

AMERICAN KILL

Written by

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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "The following is based on true events."

FADE UP

EXT. TEXAS DESERT - DAY

The Texas electricity transmission power line: a huge spine of rigs trails off into the distance. The sun rises -- a colossal furnace globe brims the horizon.

The power lines, BUZZING.

The Sun reaches higher into the sky. The metal begins to SING in the blazing heat.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

SUPER: "June 2012. Round Rock, Texas."

Tidy, functional homestead: painted walls and a metal fence.

INT. SAME SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

LARRY BECK (28), engineered by Gucci, begins the day in vest and jeans. He whips up a couple of eggs, MICROWAVES them edible. He wears a battered and scratched wedding ring.

A RADIO FLIPS ON -- staple country fare.

Larry wanders into the bathroom. The microwave PINGS.

He rinses his face and doesn't look in the mirror.

Back in the kitchen, he squirts barbecue sauce on the eggs. He's gained an old shirt.

Larry stands at the open back door to eat his eggs. He stares into the yard.

EXT. TEXAS DESERT - DAY

The sun, ever higher, always hotter, bakes the rock.

A lizard sunbathes, cocks its head, races away.

EXT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Larry, still at the back door. Behind him, a Gretsch White Falcon electric guitar hangs alone on the wall.

INT. LARRY'S KITCHEN - DAY

A small backpack. He grabs it, puts his cellphone in one compartment, zips it up.

He hunkers down at the open fridge. A couple of items go into the bag. He's packed for work.

The egg bowl is flipped over in Larry's tiny dishwasher, the machine PUSHED ON.

Larry moves, to reveal a framed photo: himself; a stunningly beautiful young woman; a pretty young girl between them. The likeness is clear - that's his family. His footsteps go away across the bare floor. The front door opens --

EXT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

-- and slams good and shut. He leaves, tucking his raggedy shirt, without raising a farewell.

INT. PRETTIER SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

A bigger house than Larry's, decor of feminine chic.

MICHELLE BECK (26), dressed in over sized T-shirt, goes to rouse her sleeping eight year old daughter, BUCKIE.

By Buckie's bed is the exact same photo as Larry's in the exact same frame, the woman and girl revealed to be Michelle and Buckie.

She tickles the kid's feet, which shoot into the blanket. Buckie peeks out to see --

-- her mother's disappeared. Then, the blanket vanishes skyward over Buckie. She leaps from the bed in pyjamas to chase her Mom.

INT. LARRY'S PICK-UP - DAY

A true Texan, Larry sits in his big red Ford F250 pick-up, parked up in his well equipped garage.

His hand turns the ignition, and -- nothing.

Larry gives a look like he's been asked something awkward. He tries again, pumps the gas a bit, stares at the dash.

LARRY

Oh, come on --

He checks his wristwatch and mouths.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Shit.

EXT. LARRY'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

He leaps out of the Ford and disappears behind it into his garage. The starting COUGH of a BUELL V-TWIN PUNCHES IN.

INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - DAY

Michelle's bedroom closet. Her hands flick through a series of dresses, select her choice for the day: a charcoal shift, sleeveless. She strokes the nap of the cloth with her french polished nails. Michelle wears a gold wedding ring atop her engagement rock, both like new.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The front wheel of Larry's bike, TEARING ALONG IN TOP GEAR.

Larry, crouched, goggles, no helmet, sails through a curve.

His hand winds the throttle further open and he ROCKETS OUT, belts off into the distance, towards the Sun.

EXT. DESERT POWER LINE - DAY

From up in the air, Larry and his WORK BUDDY in ERCOT power company overalls, thick leather gloves and hard hats. They're busy together, high in a pylon in the lunatic midday heat. The metal is alive with it.

Inside the pylon, they stay balanced. Each action steady and deliberate, they communicate sparingly here -- distractions can kill. They're both heavily beaded with sweat.

LARRY

Got it?

BUDDY

Almost. Ten seconds.

Larry waits. A rivulet of sweat gathers and runs brow to chin.

It drops, and --

--far below, hits the bare steel. It SIZZLES to vapor.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

And...

Larry stays silent. Buddy twists a tool into the workings.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
...three, two. Gotcha.

Larry is relieved.

LARRY
Good. Let's get the hell back down.

INT. ERCOT DEPOT - DAY

Larry walks into the cool of the Stores and strips his overalls. He tosses them into the laundry bin and yanks on his own jeans, vest and shirt.

An open locker. The safety boots, hard hat and gloves CLATTER into the bottom end. The locker SLAMS.

He leaves the Stores with time sheet and water bottle.

EXT. ERCOT DEPOT YARD - DAY

At a picnic table, WORKERS come and go in various states of dress, to fill their time sheets. All friendly, they share the one pen provided.

Larry automatically scores through a section marked "Incidents" and writes:-

"0700 to 1815."

BUDDY
(to Larry)
And that's another one. See ya tomorrow, Larry.

LARRY
Oh, yeah. See ya tomorrow, man.

EXT. ROUND ROCK 7/11 - NIGHT

Larry's BUELL SWERVES IN to park.

He dismounts, swings his leg.

A group of teenagers mess about outside the store, the kind who get adults to buy booze for them. Larry sees, but ignores them. They clock him, but decide to back off.

INT. 7/11 - NIGHT

Larry picks up a microwaveable burrito and a six pack.

The chiquita rings it up and microwaves without being asked. Their gaze diverts to a TV above the checkout, even though it's just ads.

EXT. 7/11 - NIGHT

The kids laugh outside.

The checkout girl hands over Larry's hot burrito inside.

He comes out, stores his dinner in his backpack. He walks past the kids again, jostling about.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The TV is ON. Larry slumps back in his chair to watch with his beer and burrito.

On the screen, a teen channel appears. He zaps it to the news.

REPORTER

(on TV)

...among foreign news today, human rights organizations are once again outraged by another so called honor killing in southern Asia. Newly weds, the Choudrays were found murdered in the Indian province of...

Larry jumps as a squirt of filling tries to find his lap.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

...Kerala. Members of the dead woman's own family are said to be under suspicion, however no arrests have been made as of this broadca--

Larry zaps the set off and sits in peace with his delicious wrap.

EXT. LARRY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

The hood of Larry's big red pick-up eases open.

He stands beneath the electric lights, wearing a wide beam head torch and gets down to fix the car.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Shirt off, he slowly climbs the stairs to bed.

INT. MUNICIPAL POOL - DAY

Larry in trunks and goggles, slicing through the water. He touches the end of the pool, inhales, and bounces off again for another lap.

From far above in the rafters, alone in his lane, he front crawls toward the end of another lap. The few other occupants of the pool are varying ages, and, although not obviously so, happen to swim in the opposite direction.

Underwater, MUFFLED SWISHES. His swimmer's torso moves cleanly through the dividing water. His palm stretches out, to the finishing touch.

INT. LARRY'S PICK-UP (MOVING) - DAY

He munches a breakfast bar, washes it down with soda.

EXT. ERCOT DEPOT CAR PARK - DAY

Larry's pick-up edges up to a luxuriously black Porsche 911.

BUDDY
(to Larry)
Every day. One day you're gonna
push it too far, Larry boy.

LARRY
(exiting his truck)
Hah! But not today. Today,
everything is cool.

BUDDY
Ain't gonna be so cool up on that
line today. High nineties.

Larry goes for a hug. Buddy dodges him.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
Quit it.

LARRY
Well, same day, different flavor of
shit. We seen worse.

INT. ERCOT STORES - DAY

The STORE KEEPER slides them fresh overalls over the counter. They head to the locker room.

EXT. POWER LINE - DAY

High up in the pylon with Larry and Buddy. Buddy waits in silence as Larry tightens up a series of bolts, one at a time, then back round again. As Larry does so, he's distracted by something.

A slow movement, out of focus -- something dark on the ground far below.

LARRY
(calm)
Hey, Buddy.

BUDDY
Hmm?

LARRY
(still looking down)
What'd you say that is?

He indicates down to where the dark shape makes its way.

BUDDY
Er, well, looks like, I mean it
looks like a -- jaguar?

LARRY
Hmm, yeah. Rifle's in the truck.

BUDDY
Yeah. Shit.

LARRY
So's my three fifty seven.

BUDDY
Great.

They remain calm enough. Everything's okay for now.

On the ground, the beasts heavy paws pad across the sand.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
(yells at the cat)
Fuck off!

It freezes, ground locked, and looks around.

Larry scowls, puzzled by Buddy's behavior.

BUDDY (CONT'D)
(more insistent)
Fuck off!

The cat does not. It slowly raises its head skyward and relaxes. The impassive green discs look up and blink at the men. A deep, bone chilling growl comes from within.

LARRY

I guess he don't speak no English.
Ah, he'll get bored by the time
we're done.

The cat continues to look at the humans, looking down from their perch. He pads over to the shade of the truck and lies down to wait.

BUDDY

Oh shit. I don't like the way this
is goin', man.

EXT. POWER LINE - DAY

A couple of hours later, the jaguar lazily pads to a new shade spot.

BUDDY

He's still there. He ain't bored.
Animals don't get bored. They just
get hungry and mean.

LARRY

Like you?

BUDDY

Ha friggin' ha. What we gonna do?

LARRY

Seems one of us is gonna have to be
a decoy.

Buddy really laughs this time.

The cat looks up sharply, flips its tail.

BUDDY

A decoy?

LARRY

Or we could rush him.

Buddy's laughter stops.

BUDDY

No. Decoy's better. An' it's your
idea, so decoy away, man.

They begin to descend.

The animal watches steadily. Interest gains with each step.

They're about down and the cat begins to stalk. The guys are anxious, but this is it.

LARRY
(to Buddy)
Okay?

BUDDY
Yeah, okay. Just say 'go'.

LARRY
(instantly)
Go!

Larry leaps the last two struts, tucks, rolls, and bounces up running as fast as he possibly can.

The jaguar flashes by.

Buddy hits the ground and makes for the truck. It's only a few feet, and he's there.

Larry does half a lap of the pylon base then scoots back up it like a squirrel. The jaguar leaps fifteen feet. One great wide paw hooks into the back of Larry's boot.

The cat yowls in anger. It can't find a grip on the metal, but still Larry is pulled down, away from safety.

Buddy yanks the .308 rifle bolt back.

The massive strain shows on Larry's face -- it's Herculean!

The jaguar yowls again in frustration.

Buddy aims the rifle. BANG.

INT. ERCOT TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Larry drives along with Buddy. They're just about wetting themselves with amazed laughter.

BUDDY
What, the fuck, is a jaguar doin'
in Texas anyhow?

LARRY
(English accent)
A jaguar? In Texas?

Buddy doesn't get it.

LARRY (CONT'D)
(back to normal voice)
Jesus Christ.

EXT. ERCOT TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

The dead animal, slung across the hood, hunter style.

The truck drives off into the Sun and the laughs go with it.

EXT. ELECTRICAL CO. DEPOT YARD - DAY

The guys write their time sheets at the picnic table.

Larry's hand scribbles:- "0730 to 1825 Lines 17 and 23". He scores through the "Incidents" section.

EXT. ROUND ROCK 7/11 - NIGHT

The teenagers are absent tonight. It's quiet. The town streets are wet.

INT. 7/11 - NIGHT

Inside the MICROWAVE, Larry's burrito SPITS, SIZZLES and spins in the paper wrapper.

EXT. ALLEY (NEAR THE 7/11) - NIGHT

A Zippo PINGS open. Flame laps its grate, like orange silk.

Back to the 7/11 -- the MIROWAVE HUMMING, the TV'S TINKLING THEME TUNE. Very faint and distant, almost imperceptible, a WOMAN screams. It goes unnoticed by everyone -- just fades into the MASK OF BACKGROUND NOISE.

EXT. 7/11 - NIGHT

Larry wanders out with his burrito and a scratch card.

A YOUNG MAN(19), smartly dressed, comes pelting down the street, followed by TWO OTHERS in casual clothes.

Larry, engrossed in his scratch card after this long day. The young man flashes by.

One of the second young men smashes into Larry's shoulder, sends his burrito flying to --

-- its soggy demise.

LARRY
Hey! Fuckin' watch it!

All three continue to sprint off into the night.

Larry, with no dinner, turns back to the 7/11, when something catches his eye, something not right. His head turns as --

-- GURPEET (15), no more than a girl, ENGULFED HEAD TO TOE IN FLAME, meanders aimlessly, her arms in some sort of feeble plea. She no longer screams, only moans without speech.

He dashes to her.

She staggers, her legs buckle.

Larry reaches her, only to realize he's unable to help against the awful heat.

The burning girl still writhes at his feet, but aching slowly.

He speeds away again on foot, back to the 7/11.

LARRY (CONT'D)
(panicked)
Hey! Hey!

EXT. 7/11 - NIGHT

SIRENS WAIL, all lights flashing as an ambulance BOUNCES to a halt.

INT. AMBULANCE (MOVING) - NIGHT

Larry, completely wired, inside the ambulance, sirens BLARING. A MEDIC next to him intently administers a huge shot of pain relief to the girl, still alive, still conscious.

She moans, her lips gone, teeth against raw gums. Her eyelids completely burned away, she stares, blinded.

Larry can hardly bare to look, but can't pull his gaze from --
-- her twisted, charred limbs, protruding before his face.

The medic, with gloved fingers, touches her neck for a pulse.

He waits, then takes his hand away and places a sheet across the blackened bloody mess that was Gurpreet.

The medic calmly rubs some sanitizer on a cloth. He passes it to Larry.

MEDIC
Here. You can breathe through this.

Larry does.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A gurney races through hospital corridors. Black ash floats up from under the sheets as the horror of the girl's body whisks from the public.

Patients watch in surprise, then recoil as the smell follows with the trail of incineration. It fills all the air.

Larry sits, dazed, questioned by a DETECTIVE (GUERRERO) flanked by uniformed cops.

Doctors, stern faced, nodding, consulting with Larry and the officers.

The police help Larry to stand.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

A "Jane Doe" tag attached to Gurpreet's burnt foot.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Larry is driven along in a squad car.

EXT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The two uniforms escort him to his front door. They go straight back to their squad car, watch him enter the house, then drive off.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry stands, just inside the closed door. He stands and stares at nothing in particular.

MICHELLE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Michelle and Buckie go about their morning routines as before. The TV news is ON in the background. It comes back from a commercial break.

REPORTER

(on TV)

...to a disturbing report involving tragedy, also a local hero, in what appears to be a deliberate attack on a young Asian woman, and her would be saviour, Round Rock man Larry Beck...

At the mention of his name, Buckie gasps and shrieks.

BUCKIE

Mom!

Michelle, half ready, enters the kitchen.

MICHELLE

What on earth are you yelling for?

BUCKIE

Ssh, Mom.

She points to the TV with the remote.

