

TRAINED BY TWO SUPERPOWERS
(Spy Action Thriller)

Written by
Shafiq Ahmad Setak
WGA Registration #: 2300348

shafiqsetak@gmail.com
+1 (647) 937-5231

FADE IN:

INT. COMPETITION HALL - DAY

SUPER: INTER-HIGH SCHOOL BOXING COMPETITION, MAZAR CITY,
AFGHANISTAN - DECEMBER 1979

A battered HALL—more school gym than arena. A sagging
boxing ring. Students, soldiers, locals crowd the
bleachers, shouting, placing bets.

IN THE RING -

REZAHİ (19), granite-faced brute.

HAROON (18), lean, sharp-eyed, a predator's grin teasing
his lips.

DING! ROUND ONE.

Rezahi storms forward with punishing hooks. Haroon
dances, slipping each blow, silk sliding off steel.

CROWD

(mixed)

Finish him, Rezahi! / Haroon's playing
with him!

DING! End of round.

Rezahi snarls at his corner, shoving away help.

Across the ring, Haroon's COACH (35) presses a towel to
his fighter's brow.

COACH

He's strong, not smart. Stick to the plan.

Haroon nods, whispers a prayer, palms his face.

DING! ROUND TWO.

Rezahi BULL-RUSHES—dirty HEADBUTT splits Haroon's lip.
The REF shoves them apart.

REFEREE

Play clean—or you're out!

Haroon wipes blood, grins coldly.

HAROON

That all you got?

He UNLEASHES—jab, jab, uppercut—then a CRUSHING RIGHT HOOK.

Rezahi drops. THUD. Count out.

ANNOUNCER

Winner—Haroon, for Bakhtar High School!

The CROWD erupts. The REF raises Haroon's hand. His Coach beams.

COACH

Perfect. Just like we drilled.

A beat—Coach's smile falters.

COACH (CONT'D)

Your father didn't come?

Haroon's grin dims.

HAROON

He thinks boxing's for thugs.

Coach studies him, hesitates.

COACH

(lowered voice)

Ground's about to shake, Haroon. Don't let it bury you here.

A distant BOOM rumbles. Lights flicker. Haroon looks up, uneasy.

EXT. MAZAR CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Haroon steps out of the hall, sweat cooling.

The cheers fade behind him. He squints at a MILITARY TRUCK roaring past—the headlights slice through the night.

A few classmates cheer his name, but he waves them off—lost in thought.

CUT TO:

EXT. PONTOON BRIDGE - DAY

Fog. Frost. Snow. A FLOATING BRIDGE groans under the weight of Soviet TANKS, ARMORED CARRIERS, and TRUCKS—stamped with RED ARMY insignia.

SUPER: THREE DAYS LATER – THE SOVIET INVASION BEGINS –
FORCES CROSS THE AMU RIVER

MI-24 HIND GUNSHIPS thunder past, rotors shrieking,
shadows sweeping across the frozen terrain.

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE – WASHINGTON, D.C. – NIGHT

A full moon bleeds through the clouds. The iconic facade
stands in ghostly silence. The American flag snaps in a
bitter December wind.

INT. PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Moonlight slices through half-drawn curtains. Clock:
11:50 PM.

PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER, in robe and slippers, checks on
ROSALYNN, sleeping peacefully.

RING! The RED PHONE pulses. Rosalynn stirs.

Carter lifts the receiver.

FEMALE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Mr. President, Dr. Brzezinski on Secure
Line Bravo.

INTERCUT – PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM / BRZEZINSKI'S STUDY

Smoke curls from a dying cigarette. Maps of Central
Asia blanket Brzezinski's desk.

BRZEZINSKI

(urgent)

It's happening, Mr. President. The Soviets
have crossed into Afghanistan.

Carter's jaw clenches. A glance at his wife—still asleep.
A knowing, grim smile.

CARTER

(measured)

Maybe it's time we gave them their Vietnam.

BRZEZINSKI

I'll wake the Pentagon and Langley.

Carter turns to the window, the dark swallowing his
reflection.

CARTER

Make it happen.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALANG HIGHWAY - HINDU KUSH MOUNTAINS - DAY

SUPER: SALANG PASS - CONNECTING NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN
AFGHANISTAN - ONE DAY LATER

A Soviet convoy snakes up the icy mountain road - tanks,
troop trucks, and armored personnel carriers, engines
roaring through the snow-draped peaks.

ON A RIDGE ABOVE-

MUJAHIDEEN FIGHTERS-wind-chapped and resolute-crouch in
the rocks, weapons aimed.

A BEARDED MUJAHID (30s) shoulders an RPG, breath misting
in the cold.

MUJAHID

(pulling trigger)

Allahu Akbar!

THWUMP-BOOM!

A T-62 ERUPTS in flames. Shrapnel showers the road.
Chaos.

The ridge IGNITES with gunfire - AK-47s bark, and another
RPG LAUNCHES-

KRA-KOOM!

A troop carrier EXPLODES.

ON THE ROAD-

Soviet soldiers scatter for cover. A T-64 turret
swivels-FIRES-

Ak-BOOM!

The ridge SHREDS under impact. ROCK and DIRT RAIN down.

MUJAHID

(in Dari, subtitled)

Fall back!

The fighters DISAPPEAR into the crags-

BOOM! A final SHELL SCREAMS PAST—

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MARMOL VALLEY - DUSK

A blood-orange sun bleeds over the jagged cliffs.

Tiny lanterns glow like embers in cave dwellings. Bearded MUJAHIDEEN glide like phantoms through the mist.

SUPER: MARMOL VALLEY, BALKH PROVINCE - TWO MONTHS LATER

A narrow trail leads to a cave.

ABDUL WAHAB (24), rifle slung, stands guard.

HAJI AMAN (35) approaches, leading a VEILED FIGURE.

ABDUL WAHAB

Why is he hiding his face?

HAJI AMAN

(low)

City fighter. Orders straight from Aamir Sahib Zabiullah.

Wahab shrugs, steps aside.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

A single lantern throws jagged shadows.

COMMANDER ZABIULLAH (40s) waits, flanked by DEPUTY KHALIL KHAN (30s), adjusting his turban.

Footsteps. Wahab enters.

ABDUL WAHAB

(urgent)

Salaam, Amir Sahib. Haji Aman brings a shadow.

ZABIULLAH

Bring him. Haji Aman waits outside.

A beat. Wahab exits.

The SHROUDED FIGURE steps into the flickering light—drops his scarf.

It's HAROON. His eyes burn with focused fury.

HAROON
As-Salaamu Alaikum.

ZABIULLAH & KHALIL
Wa Alaikum As-Salam.

Gripping handshakes. No small talk.

ZABIULLAH
The city?

HAROON
Two KhAD agents dead.
(leaning in, low)
Tomorrow—Chitgari Street. A puppet
government patrol... We hit them hard.
Leave nothing breathing.

Zabiullah studies him, then—

ZABIULLAH
After tomorrow—you vanish. No more guns.

Haroon doesn't flinch. Khalil stiffens.

ZABIULLAH (CONT'D)
Join the Party youth. Win their trust.
Earn their scholarship to Moscow.
(beat)
When they pull you into security...
(leans in)
—root out our cancer.

A heavy silence.

HAROON
Understood.

ZABIULLAH
(soft, final)
Go. Be a ghost.

Haroon stands. The scarf rises again, shrouding his
face—only his burning eyes visible.

HAROON
Goodbye, brothers.

He melts into the night.

EXT. MAZAR OUTSKIRTS - PREDAWN

Frosted fields. Haroon crouches with a band of
MUJAHIDEEN, planting a mine beneath a bridge.

His movements precise, methodical.

A Soviet BTR approaches, headlights cutting fog.

Haroon holds two wires. His veins strain.

BOOM! The bridge ERUPTS in fire. Soldiers scatter. Shrapnel rains. Haroon doesn't watch—he's already vanishing into shadow.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BOXING CLUB - DAY

A gritty gym. Bare bulbs. Haroon, sweat-soaked, hammers the heavy bag.

CRACK! A vicious right hook. The bag shudders.

TAP. A weak left jab. Useless.

He resets, frustrated. Again.

Right—THUD!

Left—SLAP. Pitiful.

The TRAINER (40s, grizzled) steps in, stopping the bag.

TRAINER

A hammer in the right. A feather in the left.

Haroon glares, breathing hard.

TRAINER (CONT'D)

Kill the weakness. Work the left until it's not a weakness. Or it will get you killed.

Haroon nods, jaw tight. He turns back to the bag.

TAP. TAP. THUMP.

Left. Left. Left. Again. Again. The punches are forced, straining, but they're getting sharper.

TRAINER (CONT'D)

(muttering)

You're fighting more than the bag.

Haroon drives forward, ignoring him, his left arm dead and trembling at his side.

INT. HAROON'S HOME - NIGHT

A modest Afghan house. A single bulb glows in the main room. Haroon's FATHER (50s), stern, carved from tradition, sits at a low table with books open. His MOTHER (late 40s), gentle, sets rice on a cloth nearby.

Haroon steps inside. His father's eyes lift, icy.

FATHER

You're late.

HAROON

I was at the gym.

FATHER

That brute's pastime? For thugs. Not for my son.

(beat)

I have arranged for you. Studies in Saudi Arabia. Theology. A proper path.

Haroon stiffens.

HAROON

I won a scholarship. To Moscow.

The word hangs. His mother freezes. His father's eyes harden to stone.

FATHER

Moscow? You would go to the belly of the beast? Their atheism is a poison. The Mujahideen will brand you a traitor.

HAROON

(quiet, resolute)

I don't have a choice. There are things I can't explain.

The silence is sharp enough to cut. His father points a trembling finger at the door.

FATHER

Then you are no longer my son. Get out.

Haroon swallows, hurt flashing across his face, but he doesn't flinch. His little sister ZAHRA (12) peeks from the hallway, pulling younger brother KAMRAN (6) behind her.

Haroon's Mother moves first. She embraces him, holding him tight, tears brimming in her eyes.

MOTHER

At least sit. Eat before you go.

HAROON

I cannot. The food of this house is no longer mine.

MOTHER

(whispering)

Then may Allah protect you.

He kisses her forehead, holds her hand for a final moment. Then he kneels, gathering his sister and brother close. He kisses their cheeks.

HAROON

(in Dari, subtitled)

Take care of Mother. Help her. Be strong.

He shoulders a small bag. One last glance at his father—a statue of disapproval—then he turns and steps out into the night. His mother watches him go, a hand over her mouth, silently weeping.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Stern portraits of BABRAK KARMAL and BREZHNEV loom above Afghan and Soviet flags.

A handful of YOUNG RECRUITS sit stiffly. Among them — HAROON, eyes steady.

USTOWAR (40s), a Party official, paces with rehearsed authority.

USTOWAR

Comrades... today you begin your service.
The enemies of socialism crawl in the shadows.

(pauses, scans the room)

You will be sharpened into weapons.
Discipline. Loyalty. Obedience.

Haroon raises his hand. His voice — calm, unwavering.

HAROON

I pledge my loyalty. To the revolution.
To the people.

Ustowar studies him — then nods.

USTOWAR

Good. Moscow will teach you the rest.

EXT. RED SQUARE - MOSCOW - DAY

SUPER: THREE DAYS LATER - MOSCOW

Soldiers march across Red Square. Snow drifts past St. Basil's domes.

EXT. COMBINED ARMS ACADEMY - MOSCOW - DAY

A fortress-like building. Haroon, in cadet uniform, jogs with recruits from across the world. His breath steams in the cold, eyes burning with resolve.

MONTAGE - HAROON'S TRAINING

- INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Chalk squeaks across the blackboard: YA IDU... TY IDYOSH...

Instructor snaps: "Haroon!" Haroon fires back, flawless accent:

HAROON

My idyom... Vy idyote... Oni idut.

A beat. Instructor nods, reluctant respect.

- INT. GYM - DAY

Sweat and steel.

Deadlift - 150kg.

Speed bag - blur of fists.

Roundhouse kick - CHAIN SNAPS.

- INT. ARMORY - DAY

Blindfold.

CLICK-CLACK-CLANK.

An AK-47 assembled in 9.8 seconds.

Cadets exchange glances: respect... suspicion.

- EXT. RAINY TRAINING FIELD - DAY

Mud. Barbed wire. Rain lashes down.

A boot kicks Haroon's rifle away.

RIGHT HAND: DRAWS MAKAROV –

BANG! Dummy's chest erupts.

SWITCH LEFT HAND:

BANG! Miss. Silence.

DIMITRY VAVILOV (30s), towering, broad-shouldered, smirks.

DIMITRY
Spetsnaz? With that limp left?
(shakes head)
Weakness doesn't just kill you... it kills
comrades.

Haroon's jaw clenches, left hand trembling on the pistol.
Rain trickles off his lashes – fury burning beneath.

END MONTAGE

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

Cadets sit upright as a RUSSIAN OFFICER stands before them.

SUPER: SIX MONTHS LATER

OFFICER
Today, comrades, we speak of the steel
fist of socialism – our battle tanks.
Soon, you will drive them, fire them,
command them.

The TV flickers: TWO MASSIVE TANKS crawl over mud and rock.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Identify.

Haroon raises his hand.

HAROON
T-62s and T-64s on the right. T-72s on
the left.

The officer narrows his eyes.

OFFICER
How do you know, Number Five?

HAROON
Because they've rolled through my country.

A ripple of chuckles. The officer's expression remains unreadable.

OFFICER

At your government's request, comrade.

CUT TO:

INT. INDOOR SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

Dim. Echoing. Human-shaped targets painted with body armor line the far wall.

BEEP! The targets rise.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Cadets fire in tight formation.

THE INDIAN CADET:

Headshot. Center Mass. Center Mass.

THE CUBAN CADET:

Center Mass. Center Mass. Center Mass.

HAROON FIRES:

Center Mass. Center Mass. Headshot.

Behind him, Dimitry Vavilov watches, arms folded.

DIMITRY

Left hand.

Haroon hesitates, switches grip - awkward.

BEEP. BANG! Miss.

Adjust. BANG! Clip. BANG! Scrape.

DIMITRY (CONT'D)

Again.

Haroon shoots - another miss.

DIMITRY (CONT'D)

(sneering)

Six months. Still useless. Go wash dishes.

FLASHBACK: 18-year-old Haroon in Mazar gym, hammering the bag.

Right hand – THUD!

Left hand – slap.

Coach steadies the bag.

COACH

Your left's a whisper.

Haroon grits his teeth, tries again. A harder WHACK!

BACK TO RANGE – Haroon fires left-handed. Miss, scrape, miss. Dimitry sneers.

DIMITRY

Afghan fool. OUT.

Haroon lowers his weapon. Walks off. Cadet stares follow.

EXT. TANK TRAINING ARENA – DAY

Dust rises. T-62s idle.

Inside one – Haroon at the controls.

Eyes lock on a distant red flag.

HAROON

Fire.

BOOM. The shell vaporizes the flag.

RUSSIAN INSTRUCTOR

Good shot, Number Five.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

Frosted windows. Breath clouds the air. A RUSSIAN OFFICER addresses a hard-bitten group of cadets.

SUPER: NINE MONTHS LATER

RUSSIAN OFFICER

Tomorrow – final evaluations.
Certificates. Glory... or disgrace.

INT. INDOOR SHOOTING RANGE – DAY

Targets sway on motorized tracks. Gunfire echoes.

DIMITRY

Number Eight. Step up.

A Cuban cadet advances.

Draws his Makarov with easy grace.

POP! POP! POP! – Dead-center hits.

Switches grip – POP! POP! – Same deadly precision.

DIMITRY (CONT'D)
(satisfied)
Awesome. Go.

The Cuban cadet holsters and exits.

DIMITRY (CONT'D)
(cold)
Number Five.

Haroon steps forward. Calm. Steady. Raises his weapon.

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! – Three clean hits.

SWITCHES LEFT-HANDED –

CRACK! Miss. CRACK! Miss.

DIMITRY
(barking)
Again!

Haroon fires – miss again.

DIMITRY (CONT'D)
(shouting)
USELESS! Go scrub toilets!
(beat)
You disgrace this academy!

Haroon lowers the pistol.

Turns. Walks off – silent rage. DOOR SLAMS.

INT. GRAND HALL – DAY

Marble. Chandeliers. Cadets in formation.

RUSSIAN OFFICER
Number Eight – Cuba. First place.

