

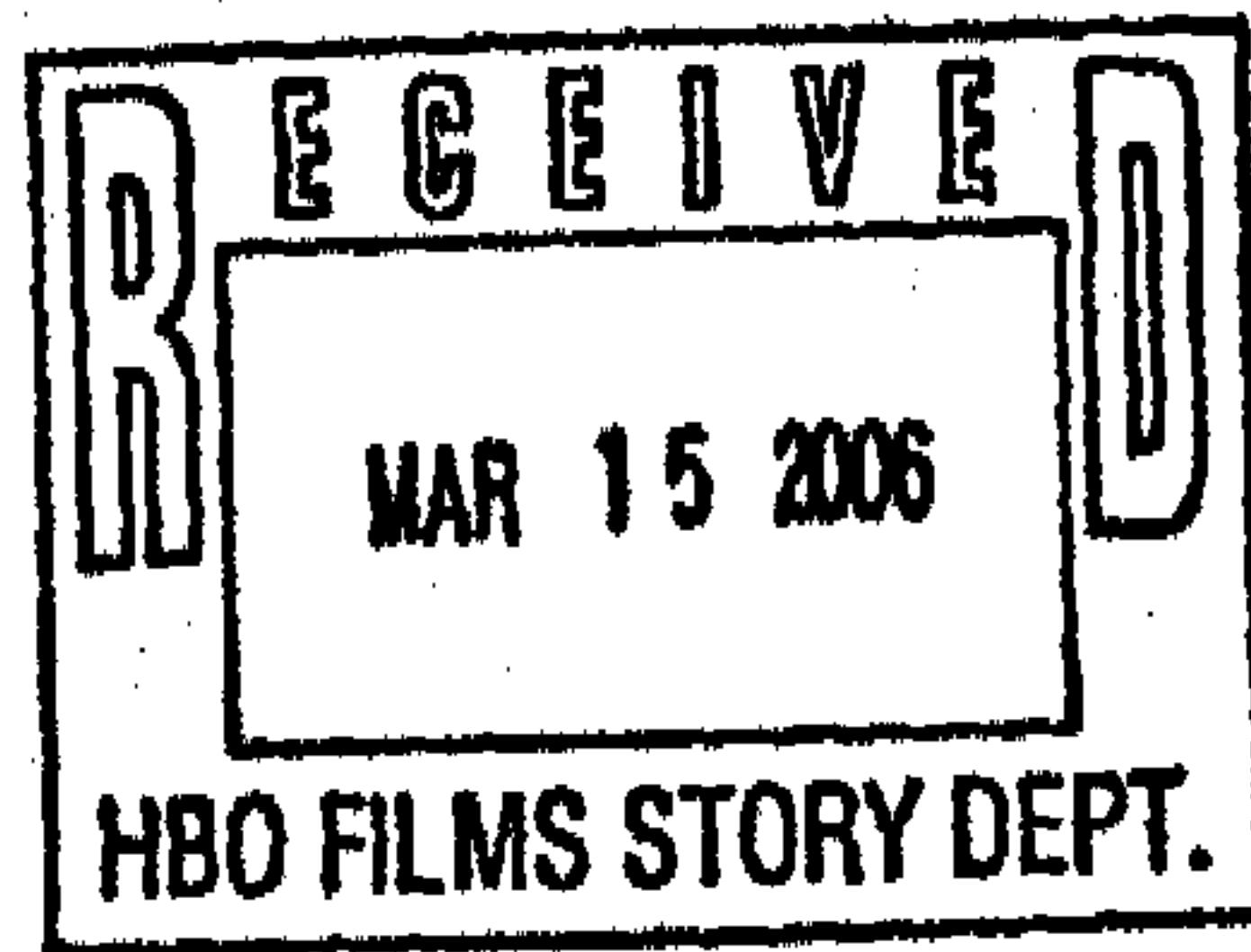
I ROCK IRAQ

by

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Based on a True Story

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HBO FILMS  
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A black screen.

Up in the top corner of the screen, a big blinking camcorder date line appears: ---:---:---. In the b.g., car noise, muffled explosions and, finally, a voice intoning (in a plummy Oxbridge accent fit for Masterpiece Theatre)

VOICE OVER

Iraq. April 2003. The birthplace...of Balloch & Roe.

(squealing)

What the fuck!

The sound of a scuffle and suddenly the screen is filled: with wildly gyrating video of an SUV interior...

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Give that back to me. I'm not finished.

SECOND VOICE

(laid-back, surfer voice)

Dude, you didn't even have the cap off!

Whoa, look, somebody's coming...

The camcorder focuses through the SUV windshield on: a man. RUNNING toward us through a rubble-strewn, deserted vaguely third-world street. HAULING ASS toward us.

Ten feet in front of the SUV, the man slips on debris and SLAMS to the ground. The camcorder zooms in as dozens of bank packets of \$100 bills spill out of his shirt.

JACK (V.O.)

Jesus. Did you see that?

We REVERSE to SEE: JACK ROE (26, good-looking cowboy/surfer) and BRENT BALLOCH (27, distinguished New Zealander) staring in wide-eyed wonder out the window of a white SUV with "TV" duct-taped on the doors.

Before Brent can reply, an enormous tank ROARS into the intersection ahead. The looter frantically SCOOPS up his money and RUSHES past them.

Ahead, across the intersection, other desperate men POUR out of a large building. It's a bank.

As the tank rolls into the intersection, we see "COURTESY OF THE RED WHITE AND BLUE" stenciled on its gun. And beer coolers and plastic lawn chairs tied onto its back.

It's so big that when it swivels its gun toward the bank, the turret SCRAPES against a building, knocking off all the beer coolers on the back.

In slow motion, the tank LURCHES to a stop. A couple of tank crew guys POP out and scramble to pick up the spilled beers and coolers. It's surreal.

Meanwhile, a platoon of Marines take up combat positions in front of the bank. As more looters RUSH out, the tank's gun FIRES, RIPPING open the front of the building with a massive EXPLOSION. Everyone starts FIRING.

Inexplicably, the Arab driver GUNS the GMC and it HURTLES into the intersection--right past the tank and Marines.

Jack and Brent look like they're about to shit themselves, but nobody bats an eye at them. As they pass, one of the Marines turns and SHOUTS:

MARINE  
PRETTY FUCKIN' COOL, HUH?

ARAB DRIVER  
(raising a fist)  
AMERICA GOOD, SADDAM BAD. FUCK SADDAM!

FREEZE FRAME: Super "I ROCK IRAQ"

JACK  
(low, to Brent)  
Dude. You think we got here a little early?

BRENT  
Don't you remember what I told you?

INT. DRUIDS IRISH PUB, ROMA. JAN. 26, 2003.

SUPER: "ROME: TWO MONTHS EARLIER" as we find Jack and Brent, deep in conversation in a packed bar. The Superbowl is up on the TV but neither of them care.

BRENT  
...it's always the guys who go in first that make the really huge money...

JACK  
I totally saw that with the internet boom. Guys that came only a year before me ended up millionaires. The guys that came 5 years earlier--billionaires.

BRENT  
And you ended up with nothing, right?  
Same with me.

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

By the time I got to Eastern Europe, there was nothing left. Guys that got there just 2 or 3 years earlier

JACK

Made out like bandits, right?

BRENT

Absolutely. But today, Eastern Europe, Russia, China--they're all done. We missed those boats. Iraq is the last frontier. The last virgin territory for capitalism. Thanks to Saddam Hussein.

JACK

Iraq, huh?

BRENT

After the invasion, the US will have to have to spend billions on reconstruction. Billions. And the guys that get those contracts will make millions. Overnight.

INT. GMC SUBURBAN. APRIL 8, 2003.

JACK

Yeah, I remember...

As we return to the SUV, slowly navigating through the burning cars, the sporadic firefights and the rubble.

BRENT

In post-conflict zones, it's only the guys who get in first that make the really big money.

JACK

I know, but...it just seems like there's still a lot of conflicting going on...

The SUV suddenly emerges into wide-open plaza, dominated by a huge statue of Saddam Hussein in the middle.

EXT. FIRDOS SQUARE. DAY.

The SUV drives into the plaza, past the famous blue mosque (seen on every newscast) and around the huge statue of Saddam. A few Iraqi's are standing around it.

Ahead, several tanks and APC's are positioned in front of two high-rise hotels--the Palestine and the Sheraton.

Dozens of white SUV's are already parked in front of the hotels. TV CREWS are working to set up cameras and satellite uplinks on the roof of the port-cochere.

BRENT

This is it. This is where it's all happening. You'll see...

INT. SHERATON HOTEL. DAY.

Jack and Brent make their way into the Sheraton.

It's a beehive of activity. Marines with M-16's mix with scruffy indie journalists. Network anchors in fishing vests hang with fat guys in flak jackets at the bar. Jack and Brent push their way to the reception counter.

JACK

How much for a double room?

SHERATON FRONT DESK CLERK

I'm sorry, but I'm afraid we are completely booked.

JACK

But I'm sure you can find something...

Jack smiles broadly and slides a \$100 across the counter.

SHERATON FRONT DESK CLERK

As you can see, we are quite full.

Suddenly, a chubby middle-aged guy in a Hawaiian shirt and board shorts (CHUCK) comes RUNNING into the lobby.

CHUCK

HURRY, everyone, they're pulling down the statue of Saddam!

It's like blood in a shark tank. TV crews grab their equipment, journalists grab their camera bags and everyone (except the news anchors) goes RUNNING outside.

EXT. FIRDOS SQUARE. SECONDS LATER.

Jack and Brent and about 40 journalists and cameramen RUN over to the Saddam statue in the middle of the square.

About 60 Iraqi's are standing around the statue while three others try to sling a rope noose around its neck.

They try to pull the statue down, but it's pathetically obvious they can't. So they HAMMER on it with a single sledgehammer. They can't even dent it.

Finally, an American tank ROLLS up.

It has a big boom arm, which it CRANKS onto the statue. Two Marines CLIMB up: one puts an American flag over Saddam's face; the other loops a chain around his neck.

Another soldier SHOUTS something up at them, and the Marines take the American flag off Saddam's face...

The tank then starts backing up, slowly. With a terrible CREAKING sound, the chain goes taut, the statue BUCKLES, then BENDS, before finally BREAKING off at the knees.

A CHEER goes up from the little crowd as the tank YANKS the broken statue down into the square.

A fat middle-aged Iraqi RUSHES out of the crowd and JUMPS up on Saddam's face, STOMPING it. Suddenly, everyone rushes forward and starts JUMPING on Saddam.

It's an incredible scene, and the cameramen and journos (who almost outnumber the Iraqi's) are getting it all.

As the crowd starts to disperse, Jack and Brent go over and JUMP up on the statue themselves.

The Iraqi's on the statue hug them, JUMPING up and down chanting "Allah akbar..." Jack and Brent take turns posing with them for each other's cameras.

Later, as they walk back across the square to the hotel, they fall in with Chuck (the Hawaiian shirt guy).

CHUCK

Pretty dramatic stuff, huh?

JACK

That was awesome, dude...

CHUCK

So, you guys OGA?

(blank look from Jack)

You can tell me. I'm pysops.

JACK

What's pysops?

CHUCK

Wait a minute, who are you guys?

INT. SHERATON BAR. EVENING.

Jack, Brent and Chuck are sitting at the hotel bar.

CHUCK

I'm sorry, but you are not journalists.

JACK

Sure we are. Want to see our id's?

Jack pulls out a blue plastic id card with his photo:

INSERT: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Temporary Press Card #2443 STANLEY J. ROE--AMERICAN--BALLOCH & ROE MEDIAN SERVICES--PHOTOGRAPHER. The Ministry of Information requests all possible facilities be extended to bearer.

CHUCK

How did you get this?

We SUPER "THREE DAYS EARLIER" as we FLASH BACK to:

INT. JORDANIAN MINISTRY OF INFORMATION. DAY.

Jack and Brent stand in line with hundreds of JOURNO's (including some famous ones) in a drab government office.

JACK

Dude, is this going to work?

BRENT

Trust me. Of course it will work.

At the head of the line, a harried JORDANIAN OFFICIAL holds out his hand without looking up:

JORDANIAN OFFICIAL

Credentials and passport photos.

Jack and Brent hand them over. INSERT: two plastic laminated ID badges with photos of Jack and Brent, under the title "BALLOCH & ROE MEDIA SERVICES".

FLASH FORWARD TO:

INT. SHERATON BAR. SAME AS BEFORE.

CHUCK

Wait, where did you get the press badges?

JACK

We made them.

CHUCK

You made them.

JACK

Sure. In the business center. That's  
why why you stay at a 5-star hotel right?

FLASHBACK of Jack flirting with a cute Jordanian CLERK in  
the Amman Hyatt business center.

JACK (IN AMMAN) (CONT'D)

(with sexy crooked smile)

How ya doing? I wonder if you could help  
me? I need to, uh...make an ID....

CHUCK

And this actually worked?

FLASHBACK of the Jordanian official barely glancing at  
the fake id's as he fills out the official press passes.

BRENT

People never really look at ID's. It's  
just like resumes: as long as they look  
reasonable, people never question them.

JACK

Yeah. We thought we might get busted at  
the border, but when we got there...

EXT. JORDAN-IRAQ BORDER. EARLIER THAT DAY.

The convoy of white SUV's approaches a huge concrete  
archway. Beyond it, there's a massive billboard of  
Saddam Hussein--with his face painted out.

As they pass under the arch, they enter a kill zone of  
barbed wire and machine gun emplacements. At the other  
end, a badass-looking Special Forces Sergeant with a  
shotgun is stopping every SUV.

JACK (V.O.)

...all the Special Forces guys were so  
busy telling us what we couldn't do, they  
barely looked at our passes.

SPECIAL FORCES SERGEANT  
(dead serious)  
IF I SEE ONE PERSON TAKING PICTURES OF  
THIS AREA I WILL PERSONALLY DETAIN YOU  
FOR MORE HOURS THAN YOU WOULD EVER WISH  
TO SPEND HERE. YOU WILL BE CURSED AT,  
YOU WILL BE UNCOMFORTABLE AND WHEN IT IS  
OVER, YOU MAY BE EXPELLED FROM THIS  
REGION. DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?

Jack and Brent nervously press their press passes against the window. The Special Forces guy barely glances at them before waving them through.

Jack and Brent exchange a happy "dude, it worked!" look as we abruptly SMASH CUT BACK TO:

INT. SHERATON BAR. SAME AS BEFORE.

CHUCK  
So they just waved you through?

JACK  
Basically, yeah.

CHUCK  
But how did you even get to the border?

JACK  
We just hung around the lobby of the Amman Hyatt. We watched what the journalists did and we just did the same.

FLASHBACK: to the packed Amman Hyatt lobby on the eve of war. It's like one big war convention. Journalists, spies, army officers and contractors: all running around doing business and trading information. And Brent is working the room like a Lebanese producer at the AFM.

BRENT (V.O.)  
It's all about being in the right place at the right time. Amman was the place.

FLASHBACK: Everybody's watching the invasion on the lobby TVs when somebody SHOUTS "The border's open": it's a mad Le Mans-style rush to the waiting SUV's outside.

JACK (V.O.)  
We rented an SUV like everybody else. When the border opened and the convoy left, we just tagged along. It was easy.

FLASHBACK: a convoy of white SUV's, with TV duct-taped on their roofs and windshields RACES down a 10-lane super-highway. Burning tanks and buses litter the empty desert. Up ahead, tanks and Humvees and big 10-ton trucks ROAR toward a burning city on the horizon.

CHUCK

I'm sorry, but I have to tell you guys, I think you're totally full of shit.

JACK

(mock pain)

Chuck, that hurts! I open myself up to you, I share my secrets with you....

CHUCK

There's no way you snuck in here during a war, with fake id's. It's a great story, but I don't believe it for a second.

JACK

Maybe not. But it's true!

CHUCK

Come on, who are you really?

A beat. For an instant, Jack stops joking around:

JACK

Dude, honestly, I'm just a regular guy...

CHUCK

Bullshit!

JACK

No seriously. I went to Boston College, I was a B student. Did the whole internet thing. Thought I was gonna retire at 30. Now I'm just trying to figure out what to do with my life.

CHUCK

Right. In Iraq.

JACK

Hey, beats being an office drone.

BRENT

Jack, JACK--quick, check it out!

Up on the bar TV, CNN is playing footage of the statue.

AARON BROWN/CNN

How many times have we found ourselves saying it lately, so this is what history looks like. History today was a statue falling. It was terror lifting. It was a spell broken. It was people finding their voices again or perhaps for the very first time.

The Saddam statue comes SLAMMING down. The camera angle is tight and dramatic. The tank isn't in the shot at all so it looks like the Iraqi's are pulling it down.

AARON BROWN/CNN (CONT'D)

In one moment and in one shot the day's story could be told. The rest is just detail.

The camera then CLOSES on a wall of Iraqi's JUMPING on the statue. The angle makes them look like thousands.

CHUCK

Outstanding!

BRENT

We were there, Jack! You and I were at the very center of the world stage at an absolutely critical moment in history! A billion people are watching what we did.

JACK

But it wasn't like that at all...

CHUCK

Who cares? It was great fucking TV.

Much later, the bar has thinned out and Jack is talking to a CNN segment producer Chris (25, half-black from Brooklyn). They've been drinking heavily for hours now.

CHRIS

Know what I miss most about America Jack?

JACK

I have no idea.

CHRIS

Small-town sluts. Those hot girls from back water towns you barely have to talk to and they'll fuck you. I mean, where are all the Iraqi sluts, dammit? It's late, I'm horny and I'm talking to you.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

No offense, but you conquer a country, you're supposed to get laid. My grandfather was a black man and even he got laid during the liberation of France.

JACK

Hey. The war is still young!

CHRIS

So who are you guys with?

JACK

What do you mean?

CHRIS

Reuters, AP? LA Times? Fox News?

JACK

Dude, we're not even journalists....

(Chris is stunned)

We're kinda like...entrepreneurs!

CHRIS

What? But how did you get in here?

JACK

We snuck in.

CHRIS

That is so hot dude!

JACK

Not if you don't have a place to stay.

CHRIS

Crash with us tonight. Hey, Libby!

Across the bar, LIBBY DARREN (semi-famous formerly-cute newscaster) is the object of Brent's focused attention.

LIBBY

Look, I know I'm sexy...

BRENT

You are extremely sexy...

CHRIS

LIBBY!

LIBBY

...but I'm also a damn good journalist. I hump my ass to fucking Iraq, and you know what they give me? Puff pieces. Fucking hospital and orphanage shit...

CHRIS  
LIBBY!

LIBBY  
WHAT?!

CHRIS  
Can these guys crash with us tonight?

INT. LIBBY'S ROOM. NIGHT.