The volume bar climbs and the reporter continues.

BUCKIE (CONT'D)

It's Dad.

They stand, poleaxed as the reporter comes to a close.

REPORTER

(on TV)

...who attempted to save her life.
Detective Guerrero, who attended
the scene, maintains Mister Beck is
not a suspect, and had been the
only chance the unidentified young
lady would have had of surviving.
Police are strenuously appealing
for witnesses to come forward.
Washington today sees another
failed inquiry into unsanctioned
military drone attacks over--

The TV zaps OFF. Michelle and Buckie just stare at each other.

EXT. POWER LINE - DAY

Larry and Buddy quietly labor away in their perch.

The truck, parked below.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

From within Larry's backpack comes the BUZZ, BUZZ, BUZZ of his cellphone.

INT. MICHELLE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Michelle, Buckie expectant at her side, hangs up.

MICHELLE

He must've gone to work. Well, he
would. That's your dad. So --

BUCKIE
Mom, give him a break. He's a hero.

MICHELLE
Mmm, uh-huh. Come on. Time's
getting away from us now. Teeth and
hair, young lady.

They separate to finish getting ready for work and school.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
I'll reach him later, and I'll fill
you in as soon as I can, okay?

BUCKIE
You better.

MICHELLE
Watch it now.

BUCKIE
Just sayin'.

EXT. POWER LINE - DAY

Larry is on the ground next to the truck. He leans in the
window and gets the phone from his bag.

He's had:- "14 missed calls". They're from the same four
different telephone numbers, being "Michelle", "Mom", "Work",
and one that's unlisted.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY

A big space with big windows and big legally advised gaps
between the desks. Intent, smart/casual workers quietly,
studiously perform their tasks at their DELL PC's. An
inspirational poster hangs behind every third station.

In her own private office sits Michelle. She furtively slips
her cell out of her indulgently sophisticated bag.

Her fingers slide to Larry's contact on the phone screen.
There's a cursory knock at the door.

A co-worker enters.

She slips the phone back in her bag.

EXT. CORPORATE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Michelle walks, phone to her ear, with a confidence that she
keeps for work.

Office guys and girls mill about.

LARRY (V.O.)
(on phone, to Michelle)
C'mon, Michelle. You know why I
can't answer the phone.

MICHELLE
Yeah, yeah, 'cause it'll bounce
clear across the desert. I can't
believe you didn't let me know what
had happened.

LARRY (V.O.)
You know, there wasn't much to
tell. Was happening, and then it
wasn't.

She throws her hair back.

MICHELLE
Larry Beck, are you shittin' me?

LARRY (V.O.)
It's not exactly like that, but
kinda --

MICHELLE
Hmm. Like the crash.

LARRY (V.O.)
Yeah, like that, slow but all quick
at the same time.

MICHELLE
Think you're in shock?

LARRY (V.O.)
Dunno. Would I know if I was? I
don't feel like I am.

She mouths 'hi' to someone she knows.

LARRY (V.O.)
I don't feel clouded, or confused
or upset, or any of that, so, if I
was, then how?

MICHELLE
I get the point, Larry. Mister
Cool.

He laughs at the other end.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
So you still coming over Saturday?

LARRY (V.O.)
Of course, yeah. Same as always,
Mimi, you know that.

MICHELLE

Good. Buckie's going insane. You
should've heard her this morning.

LARRY (V.O.)

No doubt. Tell her I'll call her as
soon as I get home.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A crumpled burrito wrapper is bunched in Larry's fist as he
sits watching the news. He starts to nod off. He jumps up,
WHACKS the wrapper into the waste.

LARRY

Bingo!

The TV PLAYS as he washes his hands in the kitchen sink.

On the screen, the "MUTE" appears.

He sits down again with his Gretsch, absentmindedly tunes it.

He strums tinny chords as the news rolls on. Larry watches:-

-On TV, a series of displays come and go behind the
reporter's head, accompanying each story.

-The Economy -- a graphic of jagged lines over a big dollar
sign;

-A Celebrity -- Barack Obama's stern image flashes up; Barack
again, different tie, smiling;

-A domestic animal -- footage of a dog being pulled alive
from a storm drain. Nothing indicates Gurpreet.

Larry looks up.

The clock on the wall says twenty-nine past eight.

Frustrated, he turns the TV up again.

EXT. 7/11 - NIGHT

Larry walks into the store.

INT. 7/11 - NIGHT

Larry is next in line to pay. He waits, then steps forward.

CASHIER

(to previous CUSTOMER)

Thank you. Good night, Sir.

(to Larry)

(MORE)

CASHIER (CONT'D)

And here he is. One burrito, one
pack o' beers! I been told no
charge to you, Sir.

LARRY

(taken aback)

Oh, oh no. I'll pay. Here, here you
go. Just the usual. C'mon, take it.

The next in line, much older than Larry but still a GOOD
LOOKING LADY, gets impatient. Then she recognizes him.

LADY

You him? You that man, on TV?

LARRY

(reluctant)

Yeah, I am.

LADY

Well, you shoulda let that girl
burn.

Everyone's bewildered.

LADY (CONT'D)

I mean, they wanna light each other
on fire, hell let 'em. One less o'
them saves our boys havin' to come
in harms way. Save Uncle Sam
another body bag, too.

CASHIER

Lady, you're crazy!

CUSTOMER #1

Hey, leave him alone. Can we just
get served, please?

LARRY

I was trying to save her life. She
was just a kid. All life's
precious, surely. We're all just
people.

She looks him up and down.

LARRY (CONT'D)

We're all just God's children.

LADY

What? God? Are you -- what? And
just where was God when my nephew
got murdered, shot to pieces by
those bastards in Afghanistan? Out
savin' some Muslim's ass, I guess.

LARRY
She was American, from Pakistan.

LADY
Huh! What's the difference? Makes
none if you're askin' me.

CASHIER
We ain't.

The exchange dies off. Larry leaves his money and exits.

The cashier and the lady are left to stare each other out.
The cashier wins.

EXT. 7/11 - NIGHT

Larry hurries to his pick-up.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry's burrito sits alone in the kitchen.

Larry himself sits in his TV chair, talking on the phone.

LARRY
So it's --

The other person talks.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Yeah, I understand. But even
though, can't I help any further at
all?

He listens again.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Okay. Yes, please. Thanks. I'll
call tomorrow. Bye.

EXT. POWER LINE - DAY

Larry and Buddy at the truck, wipe stinging sweat from their
dusty faces. This is not a sensitive environment.

SUPER: "One week later."

BUDDY
Wanna break for lunch?

LARRY
You bet. Buckie had me racin' up
and down the pool all afternoon
yesterday.

They munch through their food as they chat on.

BUDDY

She thinks you're the same age,
huh?

LARRY

She must.

BUDDY

You okay, then? You feelin' better?

LARRY

(exasperated)
You know, I just don't get it.
Nobody seems to wanna get these
guys.

BUDDY

Hey, yeah, maybe you should. Track
'em down an' bring 'em to justice,
like the fuckin' Lone Ranger.

LARRY

Funny. Somebody should.

BUDDY

(eyes him up)
Yeah, well, not you. We're too busy
for one thing. Keepin' Texas
Connected. And how much are flights
to Afghanistan these days anyhow?
Wherever the fuck it is? Thousands.

LARRY

Give or take. I already checked.
And she was from Pakistan.

BUDDY

Oh Pakistan, Afghanistan, Alderaan.
Anyway, there you go. Put it to
rest, Larry. You done all you
could. It's not your problem to
solve.

Larry lets it drop. Buddy is a wall of self righteousness.

Their quick lunch over, they head back to the towering rig.
Larry secretly pockets his cellphone.

INT. MICHELLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Michelle, at her desk. A rare moment of calm. She slips her
cell out of her bag.

EXT. POWER LINE - DAY

Larry and Buddy reach the heights, grab by grab.

They're right up now, well over a hundred feet, at the next coupling.

Buddy looks over at --

-- Larry, busy, absorbed.

BUDDY
Y' okay, Larry?

LARRY
(keeps working)
Yeah, fine. Just keepin' busy.

BUDDY
Hmm, that's good. 'Cause you wanna
get anythin' off your chest, just
you let me know. I'll give you my
ex-wife's phone number.

Larry manages a smile. His cell goes in his pocket.

Buddy stares in amazement as Larry swiftly downs tools and
gloves to answer it.

LARRY
(to phone)
Larry Beck.

DET. GUERRERO (V.O.)
Hi, Mister Beck. How's the energy
business?

LARRY
(winks at Buddy)
Not too bad.

DET. GUERRERO (V.O.)
Anyway, it's Detective Guerrero
returning your call from this
morning. Sorry it's taken so long,
but we are kinda occupied.

LARRY
That's okay. Thanks for calling
back. Any news? Anything at all?

DET. GUERRERO (V.O.)
Yeah, I know what you were calling
for. Listen, there's been a hitch.

INT. MICHELLE'S OFFICE - DAY

She tries to call again. The line's busy.

EXT. POWER LINE - DAY

Buddy, motionless in the tower.

LARRY
(to Guerrero)
Okay. See you then. Bye.
(to Buddy)
Sorry, man. I gotta go down there.

Between his gloves in one hand, phone in the other, there's nothing left to hold on to the searing hot tower.

His boot slips an inch. Larry, momentarily away from safety.

The ground seems to make a leap up to grab him.

His face reads the finality, the realization -- he'll fall.

Then, he's back, but the phone does fall --

-- and falls, and BANG! It hits the metal, shoots straight out over the desert.

Buddy, astounded, stares at Larry.

Larry stares out with wonder, down to where the phone shot away.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Larry, purring down the street on his Buell.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

An interview room. Larry sits across a desk from Guerrero.

The case report hard copy, morbidly thin, lays there on the desk between them.

DET. GUERRERO
They're gone. Disappeared, and our intel says days ago, back home to Pakistan, somewhere. Big place. Could be anywhere.

Larry nods, and waits for more.

DET. GUERRERO (CONT'D)
We're lucky that one of them had a speeding ticket he tried to pass off to his uncle, otherwise... See, this part of our community, they seldom come forward about anything. This has been an exceptional case.

LARRY
(quick)
Has? And that's it?

There's a distinctly long silence.

DET. GUERRERO
Well, yeah, short of getting on a plane, and my case load's through the roof. I'm sorry. It's frustrating, I know, but there's nothing we can do. Nothing. The first kid you saw, we're almost sure, pretty sure, that was the girl's, sorry, Gurpreet's boyfriend. Whether he was directly involved or the cause or whatever at the time, that's anybody's. The other two, who are a positive, it's just that our enquiries for crimes of this level, they stop at the border.

LARRY
Level? This level, which is murder. An American girl was murdered in front of me. What level is that?

Guerrero sighs deeply, shamefaced, shaking his bowed head.

On the desk, his forefinger slides the file forward an inch. His chair scrapes back.

Larry looks down at the file. Guerrero's footsteps leave the room. The door OPENS, and SHUTS.

DET. GUERRERO (O.S.)
He who we think he is? Let's see.

EXT. ERCOT DEPOT - DAY

Cars come and go for the shift change.

A CHERRY PICKER TRUNDLES through the yard, kicking up dust.

ENGINEER
(yells)
Larry. Mitch wants ya.

Larry gives a thumbs up, heads over to the office building.

INT. ERCOT DEPOT OFFICE - DAY

A clean, climate controlled refuge amongst the scorching, sweaty industrial vibe left outside as Larry shuts the door.

INT. ERCOT DEPOT OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Larry's boss, MITCH (56), also cool and clean, sits across his desk from Larry, now seated. Larry, not yet changed for work, drains a cup of coffee.

MITCH
Want another?

LARRY
No, I'm good, thanks, Mitch.

MITCH
(regards Larry)
Yeah.

Mitch shuffles papers unnecessarily.

MITCH (CONT'D)
I hear you're trying to go to
Pakistan? Trying to solve this
murder case?

Larry waits for whatever's coming.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Why not just leave it to the
police?

Mitch glances at his watch. Mid sentence, he slides his desk drawer open.

In the drawer, a plastic bottle of Warfarin anticoagulant rolls into his hand.

He maintains their chat as he chucks his heart medicine into his mouth. Neither man acknowledges the act.

MITCH (CONT'D)
They're the pro's, just like we are
at what we do.

LARRY
I get what you're sayin'. I do.

MITCH
Well then.

LARRY

Every time I see her, Boss, it's worse. Not better. It isn't gettin' any better. And the cops've hit a wall. The cops! The cops. All they could do was shrug their shiny shoulders and gave me a telephone number for therapy. I don't want 'therapy' on my medical record. Would you?

MITCH

I guess not.

LARRY

It's just gettin' worse. I gotta do somethin'. It is affecting me. So, I've been doin' some research, and there's a coupla ways I can go from here.

MITCH

Oh yeah?

LARRY

There's this aid organization, USAID, workin' through Pakistan. They train up the locals to do all sorts, but, particularly for me, the transmission lines. It's a big thing for their fuel plan --

MITCH

Whoa, whoa. Look, Larry, I like you, and between you and Jerry, you're the best guy I got here. You're solid, dependable, you're work's almost flawless.

LARRY

Almost?

MITCH

Yes -- almost.

Larry perks up.

LARRY

Well, that's just perfect. 'Cause I need you to recommend me.

Mitch scowls slightly. This was supposed to go differently.

LARRY (CONT'D)

They do six month contracts, which fits perfectly with the amount of time I got saved up on my overtime sheet plus vacation, which you know I hardly ever take. Of course, I gotta land the job first, but from what I make out, they're cryin' out for guys just like me. I just need you to okay the six months, recommend me.

MITCH

Larry. Do you even have a passport?

LARRY

Yeah. I took Michelle and Buckie to Mexico last year, remember? After the crash.

MITCH

Oh yeah. Mexico. Pyramids.

LARRY

Look, it's the weekend. I gotta apply online. At least think about it.

Mitch, silent, save for his breathing.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I am entitled, Mitch. I've earned it. I'll be back in six --

MITCH

Okay! If you manage to get a place with these guys, you're set. You're right, you are entitled to it. It's your life. I guess you want me to leave out the part about your goddam cell phone bouncing halfway across the frigging desert?

Larry nods. Point made.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Just get it all out of your system, Larry, then come back down to earth, for fuck's sake.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry sits at the kitchen table, facing his lit laptop. The TV glows on mute from the other room. Otherwise, it's dark.

His icon tentatively navigates the USAID page.

There's a job that simply reads:- "Electrical Engineer. Pakistan".

The icon moves to the "APPLY" box.

His mouse CLICKS.

EXT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - DAY

The weekend. Larry, in big swim shorts, floats around on an inflatable in the pool: decent sized, the dappled water glitters in the Texan sunshine.

Michelle walks through in a bikini. Larry, mind elsewhere, doesn't notice.