Applause.

RUSSIAN OFFICER (CONT'D)
Number Five – Afghanistan. Second.

The applause dies instantly. A heavy, silent pause.

Haroon steps up. Salutes. His face is stone – but his knuckles whiten at his side.

CUT TO:

EXT. KABUL CITY - MORNING

Tree-lined boulevards. Czech-made electric buses glide past battered cars and buzzing motorbikes. Soviet billboards loom – workers raising rifles, slogans in red paint.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Haroon peers out at the city.

HAROON

(whispers)

Kabul... Let's see what's left of you.

EXT. KHAD SECURITY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Concrete. Barbed wire. Brutal, austere.

SUPER: KHAD SECURITY HEADQUARTERS, KABUL – 1988

INT. KHAD OFFICE - DAY

A clock ticks. A typewriter clatters. NASRIN, 24, efficient, types at her desk.

Haroon flips through a dossier.

The door swings open.

GRAN TANDER (50s), Head of Directorate No. 10 – KHAD, enters in a sharply pressed uniform. Broad-shouldered, cold-eyed.

TANDER

Morning, comrades.

Nasrin and Haroon snap to their feet.

HAROON

Morning, sir.

TANDER

Come. Let's stretch our legs – and our minds.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Soviet portraits glare down as they pass.

INT. TANDER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A huge SCALE MODEL OF KABUL dominates a table.

Tander taps a cluster of hills:

TANDER

Paghman. Rebels wear these slopes like a second skin, lobbing BM-12s into Kabul. The President wants it stopped.

HAROON

Army response?

TANDER

They'll soften the ground. You plant new seeds.

He slides a dossier across. Haroon opens it - PHOTOS:

Mud huts. Terraced gardens. Rugged hills.

TANDER (CONT'D)

Mi-8 insertion. Gunship overwatch.

HAROON

Rules of engagement?

Tander taps a word in the file: "UNRESTRICTED."

TANDER

None.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KABUL OUTSKIRTS - PAGHMAN HILLS - DAY

ARTILLERY FIRE hammers the distant mountains, churning SMOKE and DUST.

EXT. SKY - DAY

An MI-8 TRANSPORT, flanked by MI-24 GUNSHIPS, sweeps in.

INT. MI-8 HELICOPTER - DAY

Haroon GRIPS a handhold. The cabin VIBRATES.

HAROON
 (into headset)
 Thirty seconds!

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

The Mi-8 KICKS UP DIRT as it lands. BOOTS HIT EARTH.
 TROOPS DEPLOY.

EXT. MUD HOUSE - DAY

Haroon leads the BREACH TEAM. A KICKED-IN DOOR.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

RIFLE BARRELS cut through the DUST-CHOKED air.

WOMEN FREEZE. A teenage GIRL (late teens) WHIMPERS.

Haroon scans - too quiet.

HAROON
 Where are your men?

An OLD WOMAN, her face lined like the hills, answers
 coldly:

OLD WOMAN
 Go dig where your shells fell. You'll
 find what's left of them.

Haroon signals: MOVE OUT.

EXT. VERANDA - MOMENTS LATER

A SOLDIER POINTS:

SOLDIER
 Backyard...

INT. ROOFLESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Haroon's boot SCRAPES across fresh cement. His eyes
 snap to the house.

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

HAROON
 (shouting)
 Where are the missiles?

OLD WOMAN
 (defiant)
 I don't know what you're talking about.

HAROON
I'm talking about the BM-12 rockets your
people fire blindly into Kabul!

OLD WOMAN
(gritting)
Don't drag clean citizens into your dirty
war.

Haroon GRABS the girl's wrist. She GASPS.

HAROON
Then I'll take her to Kabul. She'll tell
us there.

OLD WOMAN
(breaking)
Leave my daughter alone! Check the barn -
under the straw!

HAROON
(releasing the girl)
Nowhere left to hide.

INT. BARN - DAY

STRAW FLIES. ROCKET TUBES exposed.

SOLDIER
How'd you know?

HAROON
Only a fool seals a roofless ruin with
fresh cement.

SOLDIER
Orders?

HAROON
Take the weapons. Leave them their war.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Haroon sits across from his boss, Mr. Tander, reviewing
a file.

TANDER
Excellent work, Comrade Haroon. The
President is pleased. You're being
promoted to the Special Department for
Protecting Top Officials.

HAROON
Thank you, sir. When do I start?

Tander flips a page, glancing up with a measured gaze.

TANDER

Day after tomorrow. Comrade Najib meets
Dostum at Bagram. You'll oversee security.
(beat, smirking)
Don't blink. Men like him smell weakness.

Haroon nods, determination clear in his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. RAHIM'S GROCERY - DAY

A dimly lit relic of Old Kabul. Shelves crammed with
spices, sacks of rice, and tins of tea.

Haroon sits in a wooden chair. Across from him, UNCLE
RAHIM, an elderly shopkeeper, scribbles in a notebook.

HAROON

Uncle Rahim, tally up my purchases.

UNCLE RAHIM

Of course, my boy. Your total should be
recorded here.

Uncle Rahim hands over the notebook and pen. Haroon
flips to page 5, locates his entry, and writes "190" in
numerals. He discreetly adds a message in Dari, subtitled
in English:

*"ILYAS, a member of the Bazarak Strike Group, is a KHAD
operative. Sarwar Bahi, another spy, will infiltrate
Ustad Ata's group in Shoulgar district, posing as a
defected government soldier."*

HAROON

(presenting the
notebook)

Here you are. It comes to 190. Please
verify.

UNCLE RAHIM

(adjusting his glasses)

Ah, perfect. Thank you.

Haroon hands him Af.200.

HAROON

(exiting the shop)

Keep the change. See you soon.

UNCLE RAHIM

Take care my boy. Stay safe.

EXT. BAGRAM AIR BASE - DAY

SUPER: BAGRAM AIR BASE, NORTH OF KABUL

ANTONOV CARGO PLANES dominate the tarmac. SCORCHED SU-25s idle. MIGs tear the sky.

ARMED SENTRIES patrol. Fingers on triggers. Eyes scanning.

Haroon and PRESIDENTIAL GUARD commandos stand rigid, facing twenty of GENERAL DOSTUM's militiamen. Dostum (30s, East Asian features) stands apart—impeccable, absolute.

A Mi-24 HIND GUNSHIP sweeps low. A Mi-8 transport lands.

FOUR BLACK-CLAD ELITES deploy, securing a perimeter.

PRESIDENT NAJIB (50s, stout) emerges. He strides toward Dostum.

PRESIDENT NAJIB

General. Still alive.

GENERAL DOSTUM

A privilege Mr. President.

A tense beat. Wind whips across the tarmac.

PRESIDENT NAJIB

You win battles. But your men loot. They rape. Are you losing control?

GENERAL DOSTUM

(smiles coldly)

Let me demonstrate obedience.

He turns.

GENERAL DOSTUM (CONT'D)

Laal!

A YOUNG SOLDIER (21) snaps forward.

GENERAL DOSTUM (CONT'D)

Shoot yourself in the leg.

Without hesitation, the soldier JAMS his rifle barrel into his thigh and—

BANG! Blood sprays. He grits, staggering. Two men catch him.

GENERAL DOSTUM (CONT'D)

(dead calm)

Is this not obedience, Mr. President? Is this not control?

Najib is visibly unsettled.

PRESIDENT NAJIB

Control? Or madness?

Dostum's smile is ice.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RAHIM'S GROCERY - EVENING

A flickering bulb. The last customer slips into the night. Haroon steps up, hands in pockets, eyes scanning.

HAROON

(low)

Basmati, Uncle.

Uncle Rahim—with watchful eyes—nods, disappears into the back. Returns with a sack of rice.

UNCLE RAHIM

(sliding it over)

Eat first. Pay later.

A knowing glance. Haroon hefts the sack.

HAROON

Stay breathing.

INT. HAROON'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Haroon buttons his dark blue suit. Adjusts the red tie—a noose of allegiance. He yanks the curtain.

SNOW FALLS. Silent. Relentless. Like the war outside.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Haroon slits the rice sack with a knife.

REVEAL: C4. PENCIL DETONATOR.

He tucks the detonator into his shoulder holster—next to his Makarov. The C4 slides into his boot. A perfect fit.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

TANDER—smug, suited. Leans back in his chair.
Haroon places a form on Tander's desk.

HAROON

Sister's wedding. Mazar. Three days.

TANDER

(mock concern)

No vodka for you, eh?

HE SIGNS.

HAROON

(grins)

Next time.

EXT. OFFICE PARKING LOT - SUNSET

Golden light fades as Tander heads for his BLACK VOLGA.

HAROON

(catching up)

Shar-e-Now? Need a gift.

TANDER

(shrugs)

Hop in.

INT. VOLGA - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

The young driver grips the wheel like it's his lifeline.
Haroon, in the passenger seat, loosens his boot.

HAROON

(muttering)

Damn boots... blisters.

Haroon's hands move with surgical precision:

He molds the C4 between his thighs. Crushes the copper
detonator. Slides the bomb under the seat—seamless,
invisible.

The car hums along. Not a sound gives them away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN KABUL - MOMENTS LATER

The Volga slows.

HAROON

Here's good.

He steps out. DOOR CLICKS SHUT.

TANDER
(smirking)
Don't dance too much.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Haroon walks briskly, hands in his pockets.

BEHIND HIM -

Tander's black Volga turns the corner-

BOOM! A fireball ERUPTS, swallowing the car whole.
Shockwave RATTLES storefronts. Glass RAINS down. Haroon
DOESN'T FLINCH. Just adjusts his collar and-

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

A yellow taxi idles. Engine running. Haroon slides into
backseat.

HAROON
Old Macro-Rayyan.

TAXI DRIVER
(eyeing the smoke)
That was close.

HAROON
(staring ahead)
Breathing's overrated in Kabul.

The taxi MERGES into chaotic traffic.

EXT. MACRO-RAYYAN - DUSK

The taxi stops. Haroon tosses a bill.

HAROON
Buy your kids something sweet.

INT. RAHIM'S GROCERY - NIGHT

Uncle Rahim doesn't smile. Just nods to the door.

UNCLE RAHIM
Taxi's yours. Charikar. Then Panjshir.
(beat)
Your family's across the border.

Haroon exhales—first time all day.

UNCLE RAHIM (CONT'D)
 (tossing him a backpack)
 Safe journey, brother.

HAROON
 (nods)
 Allah bless you.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Haroon walks to the waiting yellow taxi. He opens the back door and slips in.

HAROON
 (settling in)
 Salaam brother. Let's go.

DRIVER
 Walaikum As Salaam. Buckle up.

The car pulls away, merging into the bustling streets of Kabul.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS - DAY

SUPER: PANJSHIR VALLEY - NORTH OF KABUL

Snow dusts jagged peaks. A river snakes through a cradle of rock and silence. The vast valley stretches endlessly.

EXT. HILLTOP RIDGE - SAME TIME

Bright sun. Blue sky. Haroon stands with a group of Mujahideen fighters, wrapped in winter layers. His black boots crunch in the frost as he watches a YOUNG FIGHTER kneel behind an RPG.

Downrange—300 meters—a rusting Soviet tank hulks like a dead beast. The young man FIRES.

WHOOSH— the rocket veers. Misses. The explosion kicks up a cloud of snow and stone.

The GROUP COMMANDER, 45, battle-worn with a dense beard and a faded "First Blood" jacket, steps forward. Calm, but disappointed.

GROUP COMMANDER
 Brother Hamid... two weeks, and you still miss.

He takes the launcher, reloads it, then offers it to Haroon.

GROUP COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Let's see what Moscow taught you.

Haroon steps forward. Kneels. No words. Just breathing. Wind. Range. Angle. He FIRES.

BOOM! A fireball engulfs the tank. The Commander watches him—impressed. Silence.

Then — the Mujahideen ERUPT in wild cheers.

GROUP COMMANDER (CONT'D)
(grinning)
Aamir Sahib Masoud will like you.

HAROON
I'll ask him to send me to Pakistan. My family crossed the border. They've got no one.

A beat. The Commander nods. He gets it.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN - DAY

AERIAL - The city pulses below. Narrow streets choked with rickshaws. Markets swarming with vendors and customers...

SUPER: PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN - THREE MONTHS LATER

EXT. SMALL BACKYARD - NIGHT

A jaundiced fortnight moon fights through smog.

Haroon, shirtless, ribs taut under scars, WHALES into a punching bag—a frayed burlap sack strung from a gnarled tree branch. Each HIT echoes like gunfire.

FLASH CUT — A YOUNGER HAROON at a Moscow shooting range. His LEFT HAND trembles. Bullets STRAY wide.

DIMITRY (V.O.)
Weak hands get comrades killed.

BACK TO PRESENT — Haroon BLINKS. The bag's stitches morph into BULLET HOLES. Gone.

KAMRAN (O.S.)
 (calling from doorway)
 Dinner's ready!

Haroon freezes mid-strike. Sweat drips off his nose.
 The bag swings—revealing a fist-shaped dent.

HAROON
 (grunts, towel snapping
 over shoulder)
 Coming.

He DROPS to the ground—one-armed push-ups on cracked
 concrete. Veins bulge as he snarls through each rep.

HAROON (CONT'D)
 (guttural)
 No weakness.

SPINS UP—

LEFT HOOK. RIGHT CROSS. KIDNEY SHOT.

THE BAG ROCKETS BACK—

SNAP! The branch splinters. The bag TUMBLES like a felled
 body.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A single bulb flickers. SHADOWS TWITCH like specters. A
 groaning ceiling fan turns overhead. The family eats in
 silence around a shared platter of QABELI PALAU.

Father — white-haired, hollow-eyed — hacks into a tissue.
 His gaze drifts to a satellite dish rattling in the window.

Mother — chaadar slipping from her gray-streaked hair —
 picks at her rice, detached. Zahra, late teens, glances
 anxiously between Haroon and Father.

Kamran, now 10, shovels rice, left elbow on the table.
 Haroon watches his father's trembling hands.

HAROON
 (quiet but firm)
 We're seeing a doctor soon — Insha-Allah.

MOTHER
 Good. His cough's worse.

FATHER
 (hoarse, dismissive)
 Dust... pollution. Nothing more.

Haroon grips his father's shoulder – steady, unflinching.

HAROON

Not this time.

INT. CLINIC - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

FLICKERING FLUORESCENT LIGHTS. A CHEST X-RAY glows under the lightbox—a black mass creeping like smoke.

DOCTOR

(late 50s)

Lung damage. Likely cancer.

Haroon's jaw tightens.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Medication first. Then...

(taps the X-ray)

Surgery.

Haroon stares at the prescription paper. Crinkled in his grip.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Time isn't on our side.

HAROON

(softly)

It never is.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

SUPER: JOURNALISM CLASS – AFGHAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM,
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN

Haroon sits among a group of Afghan students, ages 19 to 35, in wooden chairs with attached writing desks. A pristine WHITEBOARD gleams under harsh fluorescent lights.

MR. GORDON (40s), sleeves rolled to the elbows of his crisp Oxford shirt, paces as he writes with a blue dry-erase marker.

ON THE WHITEBOARD:

"TIMELINESS, PROMINENCE, ODDITY."

GORDON

News matters more when it's timely.

(MORE)

GORDON (CONT'D)
Prominence? Politicians, celebrities –
they drive headlines...

A student raises his hand.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Yes, Mr. Omar?

OMAR
When do we get our TOEFL results?

GORDON
(smiling)
Soon. Most of you passed. You'll be heading
to the U.S.

Haroon raises his hand.

HAROON
Sir, you didn't explain "oddity."

GORDON
(smiling)
Oddity is the unexpected. The stranger
the event, the bigger the story.
(beat, grinning)
If Kabul gets snow – normal. If Peshawar
gets 20 centimeters? Front-page news.
(leans in)
Now imagine – Nancy Reagan divorces
Ronald... and runs off with Hekmatyar.

The class bursts into laughter.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Alright, dismissed. See you tomorrow.

Students gather their things. At the door–

OMAR
(booming)
Boxing match at Shahi Bagh in two hours!
Afghan vs. Pakistani! Who's coming?

HAROON
(standing)
I'm in. Boxing's my sport.

JAWID
(from the back)
Count me in too!

EXT. SHAHI BAGH - LATE AFTERNOON

The boxing arena ROARS - a seething mass of Afghan refugees and Pakistani locals.