There's no electricity, so Chris lights candles. The room's a dump--it looks like it hasn't been cleaned for months. Libby digs out a bottle and starts to pour.

CHRIS  
So how'd you two come up with this plan?

JACK  
Well, we met at this Superbowl Party...

CHRIS  
Wait, you met this guy 2 months ago?  
(Jack nods)  
And you came to Iraq with him?

JACK  
Well, uh, it's kinda like when you're backpacking around the world: you'll be like, I want to go to Thailand. And you'll meet somebody in a bar who's already heading there. So you say, OK, let's join up, right?

CHRIS  
But that's Thailand. Thailand's like fucking Disneyland compared to Iraq!

JACK  
Yeah, but there's way more people that want to go to Thailand than Iraq....  
(beat)  
So it's not like I had a lotta choice.  
(off Chris' disbelief)  
Besides, it was kinda Brent's idea...

CHRIS  
Oh really. So is he paying for it?

JACK  
Uh, actually, I am.  
(off Chris' smirk)  
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey, y'know, Brent was kind of down on his luck when we first met...

FLASHBACK: to Brent, sleeping on the couch of a \$15-a-night backpacker hostel. When two backpackers arrive and ring the bell on the counter, he JUMPS up to serve them.

JACK (CONT'D)

I figured I'd made a bunch of money off the internet boom. And I didn't want to invest in the stock market. I mean, why give your money to a bunch of strangers when you can invest it in yourself?

CHRIS

Sure. And what better place to invest it than...Iraq.

JACK

Hey, get in on the ground floor, right!

CHRIS

Right. So Brent, what did you do before?

BRENT

Well, after I got my law degree and worked in a firm for a year, I realized I had no real interest in being a lawyer.

INSTANT FLASHBACK: of an OLDER NEW ZEALAND LAWYER YELLING at Brent for messing something up.

OLDER LAWYER

This is beyond moronic. How you ever came to graduate with a degree in law is utterly beyond my comprehension.

BRENT

(wincing, back in present)

Way too boring. Who wants to wait around for 20 years to do anything even remotely sexy? So I decided to go to E. Europe.

FLASHBACK: of Brent, with a single ragged suitcase, arriving with the locals and their livestock at a remote airfield somewhere in Central Asia.

LIBBY

Oh yeah? What did you do there?

BRENT

Emerging markets, privitisation...I set up the school system in Chechnya. At least, I started to...when I was shot.

LIBBY

Really? You were shot?

BRENT

They ambushed me in my Land Rover. They killed my bodyguard and my driver, and they shot me in the chest.

FLASHBACK: Brent driving in a Land Rover with two AK-47 totting CHECHNYAN GUARDS/BANDITS. They are having a heated argument about wages.

CHECHNYAN GUARD

You pay now. You pay now.

BRENT

ABSOLUTELY not. I'm not paying you one ruble until you take me there. And if you keep driving like bloody idiots, I may not pay you at all.

The two GUARDS exchange frustrated looks. They STOP the truck and roughly YANK Brent out of the back.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Wait, wait. Boris, Sergei, I didn't mean that...C'mon guys...

BACK TO Libby's room in the Sheraton.

LIBBY

So what happened?

FLASHBACK: to a frightened Brent being forced to strip at gunpoint at the side of a snowy, muddy road.

BRENT (V.O.)

When I came to by the side of the road, I discovered that the bullet had shattered the ceramic plate in my ballistic vest.

LIBBY

My god. They just left you? For dead?

BRENT

Yeah. I had to walk back to Grozny.

FLASHBACK: to a shivering, almost naked Brent running down the muddy road behind the truck CURSING his guards.

BRENT (CONT'D)

You bastards! You'll pay for this!

CHRIS

Wait. So where were you sitting?

BRENT

What do you mean?

CHRIS

In the Landrover, which seat were you in?

BRENT

In the back, of course. Why?

CHRIS

So the bullet travelled through the front of the car, through your bodyguard, who I assume was in the front seat, through his seat, and then it shattered your vest?

BRENT

Look, I don't really remember, OK? It was very confusing. I was shot.

CHRIS

I'm sorry, but I gotta call the bullshit flag on that.

BRENT

Excuse me, have you ever been shot? No, I didn't think so. So please, stick to something you know, OK?

(turning back to Libby)

God. What's his problem?

CHRIS

(to Jack)

Dude. You're a cool guy, but your buddy is totally full of shit.

JACK

Come on, Brent's a good guy.

CHRIS

No he's not. He's totally full of shit!

JACK

Look, maybe he exaggerates a little...

CHRIS

No. He is: totally. Full. Of shit.

Many hours (and drinks) later, Jack, Brent and Chris are passed out on the floor. Light starts to stream in. Brent gets up, very quietly. And sneaks into the bedroom.

INT. LIBBY'S BEDROOM. MORNING.

Libby is passed out, clothed, half under the covers.

Brent tiptoes over, strips down to his jockeys, carefully lifts the covers and crawls underneath. Snuggling up to her in her sleep.

Moments later, Libby stirs. Her eyes open: she SCREAMS!

BRENT

What's the matter darling?

INT. LISA AND MIKE'S ROOM. SECONDS LATER.

Jack and Chris awaken to the sight of Brent, still in his underwear, being KICKED out by a furious Libby.

BRENT

Libby, please. Let's talk about this...

INT. SHERATON HOTEL LOBBY. MINUTES LATER.

BRENT

What an amazing night!

(Jack just looks at him)

Granted, it did get a little weird in the morning. But that's totally understandable. We're both moving way too fast to handle a serious relationship...

JACK

Brent--get your bags. We gotta find a place to stay...

EXT. SHERATON HOTEL. LATER.

Jack and Brent walk out of the hotel with their bags.

BRENT

Plus if we're going to be working together, I'd rather not push things right now....

JACK

What d'you mean, working together?

A line of ancient VW taxis waits out front.

INT. BAGHDAD TAXI. LATER.

BRENT

Libby had this brilliant idea. We're going to start a fashion line together. She thinks there's going to be a huge fashion trend coming out of this war... And she knows all the top N.Y. designers.

JACK

What are you talking about?

BRENT

(excited)

You know, we could have "Bagdaddies" for cargo pants, "Mesopotamia" for perfume--I mean Libby and I have it all figured out. Surplus gas cans for backpacks...

(Jack just looks at him)

You don't know fashion. It's going to be massive. We'll make a bloody fortune.

TAXI DRIVER

Excuse me, where you go?

Jack hands him a cocktail napkin with Arabic writing.

BRENT

What's that?

JACK

Remember that party in Amman?

BRENT

(leering)

The one where you found that hot rich Arab girl that called you her cowboy?

FLASH: A packed club. Hot, sweaty and loud. Thumping Arabic/Indian dance music is driving the crowd crazy. Jack is in the corner with a HOT OLDER ARAB BABE with tight Versace jeans and way too much eye make-up. Hot in a slutty late-Carmen-Electra kind of way.

HOT RICH ARAB BABE

You are my sexy American cowboy. And I'm going to ride you all night long...

She grabs Jack's head and sticks her tongue down his throat. His eyes open wide--but he doesn't fight it.

JACK  
 (embarrassed, back in present)  
 No, not that party. The Embassy party...

BRENT (V.O.)  
 Oh, the Embassy party...

Jack and Brent stride into a fancy dress ball, looking like two young movie stars in their rented tuxedos...

BRENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 ....The party where you stole Jennifer away from me...

Jack and Brent are talking to a very PRETTY DIPLOMAT. She is seriously vibing Jack, to Brent's obvious dismay:

PRETTY BRITISH DIPLOMAT  
 ...I must tell you, I'm very impressed with what you and Brent are doing...

JACK  
 Well, we haven't done anything yet...  
 (back to present)  
 Stole her? Dude, how could I steal her?  
 You never had her...

BRENT  
 I saw her first, Jack. And you knew how much I liked her....

Back at the party, Jack and the diplomat are getting tighter when a pissed-off Brent DRAGS over LISA (militant progressive, N.Y. by way of Oberlin, 20's, unattractive).

BRENT (CONT'D)  
 Jack, I want you to meet Lisa. Lisa runs a private aid organization....

LISA  
 I just want to tell you, Jack, I'm totally opposed to what you're doing.

JACK  
 What? I'm sorry, what I'm doing?

LISA  
 Yes, Brent's told me all about it and I think it's disgusting war-profiteering.

Jack gives Brent a "what the fuck!?" look.

JACK

Y'know, I really want to talk to you about this. If you just give me one sec, I'll be right back. Just need a refill.

Brent mouths a horrified "NO!" but Jack just smiles a big bad-boy smile and moves on.

BRENT (PRESENT)

You bastard. I was stuck with the ugly peacenik all night.

JACK

Yeah, but because of her, I met this cool Jordanian businessman....

Back at the Amman party, Jack is in a deep conversation with a distinguished-looking older JORDANIAN BUSINESSMAN.

JORDANIAN BUSINESSMAN

You go to Iraq, during the war! And you don't even speak Arabic. I LOVE IT!

(kisses him on both cheeks)

Of course, I would not let my sons do it. But I respect you very much for doing it.

JACK

Thank you. I think...

JORDANIAN BUSINESSMAN

You know I have one house in Baghdad. Very big, very beautiful. In the best area--close to the Polish Embassy...

Back in the present, their taxi turns down a dusty residential street lined with palm trees and big houses behind high walls. It's a little like the flats of Beverly Hills. Except for the Apache helicopter gunships overhead and the firefights down the street.

BRENT

So he said you could stay in his house?

JACK

It was his idea. I think he felt like if there was an American there, it would be safer--like having a house-sitter...

Back at the party, the businessman is writing in Arabic on a cocktail napkin:

## JORDANIAN BUSINESSMAN

This is the address. Just show this to my guards and they will let you in.

(handing napkin to Jack)

When you get there, just call me. Let me know everything is OK. Make sure no looting, no problem, OK? That's all.

Back to the present, the taxicab stops at a large gated estate. Jack and Brent get out, and push the buzzer.

A 6'5" skinny black guy with an AK (YAYHEE) comes out. He reads the napkin, smiles broadly and opens the gate. Revealing: a perfectly manicured green lawn surrounded by tall rose bushes. In front of an enormous villa.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA. SAME.

Inside it's plush: marble parquet floors, circular staircase, crystal chandeliers and satellite TV. Hot and cold running water. All run off a big gas generator.

JACK

Score!

BRENT

We are definitely staying here.

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA. LATER THAT DAY.

Jack and Brent walk out of the villa wearing khakis, polo shirts, aviators--and cameras. The roadblock guards stare. Jack waves back like it's the most normal thing in the world to be taking a stroll in wartime Baghdad:

JACK

Hey, how you guys doing? You good?

EXT. BAGHDAD SUBURBAN STREET. LATER.

Jack and Brent walk down a busy street, trying to flag down random cars. They all VEER quickly away from them.

BRENT

Where are all the bloody cabs?

JACK

I'd rather walk. I feel like I've been sittin' in a car for days.

Brent pulls out a Fodor's-style travel guide to Iraq and starts thumbing through it. Jack is stunned.

JACK (CONT'D)

Dude, is that a guidebook? To Iraq?

BRENT

They had them in the hotel in Amman.

It's a little out of date, but...

(looking at a foldout)

So. If you were an American military planner, where would you put the new reconstruction headquarters?

JACK

No clue, dude.

BRENT

One of Saddam's palaces. Big, fortified, sends the right message about the new boss in town. Only problem is, looks like there's about ten of 'em.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BAGHDAD STREET. LATER.

Jack and Brent are walking down a street in the middle of downtown Baghdad. The street is full of rubble, burnt-out cars and a dead donkey with four feet up in the air.

All around them, LOOTERS RUN in and out of buildings, carrying everything from office chairs to plumbing fixtures and electric wiring. Paper from the blown-up office buildings FLOATS down like a ticker-tape parade.

A JOLLY DRUNK FAT GUY DRIVES past in a fork lift loaded with looted couches, AC units and computers. Jack lifts his camcorder to shoot it. The guy sees it and WAVES.

JACK

Dude, did you see that?

EXT. SUBURBAN BAGHDAD STREET. LATER.

Jack and Brent walk up to an Army checkpoint. The weary SOLDIERS are watching the looting but doing nothing.

ARMY CORPORAL

STOP. DON'T MOVE. ID's?

(they hand over press passes)

Press huh. Where you guys from?

JACK  
I'm from California. Sacramento.

ARMY CORPORAL  
Sacramento! Shitbirds, I'm from Reno!

JACK  
Dude, I used to work summers in Reno. My grandparents have a cabin up in Tahoe.

ARMY CORPORAL  
Goddam, would I love to be in Tahoe right now. I hate fuckin' Iraq.

JACK  
Pretty bad huh?

ARMY CORPORAL  
Fuck! We just pulled off the greatest invasion in history, and now we gotta watch these Hajji's destroy everything. I mean, why did we even come here?

ARMY PRIVATE  
We're guarding the Oil Ministry? What does that tell you?

JACK  
Is that true?

ARMY PRIVATE  
The Marines got that place locked down.

ARMY CORPORAL  
Priorities, right? Hey, you guys gonna make me famous? Put me on TIME magazine?

JACK  
Actually, we're trying to get to the reconstruction headquarters. You guys know where that is?

ARMY CORPORAL  
Bro, I don't even know where the fuck this is....

EXT. UDAY'S LOVE PALACE DRIVEWAY. LATER.

Jack and Brent walk up a long drive to wide iron gate. Beyond the gate is a huge Arabian Nights-style palace.

BRENT  
(checking the guidebook)  
So this is a Republican Palace...

Up ahead, they see two AUSTRALIAN JOURNOS coming out.

AUSTRALIAN JOURNO #2  
Hey guys. Who are you? AP? Time?

BRENT  
No, we're freelance. We're looking for  
the reconstruction HQ.

AUSTRALIAN JOURNO #1  
Well it's not here.

AUSTRALIAN JOURNO #2  
You should check it out, though. It's  
pretty wild. Supposed to be Uday's love  
palace. Where he brought his chicks!

JACK  
So you guys don't have any idea where  
they're running things from now?

AUSTRALIAN JOURNO #1  
Are you kidding? Nobody's running  
anything. They're still fighting.

AUSTRALIAN JOURNO #2  
We gotta go. Good luck. Stay safe.

INT. UDAY'S LOVE PALACE. MOMENTS LATER.

Jack and Brent gingerly crack open the massive front  
doors of the palace. Jack's got his camcorder running.

BRENT  
Uh, ANYBODY HOME? ANYBODY HERE?

Brent and Jack begin to explore the opulent "love  
palace." If Sinbad had a whorehouse, and it was built in  
Vegas by Steve Winn, this is what it would look like.

JACK  
Dude, do you believe this?

There's lots of bad Beverly Hills/Louis XVI gilded  
furniture left, but the place has definitely been looted.

BRENT

It's incredible...wait, look...  
(reaching down)  
Oh my god! Look at this.

He picks up a broken crystal ashtray.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Jack, do you realize what this is? Look  
at this. This is Uday Hussein's ashtray!  
(Jack is unimpressed)

Oh, I'm keeping this. This one goes in  
the collection. Look at the crest!

JACK

Forget that. Look at this.

It's a life-size portrait of Saddam. But the face has  
been sliced up, revealing a secret passage behind it.

BRENT

What do you think's back there?

JACK

Let's find out.

Jack pulls the portrait open, to reveal a hidden bedroom  
with a huge circular bed. Uday's love nest.

JACK (CONT'D)

Wow, that is seriously Playboy Mansion.

Jack takes a FLYING LEAP onto the bed. As he lays there:

JACK (CONT'D)

Dude, he had mirrors on the ceiling.  
Kinda kinky. Actually, kinda cool...

Brent is sticking his head through the cut-out face of  
the Saddam painting (like an amusement park cutout).

JACK (CONT'D)

Oh, dude, that is totally our company  
Christmas card right there.

BRENT

You know, I always wanted to be an all-  
powerful dictator.

JACK

Hey, take a shot of me on the love-bed:  
(doing Dave Chappelle)  
I'm RICH, biotch.

BRENT  
(jumping on the bed)  
Let's get one of both of us.

JACK  
Uh, no!

BRENT  
What?

JACK  
Dude!

EXT. UDAY'S LOVE PALACE BACK YARD. LATER.

Brent follows Jack out back to a huge half-drained pool.

JACK  
Too bad there's no water.

BRENT  
This must have been his gym.

Out behind the pool, there's an outdoor pavilion with all the latest exercise equipment. Brent lamely tries to work the machines. Jack starts to poke around.

JACK  
(very excited)  
Oh my god. OH MY GOD!

BRENT  
(running over)  
What is it? What did you find?

JACK  
I don't believe it. Could it be...Uday's  
...JOCKSTRAP?!

Jack holds up a skanky jockstrap. Brent RECOILS.

JACK (CONT'D)  
(trying to give it to him)  
Brent, come on. It's perfect for your  
collection. To go with your ashtray.

BRENT  
Get the hell away from me with that.

Jack CHASES Brent around the pool with the jock strap, rubbing it on Brent's face every time he catches him.

BRENT (CONT'D)  
Get away from me you asshole.

JACK

But it's Uday's. Uday's jockstrap.  
Look, I think I found the crest....

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA ROOFTOP. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Jack's drinking a whiskey and eating Doritos as he reviews the day's video. Brent's crunching Pringles and sucking down Coke while he watches CNN on the rooftop TV.

Behind them, the sun sets through a deep purple haze of smoke and flames. Tracer fire arcs through the sky and the sound of gunfire crackles in the distance.

JACK

Dude, how long you think it'll take us to find the provisional headquarters?

BRENT

Not long. Hey, look at this...

BILL HEMMER/CNN (ON TV)

We are getting reports of widespread looting in areas...

BRENT

Isn't that where we were?

It does look like the street Jack and Brent walked down.

SCOTT NELSON/BOSTON GLOBE

...it's a wild West, and the American troops do not see themselves as a police force, at least not at this stage...

JACK

That's crazy, dude. Every day what we do is on CNN. It's like our vacation video is being watched by the entire world...

BRENT

Did you ever think you'd end up doing anything like this?

JACK

You know, my Dad always talked about how, when the big opportunity comes along, you got to be ready to take the leap...

FLASHBACK to Thanksgiving at Jack's house: Jack's Dad is making a speech, carving knife poised above the turkey:

DOUG  
(Jack's big brother)  
C'mon Dad, you do this every year.

JACK'S DAD  
This is important. This is the one time of year when we remember how this great country was built...

JACK'S MOM  
Hurry up and cut the turkey, Stan...

JACK'S DAD  
When we think of our great country today, remember that it only exists because of the bravery of our ancestors, who crossed the vast Atlantic in tiny boats, with no idea of what waited for them here...