Michelle steps to the side of the pool, curls her toes over the side --

--a splash, she's in, surfaces next to Larry.

MICHELLE
Hey, lazy boy.

LARRY
Hey, darlin'.

MICHELLE
Watcha thinkin'?

LARRY
Not much.

MICHELLE
Know what I'm thinkin'?

No response.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
I am thinking, that you ought to come back. You ought to sell that little shack of yours, or rent her out, and live back here.

He eyes her, shimmering like a mermaid.

LARRY
I got somethin' I gotta take care of, first.

MICHELLE
(making fun)
Ooh, okay, cowboy. That sounded like you said 'Yes'.

She shoves off, smiling.

INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - DAY

Michelle's bedroom, a vision in emerald. Larry struggles out of his soaked shorts.

Michelle sits naked on the bed, towelling her hair.

Larry is definitely looking forward to what's happening next, but it's making him struggle with his shorts more.

She laughs quietly at him.

MICHELLE

Oh, Larry. You make me laugh so much.

LARRY

(joining in)

Yeah? It's not supposed to.

Finally, he's free.

They collapse, still damp, onto the bed.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Sure Buckie ain't back 'til three?

MICHELLE

Umm - hmm.

They start to kiss, very gently, quick little kisses. Then longer, slower, harder. Larry strokes across her breasts, over her belly.

She moves her hands round his shoulders and down to his butt. Her grip draws him in closer. But then he leans on her hair.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Ooh. Careful.

LARRY

(still kissing)

Mm, sorry.

Her thoughts have wandered.

MICHELLE

So, you going to tell me what the big mystery is?

Larry looks like he can't quite recall.

LARRY

Later, baby. Just a bit later.

He kisses down her body. They're back on track.

INT. MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER DAY

The lovers, asleep in each other's arms. Bliss.

A CAR DOOR CLUNKS outside. Michelle wakes, on instant alert, jumps up, shaking Larry.

MICHELLE

Shit! It's three o'clock - Buckie's back. Get dressed, just put your shorts back on and get in the pool. Quick!

He duly does, groggy, under protest.

LARRY

Euch. They're still wet.

MICHELLE

Shut up, wussy.

She grabs a gown and vanishes.

EXT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Everyone's back in their jeans. Michelle on the porch, saying goodbyes to Larry as another weekend with Buckie and her is over.

MICHELLE

(coy)

So, you still want help with that application?

He holds onto her hips.

LARRY

Well, you are the expert with the old interview, job process thing.

MICHELLE

Nicely put, Larry. You rehearse that?

LARRY

Funny. I'll see you Wednesday at my place. Or I can come here?

MICHELLE

Yeah, right. Buckie'll never go to sleep if you're here on a school night.

LARRY

Yeah, you're right.

MICHELLE
Naturally.

They kiss good night and part.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
(calling)
And you can tell me your big goddam
secret.

Larry blows a kiss to her and walks to his Buell.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry lies in bed alone, staring at the ceiling. He looks
over at --

-- the bedside clock. It reads:- "03:37".

He turns over, closes his eyes and curls up.

INT. LARRY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Larry, curled up in bed as before, staring at the wall. He
turns over and sits up. The clock now reads:- "04:28".

He sighs and gets out of bed.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry turns to see Michelle walk in, laptop bag over her
shoulder.

MICHELLE
(quiet)
Hi.

She pats the bag.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
I brought mine. Yours is ancient.

LARRY
Hi. Thanks for coming over.

MICHELLE
Don't be silly.

It's strangely formal, awkward.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Anytime.

They peck. His hands immediately start to explore her back.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Okay. Come on. Work, work, work.

She sits at the table.

LARRY
(conceding)
Yes. Beer? Wine? Got some of your
favorite in the fridge, just in
case.

MICHELLE
No, thanks. Got to get back just as
soon as for the sitter. She's okay,
but your little girl needs her
Mom's discipline.

LARRY
Sure. Let's get to it then.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - LATER NIGHT

Larry and Michelle at the kitchen table. Larry pops a beer.

Michelle has her laptop for enjoyment. She types proficiently
and zooms around the screen with the mouse.

MICHELLE
(in charge)
So - 'why are you applying for this
here job?' You must have an opening
gambit.

LARRY
Erm. Oh.

MICHELLE
Don't worry. I'll think of
something.

She's typing away again. Larry watches her and smiles, all
goofy.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
(absorbed)
You can read it later.

He sits back and relaxes as she reads back, unintelligible
mumbling, to herself.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Yep! That's good for that. 'Special
skills'. Your Spanish is okay.
We'll put 'moderate Spanish'.

She continues to complete Larry's application.

A look of guilt comes over his face as she works.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - LATER NIGHT

They're back at the front door as Michelle makes to leave. She stops, bag on her shoulder, holds the screen door.

MICHELLE

At the risk of becoming a bore,
Larry, why do you want this job,
anyway? What's wrong with working
for Mitch? An 'Aid Trainer' doesn't
seem like you.

His chest heaves. It's time to drop the big one.

EXT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

From the quiet street, the screen door shuts again. She's still on the inside.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michelle's face is not happy.

MICHELLE

Pakistan! It's that girl, Larry,
isn't it. It's that fucking girl.

LARRY

C'mon, don't get upset. Don't be
mad.

MICHELLE

No. You let me sit there and do
your jerk off application, for a
job in Pakistan.

LARRY

It's not forever.

MICHELLE

Oh, well then. What about us? What
about Buckie? What about me?

Silence.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

(fuming)

Look. I've got to go. It's late,
you're an asshole, and I've got to
drive back home for the sitter, and
take care of our-- your daughter.

LARRY
(so sheepish)
Okay. Say 'hi' to Buckie for --

MICHELLE
Her fucking name is Jessica.

EXT. LARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Michelle BLASTS out of the screen door. Her laptop bag catches and BASHES out with her.

Larry frames the doorway behind.

LARRY
(to himself)
That went well.

Off screen, Larry still watching, a CAR DOOR SLAMS and Michelle's car SCREECHES AWAY. He clenches his teeth.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Shit.

EXT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

The same shot as the last -- Larry's front door. His pick-up pulls into the drive.

INT. LARRY'S PICK-UP - DAY

The engine shuts off. Larry hears his house phone RINGING. He dashes out.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

The phone, RINGING.

At the front door, Larry fumbles outside to get in. The door shoots open.

His hand grabs the phone.

LARRY
Hello!

A woman, KRISTY(46), dragging on a cigarette.

KRISTY (V.O.)
Oh, hello. The mystery man answers his phone.

She smokes viciously throughout the call. Larry's face creases, like he's knocked over a good drink.

LARRY
 (too happy)
 Hi, Mom. How're you doin'?

KRISTY (V.O.)
 Hmm, well, pretty curious, and
 annoyed and disappointed. Somethin'
 like that, all rolled up. Buckie
 tells me you're movin' to Pakistan.

LARRY
 I'm not movin' there, Mom. Just
 workin' for --

KRISTY (V.O.)
 You're not gettin' me are ya?
 Mister Hero?

Ice cubes chink down the line, then a swallow.

KRISTY (V.O.)
 Buckie told me. I have to hear it
 from my granddaughter. My own
 goddam son doesn't have the common
 decency...

Larry takes a seat.

KRISTY (V.O.)
 ...to let his mother know that he's
 gonna go halfway round the world
 and go to the other side of the
 planet to do what? Huh? Why're you
 goin' to Pakistan? You know they're
 at war with America? I called
 Michelle . She don't even wanna
 talk about it.

LARRY
 I bet.

KRISTY (V.O.)
 An' your sister's all upset. Been
 in tears, just in her room sobbin'
 her heart out since I told her.

LARRY
 Oh, Mom. What did you have to tell
 Kathy for? She wouldna known if I
 was in the same room or not half
 the time.

KRISTY (V.O.)
 That girl adores you, Larry. That
 is not very nice, or fair. Her
 problems ain't her fault, and you --

LARRY
No, only half. Not my fault either.
Is this why you rang?

KRISTY (V.O.)
I rang...

Another hissing drag.

KRISTY (V.O.)
...to talk some sense into you.
You're my only son, Larry. My son,
d'you hear? I remember when you
were first datin' Michelle, an' you
said you wanted to get married.
Lord! I was so happy for you --

Larry pulls the phone from his ear, shakes his head.

LARRY
Okay. Well, it might not be true
but that's great, Mom. Mom, I gotta
go. I'll call you. Love You, Mom.
Bye, bye.

He hangs up.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Jesus.

He lifts the receiver again, taps in a number. It RINGS
through, then answers.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Hello.

LARRY
Hi, sugar.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Oh, hi.

LARRY
You talk to Kristy recently?

MICHELLE (V.O.)
(laughs)
Ooh, yeah. Should've warned you,
huh? Must've forgotten. How did
that happen?

It breaks a tiny chunk of frost, but enough.

LARRY
Yeah, well it's exactly how I'd
expected she'd react, so no need to
apologize.

Now she really laughs.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Wasn't going to.

LARRY
Oh, really? Well, to be continued.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Anytime, dude.

LARRY
Okay. I'll call you later.

EXT. POWER LINE - DAY

Larry and Buddy, the day done, pack tools into the truck. Off screen, Larry's new phone RINGS.

He picks it from the cab and laboriously accesses an e-mail.

Buddy is still packing up. He SLAMS the tailgate shut.

BUDDY
Okay?

Larry, agitated, then pleased, looks up at him.

LARRY
Yeah. That's it. I'm goin'. I'm
goin' to Pakistan.

INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - DAY

On the dining table stands a home made card from Buckie to her dad. It bears an outline of a map of Pakistan and reads:- "Good Luck, Dad. We Will Miss You". There's noise from outside -- SPLASHING and giggling.

EXT. MICHELLE'S GARDEN - DAY

Michelle appears from inside, in a tiny lemon bikini, carrying tongs and a big wooden bowl of salad. They CLANG down onto an iron patio table away from the pool.

Larry, dressed to swim, on barbecue duty, knows the grill.

EXT. MICHELLE'S GARDEN - FURTHER DAY

Larry, Michelle and Buckie are having lunch, pool side. A large parasol shades Buckie from the searing sunshine.

BUCKIE
Dad.

LARRY
Yes, sweetheart.

BUCKIE
When you were a kid in the olden days, did you always wanna be an electrical engineer?

LARRY
Well, no. Really, I wanted to be a musician, and then I wanted to be a soldier, and then a musician again. Always a musician.

BUCKIE
Oh.

They continue to chomp and pass the good, really good stuff around the table. Buckie shakes the ketchup.

LARRY
Any reason?

BUCKIE
(through food)
No, just askin'.

MICHELLE
(to Buckie)
Not with your mouth full, darling.

Larry, fork loaded, waits.

Buckie chews quick, and swallows a big lump of food.

BUCKIE
Apart from, Mom says --

Michelle halts mid chew, gives her daughter 'the eye'.

Buckie just grins.

LARRY
Mom? Mom says? What?

MICHELLE
(mouth full, warning Buckie)
Mutmee.

BUCKIE
(theatrical)
Mom says, that all of a sudden you wanna be a hero, 'cause you didn't get the chance when you was young-

LARRY
Were young.

BUCKIE

Were young. 'Cause you didn't get
the chance when you were young and
joined the Army like you said you
would.

Michelle has started to flick playfully at Buckie's bare
thigh under the table. Buckie just talks faster.

BUCKIE (CONT'D)

And! That's why you wanna go
trekkin' halfway across the goddam
planet --

The flicks are harder now.

BUCKIE (CONT'D)

Ow! Mom! -- 'on some silly
pointless wild goose chase'.

MICHELLE

(to Buckie)
Well, thank you.

Larry sips his beer, eyes raised at Michelle.

LARRY

(to both)
Ah. I see. I didn't join the Army,
no. But did Mom tell you why?

Their eyes settle on Michelle.

She gives a wonderful, glamorous smile, looking to heaven.

INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - LATER DAY

All three clear the table. The second it's done, Buckie's
gone. She dashes off outside.

MICHELLE

No swimming until --

Buckie shrieks with a SPLASH as she hits the pool.

LARRY

(head in the fridge)
Top up?

MICHELLE

Sure, why the hell not? Listen, I'm
sorry, baby, but I'm not going to
be able to take you to the airport.
It's just going to be too much on a
school night, you know?

He fills her glass.

LARRY

Nah, that's okay. She needs her sleep. It's cool. I'll get a cab. Call you when I land, though.

MICHELLE

Yeah. Good. Okay.

Michelle takes a good gulp of vino.

INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - LATER DAY

The three stand in the hall. Larry's dressed to travel now. The girls are still in their bathers. His big old bergen lies on the floor, absolutely stuffed for his trip.

They're about to say goodbye. For a long time.

Buckie clamps her arms round her dad's waist while Michelle stands by.

BUCKIE

(quiet)

I don't want you to go, Daddy.

LARRY

I know, baby, but it's not for too long, y'know?

He scoops her up and hugs her.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I'll be back before you know it, okay?

She nods, sobbing a little into his neck and shoulder. Brave Buckie.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You two gotta take care of each other while I'm away.

MICHELLE

(softly)

We always do.

Buckie's not brave enough. She jumps down and runs off, trying to breathe her tears back in.

Michelle and Larry are left standing, facing each other. She prods his chest.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

You better come back to me, Larry Beck.

LARRY
I always do. I will, darlin'.

They just slam into each other, hugging, holding like mad, kissing all over each other's faces.

LARRY (CONT'D)
(whispers)
I love you, Mimi.

MICHELLE
(full on crying)
I know. I love you, too. Oh, just go. Go on, go.

She pushes him, but they can't let go.

INT. TAXI CAB (MOVING) - NIGHT

Travelling towards Austin Airport terminal building. Outside lighting through the taxi windows. The concourse drop off area, PASSENGERS busy themselves here and there: business folk, vacationers, moms, dads, kids, all types of luggage.

Lit aircraft SOAR into the bruising sky.

EXT. AIRPORT DROP OFF POINT - NIGHT

Larry lifts the bergen from the trunk onto his back.

INT. AUSTIN AIRPORT - NIGHT

The checking in line. Larry shuffles with the other passengers, an array of Americans and Pakistanis. Their faces wear a quiet, patient anticipation.

INT. AUSTIN AIRPORT - FURTHER NIGHT

Larry swings his bergen round onto the check in desk.

The GROUND CREW GIRL wraps her stickers:- "ISB" -- direct flight to Benazir Bhutto Airport.

Larry nods to her then shakes his head.

She smiles for him. He doesn't smile back.

INT. GROUNDED 737 AIRCRAFT - NIGHT

Larry sits, waiting, staring out the little porthole at America. All around him is chaos as people settle in.

INT. 737 (IN FLIGHT) - FURTHER NIGHT

The gangway, hushed save for background JET NOISE.