CHANTING. SHOUTING. BETTING. Feet STOMP the ground in fevered anticipation.

IN THE MAKESHIFT RING:

The YOUNG AFGHAN BOXER squares off against THE BUTCHER OF PESHAWAR - a hulking brute, smirking confidently.

Near the ring, the ANNOUNCER - a wiry man with a battered loudspeaker - circles, barking into the mic.

ANNOUNCER
(over loudspeaker)
This isn't just a fight - it's honor!
It's WAR!

The BELL DINGS.

The Afghan boxer lands a quick jab - the crowd GASPS.

THE BUTCHER LAUGHS - STEPS IN -

CRUSHES the boy with a sledgehammer hook. The Afghan drops like a sack of meat.

REFEREE (O.S.)
Five... six... seven...

The Afghan stirs - groggy - pushes himself up.

REFEREE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Eight...

He stands. Wobbly, but upright.

DING! END OF ROUND ONE.

The boxers stagger to their corners. Trainers rush in. Water bottles. Spit buckets. Ice packs.

ROUND TWO.

The bell clangs.

The Afghan kid charges - throws a flurry of desperate jabs. The Butcher absorbs them, grinning - then answers with a savage body shot.

The kid winces – staggers back, legs rubbery. The Butcher closes in, sneering:

BUTCHER
(whispering)
You're next, refugee.

A brutal uppercut – the boy collapses, twitching.

THE REFEREE SWOOPS IN:

REFEREE
(counting fast)
One, two, three... Knockout!

Pakistani fans ROAR. Men stomp and clap wildly. Victory banners unfurl.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
(in Urdu, subtitled)
Long live Pakistan!

The Butcher throws open his arms to the crowd.

BUTCHER
(crowing)
Any Afghan got the guts to face me?

From the sidelines, Haroon rises beside a terrified Omar.

OMAR
(whispering)
You crazy? He'll kill you!

HAROON
(smiling, calm)
Someone has to stand up.

The Announcer sneers into his loudspeaker:

ANNOUNCER
Another refugee challenger? What nerve!

Haroon strides forward – weaving past slapping hands and cheering Afghan supporters.

Pakistani fans JEER and hurl taunts.

CROWD (V.O.)
(chanting)
The Butcher will break him!

At the ringside, Haroon borrows the downed boxer's gloves. Strips off his shirt and the underwear beneath, leaving only his jeans.

The coach hurriedly laces up his gloves. Haroon climbs into the ring. The Referee checks his mouthguard and stance.

CENTER RING – STAREDOWN.

HAROON VS. THE BUTCHER

ROUND ONE

Haroon absorbs vicious body shots – ribs bruising, body battered – but stays upright. Eyes cold, studying every move.

ROUND TWO

The Butcher attacks.

THE BUTCHER

You'll crawl back to Kabul in a bag!

A straight punch to Haroon's chest. He STAGGERS, COLLAPSES. The crowd ROARS.

On the mat, Haroon flashes back:

FLASHBACK – MAZAR-E-SHARIF – OLD SCHOOL GYM

A younger Haroon, battered. His COACH leans in.

COACH

When the wolf bites... bite deeper.

BACK TO RING

Haroon pushes himself up. Digs deep. UNLEASHES a vicious LEFT HOOK that splits The Butcher's eyebrow.

A gush of blood instantly floods The Butcher's eye. He stumbles back, blinded, disoriented – his focus shattered.

Silence – then a ROAR from the Afghans.

Haroon EXPLODES: JAB. CROSS. UPPERCUT. The Butcher STAGGERS – stunned.

THE AFGHAN CROWD ERUPTS:

CROWD

Allah-u-Akbar!

ROUND THREE

Haroon dances – light on his feet. The Butcher charges, wild.

HAROON COUNTERS: LEFT HOOK – ribs. RIGHT HOOK – temple.

The Butcher's knees BUCKLE. He COLLAPSES.

REFEREE

Eight! Nine! Ten! K.O.!

The referee lifts Haroon's battered hand high.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Knockout!

The defeated Afghan coach embraces Haroon.

COACH

(in Dari, subtitled)

You protected our honor. Come train with me. We'll split the fees.

The Announcer circles, shouting:

ANNOUNCER

Prize money will be shared – fifty thousand rupees each!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

A flickering lantern casts long, trembling shadows. Mother sits on a clean but threadbare sofa, mending Kamran's shirt. Kamran reads quietly, the book almost lost in his lap.

The door CREAKS. Haroon steps in – bloody, bruised, and alive. His chest still heaving.

HAROON

(in Dari, subtitled)

Salam, Mother Jaan. No electricity?

KAMRAN

(looking up)

Power cuts are worse in summer.

Haroon pulls a crumpled wad of prize money from his pocket.

He sets it on the worn table – a silent offering.

HAROON
 (in Dari, subtitled)
For Father's treatment. Keep it safe.

Mother's eyes glisten. She stands, approaches him.

MOTHER
 (softly)
You fought...

HAROON
 (hoarse, almost smiling)
I won.

Mother disappears into the back room. Returns clutching a small wooden jewelry box. Opens it: her last gold pieces – dull but precious.

MOTHER
 (offering the box)
Sell these instead. No more fights.

Haroon's fists clench. The rough bandages crackle.

HAROON
 (voice low)
When I reach America... I'll stop boxing.
 (beat)
Until then – I fight for you.

Mother presses her hand against his battered cheek. A single tear slips free.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. AFGHAN REFUGEES' BOXING CLUB - NIGHT

A crumbling warehouse. Rust and exile. Inside, a basement gym thrums.

PUNCHING BAGS sway. A flickering bulb. A loudspeaker leaks a crackling Afghan folk song.

Haroon leans on the ropes, knuckles taped.

A YOUNG BOXER (20) flails at the heavy bag – wild, ragged.

Haroon steps in, seizes his wrist.

HAROON

You hit like a boy. Pakistanis will eat you alive.

The Young Boxer, mutters:

YOUNG BOXER

I'm trying.

Haroon's reply - a blade.

HAROON

Trying isn't starving. Hurt him first.

He FIRES a brutal right cross. The bag jerks, chain SHRIEKING.

Silence. The Young Boxer stares.

YOUNG BOXER

Teach me.

Haroon studies him - sees his own ghost.

HAROON

Then stop begging. Fight.

He adjusts the boy's stance. Chin down. Shoulders square.

The boy throws again - cleaner, meaner.

A ghost of a smile on Haroon's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HAROON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

Haroon, dressed in a simple but neat suit, hugs his FATHER tight. Then respectfully kisses his hand.

HAROON

Please take your medicine on time. I'll work part-time in America, Insha'Allah. I'll send money.

Father coughs lightly, hiding the strain with a smile.

FATHER

(hoarse, warm)

If things get hard... I'll ask Uncle Anwar to sell the old house.

Haroon nods – fighting the lump rising in his throat.

He hugs his Mother, who clutches him as if to memorize the moment. Hugs Zahra, ruffling her hair. Kneels, embracing Kamran fiercely.

Haroon lifts his suitcase. At the door, Kamran beams proudly, carrying the backpack for him.

MOTHER

Did you call a taxi... or a rickshaw?

HAROON

Yes, Mother. A taxi is taking me to Islamabad's terminal.

(soft)

Once again, Khuda Hafiz, Mother Jaan.

Mother presses her hand to her mouth to stifle a sob. Haroon hesitates at the door, lingering – then steps into the sunlight.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Heat waves shimmer over a battered Toyota Corolla. The DRIVER hops out, popping the trunk. Haroon and Kamran load the backpack and suitcase inside. THE TRUNK SLAMS SHUT –

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PASSENGER PLANE - DAY

The overhead bin opens. Haroon stows his backpack, nerves and excitement flickering across his face. He takes his seat, fastening the belt tightly.

EXT. SKY ABOVE AIRPORT - DAY

A Boeing 747 glides through a blazing blue sky, gleaming in sunlight.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

The aircraft lands smoothly on the runway. Beyond it, a modest glass-and-brick terminal rises beside a flat expanse of prairie and parking lots.

SUPER: LINCOLN MUNICIPAL AIRPORT, OMAHA, NEBRASKA

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

Haroon enters the bustling terminal, backpack slung, suitcase rolling.

CRYSTAL ASHLEY, late 20s, blonde, vibrant, waves brightly.

CRYSTAL
Hey! You must be Haroon. Welcome to Nebraska!

HAROON
Thanks... and you are?

CRYSTAL
Crystal Ashley, International Welcome Team. Here to help get you settled.

HAROON
How did you recognize me?

CRYSTAL
(grinning)
Passport photo. Plus... you've got that "fresh off the plane" vibe.

They laugh—brief, honest.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Crystal leads Haroon to a CAPRICE CLASSIC CHEVY.

INT./EXT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

They drive through the city. Haroon watches the Nebraska skyline.

CRYSTAL
(pointing to low-rise building ahead)
That's your new place.

HAROON
How far from the university?

CRYSTAL
Ten-minute walk to the College of Journalism. I'll pick you up at 9 tomorrow for registration.

HAROON
Actually, I might switch to English Lit with Arabic as a minor.

CRYSTAL
We'll talk to the Dean. But first—settling in.

INT. DORM LOBBY - DAY

The building buzzes with student life. Haroon takes it all in.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Crystal presses "3." The elevator hums.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

They stop at Room 305. She unlocks the door and hands him a retractable key holder.

CRYSTAL

This is home now. I'm in 402—just upstairs.
Need anything, knock.

HAROON

Thanks.

CRYSTAL

See you at 8:30 a.m. sharp.

Haroon nods. She exits. He stands alone in his new space.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - DAY

Sunlight streams in. Haroon sits among students.

At the podium: PROFESSOR DAVID, 50s, sharp, wears a kippah, writes:

"PASSAGE OF TIME. GREED. DEATH."

PROFESSOR DAVID

James Matthew's "The Will" dissects three
human constants. Mr. Haroon—link greed to
disease.

Haroon tenses—

FLASH CUT - INT. FIRING RANGE - DAY

A pistol recoils. DRILL SERGEANT shouts:

DRILL SERGEANT

Useless! Go scrub toilets!

BACK TO:

CLASSROOM - PRESENT

HAROON

The banker's pain isn't physical. It's greed - devouring him like undiagnosed cancer.

(beat)

It grows in silence... spreads unnoticed. By the time it's felt, it's too late. It devours love. Erodes affection. Poisons relationships - even with those closest. Just like cancer eats away at our organs, greed infects the soul... until family, dignity - even society - begins to rot.

(with dry sarcasm)

But hey - today's bankers just turned it into a system. Mortgages. Credit traps. Now they call it "business."

A few students chuckle under their breath.

PROFESSOR DAVID

(grinning)

Exactly. Class dismissed.

INT. UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - DAY

Haroon exits. CRYSTAL appears.

CRYSTAL

Haroon!

HAROON

Didn't know you were in this department.

CRYSTAL

Creative writing with Dr. David.

HAROON

Good choice. His lectures could make tax law dramatic.

They laugh.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - HAROON'S ROUTINE

-LIBRARY NIGHT: Haroon flips through Nietzsche.

-DAWN JOG: Feet pound pavement. Cold breath.

-EXAM HALL: Pencil scratches paper.

-SIDEWALK: Backpack tight.

PRE-LAP: TIRES SCREECH-

WHAM! A spit hood drops. HANDCUFFS SNAP.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The hood yanked off. Haroon squints in fluorescent glare.

TOM (30s) slams a file.

TOM

Mr. Haroon. Let's talk résumé gaps.

HAROON

I'm an English major.

TOM

And a KHAD operative. KGB-trained.

A beat. Haroon's jaw tightens.

HAROON

I unmasked traitors. Killed my superior.
Then fled.

TOM

So why the fake backstory?

HAROON

Would you write that on a college app?

TOM

You've got two choices, Mr. Haroon. Rot
here... or maybe make yourself useful
someday.

(beat)

We'll check in with your friend. Crystal,
Room 402?

Tom heads for the door. Haroon glances down at the
handcuffs. The door opens... Then shuts behind Tom.

CUT TO:

INT. VISITATION ROOM - DAY

SUPER: FIVE DAYS LATER

Crystal and Haroon across the table. Her fingers raw,
restless.

CRYSTAL

They'll drop charges. You just go back.

HAROON

As a spy.

CRYSTAL

And a graduate. Fast-tracked.

HAROON

(sighs)

Hawthorne called prisons "the black flower of civilization."

CRYSTAL

Then bloom somewhere else.

They lock eyes. A nod.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR - DAY

Black LINCOLN speeds down a highway. Haroon inside, rigid.

HAROON

Where exactly—

TOM

Camp Peary. Langley's playground.

EXT. MILITARY AIRSTRIP - DAY

C-130 idles. Fences. Patrols.

TOM exits. Two ARMY OFFICERS approach.

MAJOR DON, tall, stern, eyes Haroon.

MAJOR DON

This the scholar?

TOM

Meet your Dari and Pashto tutor.

MAJOR DON

Here, you're meat.

Haroon meets his gaze.

TOM

(slings duffel)

Six months. Don't embarrass me.

Haroon boards. The hatch SEALS.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

The C-130 lifts off.

AERIAL - CAMP PEARY (THE FARM)

A covert CIA training compound. Obstacle courses.
Gunfire. SUVs.

SUPER: CAMP PEARY - CIA TRAINING FACILITY - 1994

EXT. DROP ZONE - DAY

C-130's rear ramp OPENS.

MAJOR DON

Welcome to Harvard for spies. First lesson
now!

He THROWS a parachute into Haroon's chest.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - DAWN

Haroon powers through pull-ups. Recruits collapse. He
doesn't.

SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

GLOCK BARKS. Right-hand bullseye. Left-hand: miss.

The INSTRUCTOR, 40s, scarred knuckles, adjusts his grip:

INSTRUCTOR

Trigger's not a light switch. Squeeze
like you're strangling a lie.

(beat, watching Haroon)

Left hand's not weak—your mind's just not
trusting it yet. Center your breath. Let
it flow from your spine, not your shoulder.

Haroon adjusts. Fires. Closer. Again. BULLSEYE.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Slide: RUSSIAN TANK.

OFFICER

Identify!

HAROON

T-62. 115mm. Weak point: turret-ring weld.

Slide flips: STINGER MISSILE.

HAROON (CONT'D)

FIM-92. Afghan sky-killer.

OFFICER

We'll teach you to love it. Then break it.

EXT. TRAINING FIELD - HIGH NOON

DRONE in sights. BEEP-BEEP LOCK. Haroon prays.

FIRES. WHOOSH-

Stinger streaks. IMPACT. DRONE EXPLODES.

OFFICER

Textbook intercept.

Haroon lowers launcher. Steady.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

A BUZZING overhead light casts harsh shadows. Haroon sits on a rigid bunk, scribbling on paper with mechanical precision. He signs the letter—his hand slow, deliberate, like a man sealing his fate.

He folds it carefully, places it in an envelope. Hesitates. Then seals it.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Haroon's fingers fly across a sleek laptop keyboard. Laid out on his desk:

- A vintage watch, inner gears exposed—possibly a transmitter.
- Thick-framed glasses with strangely reflective lenses.
- A Sony radio, antenna improbably long.
- A pen clearly built for more than writing.

CUT TO:

INT. FAMILY LIVING ROOM - PESHAWAR - DAY

SUPER: HAROON'S FAMILY HOUSE - PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN

A tired ceiling fan CREAKS above. Zahra, matured beyond her years, sits beside her MOTHER on a worn-out couch. Her hands tremble around a creased letter.

Across the room, Kamran, now (12) hunches over a splintered table, pencil dragging through Math problems.

ZAHRA
(reading softly)
"My honorable parents... dear Zahra and
Kamran..."

Kamran's pencil stops. He looks up—too alert for his age.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)
"Forgive me for going so far from home.
I'm doing well. I've sent another three
thousand dollars—"

A wet COUGH echoes from the hallway. Everyone stiffens.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)
"—for father's treatment..."

Mother grips her rosary tighter. Kamran's gaze drifts to a photo of Haroon at eighteen, grinning in boxing gloves and a jersey.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)
"I'm working toward my Master's and doing
translation work..."

Through the window, a SATELLITE DISH glints under the sun, one among dozens.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)
"...please remember me in your prayers.
Goodbye. Haroon."

The letter slips from Zahra's fingers, falling beside a newspaper with a grim headline: "TALIBAN FORCES GOVERNMENT TROOPS OUT OF KANDAHAR."

