and food. He clamors onto the table, bottles and glasses CRASHING all around him, and SHOUTS across the lobby:

ROBERT (CONT'D)

My name is Robert Aiken. I am not a terrorist.

Heads turn. Conversations stop. GUARDS race toward him.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

My wife is not a terrorist. We have been wrongly accused. And I have video evidence to prove--

TWO SECURITY GUARDS TACKLE Robert. With MORE GUARDS they drag him outside. Robert thrashes, gets a few more words out:

ROBERT (CONT'D)

TO PROVE YOU ARE BEING LIED--

The doors close, cutting him off. DIPLOMATS from around the world watch through the glass walls as he's beaten, cuffed.

ROBERT'S POV of the diplomats, their faces receding as he's dragged away. *They look almost as helpless as he does.*

INT. ARMORED SUV - PALACE OF NATIONS GROUNDS - NIGHT

Robert sits cuffed in the back of the parked SUV, his face bloody, his head hanging. *This is the end of the road.*

The door opens. An AGENT from the *Swiss Federal Intelligence Service (FIS)* gets in, pats the DRIVER's shoulder. The SUV takes off, exiting the palace grounds through a back gate.

Robert looks out at CHILDREN PLAYING SOCCER in the snow.

Turning back, he sees the agent staring at his cell phone with an *expression of intense surprise*. Robert can't see the video playing on the cell, but he can just hear the dialogue:

FOREIGN SECRETARY (V.O.)  
Joel Morgan Sykes. Age thirty-four.

INT. MAIN CHAMBER - PALACE OF NATIONS - GENEVA - NIGHT

Every seat is full--TWO THOUSAND DIPLOMATS in all.

On stage, facing them, sit a DOZEN MAJOR PLAYERS. Including: *Defense Secretary Franks and the British Foreign Minister.*

The GERMAN VICE CHANCELLOR has the floor. He drones on while diplomats listen to the translation through HEADPHONES.

CLOSE on the BUZZING jacket of a KENYAN DIPLOMAT in back. He takes out his cell, frowns. He pulls his headphones from the consul, plugs them into his cell. *His eyes grow wide.*

INT. FIS BUILDING - GENEVA - NIGHT

TWO GUARDS walk Robert into a HALL LINED WITH HOLDING CELLS. It's freezing. Robert sees a FIGURE huddled under a blanket.

ROBERT  
Vera!

Vera leaps up, runs to the bars. Robert's already past her.

VERA  
Robert?!

Robert breaks free, runs back. For an INSTANT, husband and wife lock fingers through the bars of Vera's cell.

ROBERT  
Are you OK?! I saw you at the gates. I made it inside but I couldn't get my contact to--

A guard plants a BATON in Robert's gut, knocking the wind out of him. They drag him away. Vera explodes in French:

VERA

**You motherfuckers hurt him and I  
will rip out your fucking throats!**

Robert is installed in a cell 10 yards from Vera. Both face the same direction. *They can hear, but not see each other.*

ROBERT

Ashi's sending the video out by text!

VERA

How did you get to Geneva?

ROBERT

Handing out peanuts.

VERA

Peanuts?

INT. MAIN CHAMBER - PALACE OF NATIONS - GENEVA - NIGHT

The older diplomat from the UAE stares at a cell phone. On the cell: *Joel's chest-cam POV of Secretary Franks.*

JOEL

(through his headphones)  
I see. You need to blame Iran for the camel's back so you can strike anyway. Is that it?

DOZENS OF DIPLOMATS in the chamber are watching cell phones.

FRANKS

...This is our last chance. Or the whole Middle East will burn.

CLOSE on the older diplomat looking up in astonishment at Secretary Franks and the British Foreign Minister on stage.

INT. HOLDING CELLS - FIS BUILDING - GENEVA - NIGHT

Robert and Vera sit by the bars of their respective cells.

VERA

I was thinking we should renovate that downstairs bedroom. Make it more comfortable.

ROBERT  
For your mother?

VERA  
For a baby.

ROBERT  
I've thought about this a lot.

VERA  
So have I.

ROBERT  
I don't want anyone else. I want  
you. With or without kids.

VERA  
I want to have kids.

ROBERT  
I'm saying: you don't have to do it  
for me anymore. I don't care.

VERA  
I'm serious, Robert. I want to.

Robert hears the resolve in her voice. Starts to believe her.

VERA (CONT'D)  
I'm done being... afraid of losing  
control, losing my career. I guess  
it's good for perspective.

ROBERT  
What is?

VERA  
Being locked up. Tortured.

ROBERT  
Jesus... What did they do to you?

VERA  
Nothing you don't see on an average  
night in Russian port.

ROBERT  
Vera...

VERA  
I'm sorry. I'm OK. I promise.

ROBERT  
They'll fucking pay for it.

VERA

One of them already has...

Vera tears up, thinking of Joel--betraying ties that might make Robert jealous... If he could see her face.

ROBERT

I will never leave you.

VERA

I know.

INT. MAIN CHAMBER - PALACE OF NATIONS - GENEVA - NIGHT

A BUILDING HUM OF WHISPERS across the chamber as more and more diplomats are shown the video. Noting the disturbance:

GERMAN VICE CHANCELLOR

PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES.  
WE CANNOT AFFORD DISTRACTIONS...