Larry, fast asleep, like most others.

A lone Air Steward on the aisle, tends her night bathed flock.

INT. 737 (TAXIING) - DAY

The seat belt light PINGS off. Everyone begins to unbuckle, chatter, stand up, grapple luggage from overhead.

Larry peers out of his little window at Islamabad, Pakistan. His eyes dart about, taking in this new place.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
(over the public address)
Ladies and gentlemen, we have now
arrived in Islamabad where local
time is exactly eight forty three
a.m. The temperature is a very
pleasant twenty nine centigrade,
eighty five degrees fahrenheit --

EXT. BENAZIR BHUTTO AIRPORT - DAY

Larry strides along with his flight bag, shouldering the old bergen. He navigates through the mixed bag of passengers from his flight - mainly Pakistani, some Westerners and a few Far East Asians, brats in tow.

The Immigration Control Line. His eyes scan for signs of the familiar. He sees --

-- a sign for foreigners to queue,

-- a sign for women only, each a muddle of all-comers.

Military looking guards mosey through the crowds, randomly searching baggage. They toss it out and move on, step over clothes on the floor.

He watches, along with everyone else, as a woman stoops to pick up her belongings. She tries to repack, bears the humiliation.

Larry's brow knits.

He steps to help her, but is prevented by a surge of new arrivals entering the concourse. They chatter, push and drag luggage, seem to shout to protect themselves. New queues form. It's just pandemonium. He shuffles onward.

The woman disappears within the larger crowd.

And it's hot. It's dirty.

A child nearby faints, slumped forward.

Larry checks his watch. The dial reads quarter past ten.

The fainted child's mother pats his face to revive him. He lolls in her arms.

Larry tries to swallow. It's all stifling, sickening. He starts to sway.

Then, the AMERICAN LADY behind him starts to tap his shoulder, very insistently. It's his turn at the desk.

The PSEUDO SOLDIER on the desk looks at the passport, then to Larry. He sees the name inside:- "BECK LARRY" and looks impassively at the man in front of him.

LARRY

Okay?

The officer places the open passport face down on his side of the desk.

Larry scowls, embarrassed. He looks behind, smiles and shrugs at the American Lady waiting her turn.

PLEASE NOTE: all Urdu and/or Pashto dialogue will be clearly subtitled in English.

PSEUDO SOLDIER (O.S.)

(in Urdu)

The person you're waiting for has arrived. Would you like me to keep him?

When Larry turns back, he sees --

-- the officer speaking on the desk phone.

PSEUDO SOLDIER (CONT'D)

(in Urdu to the phone)

No. I won't, but he'll've guessed by now.

He gives a chuckle and hangs up. Stern again, he nods to Larry and offers the passport back.

Larry's hand hangs, opened to accept it.

LARRY

Okay?

The officer nods.

Larry's hand closes on his passport. The American Lady arrives in view while Larry humps his bergen.

EXT. USAID FACILITY - DAY

Land Rovers of NEW AID WORKERS, luggage on roof racks. They sit for a moment, engines running. Two ARMED GUARDS wave them into USAID through fortified gates. The gate, bearing the very small "USAID" plaque, closes again quickly.

INT. USAID FACILITY - DAY

Phase one of Orientation: Accommodation. A semi military air still hangs over the proceedings.

Larry, tired, not showered for two days, with other workforce members, trying not to look like he doesn't know where he's going. He walks down a painted hall, carrying his own bags, a plastic key card in his mouth and a map to his room stuffed in his shirt pocket.

WORKER #1

Anyone seen ten? Room ten?

WORKER #2

Up here. Evens are up here.

Larry scowls, drops the bergen and checks the map.

LARRY

(to himself)

Twenty six.

He slides the key through the door lock. The light flickers green. Hey presto. He's home.

INT. LARRY'S ACCOMMODATION ROOM - DAY

He takes the room in. It's serviceable. TV, kettle, fridge, shower: basic three star stuff. The commotion in the hall dies away behind him as the door, his door, closes to.

His bag gets dumped on the single bed.

He checks his watch and leaves the room again.

INT. USAID FACILITY HALL - FURTHER DAY

Phase two: Introductions. Strip lighting bounces off a trestle table, lined with white USAID logo envelopes.

Each envelope bears a handwritten name: the names of some of the ESCORTS who already work there - 'Bod Cutler', 'Nik Harris', 'Jon Thompson', 'Kris Pitaluga', and finally, 'Alec Stuart'. A hand picks up Alec Stuart's, rips it open.

Lean and powerful, combat work gear, Scotsman ALEC (43) stands next to the table reading his assignment for the next few months.

The assignment particulars:- "INDUSTRIAL COVER AND MOTOR PATROL. SUBJECT: LARRY BECK. ELECTRICAL ENGINEER. HOMETOWN: ROUND ROCK, TEXAS, USA." A head and shoulders shot of Larry, burning determination.

ALEC
(to himself)
Man alive. 'Larry Beck'? Oh well,
could be worse. At least it's no a
bird.

On the other side of the hall, double fire doors crash open with a dozen or so new recruits. Each wears the ubiquitous stick on name tag. A printed laminate on the door reads:- "Orientation".

Larry, already seated. The others join him, jostle and budge into their seats.

AMANDA SINGER (33), the meet and greet lady for this session, is a genuine ray of sunshine.

AMANDA
-- just take a seat anywhere,
please, ladies, gentlemen, and we
can begin. I'm sure you're all
pretty eager to freshen up and get
some real food, settle into your
accommodation. Now I know we're all
terribly jet-lagged. Today's date
is the third, in case you're
thinking about celebrating for the
Independence festivities tomorrow,
of course not back home, not yet.

She takes a deep breath.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
But, as is the way, first things
first...

The workers do as they are bid now and steadily, quietly, take their plastic seats. They politely shuffle along the rows, Amanda's spiel causing comedically puzzled looks.

She waits for calm.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
...okay.

Many of the assembly are blinking, yawning, stretching. Not Larry. He sits, diligently takes in what Amanda has to say.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 Safety. Always 'Safety First'. Your safety, you well being and that of your fellow workers is our paramount concern. To that end, each work team will be assigned it's corresponding number in an armed escort --

With Amanda's mention of them, the bunch of ESCORTS, standing ominously on their side of the hall: they are what they are - armed, sombre, definitely ex-something nefarious with Kevlar over their T shirts. A few sip coffee with a thoughtful note.

All heads turn to them as Amanda waves.

Alec's face, a moment longer than the others, masks contempt.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 Hi, guys!

Some escorts nod. Others don't. They just brood, sip coffee.

Amanda continues to smile, not buying it. The inevitable SMART ASS in the crowd shouts.

SMART ASS
 Hey! We surrender, guys!

Larry drops his head in embarrassment.

The escorts do not acknowledge Smart Ass.

Amanda continues her speech. Larry remains looking at --

-- the escorts, who've only now begun to mill around. They mutter and smile to one another. One gives the 'wanker' hand sign and receives a chortle from a comrade.

AMANDA
 So, not only do we recommend that you do not travel anywhere without being escorted, for safety's sake and also under contractual obligation, we insist on it.

Larry looks away from the small army, back to Amanda.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 Now, please pay attention to your itineraries...

INT. USAID FACILITY HALL - FURTHER DAY

Alec strides over to the work force, now stood, spread about, baking in the strip lighting.

ALEC
 (yells)
 Larry Beck.

Larry obediently emerges, crossing the empty space between them. Approaching, he offers his hand.

ALEC (CONT'D)
 Larry. Alec. You wi' me.

Larry cocks his head.

LARRY
 Sorry. Am I, with you?

Alec regards his new charge suspiciously.

ALEC
 (slowly)
 Aye.

LARRY
 (penny drops)
 Oh, Scottish, huh?

ALEC
 Frae the ground up, sunshine. Let's
 go.

He jerks a thumb into a brisk walk.

ALEC (CONT'D)
 I'll show you round. Work starts
 tomorrow, y' know. There's nae rest
 round here.

Larry goes along to get along.

EXT. PAKISTAN POWER LINE - DAY

Two USAID Defender jeeps sit next to the relaxing lunch party: the team of 2 Aid instructors, 4 trainees, and 6 escorts number twelve altogether. The instructors have a safety conscious look, the trainees traditional with a hard hat.

Standing apart, the escorts keep it para-military.

Everyone gets their packed lunches out and starts to eat. One guy has a sandwich in one hand and a cigarette on the go in the other. He smokes through mouthfuls.

Larry sits, happy enough, staring at nothing in particular. Then he stops, mid chew. He rises smoothly and takes a step. Reaching inside the Defender, he grasps --

-- a Mauser .243 bolt action rifle from inside.

Rounding the back of the jeep, he SNAPS THE BOLT IN, raises the rifle and --

-- BANG! Everyone jumps.

The escorts dive at their respective charges, Glock .45 pistols magically appearing.

A few yards away, a three foot long saw scale viper writhes its final breath. Viscera bulges from its skin.

Larry smiles with satisfaction at his shot, POPS the rifle casing out, then turns to see --

-- everyone staring at him, the pistols pointed at him. The work teams are open mouthed, even the smoking sandwich guy. Alec straightens up first amid the group. He lowers his weapon and looks evenly into Larry's eyes.

Larry looks back with a modest shrug.

EXT. USAID FACILITY - DAY

The buzz of the day starting.

Jeeps in the motor pool. A gas nozzle CLANKS into a gas tank, the lever pressed, HISSES to fill up.

INT. USAID FACILITY CANTEEN - DAY

Chefs chop vegetables in the noisy kitchen prep area. A RADIO JANGLES in the background. Someone sings along.

Larry waits at the service bar with his tray.

Westernized breakfast items are served to those just ahead of him by effervescent SUZI (32), the early shift canteen girl. She's taken a shine to Larry, thanks to cheeky Alec.

SUZI
Morning, Larry.

LARRY
Morning, Suzi.

She cocks her head, smiling, waves her spatula over the display.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Yes, please. Twice for everything.

SUZI
Dream on, kid.

Alec appears at Larry's side with his own tray.

ALEC
(to Larry)
Mornin' Boss.

LARRY
Hey, Alec.

ALEC
(to Suzi)
Give the poor bugger double. He's
workin' his bloody arse off.

She shakes her head, piling breakfasts for both of them.

SUZI
You'll get me shot, Alec Stuart.

EXT. USAID FACILITY - DAY

Larry and Lindsey join the others, the same two teams of six.
They clamber into the two loaded Defenders for another day.

Other jeeps head out, heaving along with work trailers
kicking up dust.

INT. JEEP #1 - LARRY'S JEEP (MOVING) - DAY

The occupants bounce around. They smoke, but it's still too
early for chatter.

EXT. PAKISTAN POWER LINE - DAY

The crew and trainees are in the pylon, doing their thing.

In the quiet, Larry calmly shows a Pakistani lad how to
maintain the couplings.

LARRY
(miming)
Okay. Twist, like this, then that
one to straighten 'em up. Then,
tighten. Okay?

The lad nods.

TRAINEE
Yes.

LARRY
Okay. Then the next one. Good.
Good. Ya got it.

EXT. PAKISTAN POWER LINE - LATER DAY

The crew clamber down and pack their jeeps and trailers. The escorts observe the men and the horizon equally. Then they mount up and drive back off to HQ, safe and sound.

EXT. PAKISTAN POWER LINE - DAY

A new day. Same routine, different T shirts. Lunch again -- time to chill, bar the escorts.

The guys squat and lounge around the slight shade thrown by the jeeps at this time of day.

Larry and Alec sit together, away from the others, as has become their custom since the viper shooting.

Out of the blue! Two Pakistani Army Puma Gunships ROAR OVERHEAD.

Their ROTARS, huge, dangerously close. They could slice the power cables any moment now.

Everyone looks up, startled. They see --

-- PAKISTANI TROOPS, armed to the teeth of their black beards, staring back down at them.

Alec's trigger finger twitches to his pistol.

LARRY
(above the din)
Jesus!

The ROTARS SUBSIDE as the choppers pass.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Could they get any closer?

ALEC
Aye. Trained by the best.

A boast, or a dig? Another escort, clearly American in stars and stripes tattoos, flips Alec the finger. There's stilted laughter.

The levity settles the work party back down again.

ALEC (CONT'D)
(to Larry)
Bit o' danger, eh? Help your lunch
go down.

Larry smiles.

LARRY
That what brought you out here? A
bit of danger?

ALEC
Me? What, this? This is nuthin'.
Babysittin' duty.

LARRY
Oh.

ALEC
(smiles)
Aye. Seen worse, pal.

LARRY
I bet you have.

They continue to eat, selecting pieces from their lunch bags.

ALEC
What about yourself? You think this
would be this?

Larry's quiet for a moment. He looks straight at Alec and
begins the tale.

LARRY
Well, something happened to me back
home. Not me exactly, not me at
all. There was this girl.

ALEC
Oh, Foreign Legion story, eh?

Larry stops, bows his head.

ALEC (CONT'D)
Sorry. Go ahead.

LARRY
She was -- just a kid...
(falters)
...just a kid. Here.

He pulls himself together, fishes the borrowed police report
from his bag. Together with the newspaper clippings stapled
to it, he passes it to Alec.

Larry watches as the ex-soldier scans the bits and pieces.

The other guys in the work party are busy with their own
lunch time routines. They chat quietly, joke a bit, act cool.

Alec hands the report back.

ALEC
Oh, right. So you here for her?

LARRY
(stone cold)
For her killers.

ALEC
Well, good luck wi' that. You know
what F.A.T.A stands for?

LARRY
Look, I haven't just been playin'
pool and watchin' porn since I got
here. I already got their address
from the police report. That's how
come I know they both live up here,
in the Federally Administered
Tribal Area. So yeah, I do know
what F.A.T.A stands for. All I need
is some kind of capability to get
me up there, and get them, somehow,
taken in. It is murder, Alec.

ALEC
Hmm. Murder all right. Been to the
police here yet?

LARRY
No, but it's our rest days comin'
up, right? I was hopin' that...

Alec starts to shake his head.

LARRY (CONT'D)
...as you're familiar with--

ALEC
Ah, wait a minute. I'm here for the
money. No for chargin' about
upsettin' people like this. You
read that? These people are about
to become part of the chain of
command, and these two little
shites are effectively gonna be our
bosses. You're no the only guy who
can read, y'know. Over a billion
dollars from around the world sunk
into Pakistan's energy industry,
and someone's got to spend it. The
kids I went to school with couldn't
even afford to but their own
houses. I've got three! And as for
knockin' on the fuckin' Taliban's
front door -- you're dreamin', man.
Dreamin'.

LARRY
Yeah, I know. I can see all that,
Alec. And that's why I need to go
now.

(MORE)

LARRY (CONT'D)

Look, I'm goin' to the police station in town Friday. You're supposed to accompany me, anyway.