SMASH CUT TO:

INT./EXT. BLACK GM SUBURBAN - MOVING - DAY

Tires hum over pavement. Tinted windows dull the outside chaos.

Inside: leather seats, a dashboard glowing faintly.

BACK SEAT -

Haroon and TOM sit with a briefcase between them.

TOM

(sliding an envelope
over)

Eighty-three percent on the psych eval.
Langley's impressed.

HAROON

What's next?

TOM

Today? You're a tourist. Tomorrow, you
fly to Saudi Arabia. Ummul-Qura University.
Officially: a student. Unofficially: a
ghost.

HAROON

(flat)

Understood.

TOM

A couple months in, you "drop out." Say
the jihad's calling. We funnel you to
Quetta, then the mountains.

(leans in)

Your mission: track, photograph, map. If
you spot a Stinger in the wild-

(mimes a switch)

-neutralize it.

EXT. CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL - PARKING LOT - DAY

The Suburban GLIDES to a halt. The hotel's mirrored
glass glares like a sniper's scope.

INT. SUBURBAN - CONTINUOUS

Tom drops the BRIEFCASE into Haroon's lap. It's heavier
than expected.

TOM

Passport. Ticket. Visa. Cash. Laptop.
Email's preloaded.

HAROON

(feeling the weight)

No toys?

TOM
 (smiling faintly)
 Your James Bond gear's waiting in Quetta.

HAROON
 (abruptly)
 How'd you know I was Afghan Intel?

A beat.

TOM
 CIA sees everything. Land, sea, air.
 (grins)
 No more questions. Eyes forward.
 (pats Haroon's cheek)
 Now go be someone else.

Haroon steps out—

MATCH CUT TO:

His foot HITS THE GROUND—BAREFOOT in MAKKAH, on sun-baked stone.

EXT. HOLY MOSQUE - MAKKAH - DAY

GOD'S-EYE VIEW: Thousands circle the KAABA in steady rhythm.

CRANE DOWN TO: Haroon in IHRAM. Eyes closed. Lips moving. Fists clenched.

HAROON
 Ya Allah... Is this still me — or just
 another name stitched to a mission?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ARABIC CLASS - DAY

A CLOCK TICKS loudly in the quiet room.

SUPER: ARABIC LANGUAGE INSTITUTE - UMMUL QURA UNIVERSITY

Haroon sits upright among African and Asian students. His fingers dig into his open book.

INSTRUCTOR (50s), dignified, recites with monk-like reverence:

INSTRUCTOR
 (Arabic, subtitled)
*Ramzal kholod-e-wa Ka'batal Islami,
 Kam fil-wara laki min jalaalen saami.*

SUBTITLE: "Symbol of eternity, O Ka'bah of Islam. How lofty your majesty stands among mankind."

The Instructor's eyes FIX on Haroon.

INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

Brother, the next stanza.

Haroon swallows. Tightens his grip. Then speaks—his voice steady.

HAROON

Yahwil benaa-u-eza taqadama ahdo-u-...

Wa araake khalidatan alal-ayyami.

SUBTITLE: "Structures crumble as their age draws on. Yet I see you eternal through the march of time."

A murmur flows through the class. The Instructor nods, approving.

INSTRUCTOR

The language lives in you.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

A SCREAMING AIRBUS A320 thunders down the runway, kicking up heat waves.

SUPER: QUETTA INT. AIRPORT, PAKISTAN - TWO MONTHS LATER

EXT. TERMINAL - DAY

Haroon emerges, squinting against the sun. His backpack weighs heavy; his suitcase rolls behind him like a reluctant shadow.

A BEARDED MAN (EMRAN, 30s, wiry, too-calm) materializes, snatching the suitcase before Haroon reacts.

EMRAN

(cheerful, low)

Good afternoon, sir. I'm Emran. Your chariot awaits.

Emran strides off. Haroon hesitates—then follows.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Emran heaves the luggage into a dust-coated Toyota Corolla.

HAROON

Have we met before?

EMRAN

(slams trunk shut)

No. But we've both met Tom.

A BEAT. Haroon's jaw tightens. He gets in.

INT./EXT. TAXI - MOVING - DAY

The car lurches into traffic, dodging rickshaws.

HAROON

Where to?

EMRAN

(eyes on mirror)

A guesthouse full of brothers eager to meet the Taliban.

HAROON

Gear?

EMRAN

(taps glove compartment)

Sony radio with built-in tracker. Zetronix camera pens. Two pairs of spy glasses. And discreetly modified Seiko Smartwatch.

HAROON

-And if they ask for a pen?

EMRAN

(grins)

Give 'em the blue ones.

EXT. GUESTHOUSE VILLA - DAY

The taxi skids to a stop at a walled compound. Palm shadows slash across stucco.

INT. COURTYARD - DAY

A dozen YOUNG MEN clad in robes and sportswear, freeze mid-ping-pong. Eyes lock onto Haroon.

HAROON

As-Salamu Alaikum.

THE MEN
 (in unison)
 Walaikum As-Salam.

EMRAN
 (to the men)
 Haroon left Ummul Qura for jihad. He's
 one of us.

KHALID, lean, intensity like a blade, steps forward.

KHALID
 You'll share my room.

Haroon nods. Emran grabs the bag, heading upstairs.

HAROON
 (calls after)
 Sleeping bag. Flashlight. Batteries.
 Medkit.

EMRAN
 (over his shoulder)
 Already packed. They're in the car. Bring
 them in before you settle.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAWN

A CARAVAN OF TOYOTA PICKUPS tears across the Kandahar badlands, raising a wall of dust. Packed in the beds—TALIBAN FIGHTERS, AK-47s catching first light, rocket launchers slung like spears.

INT./EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING - BACK SEAT

Haroon, in a crisp SHALWAR KAMEEZ and BLACK TURBAN. An AK-47 clutched between his knees. Around him—fighters. Silent. Wired.

EXT. CARAVANSARY - DAY

SUPER: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN - 1995

Fighters sprawl across the courtyard—Arabs, Pakistanis, Uzbeks, Uyghurs—a patchwork of war-torn fabrics: Saudi thobs, Waziristani shawls, Chechen combat vests.

Among them—HAROON, cool, composed. His sleek spy glasses scan: scattered rifles, broken crates, hardened faces.

A BLACK LAND CRUISER skids into the square, coughing dust. From the back, a YOUNG TALIB (20s) bounds onto a bullet-scarred VERANDA.

YOUNG TALIB

Brothers! Today, the Lion of Kandahar
graces us – Mullah Abdul Manan Niazi!

A roar erupts – “Allahu Akbar!”

MULLAH NIAZI (50s) strides through, turban tight like a
coil, mustache precise. His BODYGUARD stalks close,
hand brushing the AK’s trigger.

MULLAH NIAZI

The Russians left us their tanks – we’ll
baptize them in the blood of infidels.

(beat)

Train here. Then drive them into Kabul.

A Pakistani fighter fires celebratory rounds into the
sky. Haroon steps forward—unshaken.

HAROON

Salamu Alaikum, Mawlawi Sahib. I offer my
life to the tank division.

His glasses record Niazi’s full frame.

MULLAH NIAZI

(studies him)

Hmm...

(then, pointing)

See Brother Zalmay, over there.

Across the Veranda, ZALMAY (30s) crouches by a crate,
Kandahari cap low over sly eyes, scribbling in a battered
ledger with a chewed-up pen.

Haroon approaches, clicks his pen—hidden camera
activated.

HAROON

(in Pashto, subtitled)

*Brother Zalmay. I’m Haroon. Sign me up
for the tank division.*

ZALMAY

(gruff, sizing him up)

Father’s name?

HAROON

(smiling)

Haroon, son of Karim Khan.

Zalmay scribbles. Haroon subtly angles the pen – a
discreet snap of Zalmay’s face.

Zalmai waves him off.

ZALMAY

Next.

Haroon melts into the throng.

CUT TO:

EXT. AL FAROUQ TRAINING CAMP - DAY

A rugged training fortress clings to the base of arid mountains, veiled in dust and haze.

SUPER: AL-FAROUQ TRAINING CAMP - KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

MONTAGE - TRAINING SEQUENCE:

EXT. RUGGED TERRAIN - DAY

Haroon and RECRUITS sprint through razor-edged rocks, lungs burning—a Drill Instructor's WHISTLE SCREAMS behind them.

EXT. TANK RANGE - DAY

A T-62 WAR MACHINE SCREAMS forward, its 12-ton treads DEVOURING mud in great, ragged chunks.

SUDDEN POPS! — white phosphorous smoke BURSTS beneath the tank as it crushes buried PMN-2 training mines, wooden mock-ups, harmless but loud.

ON THE SIDELINES:

The INSTRUCTOR (60s), doesn't flinch. Ash drips from his forgotten cigarette onto his notebook—where the word "Lion" is scribbled hastily in Pashto.

WITH A HYDRAULIC GROAN, the T-62 lurches to a halt directly in front of him.

CLANG! The hatch flies open.

Haroon, sweat-streaked, emerges from the belly of the beast, steam rising off his back.

The Instructor stubs out his cigarette on the tank's scorched armor. A silent verdict: You'll do.

INT. BOMB-MAKING SHACK - DAY

Haroon's HANDS steady as he splices wires on an IED.

ABU WALID al-MASRI, late 40s, barrel-chested, looms over the workbench.

ABU WALID
 (grunts in broken Pashto,
 subtitled)
Slow is wise. Fast is dead.

EXT. DEMOLITION FIELD - HIGH NOON

Haroon in BLAST SUIT, kneels over a LIVE ORDNANCE, sweat dripping onto the rusted casing—pliers SNIP the red wire—NO EXPLOSION.

A beat. Then CHEERS.

END MONTAGE

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Haroon sits cross-legged among TALIBAN FIGHTERS, a 12-BAND SONY RADIO cradled in his hands. STATIC crackles as he fine-tunes the dial.

HAROON
 (extends antenna)
 BBC Pashto. Let's hear the truth.

NEWSCASTER (V.O., RADIO)
 (in Pashto, subtitled)
*Taliban captured Islam Qala border crossing
 after seizing Herat.*

The room ERUPTS — "ALLAHU AKBAR!" — rifles JABBED at the ceiling. Haroon watches, face unreadable.

EXT. ISLAM QALA, HERAT PROVINCE - DAY

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

A white flag flutters atop the turret of ARGHANDAB 1, its Pashto inscription glaring under the sun.

Haroon, sweat beading under his tanker's helmet, scans the horizon through binoculars. His grip tightens—

The TANK DRIVER bursts from the hatch.

DRIVER
 (panting)
 Haroon—inside! NOW!

HAROON
 (not moving)
 Why? What's happening?

DRIVER
 Mullah Niazi's orders. Stingers to Iran.
 We intercept - now.

Haroon clenches his jaw. Drops in.

INT. ARGHANDAB 1 - CONTINUOUS

The hatch SLAMS. The T-62 ROARS awake. TREADS churn dirt.

SMASH TO:

EXT. WAR-RAVAGED VILLAGE - DAY

A ghost town. MUD HOMES shattered. No smoke. No signs of life.

ARGHANDAB 1 crawls forward. Barrel peeking past debris. Peeks. Retreats. Moves. Peeks again -

BOOM! A ROCKET blasts past - DEBRIS erupts.

Another - THWACK-KABOOM! A T-55 BEHIND explodes in FLAMES.

INT. ARGHANDAB 1 - DAY

Haroon grabs the radio, composed.

HAROON
 Arghandab 3 - draw fire. I flank. Over.

RADIO (V.O.)
 Copy. Over.

The tank JERKS onto rocky ground, climbs -

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Haroon CRESTS the ridge - battlefield sprawled below.

THROUGH GUNSIGHT - a camouflaged T-55 hides in a ruined mud castle.

HAROON
 Fire.

BOOM - DIRECT HIT.

EXT. RUINED CASTLE -

The T-55 EXPLODES. Hazara fighters scatter.

Another shell DESTROYS a Toyota Hilux - gun disintegrates.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

A TALIBAN CONVOY storms the field - tanks, pickups, bikes.

INT. ARGHANDAB 1 - DAY

RADIO (V.O.)

Arghandab 1 - reinforcements inbound.
Advance.

Haroon exhales. Pushes forward.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - MOMENTS LATER

ARGHANDAB 1 leads the charge.

INT. RUINED CASTLE - DAY

SHIITE FIGHTER on an R-104 radio -

SHIITE FIGHTER

(in Farsi, subtitled)

*Rustam! We need air support - consignment
at risk!*

CRACK! A sniper's shot KILLS the call. The fighter GRABS a PKM and CHARGES FORWARD, unleashing a BARRAGE OF BULLETS...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Two Taliban motorcycles EXPLODE - bodies FLUNG.

Dust, bullets, fire. Haroon's tank PLOWS ahead.

IN THE SKY - Two IRANIAN COBRAS dive in - GUNS SCREAM.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - MOMENTS LATER

One ROCKET decimates a Taliban T-62 - FLAMES erupt.

INT. ARGHANDAB 1 - DAY

Haroon TRACKS a Cobra - exposed side door.

HAROON

(locks)

Fire.

BOOM!

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The 115mm SHELL TEARS through the Cobra - MID-AIR EXPLOSION.

EXT. RUINED CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

A RUSSIAN JEEP BURSTS from rubble - ESCAPING.

INT. ARGHANDAB 1 - DAY

Haroon TRACKS the Jeep through the commander's sight.

HAROON

Finish it.

As the LOADING CREW SLAMS a shell into the main gun,-

BOOM! A ROCKET STRIKES nearby - BLINDING FLASH. Dust and smoke engulf the interior. The crew flinches. Screens flicker.

GUNNER

We're blind! That was close!

EXT. ARGHANDAB 1 - MOMENTS LATER

The COBRA SCREAMS overhead - swallowed by dust as it arcs into the sky, banking into a slow, lethal U-turn.

HAROON

MG - NOW!

He POPS THE HATCH, LEAPS OUT -

COAXIAL MG RATTLES - rounds RIP the Jeep's exposed rear. TWO FIGHTERS DROP. The Jeep VEERS - sinks in soft sand.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Cobra turns for one final pass.

BOOM! ARGHANDAB 1 ERUPTS IN FLAMES.

EXT. DUNE RIDGE - DAY

Haroon ROLLS, draws his MAKAROV, SPRINTS to the Jeep.

INT. JEEP - DRIVER'S SEAT -

A YOUNG HAZARA MAN fumbles with the gearshift - panics.

HAROON

(steadily)

Not today.

BANG - single shot.

Haroon SPOTS two crates in the back. He RIPS one open.

INSERT - STINGER MISSILE

Clean. Ready.

THUD-THUD-THUD. Rotor blades churn the air. The Cobra closes in. Haroon crouches behind the Jeep. He SNAPS the coolant into place. Locks. Calm. Steady.

HAROON (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Gotcha.

WHOOSH - the Stinger LAUNCHES.

KABOOM - Cobra EXPLODES.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - LATER

TANKS and TECHNICALS surround Haroon.

HE EYES THE SECOND STINGER. QUICKLY -

COVERS coolant tube with sand. HIDES it beneath the Jeep.

T-55 STOPS. HATCH OPENS -

MA (30s, Uighur) steps out, flanked.

MA

As-Salamu Alaikum, brother. You fought like a lion.

HAROON

You're not Afghan.

MA

Muslim. Uighur.

Beat.

HAROON

Joined our jihad... Ma-Sha-Allah.

MA

How'd you down that Cobra?

HAROON

American weapon. Pakistani training-back during the Jihad against the Russians.

(wipes sweat)

I'm starving.

MA

Eat with us. We should talk... brother.

Haroon glances – a tail fin glints beneath the Jeep.

HAROON

Yeah. We should.

CAMERA HOLDS on the Jeep – STINGER'S SHADOW cast on the sand.

CUT TO:

INT. MUD-BRICK WASHROOM - NIGHT

A SINGLE OIL LAMP flickers, throwing jagged shadows across the cramped space. Just a HOLE in the floor and a RUSTED WATER CAN.

Haroon crouches in the dim light, CLUTCHING his SONY RADIO. His free hand CHECKS THE DOOR LOCK—again. Eyes DARTING.

CLOSE ON SCREEN -

His FINGERS TAP RAPIDLY:

FROM: H-HIKE

"2 stingers neutralized. Intel secured. Family status?"