Jack is enthralled. MATCH CUT to his still not quite grown-up face on the roof of a villa in Baghdad:

JACK  
I always wondered, what if I was living in England 400 years ago? Would I have had the balls to get in one of those boats and head out across the sea? Or in the Gold Rush, would I have gone out to the frontier to make my fortune? I always thought I would have. But I just was born too late.

BRENT  
This is it, Jack. This is our Gold Rush. Iraq is the last frontier and George Bush just opened it up for us. He's gonna turn Iraq into Texas--and we're gonna to make millions in the process. Millions--because we got here first. Mark my words Jack: one month from now you're gonna walk out that front door, and it's gonna be like Dallas Texas out there....

FADE to BLACK and SUPER: "ONE MONTH LATER".

EXT. BAGDAD STREETS. ONE MONTH LATER.

Raw sewage runs out into the street. Garbage is piled up, uncollected. Beggars and little kids dig through it looking for food. All the stores are boarded up. And in the b.g., there's the constant sound of gunfire.

Jack and Brent wander through the streets. Their shoes are dusty and their suits hang off them. They look beaten-down, sick--and hungry.

BRENT

When are they going to open the bloody stores?

JACK

There's no power, dude. Plus, if they opened up, they'd just get looted.

BRENT

What do they expect us to eat, dammit?

JACK

I don't get it. Where are the expat bars? Where's the disco? Where's all the fun of post-conflict Vietnam?

BRENT

It's bloody outrageous. It took 4 days to conquer the whole damn country--how long does it take to get the damn power back on? I mean who the hell's in charge?

A group of HUNGRY KIDS start TUGGING at their sleeves, rubbing their stomachs and holding out their hands.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Go on, get away. Get out of here.

Brent SHOOS them off, hard. So they try Jack. Who digs in his pocket and comes up with a beaten-up candy bar.

BRENT (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Don't give them that. We need that.

All the kids smile and more start to crowd around.

JACK

I'm sorry, guys, I don't have any more. If I had more, I'd give it to you.

BRENT

You see what you did? God, now they'll never leave us alone. C'mon, let's see if we can get some food at the Sheraton.

EXT. FIRDOS SQUARE. LATER.

Jack and Brent walk past a big demonstration in Firdos Square. Hundreds of IRAQI PROTESTORS holding up banners stand where the statue of Saddam fell, facing off against the U.S. tanks and troops in front of the Sheraton.

As they get closer to the Sheraton, they see many of the white SUV's are being packed up by departing journo's.

INT. SHERATON HOTEL. SAME.

As they walk into the lobby, they bump into Lisa, the peacenik. She's humping her luggage through the lobby.

BRENT

Lisa! Are you heading out?

LISA

Yeah, I got a lift from the ABC guys.

BRENT

What about your aid program?

LISA

Fuck Iraq. I'm outta here. This is a complete cluster-fuck...

JACK

Dude, everybody's going.

BRENT

Show's over. War's won, time to go home.

JACK

So where're they handing out all those million-dollar reconstruction deals then?

But Brent is watching the lobby TV's, where a tanned, handsome man in a beautifully cut suit climbs out of a helicopter and flashes a dazzling smile. The caption reads: "NEW ADMINISTRATOR ARRIVES IN IRAQ".

BRENT

Look at him. He looks like a bloody movie star. You know what...maybe we've been going about this the wrong way.

JACK

What do you mean?

BRENT

Jack, what is the one crucial ingredient that distinguishes successful start-ups from failures?

JACK

Uh, a plan?

BRENT

No: hype! Publicity, advertising. We've been going about this the wrong way. We've been trying to get to them, when we should be getting them to come to us.

Brent RUNS over to a Fox News crew that's just in from shooting the protest outside. Jack watches, baffled.

EXT. SHERATON HOTEL PORT-COCHERE. MINUTES LATER.

The camera crew is clipping mikes onto their suit lapels.

JACK

What did you tell them?

BRENT

What difference does it make? We're about to sell our business plan to millions of people. Do you have any idea what that kind of publicity is worth?

FOX CAMERAMAN

You guys ready? Remember, this is live.

Jack and Brent wince as blinding bright light hits them.

INSERT: VERBATIM RECREATION OF FOX EVENING NEWS SEGMENT.

Jack and Brent appear, looking slightly stunned, over the tag line: FOX EVENING NEWS BIG STORY. A NEW IRAQ. A smug FOX NEWSCASTER (Clinton hair, round glasses) asks:

FOX NEWSCASTER

So Jack, let me start with you. This seems like an odd concept. Uh, we haven't even put down what's left of the insurrection. You haven't even gotten normal police people in there. The electricity's not on. Not all the water's on. It's still kind of a mess.

(big fake smile)

What do you mean you're opening a business consultancy?

Jack naively smiles back. Over "JACK ROE/BALLOCH & ROE."

JACK

Well the important thing here is that the opportunities will be there...eventually and, uh...preparations need to be made so the timing can be struck appropriately...

As Jack's talking, Fox CUTS AWAY to horrible stock images of destroyed buildings and piles of rubble.

FOX NEWSCASTER

Jack, I hate to put it this way, but, what do you know about it?

JACK

Well, what I know is, in these kinds of situations, there's a lot of... misinformation. And miscommunication...

More footage of hideously injured Iraqi's over: "BIG FACT: US WILL USE \$1.7 BIL IN IRAQI FUNDS TO REBUILD".

JACK (CONT'D)

...before, in the Saddam era, certain things weren't allowed...Communications were way less. Internet was like... highly, highly regulated.

As Jack founders, Brent looks down glumly. Checked out.

FOX NEWSCASTER

Brent, have you already had people coming to you, wanting your help?

BRENT

Uh yes, uh we've had several...we've got a lot of people...uh, here now um, at least in contact with us now. And there are a couple of big things that are emerging...One is brand protection. There's a lot of, uh, counterfeit products, and a lot of companies are seeking to protect their reputation in the market, uh, and...but they still don't want to put their people in the market. Because Iraq is still not safe.

FOX NEWSCASTER

(utterly dismissive)

Alright Jack Roe, Brent Balloch, good luck. It isn't safe, so uh, take your own advice.

(MORE)

FOX NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Coming up in the big story, Donald Rumsfeld, stepping on a lot of toes. But you can't argue with the results. We'll talk about Rummy's growing legacy...

EXT. SHERATON HOTEL PORT-COCHERE. SAME.

As the lights dim we see Jack, looking like he's just been gut-punched, and Brent, shifting around uneasily.

CAMERAMAN

Nice job, guys. Did you rehearse a lot?  
(whole TV crew cracks up)

INT. SHERATON HOTEL. MINUTES LATER.

Jack strides ahead of a sheepish-looking Brent. We've never seen Jack even annoyed. But now, he's pissed.

BRENT

Well I think that went pretty well.

JACK

Are you kidding?! Didn't you see them laughing at us? We looked like idiots!

BRENT

Hey, all publicity is good publicity.

Jack just shakes his head keeps walking out the door.

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA ROOFTOP. NIGHT.

Jack is up on the roof, looking out over the city's distant firefights while he talks on on his Thuraya:

JACK

...I'm starting to wonder if I made a huge mistake coming here.

BACK IN CALIFORNIA, Jack's brother DOUG (an older, chubbier dorkier version of Jack) sits in his tiny cubicle in a big software company office,

DOUG

Oh, you think maybe?

JACK

Although, I gotta admit, it has been pretty cool to see all this...

A mortar round EXPLODES a few blocks away. Jack ducks.

DOUG (O.S.)

Jesus, what was that?! Was that a bomb?

JACK

Nah. Just a...a backfire.

DOUG

Jack, you gotta tell Mom and Dad where you are. I can't keep lying for you.

JACK

No, dude, they'll just freak out. I'll tell'em eventually, but...hang on, I got another call coming in.

(switching lines)

Jack Roe. Who is this? Hey, Abdullah, how ya doin'...Yeah, yeah the house is great, thanks a lot...no, no--no looting. Hey, Abdullah, do you know any good drivers in Baghdad?....No, we've been using taxis...No, a fixer. Someone who's juiced in--who's connected around here...

EXT. BAGDAD VILLA. NEXT DAY.

A young Iraqi (25, shaved head, suit and tie, good-looking) rings the doorbell. Jack opens the door.

GHASSAN

I am Ghassan (*pronounced Rassan*). Abdullah call me, say you need driver.

INT. GHASSAN'S VOLVO. AFTERNOON.

Jack's shotgun and Brent's in back as they drive through town in Ghassan's ancient Volvo. It's a total shit-heap.

JACK

So Ghassan, you speak pretty great English...

GHASSAN

Yeah, I studied in university. I am chemical engineer.

BRENT

So you worked as an engineer? Before?

GHASSAN

Not really. Under Saddam, there are no jobs. So I work for my uncle, as driver. Later, I have small shop. Selling shoes. Cheap shoes, from Syria...

Ghassan is quiet, but not serious. Good-natured, quick to smile, but definitely tough. Not macho though--a good guy. Very cool. He and Jack connect right away.

GHASSAN (CONT'D)

So...where you want to go now?

JACK

You know, we're trying to find out where they're setting up the new government.

BRENT

We've heard it's in one of the big palaces. But there's so many.

GHASSAN

Oh...maybe in one of Saddam big palace. Far away, across the river.

JACK

Can you take us there?

GHASSAN

Sure, why not? Yellah!

JACK

Uh, what's "yellah"?

GHASSAN

"Yellah" mean like: "Let's go!"

JACK

(with gusto)

OK! Yellah!

GHASSAN

(laughing)

Wow, Jack. Abdullah, he don't tell me you speak so good Arabic!

JACK

Oh I'm practically fluent now...

BRENT

You know, I picked up some Arabic myself. When I was in Chechnya...

Jack and Ghassan basically ignore Brent as they drive through town. As they pass a big gate guarded by US soldiers, dozens of Iraqi's are lined up waiting, while hundreds of protestors stand around SCREAMING at them.

JACK

Ghassan, what's going on over there?

GHASSAN

They are waiting to join new Iraqi Army.

JACK

Who are those other guys?

GHASSAN

They are old Iraqi Army. They protest.

JACK

Dude, what do you think about the new Administrator firing all those guys?

(a beat--Ghassan hesitates)

Come on, Ghassan. You can tell me. I think it was pretty stupid myself.

GHASSAN

I don't understand why Bremer he don't pay them. America take millions of dollar from Saddam, why not pay them? Then they happy. No problems. Now, they very angry. I think maybe big problem.

EXT. SADDAM'S REPUBLICAN PALACE. DAY.

The Jeep drives over a long bridge across the Tigris river. Through a cluster of blown-up buildings, past a huge stadium and into a lush, green park area.

It pulls up at a big checkpoint: blast walls, concer-tina wire, heavy machine guns. Ahead is a massive palace (Italian Fascist meets Arab fantasy style) topped with four enormous bronze busts of Saddam Hussein.

GATE GUARD

Need to see your CPA ID's, guys.

BRENT

We don't have our ID's yet, but we're here to bid on contracts.

GATE GUARD

I'm sorry, I can't admit you to this facility without proper credentials.

JACK

C'mon dude. We've been walking around for like a month trying to get in here. Here's my passport, I'm an American.

The guard hesitates, then nods them in. But a young female BUREAUCRAT from inside the gate sees them.

BUREAUCRAT

Wait--what can I do for you gentlemen?

BRENT

We're here to participate in the bid process for reconstruction contracts.

BUREAUCRAT

I'm sorry, who are you?

JACK

We're kind of like...entrepreneurs.

BUREAUCRAT

I'm sorry, I'm going to have to ask you to leave. SECURITY--who the hell let these guys in?

JACK

But how do we find out about contracts?

BUREAUCRAT

There are no contracts. All the contracts have already been awarded.

JACK

What do you mean? When was the bidding?

BUREAUCRAT

The President has suspended competitive bidding under his emergency powers. If you're looking for work, try Halliburton. They're right down the road. GUARD!

The guard shrugs 'sorry' and leads them away.

EXT. HALLIBURTON COMPOUND. MINUTES LATER.

Ghassan pulls up to a huge steel gate in a massive blast wall--much higher and much more imposing than the CPA.

Inside, it looks like a Palm Springs trailer park--a whole little prefab city of double-wide trailers.

INT. HALLIBURTON RECRUITING OFFICE. DAY.

Jack and Brent sit at the desk of a plump South Asian HALLIBURTON MANAGER in his trailer-office. Family pictures, cricket trophies--it's Dilbert time.

HALLIBURTON MANAGER

So...you are not pipeline guys, right?  
Do you have any experience with power plants? Or bridge construction?  
(they shake their heads)  
Do you even speak Arabic?

JACK

Uh, I'm learning, but...

HALLIBURTON MANAGER

I don't understand. What were you thinking, coming to Iraq, you two?  
(no answer)

The only thing I can offer you is truck driver. The salary is \$10,000 a month. Plus room, board and benefits of course.

INT. GHASSAN'S VOLVO. LATER.

JACK

There were never any contracts. Halliburton had them the whole time.

BRENT

Hey, they may have the inside track, but they can't take all the contracts Jack. And in the meantime, \$10k a month...

JACK

No. I did not come to Iraq to take some crap job for a big corporation.

FLASHBACK: to an overhead shot of a huge warehouse office. The crane TRACKS over dozens of identical cubicles--like a rat maze--and STOPS on Jack's space.

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I've been a corporate drone...

We ZOOM in on Jack: trapped--laboring over stacks of computer printouts surrounded by Dilbert cartoons, spring break photos and ding letters from business school.

JACK (CONT'D)  
I fuckin' hated it. I'd rather go home.

Brent starts to say something--but sees Jack's face and thinks better of it. A heavy beat. After a moment:

GHASSAN  
So...where you want to go now.  
(no response)  
OK. Maybe I take you someplace very cool. Someplace only Iraqi go, OK?

EXT. SADR-CITY THIEVES MARKET. AFTERNOON.

JACK  
Holy shit, dude...

Jack and Brent stand at the edge of a gigantic flea market. But instead of tube socks, everything from anti-aircraft guns to looted kitchen sinks is for sale.

BRENT  
So this is where it all went.

As they walk in, nobody seems to care that they are not Iraqi. And there's not a US soldier in sight.

MARKET VENDOR  
Excuse me mister, you know what this for?

He's standing beside an entire dental office suite.

JACK  
Yeah, that's a dentist's chair. And that's the dentist's lamp to go with it.

Brent starts looking at some silverware. Jack at guns.

BRENT  
Jack. Look at this. That's Saddam's crest. My god, it's Asprey...

JACK  
Dude, check this out. This is an HK MP-5. This is what the SAS uses.

Ghassan asks the vendor how much the machine gun is.

GHASSAN  
\$50. But AK-47 with 2 clips only \$2.

JACK

Did you say \$2?

GHASSAN

Yes. AK very cheap now. 10,000 bullets, only \$5. You want RPG? RPG also cheap.

JACK

Whattaya think, Brent? Couple RPG's for the house? You know, for self-defense.

BRENT

Forget RPG's! Look at this champagne! It's vintage Tattinger!

They're heading back to the car with their purchases when Jack spots: a brand new Jeep Grand Cherokee.

JACK

Ghassan. How committed are you to that Volvo, dude?

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. DAY.

Ghassan drives around, stopping to show off the Jeep to buddies on every corner. He seems to know everyone.

GHASSAN

I like this truck! Very good.

JACK

Yeah, not bad for 3000 bucks!

BRENT

Now we look like real businessmen.

JACK

Fake it 'til you make it, right?

GHASSAN

Hey, you want to try your new gun now?

JACK

Sure! Where?

EXT. TIGRIS RIVERBANK. DUSK.

It's a beautiful Baghdad dusk beside the majestic Tigris: white cranes fly past, ducks swim by--as Jack and Brent BLAST AWAY in full auto at some old oil drums.

Brent's having a hard time hanging on to his AK as it BUCKS and RISES. Jack's HK is super-smooth.

JACK  
(huge smile)  
THIS IS SO DAMN FUN!

BRENT  
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY GUN.  
GHASSAN, can you check this?

Ghassan takes the AK and RIPS off a series of bursts. NAILING the oil drums dead center.

GHASSAN  
I think is OK now. You try.

After they burn through the ammo, Jack and Brent stand there with their smoking guns, big smiles on their faces.

JACK  
Hey Ghassan, get a picture of us.

Ghassan uses Jack's camera to take a picture of Jack and Brent posing with their guns Rambo-style by the Tigris.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Ghassan, you get in here too.

GHASSAN  
No, no. It's OK for you.

JACK  
Come on Ghassan, you're part of the team.

Jack carefully balances the camera on a tree stump, PRESSES the button and RUNS back over to pose.

JACK (CONT'D)  
OK. Charlie's Angels everybody.  
Charlie's Angels. Come on Ghassan.

GHASSAN  
What is "Charlie's Angels"?

JACK  
Just...be a sexy chick OK. Like this:

INSERT: SNAPSHOTS of the three in full-on Charlie's Angels poster pose: big sexy girl-power attitude, pouty lips and guns on outthrust hips.

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Ghassan, don't take this the wrong way if I tell you you make a very sexy Lucy Liu. You've done this before, right?

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. LATER.

It's nighttime now and they're driving back to the city.

JACK

So much fun! We gotta get more ammo.

BRENT

Yeah, at 2 cents a round...

JACK

Maybe we should buy some RPG's too.

Up ahead, there's a US checkpoint stopping cars.

JACK (CONT'D)

Shit. Ghassan, you think we're going to have a problem with all these guns?

EXT. ARMY CHECKPOINT. SECONDS LATER.

HARD-ASS MARINE

STOP RIGHT THERE! Papers, please...

A bunch of hard-ass, itchy-fingered Marines stand around waiting for an excuse to shoot up the car. No mellow, shoot-the-shit checkpoint here.

JACK

(handing over passports)

Hey. How you guys doing today?

HARD-ASS MARINE

What is your purpose for being here?

BRENT

We do uh, catering for the coalition...

HARD-ASS MARINE

So where are your CPA ID's?

BRENT

We just started. You know, we were trying to get back to the CPA but we're lost. Can you give us directions?

HARD-ASS MARINE

Do I look like a fucking traffic cop to you? Where's your driver's ID?

Ghassan passes the Marine a yellow Iraqi ID Card.

HARD-ASS MARINE (CONT'D)

Holy shit. He's Republican Guard!

SECOND MARINE

Sarge, we got weapons back here!

All the Marines come to life, weapons up, ready to shoot.

HARD-ASS MARINE (CONT'D)

YOU, HAJJI, GET YOUR ASS OUT OF THE CAR.

JACK

No, wait, he's with us.

HARD-ASS MARINE

(grabbing Ghassan)

Not any more. We're taking him in...