The statement hangs.

Alec looks back at --

-- the pictures of the suspects, the fresh faced young Gurpreet. The morgue glossies.

ALEC

One trip. Out, straight back again.

LARRY

Yes! Thanks, man, that's great, 'cause I've booked the jeep for Friday morning.

Alec gives a big laugh.

ALEC

Who's workin' fae who here?

LARRY

(joking along)

Well, strictly speakin', you work for me, but I have to do what you say.

ALEC

Aye. And that is what you call a paradox.

INT. ISLAMABAD POLICE STATION - DAY

A show piece facility for a nicer part of town: all brushed steel and plexiglass. It appears empty, save for one fierce looking young OFFICER at the front desk. This guy looks tough because he is tough -- part of the Elite Punjab Police.

Larry enters the air conditioned station and approaches the front desk.

The desk officer eyes him solemnly.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Behind the large station windows, the Punjab officer, bored to tears, observes the foreigner. The folk of Islamabad bustle and whizz by.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The officer leaves the desk. He gently points to Larry, then to the desk, indicating Larry to stay. Larry gets the point.

LARRY
Here? Yeah, I'll stay here. Sure,
you got it, bud. My fault entirely.

The officer gives him a blank look, then is gone.

LARRY (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Knew I shoulda --

INT. POLICE STATION OFFICE - DAY

The desk officer appears at a glass strip in the office door.

It distracts his CAPTAIN -- a big guy, even more ferocious looking than the desk officer. The Captain waves him in before he can knock. The desk officer enters politely.

DESK OFFICER
(in Urdu)
Sir, can you please speak to this
Englishman at the desk, please,
Sir?

The Captain GRINDS his chair back.

INT. FRONT DESK - DAY

Leaving the desk boy in his wake, the Captain takes charge. He appears before Larry, beckons him to his office.

Doing so, they pass the desk officer, who snaps a crisp salute before heading back to being bored.

LARRY
(to the desk kid)
Thank you.

DESK OFFICER
(in Urdu)
Thank you, Sir.

INT. POLICE STATION OFFICE - DAY

The Captain clears papers from his desk, gives Larry his full attention.

CAPTAIN
(flawless English)
So, please have a seat and how may
I be of service?

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Across the street, Alec pays for some packet of food from a street vendor. He opens it, takes a spoon from his own pocket and begins to munch: it's good stuff. He casually checks out the police station, enjoying his snack.

Through the window, the desk officer's head drops. He gives himself a shake, produces a pile of loose files and reluctantly begins sorting them.

INT. POLICE STATION OFFICE - DAY

The Captain leans back in his chair. Larry's reports are spread in front of him.

CAPTAIN
I see.

LARRY
Yeah, and I can see what you're thinking. There's no real evidence, not from the scene. Material, I think, is it?

The Captain nods.

LARRY (CONT'D)
But then, there have been positive I.D's.

The Captain shifts slightly in his chair.

LARRY (CONT'D)
She was on fire, burned up, for crying out loud. That's why there's no evidence, unless you count ashes. Charred --

CAPTAIN
Sorry, Mister... Beck, but, even here, we need evidence.

They sit, one looking at the other.

LARRY
But she died in Texas. They murdered her there. God, they ran right past me.

CAPTAIN

Yet you yourself couldn't provide identification of the suspects for your own police personnel.

LARRY

(touching the papers)

Others did. They came forward, and I've given you the names that they gave the police, the police back in Texas, of the guys who did it. And I've got their address here in Pakistan.

CAPTAIN

Yes. This is all rather unusual, in every respect, I certainly agree. So! I have their names, details etcetera and I will look into this, Mister Beck. I can definitely take it to my boss and see what she says.

The Captain begins to type into his computer.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

(while typing)

See? I, am, logging, it, now.

His hands skip across the Urdu keyboard.

On the screen, facing away from Larry, his Pakistani police file flicks up in Urdu. It has photos, home address, passport details, age, date and place of birth, employer, marital status -- the works.

The CURSOR CLICKS to minimise it.

LARRY

That's all I ask. That's why I'm here.

CAPTAIN

But, may I offer some advice from my years of experience within the police service, Mister Beck? Good. Because I should warn you, your chances of success are minimal.

LARRY

My? My chances? Erm --

CAPTAIN

Yes, you see, here, Mister Beck, these issues are very much a western priority. Look around you.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

A state of the art facility, primed to receive those at the sticky end of a just society in one form or another, and yet, deserted. Our work is elsewhere, not in marital disputes, no matter how severe. And so, to reiterate, your chances are indeed minimal. In fact, you might say negligible given your attitude to our society and how it functions.

LARRY

Functions? I don't follow. So, what you're sayin' is... What are you sayin'? That I'm the bad guy?

CAPTAIN

Well, now, let us not become further enveloped in an unnecessary discussion concerning the points of good or bad. Some things simply are what they are.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Larry pulls the station door open, back to --
-- the bright heat and noise. He steps from the pavement.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The desk officer blatantly observes Larry.

DESK OFFICER

(to the Captain, O.S.)
(in Urdu)

He's just standing there, Sir.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

(in Urdu)

Hmm. Let's see where he goes.

EXT. ISLAMABAD STREET - DAY

Larry, scanning the crowds. He spots --
-- Alec, by the vendor.

Larry trots across the road.

ALEC

(chewing)

Well?

Larry just shrugs and exhales.

ALEC (CONT'D)
Aye, well.

LARRY
Yeah. What're you eatin' now?

ALEC
Aloo keema.

Larry, scowls, peers into the dish.

LARRY
What? Leukaemia?

ALEC
(smiling)
Mince an' tatties. Y' want some?

LARRY
Er, no, thanks.

ALEC
Your loss, pal. Let's get back.

The two guys make their way around a market area. It is incredibly busy. All kinds of people go in a hundred different directions. Tangled stalls of meats, fruit, cloth, hardware, ammunition, fancy goods.

Larry and Lindsey filter through, with the crowd.

LARRY
Without bein' too pessimistic...

They're parted by the crowd. A cow's whole lifeless head seems to float towards them along the ground. Then the wheelbarrow and the skinny kid pushing it also emerge. Larry eyes the passing head.

LARRY (CONT'D)
...I don't think he gave two shits.

A couple of grizzled older guys stare at the Westerners, then go back to lazing by the road.

Larry and Alec continue to filter. In the crowd behind them, a figure emerges, tracking. It's the elite desk officer, now in a big civilian overcoat despite the heat. He sneaks, ripples like a shadow.

ALEC
Yeah, don't let 'em grind ya down.

LARRY

I won't!
 (to himself)
 Don't worry about that.

Handfuls of raggedy kids mill between the traffic, holding flowers to car windows.

Larry sees the children. He takes it in, these beggar kids.

Alec's oblivious.

A cute girl, barely six years old, catches Larry's eye.

She's on him. She holds out her rose, blocking their path.

FLOWER GIRL

(in Urdu)
 Allah bless you and your family.

Larry, awkward, stops.

The flower, raised waist high to the men. Alec's thumb directs her away.

ALEC (O.S.)

Hey, piss off, wee girl.

She stands her ground.

ALEC (CONT'D)

(to Larry)
 Watch this.

He opens his wallet and hands her a one thousand rupee note. As it changes hands, he wags a finger at her.

ALEC (CONT'D)

(loud, to the girl)
 Here you go. No charas. No charas.

She gives a wicked little smile, snatches the money and dashes straight off.

Alec, holding his new rose, watches her.

ALEC (CONT'D)

There she goes.

She arrives at a small group of men, who sit in tree shade on the corner of the market.

Her little hand passes the note to the group's clear Alpha.

The Alpha eyes the Westerners through the crowd, then confidently, openly gives her something from his palm.

She snatches that and disappears again. The dealers go back to chatting beneath the trees.

She scampers off, vanishes.

Larry and Alec are left as observers. They carry on.

EXT. ISLAMABAD SIDE STREET - DAY

The flower girl scurries along through back streets, progressively less pleasant. It becomes a shanty town.

Her bare feet dodge the open sewer and she leaps into --

INT. SHANTY DOMICILE - DAY

-- a dark shack.

EXT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

At the market edge, Larry and Alec reach their jeep.

The car doors -- SLAM, SLAM.

The exhaust COUGHS smoke, brake lights flash on and off. The jeep GRUMBLES forward, merging with the crowds and traffic.

INT. FLOWER GIRL'S SHACK - DAY

She scrabbles in the gloom for --

-- a hidden disposable lighter, which she instantly flicks to light her lunch time joint.

In the corner of the fetid hovel, beneath a blanket, a slumbering figure stirs.

A man's hand, huge in front of her tiny features, steals the joint from her mouth. She looks up, tight lipped, indignant. She is dragged away, out of shot, to the corner.

EXT. SHANTY TOWN - DAY

The opening of the shack is wrenched to from within.

INT. LARRY'S USAID ROOM - NIGHT

Larry, no shoes and a beer, reclines on the bed, cellphone in hand. It RINGS, then picks up.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Hello.

LARRY
Hey, gorgeous.

INT. MICHELLE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Her face lights up.

MICHELLE
God, how're you doing? How's the work going? You know I was expecting you to call Wednesday. Buckie got pretty bummed out.

LARRY (V.O.)
Okay, I know. It's all great so far. You tell her I was just workin'?

MICHELLE
Of course. Here, I'll tell her you're on. She's just getting ready for school.

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Larry sips his beer as Michelle goes to fetch Buckie.

BUCKIE (V.O.)
Daddy?

LARRY
Hey, how's my little champ?

BUCKIE (V.O.)
Good. Did you get stuck at work?

LARRY
I did, sweetie, and you remember it's night time here now?

BUCKIE (V.O.)
Oh, yeah, 'cause of the time difference.

INT. MICHELLE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Michelle continues to get ready for work through Buckie's chat with her dad. She slips school books into Buckie's satchel, brushes a couple of tangles out of Buckie's hair, cuts sandwiches for two packed lunches.

BUCKIE
Mom says I'm too young for a sleep over at Ava's this weekend. Can I go?

Michelle looks her up and down.

LARRY (V.O.)
You are definitely too young, and
so is Ava. Mom's right. Sorry,
Buckie.

BUCKIE
Okay. Bye, Daddy. Love you.

She hangs up.

BUCKIE (CONT'D)
(to Michelle)
He says I can go. Yes!

Michelle is puzzled, then really angry.

MICHELLE
(to Buckie)
No. The answer is 'No'. And just
for that, you're missing the first
ten sleep overs when you are old
enough.

The phone RINGS again. Michelle picks it up.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Larry?

LARRY (V.O.)
What the fuck's with her?

MICHELLE
(to Buckie)
Room. Now.

There's a glare off. Buckie goes. The bedroom door SLAMS.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
(to Larry)
She has been like this since you
went. Pain in the goddam ass.

LARRY (V.O.)
You want me to talk to her?

MICHELLE
No, no. She can stew in her room
for ten minutes. She can miss your
call.

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Larry is powerless, sitting up now.

LARRY
Okay. So, how are you?

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Great.

LARRY
I'm not gonna be here forever. I am coming home.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Okay.

LARRY
Michelle. Mimi. Come on.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Oh, Larry. It's not okay. Buckie's like this 'cause she's worried. It's on the news every goddam day. The kids at school keep asking her if you've been taken captive yet. My asshole sister, who's clearly not skinny enough to come visit, refuses to help even pick her up from school.

Larry sits like a dummy

MICHELLE (V.O.)
You're family are no help. And I'm worried fucking sick, too. It's just so dangerous out there. What the fuck are you doing in Pakistan, Larry? What?

INT. BUCKIE'S ROOM - DAY

Buckie stands, open mouthed, barely breathes, eaves dropping at her own door.

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Voices pass in the corridor.

LARRY
I... I told you before I came out.
Michelle sucks through her teeth down the line.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Look, I'm gonna clear it up. And when I do, I can come straight home. There'll be no reason for me to stay here then.
(MORE)

LARRY (CONT'D)
I don't actually want to be here,
you know that. Don't you? Honey?

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Yeah. Jesus.

LARRY
Mimi, don't be like this. Tell
Buckie I love her. I love you, too.

INT. MICHELLE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Michelle stands, still upset. Her make up is ruined.

MICHELLE
Yeah. Love you.

LARRY (V.O.)
I'll call every day from now on, no
matter what. Just to say 'Hi'.
Okay?

MICHELLE
Yeah. Okay. Bye.

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

He's hunched over the side of the bed.

LARRY
Bye.

The phone clicks dead in his hand.

INT. USAID FACILITY CANTEEN - DAY

Alec enjoying his breakfast. Larry slides into the chair
opposite. He just sits, watching his escort.

ALEC
What? Oh, what now?

INT. USAID JEEP (MOVING) - DAY

Bumping down a dusty desert track, through the windshield are
mountains in the distance.

Alec GRINDS a gear change through a bend.

Surveyors equipment rattles in the back of the jeep.

Larry's eyes flicker intently at --

-- the terrain through the windshield.

LARRY
Far to go?

ALEC
(laughs)
Are we nearly there yet? No. About
an hour. But that up ahead is the
foothills of the Hindu Kush, my
friend. They get wind someone's up
here pokin' about, they'll vanish
into the mountains. If we're lucky.

They jangle along.

ALEC (CONT'D)
Y'know, it's pretty fuckin'
impressive, when y'think. Three
million people, all the men, just -
vanish! Y'know we talked about
F.A.T.A?

Larry nods.

ALEC (CONT'D)
Well, that's where we are now.
We've arrived.

Larry keeps looking ahead.

EXT. USAID JEEP (MOVING) - DAY

The jeep ploughs on, fishtails and shoots off, away toward
the mountains.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADSIDE - DAY

Alec pulls the jeep over, right off the dusty track.

Larry watches him check his pistol. Alec is detached as he
readies for the mission.

The guys don florescent safety tabards, hard hats, the works.
They are now dressed as a Surveyors work detail.

The back of the jeep SLAMS.

The jeep hurtles off again.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY

From the breezy ridge, the jeep parked in the distance. It
looks like a toy in the middle of nowhere.

Through a rifle scope: the cross hairs scan the valley floor,
fix on Alec. It travels smoothly up to his hard hatted head.

An INSURGENT RIFLEMAN, bearded, typical local dress. His finger moves from the side of the trigger guard to hug around the trigger itself.

TUTOR'S VOICE (O.S.)
(in Pashto)
No. Be patient.

The rifleman's finger compliantly slips back out.

Through the scope, he sweeps a little, over to Larry. Aiming straight for the head, he maintains his target.

TUTOR'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(in Pashto)
Good. Good work.

RIFLEMAN
(in Pashto)
Pow! Got you.

Through the scope, Larry pretends to work with the surveying equipment.