As he types 'FAMILY', his INDEX FINGER HOVERS over the 'ENCIPHER' ICON. TREMBLING.

A DEEP BREATH—a quiet UFFF escapes him.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - FLASHBACK (8 YEARS EARLIER) - SUNSET

YOUNG Haroon (17) presses his forehead to SUN-WARMED MUDBRICK.

HAROON
 (counting)
 ...eight, nine, ten!

BEFORE HE SPINS—

His sister, Zahra (10) ducks behind the well. Brother, Kamran (6) giggles, KICKING from the fig tree.

HAROON (CONT'D)
 (grinning)
 Allah made trees for fruit... not boys!

Kamran's LAUGHTER echoes—CAREFREE.

A KNOCK ON A DOOR.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Haroon SLAMS his finger on 'ENCIPHER'—GREEN FLASH.
 Then—SENT.

A LOW BUZZ confirms delivery. 'SENT' blinks on-screen.

He COLLAPSES THE ANTENNA, POWERS OFF the radio, and
 SLIPS IT into his jacket's inner pocket—

KNOCK-KNOCK! The DOOR RATTLES.

VOICE (O.S.)
 (in Pashto, subtitled)
Brother! You alive in there?

Haroon STIFFENS — then FORCES A CASUAL TONE.

HAROON
 (in Pashto, subtitled)
Just a bit of diarrhea.

He OPENS THE DOOR, stepping out with a STIFF, NEUTRAL
 EXPRESSION—hand on his stomach.

INT. LARGE ROOM - NIGHT

YELLOW FLAME from an oil lamp licks at the darkness.
 Haroon scoops lamb and rice with right hand fingers.
 Around him, TALIBAN FIGHTERS eat in silence.

A SHADOW falls across the food platter. Chewing stops.
 Zalmai, clad in a black turban, fills the doorway. His
 combat boots caked with dust.

ZALMAY
 (quiet intensity)
 Haroon.

Haroon casually wipes his hands with a tissue from the
 NAPKIN STACK. Takes his time.

HAROON
 (measured)
 Zalmay Khan. You interrupt dinner.

ZALMAY
 (smiles without warmth)
 Allah provides better meals where you're
 going.

EXT. COMPOUND GATE - NIGHT

MOONLIGHT glints off the armored BLACK LAND CRUISER.
 TWO TOYOTA TECHNICALS idle beside it, their DShK MACHINE
 GUNS tracking like restless predators.

Haroon shoulders his backpack, eyes locked on the
 gunners.

ZALMAY
 (hand on Haroon's
 shoulder)
 You ride with brother Abu Sayed.
 (lower)
 Don't speak unless spoken to.

INT. LAND CRUISER - BACK SEAT - NIGHT

Leather CREAKS as Haroon settles in.

HAROON
 As-Salamu Alaikum...

ABU SAYED (40s), scholar's beard, green eyes, polishes
 his glasses.

ABU SAYED
 Wa Alaikum As-Salam, Ghost of Arghandab.

The engine ROARS to life. Outside, the technicals fall
 into formation.

HAROON
 (eyeing the escort)
 Two technicals. I'm either important...
 or you expect trouble.

ABU SAYED

(smiling)

In Afghanistan, brother, those are the same thing.

The lead technical HITS A BUMP—the DShK SWINGS WILD before steadying.

Haroon's hand TWITCHES toward his thigh. Empty. Just reflex.

ABU SAYED (CONT'D)

(noticing)

All that training... does it ever sleep?

CUT TO:

EXT. SPINGHAR MOUNTAINS - DAWN

SUPER: AL-QAEDA BASE - SPINGHAR RANGE, AFGHANISTAN

The small convoy snakes through the rugged mountain terrain — steep slopes, narrow passes, jagged outcrops. First light stains the snow blood-red.

CLOSE ON HAROON'S GLASSES — a subtle CLICK. Hidden camera ACTIVATED.

INT. LAND CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Haroon watches the lead technical's BRAKE LIGHTS FLARE.

HAROON

You still haven't said where—

ABU SAYED

(grinning)

Where boys become martyrs.

EXT. TORA BORA VALLEY - DAY

The Land Cruiser SLIDES into the valley's jagged jaws. Rocky ridges rise like fortress walls.

Vehicles halt at a CRUDE CAVE COMPLEX.

ABU SAYED

(exiting)

Welcome to Tora Bora. The lion's den.

Haroon steps out, adjusting his glasses. Lenses WHIRR INTO FOCUS.

HAROON'S POV:

- A cancer of caves and mud huts clinging to the mountain's base.
- RECRUITS drill with AKs. GUNFIRE ECHOES.
- Beyond them, RUSSIAN TANKS, half-buried, muzzles SKYWARD.

ABU SAYED (CONT'D)
(yelling over noise)
Allahu Akbar!

EXT. PATH TO CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Gunfire fades. Haroon and Abu Sayed approach a CAVE MOUTH - its darkness barely held back by flickering OIL LAMPS.

AT THE ENTRANCE -

ADNAN (30s), wolf-eyed, cleans his rifle with eerie CALM.

ABU SAYED
(forced cheer)
Brother Adnan! The Sheikh in?

ADNAN
(eyes on Haroon)
With Abu Mohammad. Who's this?

Haroon's watch ZOOMS IN-FACIAL RECOGNITION SCANNING.

ABU SAYED
Our tank whisperer.

Adnan steps aside, face UNREADABLE.

INT. CAVE CHAMBER - DAY

OIL LAMPS flicker. Shadows DANCE. Haroon steps into the haze, following Abu Sayed.

HAROON
(respectful)
As-Salamu Alaikum, brothers.

MALE VOICES (O.S.)
Walaikum As-Salam Wa Rahmatullah.

Haroon rubs his eyes. He blinks-then freezes.

Two men emerge from the haze.

AIMAN ZAWAHIRI (50s), turbaned, DAGGER-EYED. ABU MOHAMMAD (30s), intense, robed.

ABU SAYED

Brother Aiman, this is Haroon. Mullah Niazi's highest recommendation.

Zawahiri CIRCLES him.

ZAWAHIRI

Where'd you learn tanks?

HAROON

Commander Zabiullah. Sholgar District. Captured a T-62 and T-55.

ZAWAHIRI

(nods)

Battlefield training.

HAROON

A deserter from the Communist regime refined it. Later, Al Farouq.

ZAWAHIRI

And your Arabic?

HAROON

Qur'anic. Then Makkah.

BEAT. Then—

ZAWAHIRI

(almost smiling)

You answer well. Tomorrow, we begin.

Haroon reaches inside his Jacket, produces a blue pen and Seiko Watch.

HAROON

Small gifts from Makkah. For a mujahid who chose jihad over Sharm el-Sheikh.

ZAWAHIRI

(grinning)

I have my own. Give them to Abu Mohammad.

ABU MOHAMMAD

(taking both, in Arabic)

Shukran, akhi.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAINING AREA - DAY

A desolate valley choked with dust. Jagged cliffs loom like sentinels.

Fifteen AL-QAEDA FIGHTERS in mismatched camo stand at attention before a hulking T-62 tank, its cannon casting a long shadow.

Haroon paces like a Drill Sergeant, his VOICE cutting through the wind.

HAROON

(pointing to the tank)

This is a T-62—not some relic. 115mm smoothbore gun. 12.7mm anti-aircraft machine gun. It doesn't just kill infantry—it erases them.

A beat. The men exchange glances.

HAROON (CONT'D)

(cold)

It takes four men to tame this beast. Commander. Driver. Gunner. Loader.

He scans the group.

HAROON (CONT'D)

(challenging)

Who's not afraid of steel and fire?

ABU MOHAMMAD, ADNAN, and FAHD (early 30s) step forward.

HAROON (CONT'D)

(eyeing Fahd)

Name.

FAHD

Fahd.

HAROON

(nods)

Good. Let's find out if you bleed oil—or fear.

They climb the tank, boots CLANGING against metal.

EXT. T-62 TANK - DAY

CLOSE ON a hatch creaking open, revealing the claustrophobic hell inside.

INT. TANK CABIN - CONTINUOUS

DIM LIGHT slices through periscopes. Haroon tosses helmets to the men.

HAROON
 (patting the
 commander's seat)
 This seat decides who lives. One wrong
 move—
 (mimes explosion)
 —you're cooked meat.

He slaps the Gunner's Primary Sight with a sharp CLANG.

HAROON (CONT'D)
 This is your Eye of God. Gunner's Primary
 Sight—GPS.
 (beat)
 Spots. Ranges. Kills.

FAHD
 (grinning)
 I always thought GPS meant Global
 Positioning System. Infidel language is a
 warzone of acronyms.

HAROON
 (deadpan)
 Gunner's Primary Sight. The last thing
 your enemy sees.

Beat. Then—

HAROON (CONT'D)
 (smirking)
 Let's wake the dragon.

He jams a lever. The engine ROARS to life.

EXT. TRAINING AREA - DAY

The T-62 LURCHES forward, treads grinding stone to dust.

ONLOOKERS STUMBLE BACK as the cannon SWIVELS—locking
 onto a distant boulder.

INSIDE THE TANK:

HAROON
 (barking)
 Gunner! Traverse left!

Adnan wrestles the controls. The turret WHINES.

HAROON (CONT'D)
(into headset)
Fahd! Load HEAT!

Fahd rams a shell into the breech. CLANG.

HAROON (CONT'D)
(eyes glued to scope)
Fire!

BOOM. The tank KICKS BACK. The boulder EXPLODES in a fireball.

The recruits CHEER—some pray, others stare in awe.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AREA IN FRONT OF CAVE - DAY

Haroon kneels by a bucket, scrubbing clothes. His hands—calloused, stained with oil and dirt—wring out a shirt. Water drips between his fingers like time slipping away.

Abu Sayed approaches, shadows stretching long in the late sun. He watches Haroon for a beat too long.

ABU SAYED
(soft)
Back home... men our age are in cafes.
Flirting. Drinking. Living without looking
over their shoulders.

Haroon doesn't pause. Just keeps wringing.

HAROON
(flat)
Allah gave them their test. Ours is
different.

A long silence. Abu Sayed kicks a pebble.

ABU SAYED
(sighs)
Sometimes I wonder what my mother thinks
I'm doing out here.

Haroon finally looks up. His eyes—hard, unreadable.

HAROON
She thinks you're becoming a man.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAINING AREA - DAY

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

FIGHTERS stand ramrod straight, faces hardened by dust and discipline. The T-62 looms behind them like a sleeping monster.

Haroon strides down the line, slapping the tank's cannon with a CLANG.

HAROON

You came here as boys. Now? You can drive, load, command, and kill with this beast.

He stops. Eyes them.

HAROON (CONT'D)

(challenging)

Last chance. Ask.

Adnan steps forward, chin up.

ADNAN

The Russians had T-72s. Why'd they leave us these old dogs?

HAROON

Because old dogs still bite.

(beat)

And they knew we'd turn their trash into our teeth.

A rumble of approval. Haroon nods—almost proud.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

A SINGLE LANTERN flickers. Haroon tunes his Sony radio, static crackling like distant gunfire.

SUDDENLY—

Abu Sayed fills the doorway, backlit by moonlight.

ABU SAYED

(grinning)

Still trying to catch lies from the BBC?

Haroon doesn't smile. Just turns the knob. A Farsi news bulletin drones.

HAROON

Even lies tell you what the enemy fears.

Abu Sayed snorts, picks up the radio. Turns it over in his hands—too carefully.

ABU SAYED

(casual)

Osama wants to meet you. Tomorrow. Lunch.

Haroon freezes for a fraction of a second. Then nods, taking the radio back.

HAROON

(even)

An honor.

Abu Sayed lingers. The lantern light flickers across his face—something unreadable there.

ABU SAYED

(turning to leave)

Sleep well, teacher.

EXT. PATH TO TUNNEL - DAY

The narrow valley walls close in like prison bars. Haroon follows Abu sayed, his eyes tracking every rock, every shadow.

ABU SAYED

(over shoulder, low)

No handshakes. And speak only when spoken to.

Haroon nods. The cave mouth yawns before them—a stone throat waiting to swallow them whole.

INT. CAVE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Distant HUM of a diesel generator. Dripping water on cordite and damp stone. Their footsteps ECHO like faint gunshots.

Haroon's gaze darts—catches a GLINT in the shadows. A VIDEO CAMERA, tracking them. He doesn't react.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Sunlight stabs through the cave's jagged entrance, painting dagger-like shadows on the rough stone.

The air hums with the quiet clink of cutlery and low murmurs in Arabic.

At the center, on a worn patterned tablecloth:

Haroon and Abu Sayed, seated cross-legged -

Facing them: OSAMA BIN LADEN, 50s, calm but electric presence, wears an M-65 Woodland jacket over his robes, a white turban crowning his head.

Leaning against the wall beside him—a RUSSIAN KRINKOV, its orange BAKELITE MAGAZINE glowing in the dim light.

They eat lamb and rice with their hands, communal plates between them. Scattered apples, and bananas.

A SUDDEN SHUFFLE at the entrance. All heads turn.

Abu Walid, sweat glistening on his brow, steps in, adjusting his black jacket.

ABU WALID

(smiling, hands raised)

As-Salamu Alaikum, brothers. Don't let me interrupt.

Osama rises—the others follow like a wave. Embraces Abu Walid warmly.

OSAMA

(Saudi Arabic,
subtitled)

Welcome. You're a little late.

ABU WALID

(in Egyptian dialect)

Car trouble. These mountains eat engines alive.

Osama gestures to Haroon.

OSAMA

Brother Abu Walid Al-Masri—our best IED instructor at Al-Farouq.

Haroon nods, respectful but not submissive.

HAROON

As-Salamu Alaikum, Ustadh. It's been months.

ABU WALID

(studying Haroon)

Ah. The one who could disable a mine blindfolded.

(beat, to Osama)

His hands never shake.

OSAMA
That's why he's here. We need men like
him in Panjshir.

Haroon hesitates. Fingers twitch near his plate.

HAROON
With respect... may I visit my family in
Peshawar first? A week.

Silence. The cave breathes.

Osama strokes his beard, then—

OSAMA
(nodding)
One week. Then the war won't wait.

Haroon closes his eyes, exhales. Recites low, fervent:

HAROON
(subtitled Qur'anic
verse)
*Obey Allah, obey the Prophet, and obey
those in authority among you.*

Osama smiles—but it doesn't reach his eyes.

OSAMA
Go tomorrow.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

MOONLIGHT bleeds through the entrance. Haroon sits alone,
his SONY RADIO in hand.

CLOSE-UP: HIS FINGERS --

Pops the battery compartment. Flicks a HIDDEN SWITCH.

Reassembles it— the screen SPRINGS TO LIFE, revealing a
TOUCH KEYBOARD.

HAROON
(whispers, tapping
the screen)
Ya Allah... open a door.

ON SCREEN - TEXT MESSAGE WINDOW -

FROM: TOMCAT

FAMILY SAFE IN US. COME IF READY.

Haroon's fingers fly across the virtual keys.

FROM: H-HIKE

PESHAWAR VIA TORKHAM BORDER, TOMORROW MORNING.

He taps ENCIPHER, then TRANSMIT.

GREEN LIGHT pulses— SENT.

Haroon quickly dismantles the radio, wipes sweat from his brow.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TOYOTA PICKUP - DAY

A BATTLE-SCARRED TOYOTA HILUX navigates the human river of Torkham's border bazaar. Through its dust-caked windows:

Sacks of spices bleed vibrant reds and yellows. Flies swarm goat carcasses on butcher hooks. Grocery stores overflow with foodstuffs and cold drinks. Foot traffic flows like ants—laborers pushing carts of used appliances, families hauling all they own.

INSIDE THE PICKUP:

Haroon sits rigid in a black turban and dust-caked shalwar kameez, hands resting on his knees. No weapon in sight. His eyes—dark, unreadable—lock onto:

A MONUMENTAL STAR-AND-CRESCENT GATE. Behind it, a sun-bleached sign reads:

TORKHAM BORDER // PAKISTAN 0.5 KM

The Hilux SCREECHES to a halt. Haroon's door GROANS open before the truck settles.

EXT. TORKHAM BORDER GATE - AFGHAN SIDE - DAY

Haroon stands at the iron barrier, backpack slung over one shoulder. A lone figure amid border chaos. Vendors shout. Children cry. Carts clatter. He doesn't move.