JACK

Dude, those are our guns...

HARD-ASS MARINE

Shut the FUCK up or I will shoot you.

To everyone's amazement, Brent gets out of the car.

HARD-ASS MARINE (CONT'D)

YOU! Get back in the car NOW!

BRENT

I will NOT get back in the car. Do you know who I work for? I work for Ambassador Bremer--that's right, your boss.

HARD-ASS MARINE

Not my boss. I work for Gen. Abazaied.

BRENT

Well guess what, he works for Bremer. Unless the U.S. Military has suddenly ceased working under civilian command for the first time in 200 years. And if you don't want to answer to Amb. Bremer why he and his staff don't have food in their cafeteria tomorrow, you better BLOODY WELL give my driver back his ID and let us get to work.

A long beat. Brent and the Marine are inches apart, almost bumping chests. Finally, the Marine backs down.

HARD-ASS MARINE

FINE. But I'm warning you, the next time you come through my checkpoint without proper ID, I will detain you.

BRENT

(sweetly)

Thank you very much officer.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. LATER.

No one says anything until they drive well away.

GHASSAN

Thank you, Brent.

BRENT

Don't mention it. I hate petty tyrants. Throwing their imaginary weight around. Probably a shop clerk back in the US.

JACK

Dude, he was probably a cop...Hey, Ghassan, why didn't you us you were in the Republican Guard?

GHASSAN

I am not really Republican Guard.

JACK

So why does your ID say that?

GHASSAN

Well...you know, after university, I can not find job as engineer. So...I know someone can help me find job.

(lowers voice conspiratorily)

You know, if you want good job here, you have to be from Saddam tribe. So...I pay someone, my friend, he change my name. To Saddam tribe: al-Tikriti, you know?

JACK

Yeah, but what does that have to do with the Republican Guard?

GHASSAN

You know, Saddam very afraid someone will kill him. So the best jobs, at Palace, only for Tikriti, only Republican Guard.

BRENT

So you worked at the Palace? Doing what?

INSERT FLASHBACK: of Ghassan, in a white polo shirt and white pants, driving a golf-cart over perfectly manicured green golf-course lawns. Beside a sparkling blue lake.

GHASSAN (V.O.)

My job was to check the water. You know, Saddam he make dam on river. For lake. So he and his friends can drive boats, waterski. My job is to check the water. If too low, I have to open the dam.

Ghassan takes a giant ruler out of the cart and pushes it down into the lake to check the level. END FLASHBACK.

JACK

Wait a minute. That was your job? To measure the level of Saddam's lake?

GHASSAN

Yes. It was very easy job. Every day I finish at 1 o'clock, go to my shoe store.

JACK

So you never did anything with the Army?

GHASSAN

Never. I don't even wear uniform. But when war come, of course, I supposed to fight for Saddam. But I refuse. That's why I go to jail. Very very bad. Very small room. Very hot. I'm sure I die.

JACK

Ghassan, if you don't want to go back there, you better not show that ID again. For American soldiers, 'Republican Guard' is also very very bad. The worst.

EXT. BAGHDAD NIGHT MARKET. NIGHT.

Jack, Brent and Ghassan are sitting on folding chairs on a busy Baghdad street. Street vendors are set up all around them, selling cheap junk to the passing throngs. A SMALL BOY brings them a tray with cups of hot tea.

GHASSAN

So, my friends, welcome to my shop.

We PULL BACK to REVEAL they are sitting in front of a tiny shoe shop with an huge sign reading "GHASSAN SHOES".

JACK

Your shop? So who's this "Gassin" guy?

GHASSAN

What do you mean? Who is "Gassin"?

JACK

Gassin. The guy on the sign.

BRENT

He's making a joke, Ghassan. You see, your name is pronounced "Rassan." But in English it's written like "Gassin".

JACK

Dude, forget about it. It was just a stupid joke...

A couple of IRAQI BUSINESSMEN stop by to greet Ghassan. They look over, see Jack and Brent and do a double take.

JACK (CONT'D)

(sticking out his hand)

Hey, how ya doin'? I'm Jack.

After a slight hesitation, they smile and shake Jack's hand. They pull up chairs, order tea. And chat:

IRAQI BUSINESSMAN #1

So, my friend, why you come to Iraq?

JACK

Well, I heard the most beautiful women in the world are from Iraq. So....

(they are not amused)

BRENT

He's just kidding. We're businessmen.

IRAQI BUSINESSMAN #2

I see. So tell me, how come still no water? Power only 4 hours per day? Why?

JACK

I...I'm sorry, I don't know.

IRAQI BUSINESSMAN #2  
And when come back phone?

JACK  
I don't know. Soon, I'm sure...

One of the Iraqi's says something in Arabic and everybody laughs. They finish their tea, kiss Ghassan and move on.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Ghassan, what did that guy say?

GHASSAN  
He say, "Americans can put man on the moon. But they cannot turn on my phone."

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA. LATER THAT EVENING.

Jack and Brent struggle to get all their guns and champagne and silver out of the truck.

GHASSAN  
So Jack, Brent...what we do tomorrow?

JACK  
You seem to know everyone, Ghassan.  
Maybe you could hook us up with some big  
businessmen. You know, the playaz...

INT. SHEIKH'S PALACE. DAY.

Jack and Brent are sitting on pillows on a huge Persian carpet, sipping tea and smoking hookahs with an Iraqi SHEIKH (wearing full tribal regalia) and his RETAINERS.

BRENT  
So, Sheikh. I understand you have an  
interesting business opportunity for us.

SHEIKH  
Yes. I know this can be very profitable  
for all of us. You know, right now in  
Iraq, we have a big surplus of guns.

JACK  
Yes, we've seen that at the market.

SHEIKH  
And you know Americans hate black people.  
(Jack is confused)  
America don't care about Africa.  
(MORE)

SHEIKH (CONT'D)

They don't care if the blacks kill the other blacks. So if you and I buy up all the guns in Iraq, America will help us sell them to Africa for big, big profit.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. LATER.

JACK

Dude, what was that?!

BRENT

That was just one meeting. We have lots of other opportunities to explore: cable, bottled water, advertising, trademark protection--I'm pretty sure those Mars Bars we saw were not made by the Mars company.

As Brent prattles on, Jack leans over and turns on the radio. But there's nothing but static.

JACK

Ghassan, what's up with the radio?

GHASSAN

Before the war, only government station. So now, no radio.

JACK

Dude...I'm sensing an opportunity...

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA. DAY.

Brent and Ghassan watch while Jack takes out a black box and connects it to his satellite phone and his laptop.

BRENT

What the hell is that?

JACK

It's an Immarsat, dude. It's like a modem for satellites. It's what they use on oil rigs to connect to the internet.

BRENT

And you've had this the whole time?

JACK

Dude, I'm an internet kid. Can't function without it.

MONTAGE: of flashing screens as Jack works the internet: radio station catalogues, radio manuals, schematics.

JACK (CONT'D)

OK. So all we really need is an antenna, a transmitter and a mixer.

BRENT

Wait--you're telling me you know how to build a radio station. From that...

JACK

Yeah, dude. Nothing to it.

BRENT

Well, if we can do it, it'd be great publicity. A real calling card for us.

JACK

What do you think, Ghassan?

GHASSAN

I think it's good idea. But don't you have to ask some permission first?

EXT. PALACE GATE. DAY.

BUREAUCRAT

You again. I told you...

JACK

Look, I'm not asking to come in. I just want to know how to get a radio license.

BUREAUCRAT

(intrigued)

A license--for a radio station?

JACK

Absolutely. The first private, secular, English language radio station in Iraq.

BUREAUCRAT

You know, more secular media is a big part of our democratization plan. You should talk to Mike Cavanaugh. He oversees the Communications Ministry.

JACK

Great. So how do I contact this guy?

BUREAUCRAT

Hang on, let me get his number for you.

(thumbing through a book)

Wait, that's him! Over there.

She points into the courtyard, where a 40-something guy with a vestigial 80's rocker mullet is grabbing a smoke.

EXT. COURTYARD. MINUTES LATER.

MIKE CAVANAUGH

I love it. I think it's a great idea.

JACK

Excellent!

MIKE CAVANAUGH

I ran a radio station myself, in college. It was a fucking blast. What kind of music are you planning to play?

JACK

I don't know. Everything I guess.

MIKE CAVANAUGH

Just no rap, OK? Things are bad enough, we don't need any 'Fuck tha Police' or 'OPP'. You got a station name yet?

JACK

Yeah: Hot FM--'I Rock Iraq!'

MIKE CAVANAUGH

'I Rock Iraq'--that's great.  
(stubbing out cigarette)  
Well, you got my blessing.

JACK

Wait. Is that it?

MIKE CAVANAUGH

Yeah, take the Cavanaugh approach. Go for it and see if anyone stops you.

JACK

Shouldn't I get some kind of license?

MIKE CAVANAUGH

(walking away)

I don't know, make something up. I gotta go fix the phone system...

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA. LATER.

Jack, Ghassan and Brent are gathered around the computer.

BRENT

That's it?

JACK

Yep. The transmitter's coming in DHL from the UK. The antenna's coming from Holland. They'll be in Amman in a week.

GHASSAN

Really? But is this so easy?

JACK

Well, the equipment's easy. Now we gotta find people who know how to work it.

GHASSAN

Don't worry. We can find. Nobody in Iraq have job now. Finding worker easy.

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA. MORNING.

Jack and Ghassan are packing up the SUV. Brent watches.

JACK

We should be back with the equipment in 2 days, assuming no customs hang-ups.

BRENT

Jack, I think the radio station's great. But remember, it's only a stepping stone to the really big deals.

JACK

Right. Well, if any really big deals come up, you can call me on the cell...

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. DAY.

Jack and Ghassan are driving down the highway.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a tank convoy ROARS up over the median and CUTS them off. They SCREECH to a halt.

Red laser sighting dots DANCE over the dashboard as hostile American soldiers eyeball them, not 30 feet away--itching for an excuse to light up the Jeep.

JACK

Don't move, Ghassan. Don't move a muscle.

After the convoy leaves, they slowly start up again.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Jesus. They almost shot us!

A long beat. They drive in shaken silence for a minute.

GHASSAN  
Jack, you remember before you ask me why some Iraqi's hate the Americans?

JACK  
Yeah.

GHASSAN  
I don't say before, but Iraqi's are proud people. Iraq invented writing, farming, beer, Ali Baba, Aladdin. Before, Iraq is great. But now, no. So, even though Iraqi people hate Saddam, they also hate to see American tank, driving around their country. Pointing guns. Shooting people. Sometimes women, even children. This make them very angry sometime.

JACK  
Does it make you angry?

GHASSAN  
No. What make me angry is why still no police. No water. No telephone.

JACK  
Don't worry Ghassan. Every country America's taken over has always been rebuilt better than it was before. Germany, Japan, they're rich countries now--because America rebuilt them after the war. You'll see.

EXT. IRAQ BORDER. AFTERNOON.

Jack and Ghassan drive back under the onion-shaped arch. A sign welcomes them to Jordan. The Saddam mural is gone.

INT. AMMAN CUSTOMS HOUSE. NEXT DAY.

In Amman, Jack and Ghassan open a crate containing radio equipment. They start to inspect it when the phone RINGS.

BRENT (O.S.)  
(hyper, panicked)  
Jack, it's Brent. Branson's coming.  
(MORE)

BRENT (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
He's going to do a big promotional event here. He's gonna beat us to the punch...

JACK  
Slow down. What are you talking about?

BRENT  
I need you to pick up hot dogs, maybe 2000 hot dogs, beer, a DJ. We can still do our fashion show, but now we can tie it into the launch of the radio station. We'll do it on the roof of the Sheraton. We'll christen the antenna at midnight...

JACK  
Dude, back up. This is crazy. We can't afford a big party. I've already spent most of what we have on equipment...

BRENT  
Well we'll just have to spend some more. This is the time. We have to launch our fashion line before he beats us to it...

JACK  
Can we talk about this when I get back?

INT. AMMAN HYATT BUSINESS CENTER. LATER THAT DAY.

Jack is flirting with the same cute hotel clerk while he checks his email. He opens one from Brent marked URGENT.

INSERT: the computer screen, filling with photos of gas cans, ammo cases, zippers, Persian rugs, Arab stonework. "Jack: fashion line coming GREAT! Investors in NY ready to go. Done deal. What do you think? Shold we expand theme to Arab not jst Army (sic)"

A total "what the fuck?" look crosses Jack's face.

INT. AMMAN PIRATE CD SHOP. AFTERNOON.

JACK  
How much would you charge me to download all these CD's onto my hard drives?

CD SHOP OWNER  
What you mean, all?

JACK  
I mean every CD you got.

As the owner ponders this, the sat phone rings again.

BRENT (O.S.)

Jack. Did you get my email?

JACK

I did, but I'm right in the middle of something here. Can we talk later?

BRENT

No, this is urgent. We have to trademark the fashion line now. Before we get squeezed out by Branson.

The shopowner holds up a calculator with 2000 on it.

JACK

Dude, I can't really talk now...

(to shopowner)

Is that 2000 dollars or 2000 dinar?

BRENT

Jack, just trust me on this, OK?

JACK

Uh, Brent, how much will this cost?

BRENT

A couple hundred dollars. At most.

JACK

Fine. Just put it on my credit card.

The number's on the statement on my desk.

(back to the shopowner)

No, not 2000 dinar. 2000 dollars. OK?

EXT. IRAQ BORDER. NIGHT.

Jack and Ghassan slip the Iraqi BORDER GUARDS \$2 and a carton of Marlboros to let them in. There's no customs check. And no American troops guarding the border.

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA. LATER.

Jack and Ghassan unpack the equipment as Brent lays out fabric swatches and lame sketches for his fashion line.

BRENT

I'm telling you Jack, this will be huge!

JACK

So what ever happened with Branson?

Brent blushes, mumbles something incoherent and quickly shuffles off.

INT. SHERATON PENTHOUSE. DAY.

Jack and Brent are shown around a lavish Arab bling-bling penthouse by a HOTEL CLERK. It's on the top floor and has spectacular views of Firdos Square and all Baghdad.

BRENT

So this was Uday's penthouse?

HOTEL CLERK

Yes. He like bring women here to fuck.

JACK

We'll take it.

EXT. SHERATON HOTEL ROOF. SUNSET.

Marine SNIPERS scan the city below for insurgents while Jack and Ghassan teeter on the very edge of the roof, desperately trying to tie an antenna to a support strut.

JACK

Uh, Brent, you think you could give us a hand here?

Brent starts to walk over, but SPAZZES out, losing his balance and SLIPPING on the edge--almost falling off.

BRENT

Guys, you know I'm not very good at this high wire stuff. Maybe I should just...

JACK

(suppressing laughter)

That's cool. We're good...

INT. SHERATON PENTHOUSE. NIGHT.

A bunch of YOUNG IRAQI GUYS (Jack's new radio staff) watch skeptically as Jack connects the line from the antenna through the balcony door into a computer console.

JACK

OK. Here goes nothing.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. SAME TIME.

Ghassan is sitting in the Jeep downstairs. The sound of static on the car radio is suddenly replaced by the opening riff of AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long".

GHASSAN  
(on the sat phone)  
Jack. It works! I can hear it!

INT. SHERATON PENTHOUSE. NIGHT.

JACK  
IT WORKS! IT WORKS! We're on the air!  
The first radio station in the new Iraq!

The Iraqi's raise their fists and CHEER. Everyone starts DANCING around Uday's penthouse to the thunderous chords of AC/DC. It's a glorious moment.

JACK (CONT'D)  
(on the sat phone)  
Mr. Cavanaugh? Turn on your radio...

EXT. SHERATON HOTEL. NEXT DAY.

A military convoy pulls up to the front of the Sheraton where Jack and Ghassan are waiting.

Heavily-armed SOLDIERS POUR out of the Hummers. Forming a defensive perimeter around the center APC.

Only when the area is cleared does a phalanx of SPECIAL FORCES escort someone out of the APC. It's Cavanaugh.

MIKE CAVANAUGH  
AC/DC. How did you know?

JACK  
I think it was the haircut, dude.

MIKE CAVANAUGH  
You pulled it off, Jack--the Cavanaugh way. Congratulations. Here's your license. HOT 104, I Rock Iraq--the first radio station in the new Iraq.

JACK  
Thank you very much!

MIKE CAVANAUGH

That's all I get? A thank you? Where's my VIP tour? I better see this station, now that I already approved it...

INT. SHERATON PENTHOUSE. LATER THAT DAY.

The new radio staff is gathered in Uday's living room. They're all young guys in their early 20's, shaved heads, heavy metal T-shirts, vaguely stoner-looking but sincere. They sit in a big circle around Jack and Ghassan.

JACK

OK, so Ghassan and I wanted to get everybody together. As you know, we officially got our license today--yay!

(absolutely no reaction)

Right. So we're on the air for good. But we never really talked about the big decisions. Like broadcasting in English. Playlists. Advertising. All that stuff. So. What do you guys think?

Total silence. Nobody's making eye contact with Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)

OK, look. Maybe you're not used to speaking your minds. Or having a say. But things are different now. I want you to tell me how we should run the station.

They all look deeply uncomfortable. Nobody says a thing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Come on. Tell me what you think. Nothing bad's gonna happen to you. Ghassan, tell'em it's OK.

Ghassan says something in Arabic, but still--nothing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Fine, OK, I'll go first. I always wanted to know why it's all guys working here. You, Oz. What's the story on that?

OZ, beefy--taciturn--is clearly leader of the pack.

OZ

Before, Uday used to rape all the women who worked in the radio station. So now, no women want to work here because people will think they are sluts.

JACK

OK...interesting. Now I know. Right, let's go around the circle here. You...

The poor guy looks like he's gonna have a heart attack.

JACK (CONT'D)

Is it really cooler to broadcast in English than in Arabic?

YES MAN

I...I am very excited to work here. And I agree with everything you do.

JACK

OK. And what do you think?

YES MAN #2

(pointing to the last guy)  
I agree with him.

Jack forces an encouraging smile. Next up is an intense guy wearing a skin-tight black Metallica shirt.

METALLICA FAN

I think English is good. But I think your playlists are no good.

JACK

OK. Well, we're trying to catch Iraqi people up on like 20 years of music they missed. So it's kind of eclectic. But what do you think we should be playing?

METALLICA FAN

We should play Metallica! All the time.

JACK

Right. Maybe for our second station we'll go all Metallica. What about you?

The next guy is the youngest--maybe 18. Painfully shy. He can barely look up. Jack feels bad for him.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey, it's no big deal. Just say anything. It doesn't have to be about the station. It can be about the war, me, whatever you want. We're all friends here.

The kid looks deeply conflicted. He obviously wants to say something, but he can't get it out.