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - DAY

Larry fiddles with a theodolite (surveyors measuring gizmo) while Alec strides back and forth with a range pole. The ill practised deception is convincing for all of half a minute, then becomes comically amateur.

ALEC
(calls)
Okay, Larry. I'm runnin' outta moves, here. Take a few snaps an' let's fuck off.

LARRY
Gotcha.

He settles the theodolite at his feet.

With a digital camera, Larry gets a few shots of their actual objective. He points the camera across the panoramic vista.

The camera -- CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK at --

-- the palatial Qureshi compound.

On the little camera screen, close up, all the shots of the house click up.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY

Through the rifle scope, the guys quickly pack up and whisk away in the jeep. The distance delays the faint engine noise.

INT. USAID FACILITY - DAY

The jeep trundles through the main gate.

INT. USAID FACILITY CANTEEN - DAY

Larry moseys through on his way to his room. His cell phone beeps a text.

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - DAY

Larry stands, phone in hand.

LARRY

I got your text. I was calling anyway. You don't have to send reminders

MICHELLE (V.O.)

I know that. That's not it.

LARRY

So, what's up?

He sits to unlace his boots.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Well, as if things aren't quite bad enough, Brenda called, Brenda Mitchell, and Mitch got taken to hospital the night before last.

LARRY

(stops fidgeting)
Shit. Is he okay?

MICHELLE (V.O.)

It's his heart. Minor heart attack, whatever 'minor's supposed to mean. Heart attack sounds like a heart attack to me.

LARRY

Yeah. Shit, poor Mitch.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Well, she says he's okay. Feeling much better. Just thought you should know.

LARRY

Thanks. If she calls again, give her my love and everything, can you?

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Sure. Of course. No more burgers
for Mitch.

LARRY
Yeah. I think he'd rather be dead.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
No kidding. No beer, no burgers, no
fun of any kind, Mister Mitchell.

They laugh it off, for a moment.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Oh, but you know what she said?
Said she doesn't blame you.

LARRY
Why the fuck would she?

MICHELLE (V.O.)
I don't know. Just lashing out, I
guess. I wouldn't worry.

LARRY
Puh. I'm not. Nah.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Yeah. You know Mitch loves you. And
so does she, really.

LARRY
Hmm.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
And we do too.

LARRY
I know.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
Talk soon.

LARRY
Yeah. Bye, baby.

Michelle's gone. Larry looks at the phone.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Ah, f-

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Late. Larry, in bed, stares at the ceiling. He throws off the covers.

EXT. USAID FACILITY (SECURITY LIT) - NIGHT

Larry, fully dressed, breath visible, wanders the perimeter.

A GUARD, all peak cap and assault rifle, nods to him.

Larry nods and smiles back. Then there's a voice from the darkness.

ALEC (O.S.)
Can't sleep, eh, boss?

Larry jumps a little.

LARRY
Fuck it. Jesus, c'mon, Al.

They survey the night together in silence.

LARRY (CONT'D)
The police picked me up today.

ALEC
No shit?

LARRY
No. No shit. It was surreal,
completely like a fuckin' spy
movie.

Larry tells his spy story, in:

FLASHBACK (DAY), INTERCUT WITH PRESENT (NIGHT):

EXT. USAID FACILITY - DAY

Larry at the gate, exiting the compound.

USAID GUARD
Where're you going, Sir? No exit
without your escort.

EXT. USAID FACILITY - NIGHT

Larry, amazed it actually happened.

LARRY
Told him I'd be five minutes,
getting some gifts from that shitty
little stall on the corner for my
kid.

ALEC
You shoulda damn well known better,
Larry.

LARRY

Yep. I know now. Had a phone call
today from home, and I just needed
to get out.

EXT. USAID FACILITY - DAY

Outside the walls and fences, Larry trots along. Exposed.
Vulnerable.

LARRY (V.O.)

Jesus, I wasn't outta the gate
twenty seconds when they just...
appeared. The van...

A pale colored, nondescript van lurches up behind Larry.

INT. VAN - DAY

He's framed in the daylight of the open door, turning,
realizing. A locally dressed man shoves him in and continues
walking. A web of hands grab him, and the door SLIDES SHUT.
It goes black.

LARRY (V.O.)

... the hood...

The VAN DOOR BANGS SHUT again. A grimy hood dashes over
Larry's surprised face. The ENGINE REVS. The web of hands,
attached to camouflaged sleeves, pin him to the side panel of
the van. Everyone lurches to the back as the van speeds off.

EXT. USAID FACILITY - NIGHT

Alec remains impassive, a sounding board for the tale.

LARRY

... the works.

He clears his throat.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Then we drove off, not for long,
really. But it felt like ages,
y'know? And I was panickin',
fuckin' sweatin' like hell.

INT. VAN (MOVING) - DAY

Larry, hooded and held on all sides by UNIFORMED PAK POLICE.
The desk officer, highly alert now, sits opposite him.

LARRY (V.O.)
Then we stopped. And I thought I
didn't know where, 'cause they
never took the hood off.

INT. VAN - DAY

The Captain from the police station leans into view from next
to the desk officer.

LARRY (V.O.)
But I did know it was that same cut
glass bastard from the police
station.

CAPTAIN
(to Larry)
What are we to do with you, eh?
Pakistani methods are equal to, if
not greater in yielding the desired
outcome than those employed in your
little camp down in Guantanamo Bay,
or wherever you choose to set
yourselves up these days.

He allows a silence. The implication sinks in.

Larry thinks it's his turn.

LARRY
I haven't set up shit. What am I --

CAPTAIN
Do. Not. Interrupt me, Beck.
Please. Deportation could very
easily become the least of your
worries, you know. You should not
underestimate our funny little
country, and you should not forget
this.

He nods to the desk officer.

Larry gets a slap. Then another. He takes it.

All of a sudden, the SLIDE on an automatic pistol is PULLED
BACK in front of his face. Larry flinches and struggles.

EXT. USAID FACILITY - NIGHT

Alec reacts with an 'I told you so' look.

LARRY
I thought I was dead. Thought I'd
be another dumped body. Jesus. Fuck
this place.

Alec lights a cigarette.

ALEC
Well, you're still here, big man.

Larry looks him right in the eye.

LARRY
They put a fucking gun to my head.

INT. VAN - DAY

The slider goes back again and Larry flinches, struggles. The muzzle pressed to his temple, the hood darkens with sweat. He writhes within the gripping hands. His head is forced to one side by the pistol holder.

LARRY
(in van)
Ngh. NGH!

CAPTAIN
Do you understand?

He leans right into Larry and raises his voice.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Do you see, now, Beck?

LARRY
Yes. Oh, please.

CAPTAIN
(leaning back)
Good. I am very glad that you do.
Now, get the fuck out.

EXT. USAID FACILITY - DAY

The van door SLIDES OPEN. Larry is hurled to the sidewalk, still with the sweaty old hood.

The van ZOOMS OFF again. He stands up. Shaking, he drags the hood from his head and blinks in the daylight. Ashen faced, he wanders back up to the gate, yards away. No-one takes a second look.

END OF INTERCUT

EXT. USAID FACILITY - NIGHT

Alec drags his smoke.

ALEC
(soothing)
It'll get better, well, maybe
'better's no the right word. But it
will, it'll get less, harsh.

Larry contemplates this for a second.

LARRY
So, why you up so late?

ALEC
Well, you know me now, Larry. I'm
just too sensitive for my own good.
I just love to look at the stars
an' the wonder of it all. C'mon.
Let's go do some shots.

INT. USAID JEEP (MOVING) - DAY

Heading out to another day. Larry, hung over, blinks at the scenery.

Alec concentrates very hard on driving. He swerves, brakes too hard. The guys in the back look alarmed.

ALEC
(to himself)
Ah, for the love o' --
(to the car in front)
Move your fuckin' arse!

No-one dares to protest.

EXT. PAKISTAN POWER LINE - DAY

Hot, and getting hotter. Larry stands in the belting sun, glugging down water.

EXT. USAID FACILITY (FLOODLIT) - NIGHT

Tennis courts. Aid workers on down time in brand new sports gear.

A young woman has service. She follows the ball into the air and WHACKS IT. It's a smash.

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Larry dries off after a shower.

The TV in the corner zaps ON. He continues to dry. Some cheesy pop video plays on the TV in the background. There's a quick knock at the door.

Larry's there in a flash.

Alec stands at the open door, still in daytime battle gear.

ALEC
Got a minute?

He walks in anyway. Larry starts to dress.

ALEC (CONT'D)
I been talkin' to the guys, testin'
the water, an' they've become a wee
bit curious.

Larry pauses.

LARRY
Yeah?

ALEC
Yeah. That's what y'told me to do,
right?

LARRY
No. That's great. Let's go see 'em.

EXT. USAID FACILITY (FLOODLIT) - NIGHT

The tennis players still jump around and WHACK the ball --
all very serious.

Through wire meshed walkways, Larry follows Alec. Larry
carries the now dog eared file of reports and news clippings
under his arm like some gaffer stick of justice. They stroll
unnoticed past the tennis girls and guys. Apart. Elite.

INT. USAID CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Alec leads Larry down a slight slope, to a door at the very
end.

We see the home made sign naming this room:- "The dEn" (sic),
where the escorts billet.

INT. THE DEN - NIGHT

They enter a smoke filled, testosterone soaked off duty area
for the escorts. Dingy, edgy, like a biker's bar. An old
stereo brays rock music on CD's from the old days. All the
guys are letting off steam.

ALEC
(shouts)
Ho!

The noise subsides.

ALEC (CONT'D)
 (to Larry)
 Show 'em what y' showed me.

Alec clears the pool game with his forearm. The balls RATTLE to one side.

THOMPSON
 I had money on that.

ALEC
 Shush.

Thompson smiles, shakes his head.

Larry carefully spreads his evidence across the green baize of the table.

The guys automatically, but reservedly, move forward to check it out. There's a hush.

ALEC (CONT'D)
 (whispers to Larry)
 Think you'd better start talkin',
 big man.

LARRY
 Oh. Oh, yeah.
 (clears his throat)
 Well, what I'm askin' for is
 basically a lot, but, it's what I
 couldn't get to happen back in the
 States, and, now, it turns out,
 here too. I was there, like it
 says, when this girl got set on
 fire and burned to death right in
 front of me.

A few listen, a few sceptical, a few bored.

He's losing them already. They start to wander off. He's being passed the papers from the pool table.

A well engineered hooch still in the far corner gets the attention again.

Larry watches his audience dissolve.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS (FLOODLIT) - NIGHT

A player, in the zone, dodges to the side to return with a volley.

INT. THE DEN - NIGHT

Larry, frozen.

The potential recruits, peeling off.

ALEC
(under his breath)
Action, action. Mention the action.

Larry looks to him, then comes alive again.

LARRY
(to who's left)
That's right. When was the last
time any of you saw any action?

That's a real divider. A couple of them bristle.

BRISTLER #1
Hey, Alec. Where oh where did you
find this prick?

Alec raises one defensive hand.

ALEC
(to Bristler #1)
Yeah, okay, pal.

The bristlers disappear to the depths of The Den.

Of the remaining six, one, GIANT CHARLIE, steps forward. He
addresses both our guys.

GIANT CHARLIE
We all seen shit, seen people get
rubbed out, so this ain't all that
shockin', but, unlike most of the
other assholes in this pissy rec
room, I believe in keepin' my skill
set sharp. So yeah, I'm in.

Giant Charlie looks back to the other five left.

One of those, GENE, is shaking his head, examining the
report.

GIANT CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(to Gene)
What's up, Genie?

GENE
This. This is what is known as
'making determinations and taking
action without authorized
approval'. You know, elements like
saving the lives of flood victims?
Ended up costing millions.
(MORE)

GENE (CONT'D)

Building roads without setting up proper contracts? Ring any bells? Ends up being overpaid and done on the cheap.

LARRY

Yeah. I get the saving lives part anyway.

They eye each other. Alec laughs.

ALEC

Aw, c'mon. You, we, all know there's no way the agency, any agency...

He looks at Gene.

ALEC (CONT'D)

...will ever sign off on this one. No way. It's up to us.

Larry and Gene still square off.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Okay, guys. Knock it the fuck off. Let's not argue. Let's agree to disagree. Eh?

LARRY

Fine by me.

Gene tuts, chuckes the report back on the table at Larry. He leaves a Parthian shot.

GENE

Millions... .

Back to business.

LARRY

Which kinda brings me to the fact that I can't pay you. At all.

ALEC

That's okay. We're gettin' paid to do sweet F.A to start with, anyway.

ESCORT #1

Speak for yourself.

Another one bites the dust.

In the corner, Gene stands alone, texting.

We see his thumb scout over the lit keys as Alec talks.

ALEC

Some of us know about this family,
an' the rest of us know families
like them. They're brought in, or
buy in, depending, ...

Gene's text reads:- 'Unauthorized excursion. Observation
advised'.

ALEC (CONT'D)

...to help protect an investment.
Got a big energy user won't pay
their already subsidized bill?
These are the fuckers y'call. They
do not fuck around. An' that's why,
basically...

Gene's phone BUZZES in his hand. The reply reads:- "Agreed.
Close observation also advised".

ALEC (CONT'D)

...nobody fucks with them, either.
So, who's in?

PITALUGA, an enthusiastic little escort, chips in.

PITALUGA

What? A couple of teenagers? Not
exactly the fucking Taliban, is it?
Waste of time.

LARRY

Waste of time?

ALEC

(to Larry)
Easy, there, big guy.

LARRY

No, Al.
(to Pitaluga)
Waste of time? Who do you think the
fuckin' Taliban look to to recruit?
Huh? Little murderin' bastards like
this, that's who. An' these two are
worse. They're educated, but
they're still on the road to
gettin' radicalised. These are the
colonels, the generals, the fuckers
that our kids are gonna end up
fightin'. Ten years from now. It's
so obvious. Just look. Remember
these fuckin' names, man - JAMEEL
and NAWAZ QURESHI.

Pitaluga does look, at --

-- the photos, back to Larry.

PITALUGA

Right. You got me there. Of course.
You're right. Apologies.
(to Alec)
You should take this chap on tour.
Does he cost much?

Alec gives him a V sign.

GENE

(shouts)
Hey! If you're hell bent on going
along with this, you'll need the
best, and that'd be me.

He bows like some medieval knight, smiles and rejoins the group, now seven strong.

ALEC

(pleasantly amazed)
Right then, so, Larry, we have --
Pitaluga, Thompson, Harris, Gene,
and, obviously, Giant Charlie. Are
we a go?

They nod. They are a go.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS (FLOODLIT) - NIGHT

The sporty types continue to smash and leap. A set is won.
The VICTOR leaps in the air.

VICTOR

Yes! And that, is how you do that!