The Vice Chancellor trails off as he sees the entire assembly go DEAD QUIET. All staring at the LARGE SCREEN behind him.

ON SCREEN: *Joel's chest-cam POV of Erik leading the two statesmen into the embassy room and seating them.*

Secretary Franks and the British Foreign Minister stare up at the footage. They make eye contact with each other.

In a CONTROL ROOM overlooking the chamber, Reyhani and TWO TALL, WELL-BUILT DELEGATES from Lebanon stand behind a TECHIE. Reyhani's cell is plugged into the techie's laptop.

INT. HOLDING CELLS - FIS BUILDING - GENEVA - NIGHT

Robert and Vera sit against their cell doors. Robert looks like he's thinking hard: *Vera's been walking him through the sequence of events that led to the Samson spill.*

ROBERT

Why couldn't Ibrahim leave?

VERA

His son, Caleb. He's in a coma.  
That's the whole reason Rafiq ended  
up on the Samson.

ROBERT

And Rafiq wasn't a sailor...

VERA

He was, but never on a supertanker. It's another world. And you have to carve a very precise turn through the straits. Then the fog, and the fire on board: it all makes sense.

ROBERT

I'm glad something makes sense to one of us...

Robert BANGS on the bars of his cell in frustration.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Goddammit! This is intolerable!

VERA

My trick was making up ice cream flavors. It's a little cold for ice cream. We could do pizza toppings.

ROBERT

You're going to be a wonderful mother.

Suddenly, Vera's shoulder moves against the door. *Her electronic cell door is OPENING.*

VERA

Robert...

ROBERT

Mine too.

They stand. Breathless. Giddy. The doors SLIDE across the cement. They walk through. *And face each other.*

INT. IBRAHIM'S FLAT - EDGWARE ROAD - LONDON - NIGHT

BBC ANCHOR

...moments ago--at two hours, thirty-five minutes to midnight, GMT--the Whitehouse announced...

Ibrahim and Yazel stand before the TV. *Riveted.*

BBC ANCHOR (CONT'D)

...it would *not* launch air strikes against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

They tear up with relief, joy. Ibrahim's mother enters. Carrying PLATES OF FOOD. She begins laying the table.

BBC ANCHOR (CONT'D)  
 Though Iran's Navy started to  
 de-activate their sea mines  
 some hours ago...

MOTHER  
**What did he say, Ibrahim?**

BBC ANCHOR  
 ...there had been signals the  
 Whitehouse was prepared to  
 strike whether or not the  
 Straits remained closed.

IBRAHIM  
**He said there will be no war,  
 Mother.**

MOTHER  
**Good. Then we can eat without the  
 television on.**

BBC ANCHOR  
 It's unclear if the video received  
 by millions of Comtel users had  
 some bearing on this decision. The  
 video appears to depict...(cont.)

In the next room, Sabah sits alone by Caleb's bed, drawing a  
 sketch of his profile. Beside the bed, a GENERATOR (installed  
 by Daniel's friend) hums along, *keeping Caleb alive.*

Sabah's hand STOPS on the page. The sketchbook FALLS from her  
 lap. She leans over the bed: *Caleb's eyes are open.*

SABAH  
 Ibrahim! Yazel!

Sabah strokes Caleb's head, speaks to him softly in Arabic:

SABAH (CONT'D)  
**My love. You're alive. Do you  
 remember what happened?**

CLOSE on Caleb's eyes. Remembering...

EXT. PARK - EDGWARE ROAD - LONDON - DAY (*SIX WEEKS EARLIER*)

A SOCCER BALL is placed with care on a tuft of grass.

Caleb backs away slowly. COUNTING his steps in Arabic.

The GOALIE readies himself. Squatting low. Digging in.

Caleb breathes, tries to calm his nerves. Both TEAMS OF BOYS  
 are huddled behind him. Everything riding on this *penalty  
 kick.* Everything STILL.

Caleb's feet start pumping. He rushes the ball. His laces  
 CONNECT powerfully with it. *Too powerfully.*

Caleb watches in horror as the ball SOARS HIGH over the cross-bar, over the park fence, RICOCHETS off a tree, BOUNCES across the street, and disappears down an alley.

CHEERS, HIGH-FIVES on the opposing team. Caleb's face burns with shame. A TALL BOY on his team pushes him. In Arabic:

TALL BOY  
**You lose, you go get it, Zain.**

With his team staring him down, Caleb scrambles over the park fence and jogs across the street into...

...the ALLEY--stone steps curving down to the right. Caleb sprints down the steps three at a time, hurtling out onto...

...a BUSY ROAD with a *BLACK CAB* headed straight for him. Caleb LEAPS back, the cab narrowly missing him.

Across the road, lodged under a parked car, he spots the soccer ball. He waits for a break in traffic, jogs across, and gets on his knees to crawl under for the ball.

As he collects it, his cell BUZZES. One arm around the ball, he checks his texts. SMILES. *His self-loathing lifts.*

CLOSE on his cell as he thumbs through PHOTOS OF SABAH in the mirror, posing for him with bare shoulders and coquettish looks--*racy for these two young Muslims.*

He steps off the curb without realizing it. Absorbed in the photos. Only when he hears a LOUD SCREECH does he look up. By then there is no escaping the **TRUCK BEARING DOWN ON HIM.**

CUT TO:

BLACK.

SUPER: **THE CASCADE**

THE END.