JACK (CONT'D)

Come on. Spit it out. Whatever's on  
your mind, say it. Just say it...

After an agonizing second or two, the kid blurts out:

SHY KID

I like hairy pussy...

Jack is stunned. After a second everybody starts to snicker, then laugh. Jack can't help laughing too. The kid looks up with eyes full of shame and pain and says:

SHY KID (CONT'D)

...I don't know why.

Everybody ROARS with laughter. Even the kid starts to laugh along with them. The ice is broken.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. DAY.

Later, Ghassan drives Jack and Brent over to the CPA. Jack's shotgun, Brent's in the back.

JACK

Dude, I'm still laughing about the whole hairy pussy thing...

BRENT

What? Whose hairy pussy?

JACK

No one dude. It's just something--  
something crazy they said at the station.

GHASSAN

Why you say crazy? Is not crazy. You  
just don't understand Iraqi people.

JACK

OK. So explain to me.

BRENT

What hairy pussy?

GHASSAN (CONT'D)

You really want to know Jack? You really  
want to understand Iraqi people?

JACK

Of course! Tell me.

GHASSAN

OK, I tell you one joke, maybe you will  
understand.

(MORE)

GHASSAN (CONT'D)

So, before, in Saddam time, one Iraqi dog run away. It run all the way to Iran. It escape the army and the minefields and finally, when it cross the border, it meet one Iranian dog. The Iranian dog say, 'why you come to Iran? There is more food, there is more money, everything better in Iraq.' The Iraqi dog said 'oh, I come here because I want to bark.' So, Jack. Now you understand?

JACK

Iraqi's have been under Saddam so long, they don't know how to bark any more.

GHASSAN

Very good Jack.

(a beat)

Now you begin to understand Iraqi people.

JACK

I don't know if I'd go that far...

They both laugh. It's like they're old, old friends. Brent sits in the back watching them. A little left out.

GHASSAN

You know Jack, Iraqi people are good people. But their life has been very hard. So you must be patient with us. Schwee schwee.

JACK

"Schwee Schwee." What's that mean?

GHASSAN

Schwee schwee mean: "step by step".

JACK

I like that one: step by step....

LATER, as they cruise through downtown, they hear the CLASH's "Rock the Cashbah" coming from the next car.

THE CLASH

*...drop the bombs beneath the minarets...*

JACK

Wait, Ghassan, turn on the radio.

THE CLASH

*The sheriff don't like it/Rock the Cashbah*

JACK

Holy shit, that's us!  
(to the cabbie)  
HEY! THAT'S MY RADIO STATION.

The DRIVER gives him a big thumbs up. As the traffic starts to move, they start to hear the song everywhere. From the shops along the street, from other cars, from battery-powered radios on the street stalls. Everybody's playing "Rock the Cashbah." Jack breaks into a huge grin.

JACK (CONT'D)

You see Ghassan, that's what I'm talkin'  
'bout. Schwee schwee. Step by step.

INT. PALACE. DAY.

Jack and Brent are being photographed and fingerprinted or their new CPA ID badges. In the b.g., the CLASH's "I'm So Bored with the U.S.A." is playing on the radio. An Iraqi voice comes on "This is HOT 104--I ROCK IRAQ!"

CPA ID CONTRACTOR  
So you're the radio guys huh?

JACK

That's us.

BRENT

But we don't choose the music.

CPA ID CONTRACTOR

No worries. It's great to have something to listen to. OK, so these are your IDs. Keep'em visible at all times. They'll give you access to all parts of the CPA, including the Palace, the PX and the Community Center. Lunch is from 11-2. Dinner is from 5-7. You are expected to observe the curfew and the no alcohol rule. And these are your cell phones.

JACK

Cell phones. On what network?

CPA ID CONTRACTOR

A private network set up by MCI.

JACK

But this is a New York number...

CPA ID CONTRACTOR

Correct. When callers dial that number in Westchester, the call will be bounced by satellite to Iraq. But it will appear on their bill as a N.Y. call.

JACK

Call N.Y., get Baghdad. Pretty slick!

BRENT

And the bill? How do we pay for it?

CPA ID CONTRACTOR

This is a free service provided by MCI.

JACK

Well, I guess we know who won the Iraq cell phone license, huh?

CPA ID CONTRACTOR

Welcome to the Reconstruction guys.

EXT. PALACE. DAY.

Jack and Brent proudly wear their new ID badges as they walk into Saddam's former Palace for the first time.

There are high ceilings inlaid in intricate Arabic designs. Marble floors, long halls and huge reception rooms with gaudy Persian/French provincial furniture.

The entire Iraqi government is laid out in a series of offices along the hall. Thousands of Army bureaucrats toil in cubicles in hastily converted banquet halls.

JACK

Dude, I can't believe it. We're in.

BRENT

And now that we're finally here, we're gonna make a bloody killing...

Marines, Rangers, Special Forces and Delta Force (they're the ones wearing Patagonia fleece) roam the halls, with loaded M-16s on the shoulder and pistols on the waist.

There's also a whole host of mysterious civilians, from pot-bellied guys that look like Teamsters to young bodyguard/mercenaries with an attitude. There are even contractors who wear combat uniforms and guns, but with tags saying DOD CIVILIAN instead of ARMY. All of them walk around with a palpable sense of power and purpose.

BRENT (CONT'D)

...you just leave it to me, Jack. I'm going to land us some massive contracts!

INT. PALACE OFFICES. MONTAGE.

A quick-cut montage of Jack and Brent (mostly Brent) pitching their services to the soldiers who now run Iraq:

JACK

Hey, uh, how you guys doing?

BRENT

(cutting him off)

I'm Brent Balloch, and this is my partner Jack. We'll be your liason to Iraq...

SARCASTIC SOLDIER

Why would I want to liase with Iraq?

BRENT

...all the logistical support you need, at much more lower rates than Halliburton. Whatever you need, we'll get.

BORED SOLDIER

What if what I really need is to get laid?

(his buddies crack up)

Can you get me that?

BRENT

(pompous English accent)

...we provide a variety of logistical solutions for transitional economies. You see, what I really am is an expert in emerging markets and conflicts....

OLD SHIT-KICKER SOLDIER

(thick Southern accent)

Is that so? So tell me, Mr. Balloch, how does one become an expuht in Corn-Flakes? You go to Kellogg University fuh that?

Everybody bursts into guffaws. Even Jack has to laugh. It's funny. OFF Brent's humiliated face we CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE HALLS. LATER.

BRENT

(pissed)

Don't you understand what we're trying to do here? There's millions at stake here!

JACK

I'm sorry dude. I shouldn't've laughed. But ya gotta admit, it was funny.

BRENT

That's not the point. Listen, Jack, do you know what we're selling here?

JACK

Uh, logistical services?

BRENT

NO! We're selling us.

JACK

Well maybe that's the problem. Cos it's pretty obvious nobody's buying "us".

BRENT

Look, I'll admit, I don't always do so well with American men between 24 and 45.

JACK

What, y'mean, like...the decision makers?

BRENT

There's understandably some resentment, because of my accent, my upbringing. But that's why you have to jump in and back me up. You're the cool California guy.

JACK

Look dude...I gotta lot of work to do at the station. Why don't you just do your thing and call me when there's something concrete for me to work on, OK?

INT. RADIO STATION. MONTAGE.

A quick cut montage of Jack and Ghassan, setting up the radio station. First, in the radio broadcast booth:

JACK

It's "dude." "Dooooode."

GHASSAN

Doot.

JACK

NO, not "doot"--"dooode." OK, you're on.

GHASSAN

(awkward, into the mike)

Doot. This is the G-man and you are up all night with Hot 104, I ROCK IRAQ!

JACK

(fake radio announcer voice)

Come on down. We've got 50 foot alcohol burning Funny Cars and **MONSTER TRUCK PULL**

(doing the fake echo himself)

PULL, pull, pull, pull....

We cut to: Jack videotaping Yayhee the smiling Sudanese guard (in full robes) doing a full-on whirling dirvish Bollywood dance to MISSY ELLIOTT's "Get Your Freak On."

JACK (CONT'D)

Go Yayhee! YELLAH!

YAYHEE/MISSY ELLIOTT

...who's that BITCH!

Jack and Ghassan crack up as Yayhee rocks out.

JACK

Dude, that is so damn funny!

MUCH LATER: Jack and all the guys at the station dance to OUTKAST's "So Fresh, So Clean" with cardboard shooting targets. Alcohol and extreme sexual frustration may be involved. Everybody laughs as Jack pantomimes washing his target as he lip-synch's "so fresh and so clean..."

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE. SEVERAL WEEKS LATER.

Jack and Ghassan are listening to SEX PISTOLS "Anarchy in the UK" on the radio when Brent comes running out of the Palace. He tries to jump over the concertina wire and SNAGS his pants, RIPPING them as he TUMBLES to the dirt.

JACK

Don't worry. He does that all the time.

(Brent gets in)

Hi honey. How was work?

BRENT

I had a fantastic meeting. There's a fat contract for catering the prison--\$70,000 and it's in the bag. All we have to do is get the proposal in before tomorrow.

JACK

Dude, it's our inaugural movie night.

BRENT

Listen Jack, while you and Ghassan have been playing around at the radio station, I've been busting my ass setting this up.

JACK

Hey, we're working too...

BRENT

Right. And how much ad revenue does the station bring in? Zero.

JACK

You gotta give it time. Schwee schwee.

BRENT

Schwee schwee my ass. How long do you think we can keep doing this? I mean, how much money do we have left?

JACK

I don't know. 14k maybe?

BRENT

Exactly. So we need this deal. And all you have to do is run the numbers. So?

JACK

(annoyed)

Fine--I'll do it after the movie.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA. NIGHT.

Ghassan and the gang from the radio station are sitting around the living room, looking much more relaxed.

Jack is running his laptop into a video projector (the kind you take to meetings for PowerPoint presentations).

JACK

Is everybody here? OK. So, I brought you all here for a very important American tradition.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

It's called "Movie Night", and it's gonna help us all learn a lot about each other's cultures. OK?

Jack turns on the projector. The wall fills with smoke. The overture from CARMINA BURANA swells up as the smoke parts to reveal: a huge shopping cart filled with MORONS.

The Iraqi's stare--baffled--as the shopping cart ROLLS down a bridge and is BLASTED with bricks and garbage.

JOHNNY KNOXVILLE

I'm Johnny Knoxville and this is JACKASS.

The cart SLAMS into a fruit stand--HURLING all the occupants headfirst into it. The Iraqi's are stunned.

Later, they watch--transfixed--as STEVE-O pulls his knees over his head and sticks a lit bottle rocket in his anus. When the bottle rocket goes off, they JUMP UP and CHEER!

OZ

I LOVE this movie! Why do we never see this kind of movie before?

YES MAN

Boss, I see now what you mean, Iraqi and American people, we are all the same.

JACK

That's right. We are all STUPID!

INT. JACK'S OFFICE. SEVERAL HOURS LATER.

Jack is hard at work running spreadsheets for the CPA.

BRENT

Ah, Jack. Is this going to take a while?

JACK

Probably all night.

BRENT

Well, if you don't need me any more, maybe I should get to bed. I need to be fresh for this meeting tomorrow.

(off Jack's look)

Hey, I'd do this myself, but you know I'm dyslexic. It's a very common condition among successful entrepreneurs. Richard Branson's dyslexic, did you know that?

Jack starts to say something but chokes it back.

INT. PALACE OFFICES. NEXT MORNING.

Jack and Brent are waiting in one of the reception halls that's been converted to cubicle offices.

Most of the soldiers are working on their computers. A few are playing video games. Two of them are swapping gruesome pictures of dead Iraqi's on their thumb drives.

It's hard to believe these are the guys running Iraq.

JACK

Dude. What are you reading?

An earnest young GI holds up a familiar orange book: "THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING IRAQ."

CIVIL AFFAIRS GUY

It makes total sense you'd be reading that Jones--because you are an idiot.

CIVIL AFFAIRS GUY #2

Yeah, Jonesy. That book has your name written all over it.

EARNEST YOUNG GI

Hey, at least I'm trying to understand what the fuck is going on over here.

All the soldiers start to laugh at him. Jack doesn't.

JACK

Hey, dude, can I see that?

Jack takes the book. It's like all the other Idiot's Guides, except the boxes contain facts like: "CAUTION--OIL SPILL AHEAD. "Don't assume that the 'moderate Arab states' are automatic allies for the West."

A nerdy-looking GI (PROFESSOR) watches Jack reading it.

PROFESSOR

If you really want to understand what's going on here, you should read this.

The Professor hands him a thick paperback: "A Peace to End All Peace" by David Fromkin.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

It shows how the roots of this conflict go back to the French and British partition of the Middle East after WWI.

CIVIL AFFAIRS GUY  
Professor, if I wanted to learn I  
would've stayed in school.

JACK  
(to the Professor)  
Did you study history, dude?

PROFESSOR  
No. But I'm going to. After I get out.  
At Tulane. The Army's gonna pay for it.

A tall blond good-old boy soldier (GI JOE, 26) walks in.

GI JOE  
Hey guys. Sorry for keeping you waiting.  
You know how it is, shit runs downhill.  
So, Brent, whaddaya got for me.

Brent hands him Jack's spreadsheets and proposal.

GI JOE (CONT'D)  
Hey, these look good. Real good. You  
got these on disk for me?  
(Jacks hands him a disk)  
Excellent. Well, we'll get back to you.

BRENT  
What do you mean? I thought...

GI JOE  
Jeez, Brent. You know the Army. Nothing  
works that fast. Great, guys. Thanks!

INT. PALACE HALLS. MOMENTS LATER.

JACK  
Brent! You said it was a lock.

BRENT  
You heard him. This is just procedure.

JACK  
(super annoyed)  
Don't you get it? He just used us to do  
his work for him. He's gonna plug my  
spreadsheets into his work order and give  
the job to one of his buddies.

BRENT  
Look, we just have to keep at it OK?

CHUCK (O.S.)  
HEY! Who let you two impostaers in?

They turn to see the chubby Hawaiian shirt guy from the Sheraton. Only now he's wearing a Lt. Col.'s uniform.

INT. PALACE LUNCHROOM. LATER.

Jack, Brent and Chuck are sitting in a huge ballroom turned cafeteria. It's like a college dining hall.

CHUCK  
I'm impressed you guys are still here. When I first met ya, honestly, I thought you were totally full of shit. Full of shit with chicken shit on top.

JACK  
What about you? You told us you were in marketing.

CHUCK  
That's what PsyOps is. Psychological warfare. Winning of hearts and minds. Just like Madison Avenue. Only if you don't buy the product...we shoot ya.

JACK  
Wait. So the whole Saddam statue...

CHUCK  
Hey, don't look at me.

JACK  
Dude, we were there. Remember?

CHUCK  
Sometimes things just come together.

BRENT  
Chuck, we do printing, catering and logistics now. Whatever you need, we can do.

JACK  
Dude, anything you could throw us would be great. We're totally dying here.

CHUCK  
You should talk to Mel Ross. He's real juiced in and he's got way too much on his plate right now...

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER LECTURE HALL. LATER.

Jack and Brent follow MEL into a CPA Q&A session.

Mel is deeply-tanned and very good looking in a George Hamilton kind of way. He has white, crew-cut hair and he wears a DOD Civilian Army uniform with the tag "ROSS".

The ASST. ADMINISTRATOR is explaining how the \$18.2b reconstruction budget will be spent. Mel ignores him.

MEL

How old do you think I am, boys?

(off their puzzled looks)

Go ahead. Be honest.

JACK

I don't know, 50?

BRENT

45. Tops.

MEL

I'm 65. 65 going on 16. And I fuck like a 16 year old too. Better--I know what I'm doing.

BRENT

65! That's unbelievable.

MEL

Hey, there's no secret. Exercise, eat right...and fuck a lot of young pussy.

Face-lifts may be part of the formula too, but Mel's not saying. Meanwhile, the V.A. continues his presentation while three fat teamster-looking guys sleep in the back.

VICE ADMINISTRATOR

So of the 18.2 billion, approximately \$16b is allocated for heavy construction.

MEL

That's it boys. I'm outta here.

EXT. PALACE HALLS. SECONDS LATER.

Jack and Brent follow Mel as he strides out.

MEL

If you can't figure out how to make money in 5 minutes, leave. That's what I call the Ross rule. Did you see those three guys sleeping in the back? Halliburton. You know why they're sleeping? Cos they already know how the \$18.2 billion's gonna be spent. On Halliburton! Get it? Hey, what are you doing tonight? I'm having a party at my house...

EXT. MEL'S VILLA. EVENING.

Jack and Brent follow Mel into his massive villa.

BRENT

You know, we live just down the street.

MEL

But you're not living like I'm living.

Out in the back, sleazy looking Americans and Iraqi's lounge on deck chairs by a huge pool. Watching half-naked young women cavorting to the theme from Flashdance. At the back, Pakistani chefs grill steak and lobster tails and there's Budweiser and wine coolers on ice.

MEL (CONT'D)

Not bad for Baghdad, huh? I got Romanians, Russians, Lebanese--there's even some Iraqi girls here. I bet you thought Arab women didn't fuck. Let me tell you, I fucked a 16 year-old Iraqi girl last night--unbelievable. Tits like rocks. Go ahead, get something to drink. I'm gonna go put a bathing suit on.

Jack and Brent grab beers and sit by the pool.

BRENT

Somebody is making a lot of money here.

JACK

So much for getting here first huh?

Mel reappears in running shorts, Oakley's, aqua socks and an Iraqi Freedom t-shirt. Without the uniform, he looks much older. His skin is like leather.

MEL

You guys good? Get something to drink?

JACK

Mel, this is pretty incredible.

MEL

Yes it is. I did good in the first Gulf War, but this one is unbelievable. This is the mother lode. We're never going to see another war like this, boys, not in my lifetime. Maybe not even in yours. I've made more than 30 million already. And there's no end in sight.

JACK

Jeez. 30 million dollars?

BRENT

I told Jack this war would be fantastic.

MEL

Don't get me wrong, I'm opposed to this war. Bush deceived the American people about weapons of mass destruction. This was about oil, and if anybody tells you otherwise, they're morons. And now the Republicans are using it as an excuse to take away our civil liberties and make us wait in line at the airport--it's fucked! On the other hand, I'm making a shitload of money here. It's like a...a paradox.

Mel stands up and DROPS his shorts. Jack almost BLOWS his beer through his nose when he sees that Mel is wearing nothing but a metallic teal blue thong. We're not talking Speedo here--we're talking stripper G-string.

MEL (CONT'D)

Hey, you guys bring your bathing suits?

When he bends over to take off his socks, Mel FLASHES Jack a moon that looks like two hunks of beef jerky on a string. Brent quickly JUMPS up and starts to back away.