INT. USAID FACILITY - NIGHT

A brightly lit, cleaner version of The Den for the general workers. The sanitation is a real vibe killer. A few aid workers in their after hours gear mope about, play pool badly, sip diet cola.

Larry sits apart, deep in a paperback. Alec appears next to him, unnoticed by Larry.

ALEC (O.S.)

Hey, boss.

Larry jumps a bit, just like before.

LARRY

Shit, man.

ALEC
(chuckles)
Hello, there. Says on your file
you're a smoker.

LARRY
No. Not really. Well, sometimes. Is
there anything not on that goddam
file?

ALEC
Follow me.

INT. THE DEN - NIGHT

Same set up as before, but now Larry's become an honorary
member. They enter The Den freely. Alec picks up a wooden
box. A cigar box.

ALEC
Well, this...

He opens the box and presents Larry with a Monte Cristo.

ALEC (CONT'D)
...this, pal, is the good stuff.

Larry takes it and rolls the great big fat Cuban along under
his nose. His face reaches a level of euphoria as the cigar
travels end to end.

LARRY
(quietly)
Oh... yes.

ALEC
(revelling)
Aye, that's right, big man. It
ain't Texas. But, er...

He motions across the room to the superbly engineered hooch
still.

ALEC (CONT'D)
...smokin' this end only, okay?

LARRY
Oh, yeah. Smokin' kills.

EXT. QURESHI COMPOUND - NIGHT

The approach to the Hindu Kush. No streetlights here. The
Qureshi compound is an oasis of independently generated
electricity amid the vast desert night: a pool of
illumination in the blackness.

The walls, floors and pillars are all marble.

On the verandah, a group of 7 PAKISTANI GENTLEMEN, varying ages, sit and stand. They smoke, chat easily in Pashto, enjoying green tea and lemonades.

Lit up in the centre of the courtyard is a generous, exquisitely ornate fountain. The gentle FALL OF SPRINKLING WATER masks the sound of a distant hidden GENERATOR.

Palm tree boughs wave in the darkened periphery.

Two sparkling white Toyota Land Cruisers and a jet black Lexus gleam in the courtyard.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

A modern kitchen. A YOUNG WOMAN, younger than she looks, in traditional dress, takes roti bread from the oven.

Her DAUGHTER (2), a very cute toddler, plays at the table with a lump of dough.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

From where he slouches, one of the young men, NAWAZ, spots --
-- two set of headlights, far off in the desert.

NAWAZ
(in Pashto)
Hey, look. What do they want, eh?

His uncles look out, uninterested.

The lights are a good two miles away, pointing this way and that, navigating the poor road.

UNCLE #1
(in Pashto)
So? Cars on the road. So?

Nawaz's uncle turns back to one of the elder men.

UNCLE #1 (CONT'D)
(in Pashto)
That's what I've told him until I'm
blue in the face. All his friends
want to be either cricket players,
or David Beckham. Or jihadists!
(cackling)
They can hardly get their arses out
of bed in the morning. Bloody
idiots.

UNCLE #2

(in Pashto)

He had a good job there in America.
They both did. The Americans know
business.

UNCLE #1

(in Pashto)

Yeah, but he's a hot head. Thinks
he knows everything. Just like his
mother, you know?

They both laugh.

The headlights bounce onward in the distance.

UNCLE #2

(in Pashto)

(reclining happily)

Well, ah, just be glad we don't
have to live in the fucking city,
with the bloody street filth on our
doorsteps.

They toast their fortune with green tea.

EXT. FOOTHILLS - NIGHT

On a nearby ridge, a skulking pack of striped hyenas observe
the human movement. The Alpha, his wide snout poorly
equipped, sniffs heavily, testing for a blood scent.

All their sharp little eyes glint into the dark.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

Nawaz strides purposefully back out from within the house. He
SNAPS A MAGAZINE into an AK47 rifle.

Some of the men laugh. Others wave their hands, swatting him
away like a fly.

He smiles back, then CRANKS THE CHARGING HANDLE and CRACK,
CRACK, CRACK, CRACK, CRACK, CRACK. Six fully automatic shots
spring into the air at the headlights.

The headlights progress immediately stops, then they vanish.

INT. QURESHI KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the gunfire, the girls jump.

CUTE DAUGHTER

Ooh! Pa! Pa! Pa! Pa!

EXT. FOOTHILLS RIDGE - NIGHT

The hyena pack scatters, yelps, then sneaks back. The gunshots are like a dinner gong to them. They chatter excitedly, give each other warning snaps of their jaws, then descend.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

The rest of the men tense up. Now, they too, get volatile.

UNCLE #2
(in Pashto)
What're you doing, boy?

Nawaz braces the AK against his chest in defence.

NAWAZ
(in Pashto)
We don't know who these pigs are,
driving around our house at this
time of night. Who comes here at
night? Without a warning or an
invitation?

No reply.

NAWAZ (CONT'D)
(in Pashto)
You're all soft.

UNCLE #1
(in Pashto)
Don't you dare. We're soft? Too
soft to burn our defenceless
girlfriend with a can --

He trails off. His attention has turned to the headlights which no longer burn.

INT. JEEP #1 - LARRY'S JEEP (MOVING) - NIGHT

SOUND ONLY: THE JEEP'S ENGINE, BUMPING FORWARD.

SUPER:- "Moments earlier..."

INT. JEEP #1 - LARRY'S JEEP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Through the windshield, the glorious compound stands alone in the dark. It's illuminated by the houselights, verandah and glow of the fountain. The headlights dip and rise -- earth, sky, earth, sky. The 6 SHOTS OF GUNFIRE emanate from the house.

Alec stamps the brake.

Larry, Alec, Giant Charlie and Cutler lurch forward and jolt back inside the jeep.

INT. JEEP #2 - NIGHT

Harris, Thompson, Pitaluga and Gene do the same.

INT. JEEP #1 - LARRY'S JEEP - NIGHT

Wits begin to gather.

LARRY

Jesus!

Everyone else stays silent, coiled, stiffened.

ALEC

(to Larry)

Now, we walk. Y' wanna stay here?

Larry does, and it shows. He's scared, but shakes his head.

LARRY

(whispers)

No.

(normal voice)

No. I'm with you. Let's go now.

ALEC

Sure? These are real fuckin' bullets, pal. Ain't gonna be playin' cowboys an' wee injuns up there.

In the back, Cutler nudges giant Charlie. Giant charlie shrugs back.

CUTLER

(faux serious)

Yes, that's also because we're in Pakistan, and not India.

ALEC

Please shut the fuck up, Cutler.

LARRY

That's okay. Can't stop now, can I?

EXT. JEEPS #1 AND #2 - NIGHT

The guys, still inside the jeeps, check their sights, charge weapons as quietly as they can.

The escorts carefully, near silently, exit the vehicles. They'll speak in hushed tones for now.

ALEC
Larry. Know how this works?

He holds a Glock 41 out to Larry.

LARRY
Yes. Loaded?

Lindsey smiles like it better be.

ALEC
You sure about this? You don't have to.

LARRY
No. I do. I'm sure.

ALEC
Fine. Just remember, it's kill, or be killed. Okay? Okay?

LARRY
Yeah. Okay.

Alec looks at him, checking one last time, then nods.

ALEC
Right. Let's do it.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Larry and Alec are last out of the jeeps, but take the lead as --

-- everyone moves forward. The line of escorts fan out, striding the last few hundred yards to the compound.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

The Qureshi menfolk hold still, expectant. One of the men, the eldest, produces a pair of infra red night sights. He gazes through them, scans the suspected area.

He sees stretches of rocky desert, then, Larry's little army, scampering right towards his home.

ELDEST
(quietly)
(in Pashto)
Shit.
(shouts)
Americans!

It's on.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

A staircase. The door from outside BURSTS OPEN. The Qureshi men pour down the stairs to --

-- a gun room. They empty the racks of loaded AK47s and Germenica top folding 12 gauge pump action shotguns, bristling with cartridges. They grab stuffed hunting vests and more boxes of ammo.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The escorts, just outside the reach of the compound lights. They pad cautiously onward, in profile.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

The assembling Qureshi welcoming committee.

A hand switches the verandah light OFF.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The escorts pause. Hands check weapons one last time.

Alec waves them all forward. They begin to run, slowly at first, then with the light developing, a sprint.

ALEC
(yells)
Take cover.

They do, and the gun battle starts. On the desert floor, Larry and Alec stay close.

The escorts lay SUPPRESSING FIRE.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

Vague figures of Larry and Alec running to the house.

INT. QURESHI KITCHEN - NIGHT

The young woman hugs her little daughter. She carries her to a cupboard and shuts the bewildered baby inside.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

In the half glow of the fountain, the Qureshi men are FIRING. They try to direct shots down, but the solid verandah balcony prevents them.

Bullets WHIZZ by them, knocking precious lumps out of the house. Windows SMASH.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Larry and Alec duck, run for the house wall. The rest of the escorts keep the Qureshis pinned down.

Exterior wall. Larry and Alec breathe hard, but they're intent, focused.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

The generator room. We hear POPS and BURSTS OF GUNFIRE from the battle outside, and the WARM HUM OF THE GENERATOR. The window grate is carefully removed from outside.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

One of the uncles attempts to strafe the attackers. He shows himself to the enemy, pulls the trigger. He gets out a BURST OF FIRE with his AK, before well aimed SHOT after SHOT lifts him twisting backward. He falls, dead.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry and Alec scout across the basement. The HUM and GUNFIRE continues. This is the deepest, oldest part of the house. Cautiously, they climb stairs leading out.

EXT. QURESHI COMPOUND - NIGHT

They exit the generator room into the ground level courtyard from what is effectively the castle keep of the grounds.

They run through the shadow of the courtyard to the main house.

Alec sneaks a peak round the wall to see the whole yard.

ALEC
(to Larry)
Fire escape, far corner. Go up it.
Go!

Alec immediately dashes out on his own command. He is wide, wide awake. Larry is right there with him.

They hit the far wall and ascend quickly.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

There's a quietening in the battle. Gene breaks cover. He RATTLES THE VERANDAH with AUTOMATIC FIRE, goading the men above.

GENE
(yells)
Come on! Come on, pussies!

He dodges back to his rock.

No response.

GENE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
What are you up to?

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Larry and Alec are still slithering up the fire escape.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

The eldest Qureshi forms his men. He directs them for his plan of attack with big, clear arm movements.

Their gaze follows his mime. The whole bunch nod back to him.

He waves the command to go.

One side of the verandah: they all appear, FIRING EVERYTHING they have down at the ground, then, instantly retreat.

Other side of the verandah: the same move.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The escorts cower behind their rocks as AN AVALANCHE OF BULLETS, EXPLODING ROCKS AND RICOCHETS RAINS DOWN.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

The first side goes again. The same CASCADE OF STACCATO GUNFIRE sweeps across.

Then, silence. Neither side moves.

EXT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry and Alec, on top of the main house. They tread with care, guns at the ready, to the rooftop exit.

Raindrops the size of frogs begin to flop, here and there, onto the cold, hard marble. The men are damp within moments.

Monsoon is here.

Larry tries the door handle. Slowly, twists it, slowly, open.

He sighs, then holds the door for Alec to move through it.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

Their boots, ever so slowly down the bare marble staircase.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The escorts motion to each other in succession for an offensive. Raindrops slap rock, disturb sand.

Gene assumes command.

 GENE
 (to Cutler)
 (whispers)
We keep these guys out here until
they get back out. On my lead, we
go.

Cutler nods. He turns to Pitaluga to relay the plan.

Gene turns to Harris on the other side.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry and Alec arrive down at the first, clean, bare corridor on the second storey, trying to be invisible.

Three doors lay ahead. The first is shut, the next two ajar, then more stairs going down.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Gene bolts out, FIRING from the hip. A moment later, so do the rest.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

Disaster. The Qureshis are ready. They stand in full view, release a WAVE OF SHOTS -- AUTOMATICS, SHOTGUNS.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The escorts take HIT after HIT. Cutler and Harris are instantly SHOT TO DEATH.

Gene charges forth, still FIRING.

GENE

Aargh!

He dives behind the perimeter wall. Looks round.

He sees Cutler and Harris, motionless where they fell.

Pitaluga's okay, dragging Giant Charlie back to cover.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

Over the Qureshi's shoulders, their attention turns to Giant Charlie. A big, slow moving target, heavier still in his rain soaked gear.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The force of rounds hitting Giant Charlie, forces Pitaluga to drop him and scramble away to the dark.

Pitaluga dives behind a rock. The firing ceases again. He looks around to see --

-- Thompson looking back, his shirt shining black and wet.

THOMPSON

(agonized)

I'm okay, but I'm fucking bleeding a lot.

At the wall, Gene looks at his mobile phone.

It has no signal.

GENE

(to himself)

That's okay. That's okay, baby.

He pockets the phone and produces a satellite phone.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry stands in the first room, silhouetted in silent darkness.

ALEC

Clear?

LARRY
Hold on.

ALEC
Fuck me. Clear?

LARRY
Okay. Clear.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

The Qureshis also have casualties -- some fatal.

Nawaz looks at the carnage, the house. His face shows the realization of what he has brought.

UNCLE #2
(to Nawaz)
Idiot! See what you've done. Get
inside and protect your mother and
sister.

Uncle #2 blindly fires a Makarov pistol into the darkness.

SHOTS and muzzle flashes reply from Thompson's and Pitaluga's positions.

Nawaz ducks along below the line of fire. He flips a door handle down and rolls into the house with his rifle.

He flops, starts to shake.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

Larry and Alec stealthily exit the first room, back to --

-- the corridor. As they appear, an armed figure comes into focus behind them. This is JAMEEL.

JAMEEL
(in Urdu)
(mumbling)
You shall be shaken from the tree.
Yes. Shaken from the tree.

Larry and Alec freeze, caught out. They slowly spin around.

It's a kid. A kid with tears on his cheeks, but also a great big AK47 tight in his grip. He holds it unlike a rifle, as if he's never touched one.

Larry and Alec stare, open eyed, open mouthed.

The kid recognizes Larry from the 7/11.

JAMEEL (CONT'D)
(in English)
You! How in hell? Shaken from the --

As he shouts, he shakes the rifle at them.

Larry snaps to. He steps straight in front of Alec with his pistol in the kid's face and BANG! -- dumps one bullet into Jameel's forehead.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

At the verandah door, Nawaz hears the gunshot from somewhere inside the house. It spurs him on. His trembling hand releases his magazine, re-clips it. It's secure. He crawls to his feet.

In the corridor, Alec, full combat mode again, highly impressed.

Larry stoops to see --

-- Jameel's face, now snapped back, agog, on the beautiful floor. The dead eyes now say nothing. A pool, deep red, gathers on the floor behind his head.

ALEC
C'mon.

He darts ahead. Larry nods. He looks down at the kid again, collects the rifle and follows.