Pakistani Frontier Corps soldiers lean on rifles, uniforms darkened with sweat.

SUDDEN MOVEMENT—A hand slices through the crowd. EMRAN, in spotless white shalwar kameez, brandishes a blue passport with theatrical flair.

EMRAN
 (smirk cracking his
 weathered face)
 Come, boy. Your papers are... flexible.

Haroon steps forward—WHACK! A baton cracks across his chest.

POLICEMAN
 (barking in Pashto,
 subtitled)
Where's your stamp?

Emran taps his breast pocket—rupee stacks outlined beneath. The policeman's eyes flick, then the gate unlatches with a CLANK.

Haroon crosses without a glance back.

EXT. PEARL CONTINENTAL HOTEL - DAY

A SHOWROOM-PERFECT WHITE COROLLA, tinted windows, glides up to the Pearl Continental's gated entrance.

Haroon steps onto the immaculate driveway. His cracked PESHAWARI CHAPPALS look blasphemous against the imported Italian marble.

Emran adjusts his gold-framed Ray-Bans, flashing teeth at the shotgun-toting guards.

EMRAN
 (low, to Haroon)
 Welcome to the lion's den. Five stars on
 the outside, spies on the inside.

INT. PEARL CONTINENTAL HOTEL - SUITE - DAY

LOW ANGLE - Two teacups precise shadows across a rug as Haroon and Emran recline on ornate couches. The clink of fine china echoes.

EMRAN
 Moments from now, you'll meet a VIP.

HAROON
 Hope it's not another general in disguise.
 Haven't seen a civilian face in months.

A SUDDEN ELECTRONIC BUZZ. A hidden door in the wood paneling slides open.

MIKE, late 30s, tall, athletic, African-American, ex-Special Forces posture, fills the doorway. No greeting.

MIKE

Boss wants Mr. Haroon inside.

INT. ADJACENT SUITE - CONTINUOUS

REVEAL - A sprawling penthouse suite. Floor-to-ceiling windows overlook the hotel's azure pool, five stories below.

Tom, seated, watches the shimmering blue far below.

The door clicks open behind him. Tom doesn't turn.

Instead, he smooths his lapel, almost like he's rehearsed this moment.

Haroon enters, cautious, eyes scanning - The luxury, the calm - all feel loaded.

Tom rises slowly, still facing the glass.

Beat. Then he turns.

TOM

(warm)

Long time, no see, Mr. Haroon.

Haroon freezes. A flicker of something - disbelief? Then he moves forward, extending a hand.

They shake - firm, formal. No warmth.

HAROON

Sir! What brings you-

TOM

(sharp)

Business, not pleasure. Progress report.

Haroon steps forward, sits. Unclasps his vintage SEIKO, sets it on the table between them - click.

HAROON

That's chapter one.

FROM HIS POCKETS -

Two Zetronix camera pens. An eyeglass case. A second -
slimmer, metal. He places them with care.

HAROON

And this is chapter two. I'm sure you
know how to read them.

Tom doesn't even glance. He pockets the items.

TOM

Well done, Mr. H-Hike.

Beat. Then -

TOM (CONT'D)

Mike will take you to New York. Your
passport and ticket are ready.

HAROON

What about the Sony transistor?
My burst terminal-?

TOM

(already walking away)
Give it to Mike. Safe trip.

Haroon watches him go. Then - a shadow looms. MIKE stands
behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. PASSENGER PLANE - DAY

Haroon - clean-shaven, navy bespoke suit - gazes out
the window, transformed from the rugged Operative we
knew. Beside him, Mike dozes, seat reclined.

A PRETTY STEWARD, 23, crisp uniform, taps his shoulder
gently.

STEWARD

(smiling)
Sir, we're about to land. Please bring
your seat upright. Thank you.

THROUGH THE WINDOW - clouds part to reveal:

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN - SKYLINE - DAY

The TWIN TOWERS rise majestically above the urban sprawl
- silver spires piercing the heavens.

Below, New York stirs – bridges stretch like steel veins, yellow cabs swarm like ants.

EXT. JFK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – DAY (AERIAL)

A BOEING 777 touches down in a hiss of vapor. Its shadow streaks along the runway.

SUPER: JFK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, NEW YORK

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY – DAY

A BLACK SUBURBAN muscled through traffic, its chrome grille snarling in sunlight.

INT. SUBURBAN – MOVING – DAY

Haroon watches strip Malls blur past – an alien world after the caves of tora bora. Mike checks his watch. A Glock 19 bulges subtly beneath his tailored shirt.

MIKE

12 Cornwall Lane, Hicksville. Family's inside.

EXT. 12 CORNWALL LANE – DAY

The SUBURBAN curbs at a pristine colonial. American flag. Basketball hoop.

MIKE

(not unkind)

Knock. Driver'll handle your bags.

Haroon steps out. His polished oxfords crunch gravel.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR BEDROOM – DAY

Kamran, now a teenager in a Real Madrid jersey, freezes mid-PlayStation. His eyes lock on a lone figure standing at the curb.

Beside him, his mother—draped in a white hijab—parts the curtain, then slowly lets it fall shut.

EXT. DRIVEWAY – CONTINUOUS

The Suburban's trunk THUNKS open. The DRIVER, 40s, African-American, military fade, lifts Haroon's suitcase and a pristine Apple laptop box.

Haroon stands at the red door, finger hovering over the bell...

WHOOSH – the door FLIES OPEN.

Kamran barrels into Haroon, hugging hard.

KAMRAN

(laughing)

Big brother! You're real!

Haroon blinks fast. His hands wrap Kamran closer.

HAROON

(hoarse)

Missed you too, champ.

OVER HAROON'S SHOULDER – the Driver extends the laptop box.

DRIVER

Compliments of Mr. Mike.

Haroon's grin flashes – then falters. He notices a USMC tattoo on the Driver's knuckles.

Mike, back in the SUV, gives a two-finger salute. The tinted window HUMS shut.

INT. FOYER – CONTINUOUS

WARM LIGHT filters through stained glass. Photo frames line the wall – graduations, birthdays... one frame conspicuously empty.

Haroon's MOTHER rushes forward, floral dress swaying. She cups his face, studying the Man beneath the shave.

MOTHER

(Dari, subtitled)

My wandering heart... Where does the wind take you?

Haroon kisses her palms – hands that once stitched his childhood wounds.

HAROON

(lying smoothly)

To those who need words.

INT. LIVING ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Haroon sinks into an overstuffed couch. Kamran drops the suitcase – it THUDS like it's full of bricks.

HAROON
Where's Dad? And Zahra?

Kamran fiddles with his controller, avoiding his gaze.

KAMRAN
Zahra's working part-time at Walmart.

HAROON
And Dad? Where is he?

KAMRAN
(reciting softly,
subtitled)
Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un...

SUBTITLE: "Indeed, we belong to Allah, and to Him we shall return."

HAROON
(broken)
When?

KAMRAN
January. The cancer... It took him fast.

CLOSE ON HAROON – throat tight, jaw clenched.

HAROON
(whispers)
He died while I played ghost.
(beat)
Not war. Not martyrdom. Just a hospital bed.

A single tear escapes—tracks down his corporate-clean cheek, catching light from the chandelier above.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUXURY SWIMMING POOL – DAY

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

Haroon soars from a sleek, modern diving board – arms slicing the air, body tight as a torpedo.

UNDERWATER POV –

He pierces the turquoise depths. Silence. Precision. Focus.

WIDE ANGLE — POOLSIDE

Loungers sip cocktails, sunglasses tracking his graceful resurfacing. Haroon glides to the edge — calm, unshaken. Reborn.

INT. INDOOR SHOOTING RANGE — DAY

A sterile, high-tech facility. Soundproof walls. Hanging baffles. Gunfire pops like distant firecrackers.

Haroon stands centered. Calm. Laser-focused.

Raises a GLOCK 19M — POP. POP. POP.

Targets ripple with clustered headshots.

Without pause, he swaps hands — now the left.

POP. POP. POP.

Same perfect grouping. Shooters down the line steal glances.

Haroon lowers the weapon, expression unreadable.

INT. LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

A soft LEATHER SOFA creaks as Haroon settles beside his MOTHER. Her hands, worn and silent, grip a cushion.

The glow of a SONY TV dances on their faces.

INSERT — TV SCREEN

A blonde CNN REPORTER stands amid smoke and rubble.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Pentagon confirms: seventy-five Tomahawk missiles launched from the USS Abraham Lincoln... in retaliation for the August 7th embassy bombings...

EXT. ARABIAN SEA — NIGHT

FWOOSH — A TOMHAWK ignites, rocket flame searing the battleship deck.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. AFGHANISTAN — NIGHT SKY

MISSILES scream across the stars—

BOOM! A hangar vaporized. BOOM! A cave mouth collapses in flame and fury.

EXT. AL-FAROUQ TRAINING CAMP - DAY - FLASHBACK

SUPER: NEAR KANDAHAR - 0730HRS - SEVEN MONTHS EARLIER

Through SPY CAMERA GLASSES POV - Haroon spies on a hangar.

Inside: TALIBAN FIGHTERS eat, murmur in Pashto.

INT. CAVE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Haroon sits cross-legged across from OSAMA BIN LADEN.

He tears bread, never breaking eye contact.

Osama whispers something to ABU WALID AL-MASRI.

Haroon listens, a silent observer in the lion's den.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The screen glows with REPLAYS of the strikes.

Haroon stares, haunted. Fingers digging into the cushion.

WHAP. WHAP. A pink ENVELOPE smacks his cheek.

ZAHRA (O.S.)

Hey, big brother! Earth to Haroon!

He blinks. Turns.

HAROON

Just watching the news.

ZAHRA

(now late 20s)

You fought. You fled. You're alive.

(pokes his chest)

Live. Afghanistan won't heal in our lifetime.

(softly, sincere)

But maybe you can.

HAROON

That doesn't mean we stop fighting for it.

KAMRAN (O.S.)

She just wants you married so she can chase boys guilt-free.

ZAHRA

Kamran! Just shut up!

She curls into their mother's lap. The old woman strokes her hair, smiling.

MOTHER

(in Dari, subtitled)

Bring me a daughter-in-law... or I starve.

Haroon chuckles – then WHAP! Zahra smacks the envelope against his cheek again.

ZAHRA

Mary. Works with me. Prays. Smart.
Beautiful.

(grinning)

Asked about you after seeing your photo.

Haroon opens the envelope.

INSERT – PHOTO

MARY, 25. Almond eyes. A gentle smile under a soft-colored Hijab. Beauty quiet as a breeze.

HAROON

You running a matchmaking business now?

ZAHRA

Just investing in the future – my future
nieces and nephews.

She stretches, heads out.

ZAHRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sleep well. Sweet dreams...

Haroon glances back at the screen. Another explosion.

CLICK. TV off. Silence.

CLOSE ON Mary's photo – bathed in the dying screen's glow.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WEDDING HALL – NIGHT

A golden CHANDELIER drips light like honey. Laughter bubbles. Crystal glasses clink. In one corner, a SINGER croons a Farsi love song, backed by a small live band.

CAMERA FLOATS –

– Haroon's MOTHER, regal in midnight-blue, trades secrets with elders.

– LITTLE GIRLS spin in sequined dresses, casting rainbow sparkles.

– Zahra and Kamran dance wildly, syncing to dhol drums. Applause erupts.

AT THE HEAD TABLE

Haroon, in black-on-black tux, leans close to Mary – radiant in pearl silk and emerald crown.

HAROON

(whispers)

Five minutes, janem.

She arches a brow. Try ten. He grins, rises.

HAROON'S POV – ACROSS THE ROOM

Tom and Mike in sleek suits. Crystal, backless orange gown blazing like fire.

They raise their glasses – wide grins.

Haroon navigates the crowd.

TIGHT ON HANDSHAKES – firm, familiar. Crystal grabs his forearm, nails sharp.

HAROON (CONT'D)

You flew halfway around the world.

TOM

Would've swum if we had to.

MIKE

To the miles ahead being shorter than the ones behind.

CRYSTAL

(brandishing envelope)

Pack your sunscreen, Loverboy.

Haroon opens it.

INSERT – TICKET

"UNITED FIRST CLASS. SHERATON NASSAU – OCEANFRONT VILLA."

HAROON

I don't know what to say... thank you.

TOM

Miss the flight, and I'm divorcing you instead.

Haroon yanks them into a crushing hug. The band EXPLODES – drums like thunder.

His mother watches, hands clasped, tears streaking her smile.

THE CHANDELIER BURSTS INTO LIGHT.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. SPACE - SATELLITE VIEW - DAWN

The BAHAMAS gleam below. Ocean veins through clouds.

EXT. SHERATON NASSAU RESORT - MORNING

A glass palace on Cable Beach. Palm trees bow. Waves whisper ashore.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Sunlight paints the king-sized bed gold. Haroon stirs, bare-chested, stretching.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Steam curls around him. Water flows over muscled shoulders.

HAROON

(calling out)

Mary, O Mary! My queen!

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mary stirs beneath silk sheets. A sleepy smile.

MARY

(Huskily)

Yes, my king?

HAROON (O.S.)

Can you bring me clean underwear?

Mary grins, slipping from bed like a goddess wrapped in silk. She unzips their SAMSONITE suitcase, retrieves crisp boxers.

AT THE BATHROOM DOOR—

MARY
Here, *azizem*...

DOOR SWINGS OPEN—

Haroon pulls her in, dripping. Towel low on his hips.

MARY
You're insatiable.

HAROON
Never enough.

He kisses her jaw, hands roaming, playful.

INT. OCEANFRONT RESTAURANT - LATER

Mary tastes papaya, juice glistening.

MARY
Let's visit Marina Village. Gifts for
your mother. Zahra.

HAROON
Let's get dressed and make a day of it.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Mary lines her eyes with kohl. Gold necklace gleams at
her throat.

Haroon slips into linen pants, kisses her neck.

MARY
You're a thief.

HAROON
(in Dari, subtitled)
Qand-e-Duzdee Che-qadar Sheerin Ast.
(Stolen sugar is sweetest.)

She adjusts his collar, smiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NASSAU SIDEWALK - DAY

Sunlight glares. Mary strolls, purse swinging—

A BLUR—A SKATEBOARDER COLLIDES, RIPS her purse.

MARY
(screams)

HAROON!

Haroon EXPLODES into a sprint.

THE CHASE – cobblestones, tourists, spilled fruit,
narrowing alleys.

EXT. INTERSECTION – CONTINUOUS

The skateboarder brakes at a red light. Grinning.

GREEN. Gone.

Haroon slows. Chest heaving. Whispers:

HAROON
I left Mary... for a damn purse...

He spins–runs back.

EXT. SIDEWALK – LATER

Mary–GONE.

Haroon's eyes dart. Empty.

A large Bahamian man in a security uniform rushes over,
radio crackling–

SECURITY GUARD
(breathless, panicked)
Two guys–masks, guns–in a white ambulance
van! Took her east!

Haroon pales. Staggeres back to the hotel–running.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE – DAY

DOOR BURSTS OPEN–Haroon in, drenched in sweat.

He grabs his LAPTOP.

ON SCREEN: Password prompt.

BRRRING! The suite phone shrieks.

Haroon grabs it.

HAROON
Hello?

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Mr. Bakhtari. We have your beautiful Mary.
Paradise Island Bridge. Eleven. Shorts.
Sleeveless. No police. No friends. No
toys.

HAROON

Wait—!

CLICK. Dead.

Haroon freezes. Then slams the phone. Opens the laptop.

ON SCREEN:

He types fast:

SPOUSE ABDUCTED. PARADISE ISLAND BRIDGE. 1100H. POSSIBLE
RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT.

SEND.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARADISE ISLAND BRIDGE - DAY

A taxi SCREECHES to a halt. The door FLIES open— Haroon
steps out, muscles taut under his white tank. The adidas
shorts cling to his thighs.

HIS POV:

The bridge stretches endlessly. Ocean churns below. Not
a soul in sight — just a few commuting cars.

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Haroon shoves a \$50 bill at the driver.

HAROON

Keep it.

The driver's grin fades as he gets a good look at Haroon.

DRIVER

(nervous)

You sure you wanna be here, boss?

But Haroon's already out the door, striding toward the
bridge—

EXT. PARADISE ISLAND BRIDGE - DAY

SUPER: PARADISE ISLAND BRIDGE — NASSAU, BAHAMAS

Haroon's sneakers slap the asphalt. Wind howls. A seagull screams overhead.