BRENT

I think I'll get something to eat.

MEL

(slipping into the pool)

Walk with me while I swim, Jack. You know, if I don't do 40 laps a day, my body reverts to its natural state.

Jack reluctantly walks along with him.

MEL (CONT'D)

Listen, Jack, I've seen some of the proposals you worked up for Civil Affairs. Nice work. And I'm impressed with what you pulled off at the radio station. You have the perfect skill set for Iraq. But you're not getting anywhere, right? You want to know why? This a closed system. It's all fixed. It looks like it's all above board, but in reality, if you're not an insider, forget about it. I go back to Vietnam with this shit. I'm tight with these guys. But I still gotta fight for my little piece of the pie. You think you can just walk in here and score contracts? No way! It just doesn't work that way kid.

JACK

So what do you think I should do then?

MEL

I think you should come work for me.

JACK

Jeez, I don't know, Mel.

MEL

You'd be doing exactly what you're doing now--but from the inside. Winning bids--not just ghost-writing them for me.

JACK

Mel, I came here to start my own deal. Not to work for somebody else.

MEL

Fine. I'll make you a partner. I'll guarantee you \$30k a month plus bonuses. Jack...I'll make you rich!

JACK

What about Brent?

MEL

Jack, I'm sorry to be the one to have to say this, but people hate that guy. He rubs everybody the wrong way.

Jack looks over to see Brent watching them intently.

MEL (CONT'D)

I know he's your buddy, but he's dragging you down. He's dead weight and you gotta cut him loose.

JACK

I'm sorry, Mel. I can't ditch Brent. He's my partner.

MEL

(swimming off)

Come back and see me when you're tired of banging your head against the wall, kid.

EXT. BAGHDAD STREETS. NIGHT.

Jack and Brent walk home. On the streets outside Mel's luxurious villa, there are piles of garbage, raw sewage and half-naked children begging.

BRENT

(suspicious, little drunk)

So what did you and Mel talk about all that time at the pool?

JACK

(annoyed)

Forget about Mel. He's not gonna do shit for us.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Brent hovers around as Jack checks the internet.

JACK

Dude, do you mind not hanging around? I gotta check my financial statements...

BRENT

(sulky)

Fine. I'll go up to the roof.

Brent leaves and Jack tries to balance his books. But something's not right. He keeps checking and rechecking.

JACK

What the hell? BRENT!

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA ROOFTOP. NIGHT.

JACK

Brent. Did you use my credit card for some law firm in Germany?

Brent is slugging whiskey straight from the bottle. He's very drunk. And when he's very drunk, the plummy Oxbridge accent gets replaced by his native New Zealand one.

BRENT

Absolutely not.

(beat)

Actually, come to think of it Jack, I may have. For the fashion line.

JACK

Brent, you told me that was gonna cost a couple hundred dollars.

(Brent mumbles something)

Brent, there's a charge on my credit card for more than \$13,000.

BRENT

\$13,000? How did you let it get so big?

JACK

How did I...Jesus, Brent. Do you know how much money we have left? We don't have \$13,000 left to blow on your stupid fashion line. You just wiped us out!

BRENT

This is what I hate about you, Jack. You always get hung up on the petty details. Why can't you ever see the big picture?

JACK

The big picture! Brent, we've been here for 4 months and we haven't landed a single contract. That's the big picture.

BRENT

Well maybe if you pulled your weight...

JACK

What?

BRENT

(angry, drunk)

Maybe if you weren't so busy hanging around with Ghassan and all your buddies at the radio station you'd have some time to back me up at some real meetings.

JACK

Oh, you mean those meetings where nobody shows up, or, no--this is better, where they take all my work and say 'thank you very much, let me give this to Mel.'

Brent stands up. He's very drunk and highly agitated.

BRENT

You know what your problem is, Jack? You're nothing but a number cruncher. Oh, sure, you're very charming. Everybody loves Jack. But they'll never take you seriously. You're a big joke...

JACK

Me? I'm a joke?

BRENT

That's right. And you know why? You don't have the vision and the...the persistence to be a true entrepreneur. Like me. That's right! Face it, Jack. Without me, what would you be? Nothing! Just another back-room bean counter...

Brent is right up in Jack's face, almost bumping chests.

JACK

Oh is that right? Well, let me tell you what Mel thinks, since you're so interested. He asked me to partner up with him. On one condition: that I ditch you. You know why? Because you rub everyone the wrong way. Because people hate you. And you know what? He's right. You're the reason we're not getting contracts, Brent--not me. You're the joke--and you don't even know it.

Jack regrets this the moment he says it. Brent looks like he's been punched in the gut. There's a long beat.

JACK (CONT'D)

Brent, look, I shouldn't have said that.

Brent starts SWAYING from side to side as a terrible SCREAM builds inside him. There's a crazed look in his eyes. He RAISES the whiskey bottle high over his head...

JACK (CONT'D)

Brent. Take it easy, OK?

...and HURLS it down, SMASHING it on the floor. Broken glass and whiskey FLY everywhere.

JACK (CONT'D)

Jesus, Brent...What the fuck!

Brent RUNS out. After a moment, Jack follows.

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA DRIVEWAY. SECONDS LATER.

Brent heads to the Jeep. He can barely open the door.

JACK

Where are you going? It's after curfew.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. NIGHT.

Brent SLAMS the door and struggles with the seatbelt (this should be a warning--we've never seen anyone wearing a seatbelt the whole time we've been in Iraq.)

Jack gets in after him. He does not put on his seatbelt.

JACK

Brent, come on. Give me the keys.

BRENT

Fuck you. I'm outta here...

Brent JAMS the SUV in gear and ROARS off down the street.

JACK

Brent, pull over. C'mon.

As Brent drives, it becomes quickly apparent how deeply uncoordinated he is: he GRINDS the gears, SLAMS on the brakes and JERKS the wheel from side to side, barely avoiding parked cars and roadblocks.

As he goes FASTER and FASTER, Jack starts to worry less about Brent's feelings and more about his own survival.

JACK (CONT'D)

Slow down. You're going way too fast.

They CAREEN into a big intersection, with a major checkpoint: lots of nervous soldiers in Hummers.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Brent! Checkpoint. CHECKPOINT!

Brent doesn't even take his foot off the gas. The startled soldiers RAISE their weapons, certain it's a suicide bomber. But Brent's going so fast the Jeep HURTLES past before anyone can get a shot off. The soldiers watch in disbelief as the Jeep ROARS off.

JACK (CONT'D)

BRENT  
So I'm a joke, eh? Everyone hates me.

JACK  
Brent. Stop the car. Now.

The speedometer climbs above 100. Far, far beyond Brent's obviously limited driving skills.

The Jeep SAILS around a corner, CLIPPING a parked car. The metallic CRUNCH makes Brent SWING the wheel hard in the opposite direction. You can almost feel the wheels BREAKING AWAY as the Jeep SAILS OFF toward a long concrete blast barrier at somewhere around 80 mph.

BRENT  
Oh shit.

JACK  
Fuck me.

In slow motion, Jack GRABS the "oh shit" bar and holds on tight. As the Jeep SMASHES into the blast barrier and keeps going. SCREECHING along the concrete wall for 100 feet before it finally CRUNCHES to a halt.

Inside the Jeep, Jack looks around. He's still holding the handle bar--completely unhurt. Brent is gripping the steering wheel tightly, dazed but equally unscathed.

JACK (CONT'D)

Jack unbuckles Brent's seatbelt and PULLS him out. They STUMBLE away from the crumpled truck and sit down heavily on a curb across the street.

There's a long beat as it all sinks in. A crowd gathers around them--mostly curious men with AK-47's.

BRENT

You know, we're lucky to be alive.

JACK

LUCKY!? You mean lucky you didn't kill us, you fucking asshole.

(Brent just hangs his head)

It's not dangerous enough here, you gotta crash the damn car? What the hell is wrong with you? I mean, look at that:

(pointing at the crushed SUV)

That's fucking scrap metal. We're in the middle of Baghdad, in the middle of the night surrounded by a bunch of guys with AK-47's--and we have no car.

(police sirens in the b.g.)

Oh, well there's good news. The Iraqi police. Great. Do you have any money to pay off the police, Brent? Because I'm broke. Oh, yeah, it was a surprise to me too. Apparently someone I trusted used my credit card and CLEANED ME OUT!

Brent slowly lifts his head. His eyes well up and his voice cracks as he says:

BRENT

You know, when I was 14 I had to have a 12-hour operation to untwist my nuts.

What the fuck?! Jack stares at him, stunned speechless.

After a second or two, Jack just shakes his head, gets up and starts to walk away. Brent tries to follow.

BRENT (CONT'D)

It was so painful, Jack....

JACK

Get away from me...

BRENT

...I still have the scar on my nutsack...

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA DRIVEWAY. NEXT DAY.

Jack stands in the driveway watching as an Iraqi towtruck hauls the crushed remnants of the Jeep up to the villa.

The neighborhood kids follow it chanting "Brant crazy, Brant crazy" while they mimic Brent's spastic driving. They crack each other up. But Jack isn't laughing.

BRENT

Look, Jack, I know I shouldn't have been driving. But I was very upset. You said a lot of very upsetting things to me. You have to at least acknowledge that.

JACK

I don't want to get into it.

BRENT

Jack, how can you walk away now? When we're so close to pulling it off.

JACK

Brent, either you go or I go--but we're definitely splitting up.

BRENT

(pleading, almost crying)

Jack, I can't leave Iraq with nothing. After all the work I've done, all the contacts I've made, it would be totally humiliating. Please, Jack, just give it a little longer. We're really close.

JACK

(after a long beat)

Fine. Two weeks. In two weeks, we shake hands and part ways forever. Agreed?

BRENT

Fine. Two weeks. That's all I ask. I'm going to pull it off, Jack, you'll see...

But Jack just turns his back and walks into the house.

INT. RADIO STATION. NEXT DAY.

Another staff meeting. Much less happy than the last.

JACK

...I'm not saying we're shutting down tomorrow. I'm just saying, be prepared.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY. SAME.

Brent is chasing an embarrassed Chuck down the hall.

BRENT

Chuck, I'm begging you, anything. I don't care how small, how shitty...

INT. PALACE OFFICE. LATER THAT WEEK.

GI JOE

I'm sorry, Brent. What can I tell you?  
It was a sweetheart deal.

BRENT

But you promised me it was in the bag!

Mel walks into GI JOE's office. Like he owns the place.

MEL

Hey, kid. How's it going? Making money?

(Brent gets up and leaves)

Hey! Say hello to Jack for me, wouldja?

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA LIVING ROOM. SAME.

Jack, Ghassan and Yayhee are kicking back, watching a fashion show on Asian satellite TV. Smokin' hot models strut down the runway wearing provocative lingerie.

GHASSAN

So, Jack. You going to stay?

JACK

Nope.

GHASSAN

Because of Brent.

JACK

Yep.

GHASSAN

I know, Brent crazy. Brent lie too much.

JACK

Ghassan...

GHASSAN

But Brent, he's not a bad guy. He very smart. I think you two good together.

JACK

JESUS, Ghassan! Do I bother you when you're watching the lingerie show?

INT. VILLA ROOFTOP. LATE NIGHT.

Jack and Brent are up on the rooftop again. No more explosions or tracer fire now. Just distant gunfire.

BRENT

So, are you going to go work with Mel?

JACK

Nah. Can't handle the thong. I think I'll head back to Europe, do some consulting while I figure out my next move.

BRENT

What about the contracts? What if something comes through?

JACK

You run with them. They're yours.

BRENT

What about all the money you spent?

JACK

Don't worry about it. It was my risk to come here. It was my stupidity to let you use my credit card. I'll take the hit.

Brent's CPA cell phone RINGS. They're both surprised.

BRENT

Brent Balloch here.

CHUCK (O.S.)

Brent. I need a banner printed. By tomorrow morning. Can you do it?

BRENT

Absolutely. No problem.

CHUCK

Meet me in my office in 30.

INT. CHUCK'S OFFICE. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Chuck, his guy RAY and a bunch of other worried-looking PsyOps soldiers are huddled around his computer.

CHUCK

We're announcing the Iraqi Governing Council tomorrow at 9 a.m.

(MORE)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Every news org. in the world is going to have a camera crew in the Press Room.

RAY

Right now, the CPA seal is up on the wall. Which sends the message that the Governing Council works for us.

CHUCK

Wrong message. So we need a back-drop.

Chuck points to his computer screen, where a red, white and green striped flag with Arabic writing is laid out.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

However, as usual, nobody figured this shit out until the last fucking minute. This is my ass on the line here, guys. The truth now: can you really do this?

BRENT

Absolutely! We'll just take this to our printer. I'm sure he can handle it.

INT. GHASSAN'S VOLVO. A FEW MINUTES LATER.

JACK

What printer? We don't know any printer.

BRENT

Ghassan, you know a printer, right?

GHASSAN

Maybe I know one guy...

EXT. BAGHDAD PRINTING SHOP. 3 A.M.

Jack, Brent and Ghassan stand outside a closed print shop ringing the bell. Finally, the lights come on. Someone opens a window. Angry Arabic profanity SPEWS out.

BRENT

Tell him we work for Bremer.

GHASSAN

If I tell him that, he will not open.

BRENT

Fine. So tell him...tell him we work for the new Governing Council.

INT. BAGHDAD PRINTING SHOP. MINUTES LATER.

GHASSAN

This is my friend, Abu-Haider...

ABU-HAIDER, the owner, hands their diskette to his SON, who puts it into their computer. The banner pops up.

BRENT

I need that for tomorrow morning, 8 a.m.

ABU-HAIDER

No way. Impossible.

JACK

We'll pay four times the normal price.

ABU-HAIDER

(in Arabic, to son)

*Go wake up your mother and your sister.*

INT. BAGHDAD PRINTING SHOP. NEXT MORNING 8 A.M.

The owner unfurls a huge banner in three pieces.

ABU-HAIDER

We just finished the last one. It was too big to do in one piece.

BRENT

That's OK, it'll be fine.

JACK

We gotta go. We got less than an hour.

The whole family pitches in to roll up the banner.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY. LATER.

Brent, Jack and Ghassan each have a big rolled up banner. They PUSH past the camera crews, soldiers and Bremer's private bodyguards to get into the press room.

INT. CPA PRESS ROOM. LATER.

They walk into a huge state reception room. 40-foot coffered ceiling, massive chandelier, hundreds of reception chairs laid out in front of a big platform.

CHUCK

Tell me that's it. Tell me you got it.

BRENT

We got it!

CHUCK

You beautiful motherfuckers.

They roll out the banner pieces on the podium while Chuck and his PsyOps guys watch.

BRENT

Exactly what you ordered. Down to the T.

PSYOPS TRANSLATOR

But...it does not say Governing Council.

RAY

What? Fadel, what are you talking about?

PSYOPS TRANSLATOR

No. That is wrong. The Arabic is wrong.

BRENT

That's directly from your disk...

CHUCK

Fadel, didn't you review the design?

PSYOPS TRANSLATOR

Nobody showed me, man...

RAY

Yeah, that's the message we want to send. We conquered your country and we still don't know how to spell it.

CHUCK

CHRIST! What are we are we gonna do?

BRENT

We'll just do it over. No problem. These things never start on time anyway.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY. SECONDS LATER.

Jack, Brent and Ghassan SPRINT through the halls.

JACK

"No problem? We'll just do it again?"

BRENT

If we pull this off, it'll be legendary.

EXT. PRINT SHOP. MINUTES LATER.

Ghassan's ancient Volvo SCREECHES to a halt outside. The print shop owner comes out, surprised to see them again.

INT. PRINT SHOP. MINUTES LATER.

Abu-Haider's entire family frantically works the machines, pushing everything to go faster.

BRENT

C'mon, c'mon. We gotta go.

GHASSAN

It's coming out now!

They all grab a corner as the banner starts rolling out of the printer. As it comes out, Abu-Haider's daughter and mother start drying it with electric blow dryers.

EXT. PALACE GATE. 9:38 A.M.

The Volvo ROARS up to the gate, scaring the shit out of the sentries. Jack and Brent RUN out, carrying the new banner. They WAVE their badges at the guards.

PALACE GUARD

Sir, you have to sign in...

BREN

Sorry, emergency. Ambassador Bremer's waiting for this. And we're very late.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY. SECONDS LATER.

Jack and Brent SPRINT back down the hall toward the Press Room, where only a few bodyguards now stand at the door.

INT. CPA PRESS ROOM. SAME.

They BURST in to find: camera crews set up; newscasters doing soundcheck--and a sheet covering the CPA logo.

CHUCK

We had to let them in. We couldn't wait.

BRENT  
But it's perfect now.

RAY  
Well, we can't ask them to leave.

CHUCK  
Shit. SHIT!  
(a beat)  
Wait! I've got an idea.

Moments later, a TOUGH ARMY COLONEL goes to the mike.

TOUGH ARMY COLONEL  
Ladies and gentlemen, can I have your  
attention please? We have just received  
a bomb threat. We need to clear this  
room now so we can sweep for explosives.

There's a mad STAMPEDE for the door. The room empties.

CHUCK  
OK. Let's get this banner up.

Chuck, Ray, Jack and Brent actually GLUE the three parts  
of the banner to the wall with UHU glue and duct tape.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
OK, Joe, go ahead and bring'em in.

They all stand in the back as the Governing Council files  
in beneath the huge new banner. It looks spectacular.

JACK  
Sometimes it all just comes together.

CHUCK  
Yeah. And ain't it sweet when it does.

INT. CHUCK'S OFFICE. MINUTES LATER.

Chuck, Ray, Jack and Brent walk back into Chuck's office.  
All the PsyOps officers stand up and CHEER THEM. On  
every computer and TV, the press conference is playing  
live on CNN. With the banner prominently in the b.g.

CHUCK  
You guys really saved my ass. Thank you.

BRENT  
Don't forget us, Chuck. You gotta let  
people know what we did here.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY. NEXT DAY.

Jack and Brent walk down the halls of the CPA like returning astronauts. Everybody wants to talk to them.

EARNEST YOUNG GI

Hey, I heard about the banner. Nice one.

CIVIL AFFAIRS GUY

Pretty impressive, guys.

GI JOE

You guys should come by the office later.

BRENT

Only if there's some work in it for us.

CIVIL AFFAIRS GUY #2

Can you guys really do printing here?

BRENT

Absolutely...

PSYOPS GUY

What about bumper stickers?

MP

I need 10,000 decals for the new police cars. My shipment got hung up.

BRENT

No problem. Just tell my partner Jack what you need, we'll hook you up.

INT. CHUCK'S OFFICE. A MONTH LATER.