LARRY
That's him. That's one of them. I
killed him.

ALEC
Very good. That's one less to worry
about, then.

Nawaz, creeping up the stairwell.

Larry and Alec stalk, weapons sweeping.

Nawaz, unaware, closes on them coming down the next flight. From outside, shots pop now and again, remnants of a fight that will not die.

Larry spots --

-- the kid's gun muzzle, just poking out from the stairwell.

Larry stops.

Nawaz advances a step.

Larry lunges, grasps the muzzle, grabs the weapon away from the boy. He smacks Nawaz's face with the pistol.

Alec joins him, beating Nawaz to an unconscious bloody mess.

LARRY
(whispers)
Yes. We got the little bastard.

Instantly they begin dragging him out of the house.

LARRY (CONT'D)
(to the kid)
Come on, you shit. Time to go.
You're comin' for a little ride.

ALEC
(to Larry)
Save your breath. We're no out yet.

Alec pauses, stoops over the kid. He takes one of Nawaz's arms and twists it, the gristle complaining grotesquely until it snaps -- an awful torsion break.

Larry is revulsed.

LARRY
What the fuck are you doin'?

Alec grasps the other wrist and twists it.

LINDSEY
Whassit look like? More reliable
than handcuffs, lemme tell y'.
Cheaper, too.

One with the shoulders, one with the legs, they manoeuvre Nawaz down the final flight.

The kitchen door. They pause. Alec pops his head round.

INT. QURESHI KITCHEN - NIGHT

Deserted.

Back in the hall, unconscious Nawaz, slumped at their feet.

ALEC
Think y'can lift him?

LARRY
No sweat.

ALEC
Okay. Stay right behind me.

INT. QURESHI KITCHEN - NIGHT

They advance across the room. Alec, a gun in each hand, covers their escape route. Larry follows closely, the limp kid slung over his shoulders.

In a recess of the kitchen, half in shadow we see the mother's face. Hard. Determined.

Down by her side, she holds her own .38 revolver.

She appears, spectral, blocking their path just feet ahead.

Everyone stops. It's tense. They stare at each other.

Alec quickly points one of his rifles at the kid's head.

She does not relent.

The .38 is still at her side.

The two guys begin to edge forward, trying to circumnavigate.

LARRY

(to Alec)

Take it easy.

(to the mother)

We're just going out the door, now.

MOTHER

(in Pashto)

Give me back my son, you filthy bastards. Put him down and get out.

LARRY

(to the mother)

Okay, okay. We're going now. Okay?

Larry keeps hold of Nawaz. Alec doesn't speak. He watches the woman's every move. He sees something, some flicker of resolve, some deadly intent.

Her thumb CLICKS THE HAMMER BACK.

Alec reacts. He double taps her -- BA-BANG. He steps across her corpse and POPS another round into her chest.

ALEC

Cannae be too careful.

They move quickly now, slink out of the house.

EXT. QURESHI COMPOUND AERIAL VIEW - NIGHT

Larry carrying Nawaz, Alec in front, they scurry cross the courtyard. GUNFIRE resumes ferocity in the skirmish.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Amid the SPORADIC RAIN, men fiercely continue battle.

From far, far above, the battle is silent, precipitation descends toward muzzle flashes from either side.

The shape of an MQ-1 Predator drone, accompanied by the sound of a ROTAX 914 4 STROKE MOTOR, SWOOPS over the field of fire.

The aerial battle view fades into --

INT. USAF COMMAND POST - NIGHT

SUPER:- "USAF Command post - 400 miles away"

-- a flaky TV image of the exact same aerial battle view. The TV image zooms in, resolution worsens, but definitely shows two men dragging a third. The figures rush from the house under fire.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Package acquired. Get hold of Navy,
see what kind of additional support
we can offer these guys.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Yes, Ma'am.

FEMALE VOICE

They'll need someone to smooth over
prisoner transfer to the PAK
authorities, too.

EXT. PAKISTANI SKY - NIGHT

The drone banks, silhouetted between the forbidding eastern cloud and brilliant western star-scape of the Milky Way.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Now the rains really arrive. A DELUGE, it SWEEPS in across the ground in HAMMERING WAVES. In seconds the dust is mud, inches thick.

Gene, still wall bound, pings a grenade pin. He tosses it high into the verandah and dashes forward.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

The Qureshis are fighting to the last man when the device detonates: a deafening FLASH BANG. Stunned, momentarily blinded, they turn to zombies. Weapons CLATTER to the floor.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Nawaz dragged onward. Larry and Alec slip, stumble, groan.

INT. USAF COMMAND POST - NIGHT

The monitor: the retreating escorts, skirmishing freely away.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Ma'am, why are we helping this
bunch of assholes again?

His Commander's hand rests on the back of the operator's chair.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Because they're our assholes, so to
speak. Prevent. Embarrassment. TV.
Stuff like that.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Oh, right. Gotcha, Ma'am.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Deploy, deploy.

EXT. PAKISTANI SKY - NIGHT

The drone climbs off ahead, veers to the right and gently loses altitude, then speeds down, toward the house.

EXT. VERANDAH - NIGHT

The few remaining Qureshis stagger, attempt to pick up their weapons, struggling from the grenade daze. They come round, begin to attack again.

The action slows right down to a freeze, showing the arrival on the Qureshis' battle torn verandah of a Spike missile.

Amid the fixed, taut and furious faces, suspended muzzle flashes of the improvised battlement, sits the Spike. For a moment, it hovers between the men, unaware, then --

-- it EXPLODES, blows apart from within as the action winds instantly to real time again. A burst of white death and orange flame released at 4,000 feet per second. Masonry and body parts blast outward.

The retreating escorts, lit by the rising FIREBALL. Everything is streaming wet. If the rain were any thicker, they'd be underwater.

The jeeps ahead of them disappear from view as visibility itself is denied.

A second missile streaks from the sky.

The escorts run as best they can, as the 2nd missile blast causes each car back at the compound to explode in turn. BOOM, BOOM, BOOM. The men flinch, fleeing to their own jeeps.

Finally, through the chaos of the downpour, an escort's hand reaches for a jeep door handle.

INT. USAF COMMAND POST - NIGHT

The monitor screen, bright with flame.

EXT. QURESHI COMPOUND - NIGHT

The house, ablaze.

INT. QURESHI HOUSE - NIGHT

Nawaz and Jameel's mother's face. Her dead eyes reflect the fires. Smoke sifts across her body.

The little girl creeps over to her mom.

GIRL
(in Pashto)
Mommy. All the fire, Mommy. Hot.

Her gorgeous big dark eyes also reflect the licking flame.

INT. GENERATOR ROOM - NIGHT

The oil tank gauge reads "FULL".

It goes up -- a huge, colossal fireball BURSTS high up into the tormented Pakistani night.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The muddied jeeps rev away. Fires rise and rage behind them in the receding distance.

At ground level, silhouettes of soaked hyenas trot past the burning building.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

Hammering rain beats the hangar roof and walls. PAK police stand in a tight group of seven or eight. The Captain from Islamabad is with them. He helps them bluff through the nerves.

Smoking cigarettes through clenched teeth, they grip their Steyr AUG bullpup rifles tight.

From outside, vehicle headlights fall on them. They squint round to see --

-- a single, beat up sedan car bump in through the open hangar door. Wet tires SQUEAL on the painted floor and into the opposite corner.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

The escorts' jeeps slither, fishtail and rev in low gears. Progress in the mud and lashing downpour is abysmal.

Ahead of them, two disembodied lights head their way.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

Two shirtsleeved Westerners, sweaty AGENCY GUYS, exit the sedan. They stay as far as possible from the PAK police.

The Elite Police Captain finishes lighting a cigarette end to end for one of his men. He walks bravely over to where the deadly CIA guys stand, stone faced, pissed off.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Inside the jeeps, windshield wipers working madly, the men watch in wonder.

What they'd assumed were headlights, rise and part in the air. Above the diesel engines and rain, helicopters rotors filter in.

INT. JEEP #1 - LARRY'S JEEP (MOVING) - NIGHT

Alec has an open mouthed, Christmassy look.

ALEC
Get tae fuck.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The lights are forward mounted searchlights of the choppers hovering in front, blocking their path.

The jeeps slide round, to halt under the full volume rotors, sweeping dangerously near the stranded cars.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

Under the thundering roof, out of earshot, the Captain and the spooks discuss calmly.

The PAK police look on, waiting, trying not to fidget. Trying to keep it cool. Their eyes loathe these weakling assassins.

The Captain salutes the CIA with frightening velocity, spins on his heel and walks back to his guys.

The CIA fellahs watch the machine gun toting police officers straighten themselves up as their Captain approaches.

CAPTAIN
(in Urdu)
We wait.

They comply implicitly.

The CIA light up ciggies for their own vigil. Murmuring, gesturing, one passes the other a soda from the car.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The jeeps, abandoned in the deluge.

The choppers, rising away from them.

INT. CHOPPER (FLYING) - NIGHT

In the constant fierce rotar noise, Larry and Alec sit either side of the sobbing Nawaz, arms agonisingly limp in his lap. He is totally subdued. His face battered, he looks around.

Looking back at him, is the professionally aggravated squad of NAVY SEALS transferring him, fully dressed for night ops.

Nawaz hangs his head, only just bearing the pain of his wounds.

EXT. HANGAR - NIGHT

The two searchlights appear through the night again. The rotars dominate as they approach.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

All assembled are curious now. They can't resist heading to the grand doors, rain sweeping in.

Looking out, the choppers edge in, expertly close, to land.

Furious down-force washes gusts of rain into the hangar entrance, like sea fret over the CIA and police.

They shield themselves from the outdoors indoors.

EXT. HANGAR - NIGHT

The blades wind down to tick-over, a whooshing throb just overhead.

Figures leap to the ground. SeALs. The sound of hammering rain takes over again. The SeALs rush easily into position, a mob of gun muzzles around the scene. Ready. To fire. To kill.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

The PAK police are on heightened alert, and insulted.

CIA GUY #1 glances a warning to the PAK Captain.

He simply stares back.

EXT. HANGAR - NIGHT

It's become a standoff. More SeAls pour out of the second chopper.

Emerging from the Navy huddle, Larry and Alec frogmarch the agonized Nawaz. Rain rinses blood down his sorry face.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

Nawaz collapses into police custody. Larry watches him doubtfully.

He looks at the crumpled, soaked boy.

The Captain watches Larry, waiting for recognition. Gloating.

Larry sees him. The Captain offers a slow, warning nod of thanks. Larry stiffens, stares into the Captain's face, right up close.

The Captain, welcoming combat, gives a snort of derision.

Alec touches Larry's elbow.

ALEC

Larry.

No response.

Alec takes a heavier grip.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Larry. Let go. Let it go.

He does. The Captain turns away, directs the police to remove Nawaz to their own waiting truck.

CIA Guy #1 swoops an umbrella open. He points to Larry and Alec then whirls his finger to the sky.

SeAls take the guys' arms and hurry them back to the choppers. The rest steadily withdraw in formation.

EXT. HANGAR - NIGHT

CIA Guy #1 marches along into the tumultuous lashing rain.

CIA GUY #1

(yelling)

You, Larry my friend, have friends
in high places, literally! Ones you
never even knew you had. Somehow,
you've managed to avoid being
jailed here in Pakistan. You won't
even see prison back in the States.

Larry looks suspiciously at the spook, taking it in. The procession halts at the choppers.

CIA GUY #1 (CONT'D)

Nobody wants anything to do with
you. Too sensitive. Too political.
To be associated would be...

The rotors chop quickly into the weather, ready to fly again.

SeAls tap shoulders and tighten their group around the helicopters.

CIA GUY #1 (CONT'D)

But, you are being deported. So
let's go. Now.

He gives a rock star smile.

Larry nods back to him.

LARRY

(yells)

Yeah. Time to get out now.

Larry is in the chopper. He realizes he's alone with the SeAls. He leaps forward: the SeAls grab. He gets the briefest of moments to wave a thanks and a goodbye to --

-- Alec, a huge smile in the other helicopter, waves back.

As quickly as they arrived, the choppers take off, to whisk Larry and the surviving escorts in opposite directions.

They head into the sky and disappear into the soaking night.

EXT. AIRSTRIP - NIGHT

A C-2A Greyhound plane waits in the bucketing weather, engines warming up loudly for flight.

INT. CHOPPER (FLYING) - NIGHT

A SEAL, tough as old boots, eyes Larry, leans right in.

SEAL
(shouts)
I just wanted to say, you're a
fucking badass, Sir.

He sticks his hand out. Larry takes it.

A barrage of backslapping, grinning through their war-paint. Larry is smiling back, but with nervous relief.

EXT. U.S. NAVY AIRCRAFT CARRIER - NIGHT

The ship's bow crashes explosively forward through the foaming blackness of the sea.

The C-2A Greyhound approaches the heaving deck. It appears. The deck rises and it's gone, then seen again.

It selects the right moment and, touchdown, tires grip, the plane settles on the deck.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

The front door. The lock clicks in the fresh quiet of morning. The door pushes in across a pile of mail.

Larry steps in with nothing but the same set of clothes he wore in the battle. He gathers the letters.

His hands sift patiently. He gets to one from 'Austin Private Equity', which he rips open.

His eyes scan to --

-- his pension prediction. We see phrases like "possible shortfall", "increased contribution" and "necessary provision".

LARRY
Welcome home, sunshine.

EXT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Gently, he pushes the door shut.

INT. MUNICIPAL POOL - DAY

The blue tiled pool. From underwater, Larry, trunks and goggles, dives in and swims.

He powers down the lane in front crawl.

He nears the end when SPLASH! A fellow swimmer descends from above, right in Larry's path.

Progress immediately halted, he's suspended in the water, goggled, bare, stupefied.

It's Buckie, also in goggles and bathing suit, grinning at her dad. She does some kind of Bond girl pistol shot with her fingers at Larry.

He pretends he's hit, floats toward the surface.

Buckie giggles underwater and swims off like a dolphin. Her nervous, excited laugh emits a plume of giant bubbles.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Larry, suited and booted, stands framed in the open back door.

EXT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Same position, a small rose in his lapel, he enjoys the sun on his face. He surveys the yard with a detached look. Behind him the wall is bare. He gives the yard a once over and steps back inside.

INT. LARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is completely empty. His shiny black heels walk out of view. The front door SLAMS. From the other side of the door, the glottal cough of Larry's Buell starts up and gear changes into the distance.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER:-

"Following investigation into contractor activity during the early years of this century, planned corrective action was determined for the Livelihood Development Program within Pakistan.

Lack of literacy in both sexes, and the light by which to read, had already been identified as the single factor most likely to result in insurgent recruitment.

It continues to be so."

SUPER FADES

SUPER:-

"ASSALAMU ALAYKUM

'Peace be upon you all'"

THE END