Ahead: a white MINI-BUS AMBULANCE, engine idling.

SUDDEN—

The side door SLAMS open. A gloved hand snatches Haroon—
YANKS him inside.

BLACK.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MINI-BUS - MOVING - DAY

Haroon's face slammed against steel flooring. Boot digs into his spine— CRACK. Ribs give.

THREE MEN:

— GUNMAN, burly, AK-47 barrel grazing Haroon's ear.

— GRUNT, masked, twisting Haroon's arms—CLICK—handcuffs lock tight.

— TECH, scanning Haroon's body with a blinking signal detector.

TECH

Where's the tracker, pretty boy?

Haroon spits blood. Grins through the pain.

HAROON

Up your ass.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP... The device shrieks over his sneakers.

TECH

(snarling)

Cheeky fuck.

He slips off Haroon's right Adidas sneaker in one swift motion.

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The shoe arcs through the air— SPLASH into the waves below.

INT. MINI-BUS - CONTINUOUS

Tech's fist slams into Haroon's gut—OOMPH—air escapes.

TECH
We said no tracking!

Haroon roars, slams his forehead into Tech's jaw—CRACK.
The Gunman reacts, boot crunches down on Haroon's ribs.
A gasp. A choke.

GUNMAN
(pressing barrel to
Haroon's temple)
I'll paint this van with your brains.

TECH
(wiping blood from
his lip)
Not yet. Contract says alive.

A tense beat. Gunman snarls, but lowers the weapon.
Haroon meets their eyes—calculating, unbroken.
The mini-bus accelerates, heading for the coast.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY OVER PARADISE ISLAND BRIDGE - LATER

An MH-60R SEAHAWK hovers like a dragonfly, rotors slicing through the humid Bahamian air.

THROUGH THE COCKPIT GLASS—

Mike grips the controls, eyes locked on the GPS screen.
The signal BLINKS erratically.

BESIDE HIM:

Crystal leans forward, her knuckles whitening on the dash.

MIKE
(into headset, voice
like gravel)
Charlie 2—descend and sweep. Signal's hot.

INT. SEAHAWK - REAR COMPARTMENT

Two OPERATIVES, armed with a sniper rifle and machine guns, strapped in body armor, snap their harnesses tight.

One yanks open the side door-

WIND HOWLS IN as the other deploys a FAST-ROPE.

EXT. OCEAN SURFACE - MOMENTS LATER

The lead operative HITS the water, retrieves a handheld tracker from his waterproof pack. The device SCREECHES-

HIS POV:

A single ADIDAS sneaker bobs in the swells. He swims, GRABS it.

OPERATIVE
(into mic, grim)
Item secured. Pulling out.

EXT. SEAHAWK - DOORWAY

The rope TIGHTENS as they haul him up. Crystal catches the sneaker-her face darkens.

CRYSTAL
(to Mike)
They're mocking us.

MIKE
(grits teeth)
Let's see them laugh when we're knocking.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Seahawk banks HARD toward the coastline-

BELOW:

Two speedboats carve white lines toward a sleek 80-foot yacht-"THE WAVE BUSTER"

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The tracker suddenly BEEPS WILDLY-

MIKE
(snarls)
There!

EXT. YACHT HELIPAD - DAY

The SEAHAWK's rotors SCREAM as it touches down, kicking up mist and salt spray.

Before the blades stop spinning—

Mike storms out, ducking low.

JACK, 300 lbs, ADIDAS TRACKSUIT, cigar glued to his grin, waddles up, arms wide.

JACK
(mock outrage)
Mickey-fuckin'-Mouse! You bring SWAT and Disneyland to my swim club?

MIKE
(deadpan, crushing his handshake)
Just returning your jackass energy.

Crystal steps in, slaps a photo to Jack's chest.

CRYSTAL
Asian male, early 30s. Abducted an hour ago.

JACK
(snaps fingers)
Steve! Get your butt over here!

A bearded deckhand, STEVE, 30s, fish scales on his shirt, hustles over, wind whipping his cap.

STEVE
(shouting over the rotors)
Yeah—White ambulance minibus. Dropped a guy like him at a Meridian-class yacht—

FLASHBACK - EXT. DOCK - NOON - SILENT

A white AMBULANCE MINI-BUS SCREECHES to a halt in a bustling tourist marina lot — charter boats BOB, SEAGULLS circle overhead, a steel band plays faintly in the background.

Steve, camera in hand and CHEAPEAU pulled low against the sun, snaps photos of a smiling tourist couple — the vibrant dock and moored yachts in the background.

As he frames another shot, something catches his eye:

TWO MILITARY-TYPE MEN emerge from the ambulance, faces shadowed by caps. They haul a slumped ASIAN MAN (26) in a wheelchair – one of them carrying a BLACK MEDKIT – bulky, rigid, oddly shaped.

Steve subtly pivots, SNAPS a quick frame.

CAMERA TRACKS the wheelchair's SQUEAKY WHEEL as they roll toward a gleaming yacht.

THE NAME PAINTED ON THE STERN –

"THE MERMAID" – bold, navy lettering.

Steve lowers his camera, brow furrowed.

BACK TO PRESENT –

MIKE
(gripping Steve's
shoulder)
You certain?

STEVE
(air quotes)
"The Mermaid." Name was ten feet wide.
I've got perfect vision – like my camera.

CRYSTAL
(cutting in)
Mermaid... or Mercury?

STEVE
(offended)
Mermaid. I don't miss letters, lady.

MIKE
(to Jack, already
moving)
Prep your boat. We go now.

Steve mimes a basketball shot at Crystal. She ignores him.

EXT. SKY – MOMENTS LATER

The Seahawk helicopter LURCHES upward, its shadow skimming the waves like a blade.

INT. LOWER DECK CABIN, YACHT – DAY

A functional crew cabin – marine-grade walls under harsh LED lights. Stale air thick with smoke. Engine vibrations pulse through the textured fiberglass floor.

Haroon, barefoot and handcuffed, lies on the floor. A dried streak of blood cracks at his mouth as he shifts, his ribs flaring with pain.

At a sturdy aluminum fold-out table, two men slap down plastic cards:

BULBOUS NOSE MAN (30s), thick brows, a crooked, busted nose.

NARROW-EYED MAN (35), pale, slitted eyes—snake-calm.

AK-47s lean against their chairs.

Haroon eyes them.

HAROON
(in Russian; subtitled)
I need the washroom.

Bulbous Nose snorts, flicking ash.

BULBOUS NOSE MAN
Speak English, bastard.

Haroon smirks, switches tongues:

HAROON
Was speaking the language of hell. You'll need it soon.

A beat. Narrow-Eyed's fingers tense on his cards.

HAROON (CONT'D)
Washroom. Now.

BULBOUS NOSE MAN
Not allowed.

Haroon shrugs. Releases his bladder.

Piss soaks his ADIDAS SHORTS, pooling beneath him. The stench HITS.

Narrow-Eyed KICKS Haroon's ribs—HARD.

NARROW-EYED MAN
You fucking animal!

Haroon grunts, rolling onto his side. Eyes glacial.

HAROON
Your choice. WC or barn.

Bulbous Nose gags, waves a hand.

BULBOUS NOSE MAN

Let him go! Christ!

Narrow-Eyed mutters in Russian, unlocks the cuffs—refastens them in front.

Haroon stands slow, testing his ribs.

NARROW-EYED MAN

Straight. Left. No lock.

Haroon moves, steps heavy, toward a narrow door marked "LAVATORY."

Narrow-Eyed follows, hand on his gun.

Haroon steps inside—eyes the hinges. A flicker of calculation.

INT. WASHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A compact but well-appointed yacht bathroom. Polished teak walls, gleaming chrome fixtures. The sink is spotless, the mirror flawless but for a single hairline crack near the edge.

Haroon peels off his soiled shorts and underwear. He cranks the faucet—crystal-clear water rushes out. Scrubs the fabric fast, kneading out the stain under the stream.

Then — teeth grip the DRAWSTRING'S AGLET. A sharp twist. The plastic cap comes loose.

A MICRO GPS CHIP — a tiny black tracker (1 inch), its surface non-reflective — drops into his palm. A single press with his fingers on both sides. It blinks green — active.

Smooth, practiced— he reaches behind the pristine toilet tank, presses the chip against the hidden side of the chrome pipe. It adheres seamlessly, undetectable.

CREAK -

The door pushes inward— an AK-47 barrel intruding into the space. Through the gap: Haroon's bare back, the muscles taut under the LED lighting.

NARROW-EYED MAN (O.S.)

Hurry up.

Haroon doesn't flinch. Voice calm, measured:

HAROON

Almost done.

Silence. Only the soft hiss of the faucet, the distant thrum of the yacht's engines.

INT. YACHT - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

A sleek, marine-grade space with wraparound windows and humming electronics.

In a wide, revolving captain's chair, a man in a crisp WHITE SUIT sits like royalty. His brown beard is trimmed sharp. A thick cigar glows between his fingers. A bodyguard, rifle slung, flank him silently.

At the helm: ROGER, dark-skinned, 40s, compact and focused, mans the yacht's controls.

MAN IN WHITE

(lighting his cigar,
exhaling slow)

Roger. How much longer?

ROGER

(adjusting the helm)

Five miles to the island, sir.

MAN IN WHITE

Can't you speed it up?

ROGER

We're at full throttle.

SMASH TO:

EXT. SKY / OCEAN - DAY

A blue-and-white recreational boat slices through the endless ocean below.

CAMERA TILTS - the POV of a circling MH-60 SEAHAWK HELICOPTER.

The chopper dips, banking toward the sleek yacht. Painted across the stern in bold navy letters:

"THE MERMAID"

INT. YACHT - CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The low roar of rotors vibrates through the cabin walls.

ROGER
 (to Man in White)
 Boss, it's a U.S. bird. No clue how they
 found us.

MAN IN WHITE
 (rising, calm but
 grim)
 Then we fight to the last drop.

ROGER
 What's the move?

MAN IN WHITE
 (glancing out the
 window)
 Hold course. Let's see who blinks first.

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE OCEAN - DAY

The Seahawk hovers low, its shadow sprawling across the
 yacht's deck.

INT./EXT. SEAHAWK COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

MIKE
 (over external speakers)
 This is Commander Mike of the U.S. Navy.
 You are under arrest for the abduction of
 an American citizen. Change course and
 return to shore. Non-compliance will result
 in a Hellfire missile strike.

INT. YACHT - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MAN IN WHITE
 (into yacht's mic,
 steady)
 We don't know what you're talking about.
 We're just tourists... on a rented yacht.

EXT./INT. SEAHAWK - COCKPIT -

Mike watches the yacht continue its course—blatantly
 ignoring his warning.

MIKE
 (into headset)
 Crys. Give them a warning shot.

CRYSTAL
 (hesitating)
 Sorry, I've got a killer headache.

Long beat... Then-She presses the trigger. A controlled burst of gunfire tears into the ocean just ahead of 'The Mermaid'.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - YACHT - LATER

MAN IN WHITE

(to guards)

Get the Igla ready. And bring up the Afghan - he's our insurance against missiles.

GUARD

(rushing off)

On it, boss.

MAN IN WHITE

(to Roger)

Slow down. Signal compliance. That's a combat chopper—they won't hesitate.

ROGER

(spinning the helm)

Executing U-turn now.

EXT. OCEAN - WIDE SHOT

THE MERMAID arcs into a slow turn as the SEAHAWK circles overhead, mirroring her path.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - YACHT - CONTINUOUS

Haroon, hands cuffed, is shoved inside. The Narrow-Eyed Man follows, AK-47 at the ready.

INT. SEAHAWK - BACK SEAT - SAME TIME

A CIA SNIPER zeros in through his scope—his crosshairs settle on the Narrow-Eyed Man's head.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - YACHT - CONTINUOUS

RED LASER DOT dances briefly across the Narrow-Eyed Man's forehead—then—

POP. HE crumples. Dead.

Haroon reacts instantly—twists. Sidekicks the Man in White across the room.

As the Man in White fumbles for his weapon, Haroon bolts for the deck.

EXT. YACHT - DECK - SECONDS LATER

Gunfire erupts behind him as Haroon sprints for the edge.

More gunfire—from above—rains down from the Seahawk, pinning the Man in White back.

HAROON LEAPS—

EXT. SEA - CONTINUOUS

He hits the water hard. Sinks. Then—surfaces—gasping—handcuffed, but swimming.

CUT TO:

EXT. YACHT - AFT DECK - DAY

A GRIM-FACED OPERATOR shoulders a Russian Iгла missile system. The targeting laser SNAPS RED-LOCKED ON.

INT. SEAHAWK COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

ALARMS SCREECH.

Mike, steely-eyed, doesn't flinch.

MIKE
(into headset)
Hot launch! Deploying flares!

His hand SLAMS the countermeasures—

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

FLARES ERUPT from the chopper, streaking white-hot through the air.

The Iгла missile LAUNCHES with a deafening THWOOSH!

The Seahawk DIVES TOWARD THE WAVES—

THE MISSILE CORKSREWS past it, detonating in a FIREBALL that shakes the sky.

INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Mike FLIPS THE SAFETY COVER off the Hellfire controls.

MIKE
(cold)
Payback.

His finger stabs the TRIGGER.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

The HELLFIRE SCREAMS TOWARD THE YACHT—
IMPACT.

The upper deck DISINTEGRATES in a MAMMOTH EXPLOSION.
Fire GUTS the vessel.

EXT. OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

Haroon, handcuffed, GASPS in the churning water, kicking
back from the BURNING WRECKAGE.

A RESCUE TUBE SPLASHES DOWN beside him.

EXT. SEAHAWK - CONTINUOUS

The chopper HOVERS, searchlight PINNING Haroon in its
beam.

EXT. OCEAN - WIDER

The WAVE BUSTER CUTS THROUGH WAVES, Jack and Steve on
deck, rifles ready.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

SUPER: THREE DAYS LATER

Haroon, clean-shaven and sharp in a fresh suit, exits
beside Mike.

They descend the steps just as paramedics rush a
stretcher past, an unconscious patient hooked to IVs.

MIKE

(pointing to the lot)

Car's over there.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

They approach a black 1995 Lincoln Town Car. Behind the
wheel, a MAN IN BLACK (28) adjusts his hat, obscuring
most of his face.

INT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR - DAY

Haroon clicks his seatbelt.

HAROON
Any news on my lost gem?

MIKE
Not yet.

The car pulls out. Through the windshield, the hospital sign looms:

"PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL"

HAROON
So what's the plan?

MIKE
Tom wants you out of the city—somewhere quiet.

HAROON
And your charming partner?

MIKE
Called in sick.

HAROON
I don't buy it.

MIKE
Meaning?

HAROON
Things started going south the moment I met her.

MIKE
(smirks)
By the way—how'd you activate the tracker with cuffs on?

HAROON
(grinning)
Wet myself. They had to uncuff me to the front for the bathroom. Gave me just enough time to clean up... and activate the chip.

MIKE
(laughs)
You might be the first spy to weaponize a bladder.

HAROON
All's fair in love and war.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

A LINCOLN TOWN CAR cruises a two-lane highway—green hills rolling on both sides.

As they crest a hill—

WHUP-WHUP-WHUP—

A HELICOPTER roars overhead, its rotor wash bending treetops.

EXT. HELICOPTER - SKY - DAY

A MASKED GUNMAN leans out, unleashing a torrent of BULLETS.

INT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR -

GLASS SHATTERS. METAL SCREAMS. BLOOD SPRAYS—

Mike jerks as bullets rip through his thigh and chest. He slumps, barely alive.

Haroon grits his teeth—blood streaks his arm from a grazing shot.

The DRIVER drops, DEAD. The wheel jerks.

The Lincoln veers off the road, CRASHING through bushes—

EXT. HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The car barrels downhill through thick underbrush.

INT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Haroon struggles to stay upright as the vehicle bounces violently.

Branches slap the windshield. Dirt sprays. The car careens faster—

Haroon unbuckles his SEATBELT, reaches across, YANKS open Mike's belt—

HAROON

(grimly)

Hold on, brother.

With effort, he SHOVES Mike's limp body toward the back door—kicks it open—

EXT. HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Mike's body tumbles out into the brush, rolling to a stop.

The Lincoln spins sideways, skidding toward a drop.