CHUCK

So, I guess you two are the go-to guys now, huh?

JACK

Hey, once people figured out we could get shit done in Baghdad...

BRENT

...the phone never stopped ringing.

CHUCK

Well we're all trapped here in the Green Zone. It's nice and safe, but...

BRENT

...you can't get anything done.

CHUCK

Exactly. So you guys too big for me now?

JACK

Never too busy for you, Chuck.

CHUCK

We need to announce the new currency.  
Posters, billboards, bumper stickers--  
everything. Think you can handle it?

BRENT

Absolutely...

CHUCK

Great. Here's the proposal.

Chuck hands Jack a folder. Jack opens it and starts to read. He stops, and pulls out a slip of paper.

JACK

Chuck, what the hell is this?

CHUCK

That's your advance. We've blown through  
so much cash we had to write you a check.

JACK

What, did you make this yourself, dude?

INSERT: A check for \$207,000. But it looks more like a bingo parlor receipt. It says CENTRAL BANK OF IRAQ in cheesy script, but the amount and the payee are handwritten in big block letters. Even the authorized signor names are handwritten. And it's been numbered "0000001" with a rubber hand stamp.

CHUCK

That's history, Jack. That's the first check written in post-Saddam Iraq.

JACK

Yeah, but can I cash it?

EXT. CENTRAL BANK OF IRAQ. DAY.

A new Jeep Cherokee drives up to a magnificent old building in the middle of bombed out downtown Baghdad.

INT. CENTRAL BANK OF IRAQ. SAME.

Jack and Brent walk into a huge cathedral-like room. It looks just like a bank. But there are no tellers. Or customers. Just bureaucrats laboring at their desks.

BRENT

Is this the Central Bank of Iraq?

IRAQI BANKER

Yes.

BRENT

We have a check to a cash. Here.

Brent hands him the check. He looks at it, baffled. He walks over to another banker's desk and they look at it together. After much discussion, the banker returns.

IRAQI BANKER

I'm sorry, we do not 'cash checks' here.

BRENT

This is the Central Bank of Iraq, right? And this is a check drawn on the Central Bank of Iraq. So what's the problem?

IRAQI BANKER

We are not a commercial bank. We are a national bank--like your Federal Reserve.

JACK

Oh, dude. This isn't a bank. This is where they set monetary policy.

IRAQI BANKER

Exactly.

JACK

Dude, we're probably talking to like the Iraqi Alan Greenspan right now.

BRENT

He could be the bloody Iraqi Elvis for all I care. Do you know who we work for?

(holding up his CPA pass)

You see this? This means I work for Ambassador Bremer. So if you want to keep your job, you better cash that check, and cash it quick. Understand?

EXT. CENTRAL BANK OF IRAQ. MINUTES LATER.

Brent and Ghassan stand outside the bank watching while Jack makes a call on his CPA cell.

JACK

Hey, Chuck. Guess what? We kinda had a problem with that check...No. They wouldn't take it...OK. Thanks.

(to the others)

He's gonna call some Iraqi General.

INT. CENTRAL BANK OF IRAQ. SECONDS LATER.

The telephone rings. The banker picks it up.

The sound of someone YELLING angrily in Arabic can be clearly heard from several feet away. The banker pales.

GHASSAN

The General is telling him if he don't cash the check, he will come down here and cut off the head of this man and kill his whole family. This is Saddam way.

The banker hangs up the phone, visibly shaken.

IRAQI BANKER

Come with me.

BRENT

See? I knew we'd work it out.

INT. CENTRAL BANK OF IRAQ BASEMENT. LATER.

The banker leads them down to the basement where massive steel vault doors are blackened and scratched by recent looting attempts. The banker opens the vault to REVEAL:

Dozens of pallets stacked to the ceiling with slabs of U.S. dollars, each still vacuum-sealed in blue plastic labelled FEDERAL RESERVE OF NEW YORK: \$5 MILLION.

JACK

BRENT

Holy shit!

My god!

Jack and Brent look like they've just seen the face of God. Looks of joy and wonder wash over their faces.

BRENT

That is the most beautiful thing...

JACK

...I have ever seen. That smell. That new money smell. It smells like...like

BRENT

Heaven!

The banker CLIMBS up onto a pallet and starts cutting open one of the blue plastic slabs. He pulls out three big bricks of bills and hands one to each of them.

Jack and Brent cradle them reverently as the banker cuts open the last brick open and counts out \$7,000.

INT. NEW JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. MINUTES LATER.

Jack and Brent stare at the bricks of money. In shock.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA OFFICE. LATER THAT DAY.

The bricks are sitting in the middle of a bare table. Brent and Jack just sit there, still staring at them.

BRENT

That is a lot of money.

JACK

I'm gonna open mine...

BRENT

Wait, Jack...

But Jack is already ripping open the money. And THROWING stacks of it at Brent. HARD. In the head--and the nuts.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Ow. OW! Jesus, Jack, are you crazy?

JACK

How does it feel to get hit in the nuts with ten grand cash? Good? Whoops, careful, you might need another operation!

BRENT

You BASTARD! Alright, that's it.

Brent grabs his own money, and starts throwing it back.

JACK

Medic! MEDIC! Gang way, we have a soldier with badly twisted nuts here.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA LIVING ROOM. SECONDS LATER.

Ghassan and Yayhee are watching a Britney Spears video when they hear the sound of furniture crashing.

GHASSAN

*Are they fighting again?*

YAYHEE

*Don't worry. Watch the video. She's going to do the sexy thing again...*

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA OFFICE. LATER.

The money fight has degenerated into dancing around and throwing money up into the air. And taking pictures of each other lying on money, covered with money--hitting themselves in the head Homer Simpson-style with money.

JACK

I had my doubts, Brent, but I gotta say you came through in the crunch.

BRENT

Hey, we did it together.

JACK

Actually, we did it with Ghassan.

(a beat)

You know, we should really make him a partner too.

BRENT

A partner? Why? We're already paying him a lot for an Iraqi.

JACK

Dude. It's the right thing to do.

BRENT

I know you're very fond of Ghassan but...

JACK

Forget I asked. I'll pay him out of my share, OK? Fuck it!

BRENT

(pissy)

Fine. We'll make him a partner. A junior partner though.

JACK

Whatever, dude. Come on. Let's tell him. GHASSAN! Get your ass in here!

Ghassan comes in. He looks at the money scattered around.

BRENT

Ghassan, Jack and I have been talking, and we've decided to make you a partner.

Ghassan is totally surprised.

JACK

I don't know. You better think about what you're getting into here Ghassan.

GHASSAN

(very moved)

I think you both crazy.

JACK

Is that a yes? Ghassan, is that a yes?

(Ghassan nods, overcome)

Alright Ghassan! Welcome aboard. Here's your first partnership payment.

Jack scoops up \$100 bills and pours them over him.

JACK (CONT'D)

We're very strict about accounting around here. Brent, don't you have a couple bottles of that champagne in the fridge?

Later, the three raise a toast.

GHASSAN

You know, 6 month ago, I am in Saddam's prison. Waiting to die. Today, I am drinking champagne. With you!

JACK

To Ghassan--our favorite ex-con!

BRENT

No--to Balloch, Roe and Ghassan. And the millions we're going to make together!

ALL  
To Balloch, Roe and Ghassan...

They lift their glasses. But only Jack and Brent drink.

JACK  
Ghassan, you have to drink that.

GHASSAN  
(embarrassed)  
Actually, I cannot. I am Muslim.

JACK  
(mock shock)  
Oh, shit! You're Muslim dude!?

BRENT  
Why didn't you tell us?

JACK  
Well, if you can't drink it, you'll just  
have to SHOWER IN IT!

Jack GRABS the champagne bottle, SHAKES it up and SPRAYS  
the foam all over Ghassan. And Brent. And himself.

LATER, while Brent and Ghassan are happily kicking back,  
Jack hesitates, pulls out his phone and dials a number:

JACK (CONT'D)  
Hey Mom? It's Jack. Uh, you'll never  
guess where I'm calling you from...

We FADE TO BLACK. SUPER "SIX MONTHS LATER. MARCH 2004"

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. SIX MONTHS LATER.

Jack and Ghassan are driving through Baghdad. There's a  
lot more traffic, a lot less troops and a lot more street  
life than before. It almost looks like a normal city.

JACK  
You nervous Ghassan?

GHASSAN  
No, I'm not nervous. And you?

JACK  
Nah. Why would I be nervous?

GHASSAN

(smiling)

So how much money you have today Jack?

JACK

I don't know, maybe \$50. In my wallet.

GHASSAN

And what about in your bag?

Ghassan points to a plastic shopping bag at Jack's feet. Nestled up against his HK-5 submachine gun.

JACK

Oh, about \$642,000, give or take a few...

GHASSAN

Small money, right? So, you want to stop, get some coffee? Smoke one hookah?

JACK

Sure.

GHASSAN

Really? Serious?

JACK

NO! Are you nuts? Let's get home.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA. LATER THAT MORNING.

Jack and Ghassan walk into the house. Yayhee is watching Syrian wedding videos with his AK-47 on the coffee table.

JACK

Yayhee: you do know you're supposed to be guarding us, right? Just checking...

(yelling upstairs)

Honey, I'm home. I brought the bacon...

INT. VILLA OFFICE. MOMENTS LATER.

Jack opens a big safe under his desk. Inside are stacks of fresh hundred dollars bills, still in banker's bands.

JACK

Fort Knox Iraq....

He opens the plastic shopping bag. It looks like it's filled with towels (Iraqi Freedom souvenir towels).

But wrapped in each towel is one of those plastic-wrapped Federal Reserve \$100,000 bricks of money.

JACK (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. Straight-up cash.

As he puts them in the safe, Brent walks in.

BRENT

Is that the textbook money?

JACK

Yep. This one's from Chicago, this one's from Philadelphia...

(off the Fed. Reserve labels)

BRENT

Yeah, but how much of that is profit? And how much is just going to pay for your new printing presses?

JACK

Brent, it's called capital investment.

BRENT

In America it's called capital investment. In Iraq it's called stupidity.

JACK

It's my money. End of discussion.

BRENT

Jack, we're supposed to be taking money out of Iraq, not putting it into Iraq. You know, I've been thinking. We've been going about this all the wrong way.

JACK

What are you talking about?

BRENT

Well, I just had another one of my brilliant ideas. Are you ready? OK, so right now, we're basically the Kinko's of Iraq. I mean, we do some catering, but mostly we provide printing and logistical support to the CPA. Nothing wrong with that--pays the bills--but it's a lotta work for not a whole lotta money.

JACK

Depends what you call not a lotta money.

BRENT

Compared to Halliburton, KBR, Custer Battles, it's chicken feed. Plus it's just not prestigious enough. I mean, how does it look on the resume? I'd like to come out of this with more than just a helluva lot of money. I'd like to be the youngest director of a Fortune 500 Company. Or the Ambassador to Iraq...

JACK

(cutting him off)

Fine. So what's this brilliant idea?

INT. PALACE/BREMER'S OFFICE. LATER.

Civil Affairs soldiers and pasty State Dept. bureaucrats sit around a table in a big conference room, impatiently waiting while a nervous Jack and Brent prepare to pitch:

BRENT

Gentlemen. I know you all have fires to fight, so let me come straight to the point: free and fair elections in Iraq are central to your mission here. But as you all know, the electoral report just released by the UN calls the situation in Iraq, in so many words: a disaster.

A collective intake of breath. Jack looks like he wants to strangle Brent. But Brent is unstoppable.

BRENT (CONT'D)

However, and this is the key, it goes on to say: "If the work was started immediately and the required political consensus was reached fairly rapidly, it would be possible to hold elections by the end of 2004." Great, right? But here's the harsh reality: you guys barely have the resources to deal with the problems you have now, let alone prepare a divided, devastated country for its first free elections in three decades. And do it in the next 3 months.

CIVIL AFFAIRS OFFICER

Did you come here to tell us that we can't do our jobs?

BRENT

Not at all. I came here to tell you that we can bring you the resources you need to do your job. That's what we do.

STATE DEPT. GUY

What exactly does that mean?

BRENT

We are prepared to undertake the entire democracy and election campaign for you: from TV and radio ads; billboards, educational materials; town hall meetings--everything the UN says you guys need.

STATE DEPT. GUY

And what makes you qualified to do this?

BRENT

I admit, we're not democracy experts. Our expertise is in Iraq logistics. But our partners on this are Pottinger Bell, who did the first democracy and election campaigns in South Africa and Bosnia, and Bates Pan Gulf, the leading advertising agency in the Arab world. And if you'll look at the materials we've prepared...

(Jack hands around folders)

I think you'll see that this plan is exactly what you would do--if you had the time and resources to do it yourselves. Gentlemen: we're bringing you the A-team, we've done all the research--and we're prepared to do all the legwork. All you have to do: is pay for it.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY. LATER.

BRENT

YES! YEESSSS! We got it. We GOT IT!

JACK

Well, it's not official yet.

BRENT

This is gonna be HUGE for us. HUGE!

JACK

I gotta admit, Brent, you were very impressive in there.

BRENT

I told you I studied human rights law.

JACK

Yeah, but I guess I didn't believe you.

BRENT

My professor used to work with Lord Bell.  
God, you think we owe him a finder's fee?

JACK

Make him a consultant....Hey, you coming  
to see GI Joe about the matchbooks?

BRENT

No, you do it. I've got to call our new  
partners and tell them we got the gig.

INT. GI JOE'S OFFICE. LATER THAT DAY.

G.I. Joe's doing a bad Saddam imitation. He uses a comb  
for a mustache as he does the salute. Ghassan winces.

JACK

Dude, that's not funny.

GI JOE

What are you talking about? That scares  
the shit outta the Hajji's. Every time!

(turning to another guy)

Dan, tell me that shit's not hilarious!

(the other guy just shrugs)

Hey, uh, I got some new Hajji pix--some  
real sick shit. You wanna see?

JACK

No, dude. I just want you to approve  
these matchbooks, OK?

GI JOE

(picking one up)

They look good. Think these'll persuade  
the insurgents to lay down their arms?

JACK

No. But maybe if they smoke more, they'll  
die of lung cancer in 20 or 30 years.

GI JOE

Whatever. So can you get 120,000 of  
these to Fallujah tomorrow?

JACK

No problem. I'll send my guys.

GI JOE

No, bro. It's gotta be you. The Marines are back in there, and they're not letting Hajji's through any more.

EXT. PALACE COURTYARD. LATER.

Jack and Chuck are shooting some hoops in Saddam's back courtyard. Jack's still in his suit, Chuck's in uniform.

JACK

I fuckin' hate going to Fallujah...

CHUCK

Yeah, but how'd your big meeting go?

JACK

Dude, I think they're gonna go for it.

CHUCK

Nice one! Hey, I got some news too. I reupped: 3 more months in Iraq!

JACK

(pleased)

You dumbass. Why would you do that?

CHUCK

Hell, somebody's got to stick around who knows how to get things done around here.

EXT. PALACE. LATER.

AS Jack walks out the front door of the Palace he's spotted by Mel. Not someone he's happy to see.

MEL

Jack, have you had a chance...

JACK

(not stopping)

Mel, they're going with tents.

MEL

(following him out)

Tents? Jack, there's no profit in tents.

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

With my units, you take a shipping container, bolt on air-con, a bunk bed and some wheels, and voila, you got an \$80,000 trailer. Do you have any idea how big the profit margin is?

(Jack just keeps walking)

Come on, Jack. What's it gonna take for us to do some business here? You want a house? No problem. Hell, you do this deal I'll give you my damn house. I'll even throw in Hungarian citizenship.

JACK

Mel, why would I want to be Hungarian? I'm an American.

MEL

Hey, I'm American too, you know.. But why pay those taxes if you don't have to?

(someone calls Mel away)

The party's not over Jack! We can still make a lot of money on this one.

Jack passes through a heavily fortified checkpoint where nervous soldiers with M-16's check ID's. On the other side is a huge parking lot packed with SUV's and Hummers. Jack walks over to where Ghassan is waiting by the Jeep.

GHASSAN

How did it go?

JACK

It went great. I think we got it.

A Suburban pulls up, filled with badass Delta Force guys.

BADASS DELTA FORCE GUY

Excuse me. Are you guys leaving?

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. LATER.

As they drive across a long bridge over the Tigris River, past tanks and pillboxes, the cell phone RINGS...

JACK

Jack Roe here....Hey, Mike...No, why?

(whispering to Ghassan)

Ghassan, turn on the radio.

Ghassan turns it on, to hear 50 CENT's "P.I.M.P.":

EXT. SHERATON HOTEL. MINUTES LATER.

JACK

(jumping out of the car)

Ghassan, wait here. I'll deal with this.

INT. SHERATON PENTHOUSE. MINUTES SAME.

Jack BURSTS in. It looks like a frat house now--dirty couches, empty beer cans and overflowing ashtrays under a huge banner that reads "HOT FM 104: I ROCK IRAQ"

All the guys sit around cheering Oz. Who is busting bad hip-hop moves while rapping in a thick Iraqi accent:

OZ/50 CENT

*I don't know what you heard about me!  
But a bitch can't get a dollar out of me  
No Cadillac, no perms, you can't see:*

They all JUMP to their feet and SHOUT:

ALL

**THAT I'M A MOTHER-FUCKING P-I-M-P!**

JACK

HEY! WHAT DID I SAY ABOUT GANGSTA RAP?

A moment of shock. Then they all run out of the room like kids caught in the cookie jar. Everyone except Oz.

JACK (CONT'D)

Don't give me that look Oz.

OZ

This is censorship, Jack!

Jack turns his glare on the DJ booth, where FLUFFY AHMED (skinny, 21, tight shirt) just shrugs.

FLUFFY AHMED

Don't look at me, bitch. You hired them.

JACK

Just put something else on, OK?

FLUFFY AHMED

Whatever you say, boss.

(into the mike)

Hello, Baghdad!

(MORE)

FLUFFY AHMED (CONT'D)

This is DJ Ahmed, and we have a special request from our friends at the CPA. This is for you, Occupiers!

P.I.M.P. is abruptly replaced by DOA "You Spin Me Round".

JACK

Ahmed, please--could you maybe play something a little less...gay.

FLUFFY AHMED

That's right, bitch. I'm the first gay Jewish Iraqi DJ in Baghdad. Deal with it!

INT. BAGDAD VILLA. NEXT MORNING.

Jack is trying to wake up a naked, hung-over Brent.

BRENT

You two go to Fallujah. I got a meeting.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. LATER THAT DAY.

Jack and Ghassan drive fast along a deserted highway. They pull off at a heavily fortified U.S. base. A GUARD calls down from the machine gun nest up above the gate.

FALLUJAH GUARD

HEY! You know I coulda shot ya for approaching my gate without permission.