Haroon sees a thick overhanging TREE BRANCH—his only shot.

With a breath, he LEAPS out, arms grabbing the branch—

The Lincoln sails forward—

EXT. POND - CONTINUOUS

SPLASH! The Lincoln CRASHES into the pond, submerging nose-first.

INT. SINKING CAR - UNDERWATER

The DRIVER'S lifeless body floats in the dark, drifting into murky shadow.

EXT. HELICOPTER - SKY - MOMENTS LATER

The chopper banks over the water.

INT. HELICOPTER - REAR COMPARTMENT

The GUNMAN drags a WOMAN with long, black hair—LIMP, LIFELESS—and shoves her out.

EXT. POND - CONTINUOUS

SPLASH! She vanishes beneath the surface.

CLOSE ON - WATER SURFACE -

Bubbles rise. Ripples spread...

Then— HER BODY FLOATS UP—face-up, motionless.

EXT. SKY ABOVE POND - CONTINUOUS

The HELICOPTER banks hard, vanishing beyond the treetops.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A GM TRUCK VAN skids to a stop. Jack and Steve jump out—rifles up, eyes sweeping the terrain.

EXT. WOODED SLOPE -

Jack checks a handheld GPS. A blinking dot leads him forward.

He pushes through brush—spots HAROON dangling from a tree branch, blood dripping from his arm.

JACK
(smirking)
Sorry. We're a little late.

HAROON
(grimacing)
Rough landing.

Jack clears his rifle, extends the barrel. Haroon grabs hold.

JACK
(flatly)
Blew a tire after leaving the hospital.
Someone tipped them off.

HAROON
(wrapping his arm
with his tie)
No doubt. But we need to find Mike—fast.

JACK
Steve's already on it.

Just then, Steve emerges from the trees, carrying MIKE—bloody and unconscious—over his shoulder.

JACK (CONT'D)
(grabbing Mike's wrist)
He breathing?

STEVE
Barely. Took two through the vest—armor-
piercing rounds. He's bleeding out.

JACK
Tom's on his way with a chopper.

HAROON
Tom's here?

JACK
He's running your extraction himself.

EXT. HORIZON - LATER

A HELICOPTER slices through the sky, blades thundering.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

SUPER: MUSLIM CEMETERY, NEW YORK - THREE DAYS LATER

A SEMI-CIRCLE OF MOURNERS stands before a rectangular grave - dug east-west per Islamic custom. No flowers. Only bare earth.

Six pallbearers, including Haroon, lower a plain wooden casket using ropes - no nails, per Sunnah. The wood CREAKS under its burden.

AT GRAVESIDE:

An IMAM, 60s, white beard, begins sealing the grave with hand-pressed clay bricks as he recites:

IMAM
(in Arabic, subtitled)
Allahuma ghfir laha warhamha...
(Oh Allah, forgive her and grant her
mercy...)

Handfuls of dirt THUD against the casket.

WIDE ANGLE:

Mourners fade away like shadow puppets, leaving only HAROON'S FAMILY by the graveside—solemn, unmoving.

THEN -

Tom approaches with two federal agents, their black suits crisp, sunglasses concealing any trace of emotion.

A UNIFORMED NYPD OFFICER stands at a respectful distance, hat in hand.

TOM
(quietly)
I'm sorry for your loss, Haroon. We did
everything we could.

HAROON
(somber, hollow)
I know.
(beat)
Thank you, Tom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HAROON'S BEDROOM - DAY

SUPER: NEW YORK - THREE WEEKS LATER

Haroon sits on the edge of the bed. A half-folded newspaper rests in his lap. Beside him, a framed photo of his late wife.

A GENTLE KNOCK at the door.

Zahra, warm and worn, enters with a tray of toast and tea.

ZAHRA
(forcing cheer)
Morning. Eat something.

She sets the tray on the side table. Haroon doesn't look up.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)
Kamran's at school. I'm taking Mom to physio-doc says her back might improve.

Haroon nods faintly. Distant. Hollow.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)
(hesitates)
You should quit... that military gig.
Find something safer.

HAROON
(flat)
Contract's airtight.

A long beat. Then—

HAROON (CONT'D)
(bitter laugh)
Spent my life training—boxing, learning languages, studying spies. Even fought with the Mujahideen.
(beat)
For what? Russians left. Taliban came. I lost everything.

Zahra places a gentle hand on his shoulder. No reaction.

ZAHRA
Maybe it was never about winning.

His jaw tenses.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)

(checks watch)

I've got to go.

She exits. A moment of silence.

RING RING. The bedside phone.

Haroon picks up.

HAROON

Hello?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

(distorted)

Good morning, sir. Is this Mr. Haroon?

HAROON

Speaking.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

This is FedEx. We have a package for you.

HAROON

Who's the sender?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Name says... Mary.

A beat.

HAROON

That's mine.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Just confirming your address—12 Cornwall Lane, Hicksville?

HAROON

That's correct.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Perfect. I'll be there in twenty minutes.

HAROON

Awesome.

He hangs up. Something shifts in his eyes.

FLASHBACK - INT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

A YOUNGER HAROON (20s), lean and sharp-eyed, stands in a bunker. SILHOUETTE TARGETS sway on motorized tracks—life-sized torsos riddled with old bullet holes.

Haroon grips a pistol with his left hand. He steadies...
FIRES. MISS.

Behind him, DIMITRY watches—arms crossed, unimpressed.

DIMITRY

You disgrace this academy. Go scrub
toilets.

Haroon lowers his gun, humiliated.

BACK TO PRESENT:

The low hum of the dial tone lingers. Haroon blinks.
Focus sharpens. He moves fast.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Haroon strides to a wall-mounted MAP OF AFGHANISTAN. He
slides it aside—revealing a hidden cabinet.

INSIDE: a bulletproof vest, helmet, shotgun, and
revolver. He grabs it all.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Haroon opens the fridge—pomegranate juice in hand.

He grabs a long white plastic bag from a kitchen's drawer
and bandages from the first aid kit.

ON COUNTERTOP:

- Pours pomegranate juice into the plastic bag.
- Seals it tight with adhesive tape.
- Places it on the helmet's frontal side, securing it
with more tape.
- Wraps it with bandages, smearing juice and tomato
sauce across the right side—fake blood.

He straps on the vest under his shirt. Helmet on. Weapons
loaded.

INT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Haroon peeks out. The sky above—overcast, thunder
flickering on the horizon.

He leaves the door unlocked and rushes back upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM -

Haroon checks himself in the mirror.

- Adjusts the helmet.

- Tightens the bandages around his head and chin.

He sits on the bed.

- Retrieves his GLOCK 19 from under the pillow.

- Positions the Glock and the shotgun under the quilt on his right side.

- Places the revolver under his left thigh.

He pulls the quilt up to his abdomen—waiting.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A FedEx MINI-VAN pulls up to the curb outside Haroon's house.

INT. VAN - MOMENTS LATER

A BEARDED MAN, early 50s, clad in a gray raincoat, sits behind the wheel. He pulls out a scuffed burner phone with a long pull-out antenna and dials.

CUT TO:

INT. HAROON'S BEDROOM - DAY

The home phone rings. Haroon picks up.

HAROON

Hello?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Your package is behind your door, sir.
Could you come down and sign for it?

HAROON

The door should be open—my sister just left. I can't come down because of my injuries. Mind bringing it up?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Not at all, sir. FedEx always goes the extra mile.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The bearded man steps out of the van, carrying a small handbag. He approaches 12 Cornwall Lane, tests the handle, and slips inside.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Footsteps, soft but deliberate, climb the stairs.

INT. SMALL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

HAROON (O.S.)

My room's on the right. Door's open.

INT. HAROON'S BEDROOM -

The man steps in, his gaze sharp, calculating.

THE MAN

Good morning, Mr. Haroon. Got your package right here.

HAROON

(calmly)

Appreciate it.

The man unzips his handbag.

THE MAN

I kept it inside to protect it from the rain.

(beat—then, suddenly)

SWOOSH!

A SILENCER-EQUIPPED PISTOL emerges from the bag, aimed directly at Haroon.

HAROON

(startled, tensing)

What kind of delivery is this?

THE MAN

(smirking)

America's adventurism has even reached FedEx. We don't just deliver packages anymore—we deliver death.

HAROON

(narrowing his eyes)

Dimitry? Or should I say... Prof. David?

DIMITRY
 (grinning)
 There's that sharp brain. Took you long
 enough.

HAROON
 (casually moving his
 hand beneath the
 quilt)
 So... what now?

DIMITRY
 (raising the gun
 slightly)
 Don't. Move. Sweep your gun onto the floor.
 Now.

Haroon uses his leg to nudge a shotgun off the bed.

DIMITRY (CONT'D)
 Smart. Now the Glock.

Haroon pushes the Glock 19 off the bed with his right
 hand.

DIMITRY (CONT'D)
 (mocking)
 Cooperative. I like that. You've been
 dodging death for too long, Haroon. But
 today... your luck runs out.

HAROON
 Before you pull that trigger, answer two
 questions.

DIMITRY
 (amused)
 Go on. Humor me.

HAROON
 Why did you kill my wife?

DIMITRY
 (smirking)
 We just wanted you to work for us too—share
 what you learned from the Taliban, Al-
 Qaeda... and the CIA's little games in
 Afghanistan. But you didn't listen.
 (shrugging)
 You tipped off your CIA friends, which
 got our people killed and our luxury yacht
 destroyed. Killing your wife? That was
 retaliation.

(MORE)

DIMITRY (CONT'D)
 (beat, darkly amused)
 Besides, those Bahama gangsters... they
 wouldn't have spared her either. You know
 that.

HAROON
 (anger simmering,
 eyes narrowing)
 You bastard.

DIMITRY
 (grinning)
 Blame the game, not the player.

HAROON
 (studying him,
 suspicious)
 The disguise... how?

Dimitry grins. Reaches up—peels off a mask.
 A different face. Completely.

HAROON (CONT'D)
 (staggered)
 My God...

DIMITRY
 (chuckling, raising
 his gun)
 Different face, same nightmare.
 (aims)
 Time's up. Goodbye, comrade.

BANG!

The first shot rips through Haroon's right arm. The
 second shot MISSES, embedding into the wall. The third
 shot hits his forehead—or so it seems.

Pomegranate juice spills from beneath Haroon's bandaged
 helmet. It looks like blood.

Another shot—chest. But Haroon wears a bulletproof vest
 beneath his shirt. He slumps. Breathes shakily.

HAROON
 (in Arabic, subtitled)
La Ilaha Illallah, Mohammadur Rasoullulah.

Then goes still. A beat. Dimitry lowers his gun slightly,
 assessing. Silence. Suddenly—

BANG! BANG!

Two shots tear through Dimitry's hand and shoulder. He staggers, dropping his gun.

DIMITRY

(cursing)

You motherf--! How the hell did you shoot left-handed?!

HAROON

(icy)

The CIA trained me better than you ever did. But it was you--your country's politics--that made me who I am. Twice. First, when you invaded my homeland.

(beat)

Now, by forcing my hand in my new one.

DIMITRY

(growling)

Fuck you.

BANG! Haroon shoots him in the KNEE. Dimitry howls, collapsing, clutching the shattered joint.

Haroon rises, revolver still aimed. Steps forward. He kicks Dimitry's gun away.

Then--WHAM! A sharp left hook smashes into Dimitry's jaw--cracking a tooth, spraying blood.

HAROON

(low and lethal)

Taste the strike of a weak hand...
That's for my wife.

Dimitry groans, clutching his bloody jaw, breath ragged. He spits out a broken tooth, eyes flickering with pain--and something darker. Fear.

HAROON (CONT'D)

I'd love to finish this myself... But the FBI? They'll get creative.

(smirks)

I hear waterboarding's back in fashion.

DIMITRY

(weak, spitting blood)

You think this ends with me? We planted seeds everywhere...

In the distance--SIRENS WAIL. Haroon stands tall.

OVER HIM--

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HAROON'S HOUSE - DAY

A STORM of red and blue lights. FBI SUVs. Ambulances. Police cruisers. Officers lock down the street. Tactical agents and medics rush inside.

INT. HAROON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Two FBI AGENTS restrain a bloodied Dimitry Vavilov, snapping cuffs around his wrists. PARAMEDICS lift Haroon and Dimitry onto stretchers with swift precision.

EXT./INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

The wounded are loaded into separate ambulances. SLAM! The doors shut. Escorted by law enforcement, the convoy peels off.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

A NEWS VAN SCREECHES to a halt.

A polished ANCHORWOMAN, 30s, blonde, sharp, leaps out, MIC in hand. Her CAMERAMAN trails her, already rolling. She intercepts a flustered POLICEMAN.

ANCHORWOMAN

Sir, we've received reports of a shootout in this area. Can you confirm any details?

The officer hesitates, choosing his words.

POLICEMAN

Two individuals were involved. One is in critical condition. Both have been transported to a hospital. The FBI is handling the investigation. That's all I can say.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A STERILE WHITE ROOM. Machines BEEP in rhythmic monotony. Haroon, weathered but sharp, lies in bed. An IV drips into his arm. His fingers clench the thin hospital blanket—knuckles white.

SUPER: LONG ISLAND COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - THREE DAYS LATER

The door CREAKS OPEN.

Tom enters, casual but purposeful, holding a small bouquet.

Two STOIC MEN in dark suits and sunglasses flank him—silent shadows. They post up by the door.

TOM
(placing the flowers
on the nightstand)
How's our most expensive Afghan asset
doing?

HAROON
(pressing the bed
control, raising
himself)
Alive. That's something.

TOM
Got good news.

HAROON
God knows I need some.

TOM
We took down more of David's network.
And Crystal? She's in custody.

HAROON
Had my doubts about her since the
honeymoon. That's when my wife vanished.

TOM
Mike suspected her too. That's why she's
being interrogated.

HAROON
Yeah... the day Mike was escorting me to
your Bahamas safehouse—She stayed back.
Claimed she was sick.
(beat)
Always wondered if she tipped off the hit
team. That ambush nearly killed us.

TOM
You were right to wonder.

HAROON
She also knew where we honeymooned. She
must've leaked my ties to the Afghan
Communist Security Service.

TOM
She did.
(beat)
The Bahamas? That was her idea.
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

She even footed most of the bill—flights, hotel, the whole romantic setup.

HAROON

(breathes in, jaw
clenched—almost a
scoff)

And David? His real name?

TOM

Dimitry Vavilov. Your old KGB shooting instructor.

HAROON

(smirks)

Of course. Snake finally shed its skin.

TOM

(glancing at his watch)

He came over in '93, right after the Soviet collapse. Entered as a skilled worker—Ph.D. in Russian. Later earned another in English Lit from Columbia. Started teaching at the University of Nebraska... all while quietly feeding intel back to Moscow. Classic Russian tradecraft. Clean. Subtle. Just bold enough to pass.

HAROON

Figures. Communist Security Service never lacked imagination.

TOM

(glances at his watch)

Once you're out, you get a full reset. New ID, passport, credit cards, the works.

HAROON

So... Haroon Bakhtari's finished?

TOM

He's a ghost now. Might wanna consider plastic surgery too. New life, new face.

HAROON

(grinning)

I'll keep the face. The past gave it character.

TOM

(smiles, rising)

We'll see.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
(extends a hand)
Take care, Haroon.

HAROON
(grips it firmly)
You too, Tom. See you on the other side.

INT. SURGICAL CLINIC - NIGHT

Bright lights. Sterile room. Haroon lies on the operating table. His eyes stare upward—calm, resigned—as the anesthetic mask lowers over his face.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Count back from ten...

Haroon exhales slowly. His world fades.

MONTAGE - HAROON'S REBIRTH

- Surgical instruments glint under white light.
- Gloved hands make careful incisions.
- Bandages wrap his swollen, altered face.
- Days pass. Bruising fades. Swelling reduces. The mirror reveals a new man.

INT. HOSPITAL - ICU - NIGHT

Machines beep rhythmically. Tubes snake around a still figure—MIKE. Pale. Eyes closed.

NURSE checks vitals. Monitors flicker. Then—

BEEEEEP. Flatline.

The nurse silently presses the code button. DOCTORS rush in—but it's too late. A sheet is gently pulled over Mike's face.

EXT. UNKNOWN CITY - NIGHT

A man steps into a crowd. A new face. Haroon's eyes.

He disappears into the sea of strangers.

FADE OUT.

THE END... OR A BEGINNING?