He's got a thick Southie Boston accent and a clover painted on his helmet. All the guards do.

JACK

Yeah right, like you were gonna shoot me. Open up! I got a delivery for Col. Darby.

FALLUJAH GUARD

Who?

JACK

Just open the damn gate, dude.

FALLUJAH GUARD

Sorry. Someone's gotta sign you in...

JACK

I fuckin' hate Fallujah...

An hour later, they're still sitting out front. Ghassan looks worried, but Jack is deeply engrossed in a book.

GHASSAN

This is no good. We are going to get killed sitting out here like this.

JACK

Listen to this: "In a region of the globe whose inhabitants were known especially to dislike foreigners, and in a predominately Moslem world which could abide being ruled by almost anybody except non-Moslems, a foreign Christian country ought to have expected to encounter hostility when it attempted to impose its own rule." Know what that's about?

GHASSAN

The Americans in Iraq.

JACK

Nope. The British in the 1920's.

Jack lifts up his book. It's the fat history paperback the Professor had: "A Peace to End All Peace."

JACK (CONT'D)

Ghassan, this guy writes that it would have taken at least a million man army for the British to stop all the rebellions against their rule here. A million men. And we have what, 150,000?

GHASSAN

What are you saying? America will lose?

JACK

No, I'm saying America can't do it alone. For things to get better, it's gonna take the Iraqi people to raise their voices over the violence and the fundamentalists

GHASSAN

Like our democracy campaign.

JACK

Yeah. That...and more Britney Spears.

GHASSAN

Jack, you are so nice. You are here to bring democracy and Britney Spears to Iraq. Not to make money, right?

JACK

It was never really about the money.

GHASSAN

(big smile)

Come on, Jack. Don't lie.

JACK

OK. Maybe it was a little bit about the money. In the beginning. But not now.

GHASSAN

(laughing)

I know, I know. You come here because you love Iraqi people.

JACK

No. My love affair with the Iraqi people came later, Ghassan. After I met you...

GHASSAN

Aaaaw. I love you too, Jack.

FALLUJAH GUARD

HEY GUYS! Darby's not here. He went back up to Baghdad this morning.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. MINUTES LATER.

Jack chews out GI Joe on the cell as they race back along the empty highway at 90 mph.

JACK

Dude, not only was he not there--they wouldn't even let us do the delivery!

Up ahead, there's a checkpoint. Ghassan slows the Jeep.

CRACK-CRACK: two .50 cal. shots suddenly ZIP overhead.

JACK (CONT'D)

HOLY SHIT! They're shooting at us!

Ghassan SLAMS on the brakes. The car SKIDS about 100' to a stop. Jack STICKS his head out of the car, pissed:

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey, GUYS!

CRACK. Another shot ZIPS by Jack's head.

JACK (CONT'D)

JESUS! HEY ASSHOLES, WE'RE AMERICAN!

EXT. FALLUJAH CHECKPOINT. MINUTES LATER.

FALLUJAH MARINE

Sorry. Thought you were the bad guys.

He's checking their CPA ids while his buddies train their guns on the Jeep. They're not nervous, they're cocky.

JACK

Yeah, whatever. We just wanna get back to Baghdad before dark.

FALLUJAH MARINE

Good luck. The highway's closed. You're gonna hafta take the road.

JACK

Dude, you can't send us down there. That's right through Fallujah!

FALLUJAH MARINE

Don't you worry about Fallujah. That pussy-faggot sit-on-the-sidelines Army bullshit is OVER. The Marines are BACK!

FALLUJAH MARINE #2

Yeah, baby. Back to kick some Hajji ass!

OTHER MARINES

GET SOME! GET SOME! GET SOME!

EXT. DOWNTOWN FALLUJAH. MINUTES LATER.

The Jeep drives slowly through the center of town. It's quiet compared to Baghdad, but there's a palpable air of menace. Locals stare at the SUV with open hostility and little kids pretend to shoot at them. It's scary.

GHASSAN

You know, even Saddam cannot control Fallujah. Fallujah fight everybody.

JACK

Now they're gonna have to fight the Marines.

GHASSAN

They are crazy, those guys.

JACK

Yeah, but they're great soldiers.

GHASSAN

They say the soldiers do terrible things in Fallujah. Even to women and children.

(a beat)

One woman, her name Nora. After the soldiers took her to prison here, she send a note to her friend, she say 'please kill me if they let me go. The soldiers rape me hundreds of times. I cannot face my family now.'

JACK

American soldiers would not do that. You know that, Ghassan--you work with them.

GHASSAN

Jack, it was on TV.

JACK

What, on Al-Jazeera? Come on, dude, you know better than to believe that crap.

Ahead, a convoy of white SUV's heads down the street toward them. As it passes, they see the SUV's are filled with elite PSD merc's, machine-guns at the ready.

Jack nods at them as their two SUV's pass--inches apart. The merc's nod back. Their eyes lock for an instant.

EXT. BAGHDAD SUBURBS. HOURS LATER.

The sun is setting as the Jeep reaches the edge of Baghdad. Jack's cell phone rings. It's Brent:

BRENT (O.S.)

Jack, where are you? Are you OK?

JACK

Yeah. Why? What's going on?

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA LIVING ROOM. LATER.

JIM CLANCY/CNN (O.S.)

...civilian contractors working for the U.S.-led CPA were caught by attackers inside the city of Fallujah...

Jack, Ghassan, Brent and Yayhee all watch in horror as CNN shows the gruesome news video of two burning SUV's.

JACK

We were right there. We saw those guys.

INSERT: amateur video of CHEERING crowds at the wreck.

JIM CLANCY/CNN

Now, as we understand it, after that point, the crowd gathered. There were bricks and rocks thrown at the cars as the demonstrators, or those who had gathered began to vent their rage against the occupation. But then it got worse.

INSERT: Arab news footage of angry crowds BEATING charred torsos with metal bars. DRAGGING burnt body parts through the street and hanging them from a bridge. All as Iraqi men CHEER and SHOUT and JUMP for joy.

INT. CPA PRESS ROOM. NEXT DAY.

Jack and Brent are standing in the back of the Press Room with Chuck and a bunch of other soldiers.

The room is packed with reporters and camera crews. Bremer and his U.S. Commander for Fallujah (GEN. KIMMITT) are standing at the podium together. Looking pissed.

AMBASSADOR BREMER

The acts we have seen were despicable and inexcusable and they violate the tenets of all religions including Islam as well as the foundations of civilized society. Their deaths will not go unpunished...

JACK

Oh, shit. This is gonna be bad.

BRIG. GEN. KIMMITT

We are going to hunt down the people responsible for this bestial act. It is up to the people, the small number of people in Fallujah to determine if they want to do it with a fight or without a fight.

INSERT: Shaky handheld news footage of INTENSE FIGHTING in Fallujah. Nasty, chaotic street-to-street fighting. And the Marines are not kicking ass. In fact, they have to call in helicopter gunships to save their own asses...

TOM PERRY/LA TIMES

(freaked out embedded rpt.)

...There were platoon-sized groups.

(MORE)

TOM PERRY/LA TIMES

They brought in buses, they blocked off streets. They hit the Marines with counter-fire. They had some anti-aircraft facilities that were shooting at the helicopters.

CLIPS of huge EXPLOSIONS in Fallujah start a MONTAGE of images of the disastrous Marine incursion: actual war footage and snippets of CNN broadcasts that Jack and Brent catch at home, at the CPA and at the radio station while they try to continue their work. And that Ghassan sees playing in shops and on the street. All overlaid with real voice-over from newscasters and politicians:

BARBARA STARR/CNN

...the word here at the Pentagon is that everything's under control. But look at the map that we showed just a moment ago. All of the places across Iraq, you see there where violence and unrest has broken out.

JIM CLANCY/CNN

...Right now we're talking about entire cities being completely taken over...

ANDERSON COOPER/CNN

Despite mounting U.S. casualties, the Pentagon today insisted the situation in Iraq is not spinning out of control.

WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT

Mr. President, April is turning into the deadliest month in Iraq since the fall of Baghdad and some people are comparing Iraq to Vietnam and talking about a quagmire.

GEORGE BUSH

It's not a civil war; it's not a popular uprising. Most of Iraq is relatively stable.

JOHN KING/CNN

Why is there so much violence? Why such anti-American sentiment?

GEORGE BUSH

It's an interesting question. They're really pleased we got rid of Saddam Hussein.

(MORE)

GEORGE BUSH (CONT'D)

And you can understand why....I mean, he was a horrible individual....And they were happy--they're not happy they're occupied. I wouldn't be happy if I were occupied either.

We END MONTAGE as we pull back from the screen and show Chuck and Jack watching the press conference on C-SPAN.

CHUCK

Jack, you think you got enough equipment to run another radio transmitter?

JACK

Yeah, probably. Why?

CHUCK

We're setting up an emergency broadcasting system. George, grab a Hummer and take Jack to the Sheraton.

GEORGE (gung-ho young PsyOps Lt., 23) grabs his M-16.

EXT. FIRDOS SQUARE. LATER THAT NIGHT.

The PsyOps Hummer drives into Firdos Square. Which is now packed with tanks and Hummers protecting the hotels.

The Hummer pulls up to pair of other PsyOps hummers, both lined up facing the blue mosque. Instead of machine guns, PsyOps Hummers have huge speakers mounted on top.

PSYOPS GEORGE

Hey, Randy. What's goin' on?

PSYOPS RANDY

Those fuckers are using the mosque to broadcast insurgency messages!

Angry Arabic is BLARING out of the minaret speakers.

PSYOPS TRANSLATOR

They say, 'kill the infidels, throw out the Oppressors, let the streets flow with their blood. They are bitch dogs...'

PSYOPS RANDY

Ferris, that's cool. We get it. Thanks.

PSYOPS GEORGE

So what are we doing about it?

PSYOPS RANDY  
Pull up. We'll hook you in.

Jack watches curiously as Randy runs a thick speaker cable from the other PsyOps Hummers to theirs.

PSYOPS RANDY (CONT'D)  
OK. WE'RE GOOD TO GO. LET'EM HAVE IT!  
(to Jack)  
Ready for a little G&R?

The sound of GUNS & ROSES' "Appetite for Destruction" BLASTS out of the speakers at about a million decibels.

It's so loud it shakes the windows. From where Jack is, it sounds like a plane taking off. Every resident of Baghdad must be hearing Axel scream out his frustration.

PYSYOPS GEORGE  
WHOO! PSYOPS RULES!

PSYOPS RANDY  
EAT SHIT, MOTHERFUCKERS!

Jack watches in stunned disbelief as the PsyOps guys battle the Mosque in a test of speaker wattage.

After a moment, he turns away and starts to walk toward the hotel. None of the soldiers even notice he's gone.

INT. SHERATON PENTHOUSE. LATER THAT NIGHT.

When Jack gets to the station it's quiet--somber--no longer Party Central. All the staff are standing at the window looking out over the city. Jack joins them.

Explosions and tracer fire blossom all over the city. It looks just like when they first arrived, during the war. Except for the GUNS & ROSES wafting up from the square.

JACK  
Shit. Look at that.

A long beat. Jack takes it in.

JACK  
Look, guys. If you don't want to stay here, I'll understand.

OZ  
Where we gonna go, huh? You can go home  
to America, but this is where we live.

JACK

Hey, I live here too now.

SHY KID

I'm going to stay. It's not safe to go in the street anyway.

(everybody nods)

JACK

All right. Well...what can we put on that'll cheer people up? Oz?

Oz turns to the monitor and PUNCHES up a song. As the radio crew watches the firefights RAGING all over the city, the dark, eerie strains of METALLICA's "Enter Sandman" go out into the Baghdad night:

METALLICA

*Exit light/Enter night/take my hand/we're off to never-never land/Something's wrong, shut the light/heavy thoughts tonight/and they aren't of Snow White...*

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA LIVING ROOM. NEXT MORNING.

METALLICA

(fading out)

*Dreams of war, dreams of liars/Dreams of dragon's fire/& of things that will bite.*

Jack, Brent and Ghassan sit on the couch watching CNN...

AARON BROWN/CNN

Around the world today, one story out of Iraq dominated the news. It wasn't a battle waged or won. It was something quite different: pictures of American soldiers mistreating, humiliating Iraqi prisoners.

We see the first horrifying images of torture from Abu-Ghraib. The Christ-like figure of the hooded man with his hands wired. The pyramid of naked writhing men. Lindsay England grinning as she points at naked genitals.

AARON BROWN/CNN (CONT'D)

...six American soldiers have been charged so far and could be court martialled. Others far higher in the chain of command will likely be disciplined. The fallout could be immense...

Jack looks at Ghassan, who says nothing but has that hard, angry, disappointed "I told you so" look.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. LATER THAT DAY.

Jack, Brent and Ghassan drive down Rashid Street.

The pictures from Abu Ghraib are everywhere. Playing on every television in every cafe. Splashed across the newspapers being held aloft by the shouting news boys.

When the Jeep passes, people stare at Jack and Brent with bitterness, anger and disappointment.

JACK

Ghassan. I'm sorry dude.

GHASSAN

It's not your fault.

JACK

No. I'm sorry I didn't believe you.

INT. PRINT SHOP. LATER.

Ghassan and Jack are showing samples of the democracy campaign posters (people at polling stations, lock boxes showing secret ballots) to their new print shop foreman, ABU HAIDER (the print shop owner from the banner).

JACK

Ghassan, tell him he's gonna need more guys. This is a huge order. And Ghassan-we have to keep this totally secret.

GHASSAN

Don't worry, he use only his family. Every Iraqi know, to work on this now, is very very dangerous.

INT. HOOKAH CAFE. THAT NIGHT.

Ghassan and Jack walk into their favorite hookah cafe. But instead of greetings, all they get are hard stares. No one comes to seat them; and finally, somebody HISSES something in Arabic. Suddenly, everybody's HISSING.

GHASSAN

We should go. C'mon Jack, let's go.

INT. PALACE/BREMER'S OFFICE. LATER.

It's the same State Dept. guys and soldiers as before.

STATE DEPT. GUY

I think we have to begin by acknowledging how dramatically circumstances have changed since we began this campaign...

CIVIL AFFAIRS OFFICER

What are you saying?

BRENT

The campaign was approved by everyone in this room. It's done. It's ready to go.

VERY SR. STATE DEPT. GUY

I think what Mike is trying to say is that things have changed...

Everyone turns to look at the sr. guy. He points to a poster of an smiling Iraqi woman and child on the wall.

VERY SR. STATE DEPT. GUY

(CONT'D)

I mean seriously, 'For a New Iraq'? It's full-blown civil war out there. Does anyone really think we can sell Peace and Love to the Iraqi people any more?

A beat. Jack, Brent and the Army guys look stunned.

CIVIL AFFAIRS OFFICER

This wouldn't be coming from the White House would it?

VERY SR. STATE DEPT. GUY

Look, would certain people in this Administration be happy to see taxpayer dollars not go to certain Arab newspapers and TV networks that have been killing us with this coverage--I'm sure. But that's a separate issue...

CIVIL AFFAIRS OFFICER

Yeah. Cos you guys are so independent.

Everyone jumps in at this. The meeting devolves into angry finger-pointing. Jack looks at this in disbelief.

JACK

Wait a minute, doesn't anyone care about the democracy campaign?

(they all stop & look at him)

I mean, isn't this the most important time to be trying to bring the message of democracy to the Iraqi people?

VERY SR. STATE DEPT. GUY

Who the hell are you?

JACK

I'm Jack Roe. From Balloch & Roe.

CIVIL AFFAIRS GUY

He's the numbers guy.

JACK

Look, I know I'm just the numbers guy. And I'll admit, when I first put this together, it was just about the numbers. But since then, I've come to realize how important this is. I mean, this is why we're here, right? Whatever you think about WMD's or the real reason we invaded

(Brent kicks him under table)

...I think we did the right thing here by deposing Saddam. And we have the potential to make a really important change here. For a country that really needs it. But if we just give up now... well, it's worse than not trying at all.

A long beat. Everyone looks to the sr. State Dept. guy:

SR. STATE DEPT. GUY

I respect your opinion, uh, Jack. But I'm afraid this decision is final.

INT. PALACE HALLS. LATER.

BRENT

Where did that come from?

JACK

What?

BRENT

I mean, I'm a bullshitter. But that was some incredible bullshit in there. Too bad it didn't work.

JACK

That's not bullshit--that's how I feel.  
I mean, we finally had a chance to really  
do something. To make a difference...

(off Brent's incredulity)

Aw fuck it. It doesn't matter anyway.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA. DAYS LATER.

Jack is sitting listlessly at his desk.

There are spreadsheets on the computer, proposals spread out in front of him. But he's not doing any work.

BRENT (O.S.)

Jack, you better take a look at this...

Jack turns to look at Brent's computer screen, where a masked man CUTS off the head of 26-year-old Nic Berg.

Berg is SCREAMING and blood is GUSHING as the man struggles to SAW through the spinal cord. Finally, the screaming stops and the man holds up Berg's head, triumphantly. He shouts: "ALLAH AKBAR!"

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA LIVING ROOM. NEXT MORNING.

Jack and Brent are still watching CNN, still in shock.

AARON BROWN/CNN

Again tonight, much to report on the Iraqi abuse scandal....One example of the fallout, the murder of Nic Berg. His killers say it was a result of the abuse the Iraqis suffered.

MARIA HINOJOSA/CNN

Family and friends describe Nic Berg as smart, funny and idealistic. Back in late December he decided to go to Iraq to look for work repairing communications towers.

MICHAEL BERG

...he just really wanted to be part of something that was important....He wanted to help in a positive way by building rather than breaking down.

BRENT

Yeah, I heard he was a real idiot.

(Jack just looks at him)

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

What? Obviously he was. Or he wouldn't have gotten himself killed.

Jack just shakes his head in disbelief and leaves.

EXT. SADR CITY. LATER.

Jack and Ghassan drive cautiously through the streets of Sadr City. The sound of gunfire is all around them. Sometimes when they pass through intersections they can see the firefights between US troops and the Mehdi Army. A mortar EXPLODES right beside them, ROCKING the Jeep.

JACK

Jesus! That was close...

INT. PRINT SHOP. MINUTES LATER.

Jack and Ghassan walk into the print shop. Something's wrong. Everyone is upset, angry. Even crying.

JACK

What's going on? Where's Abu-Haider?

Ghassan talks to the workers in Arabic.

GHASSAN

Oh, shit, Jack. Abu-Haider family is killed last night. We cannot stay here.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. LATER.

JACK

Killed by who? By insurgents?

GHASSAN

No. Last night, Abu-Haider take them to Syria. Because now too dangerous in Baghdad. They drive at night, but in the dark, one US tank come up over the road, hit Abu-Haider car. The Americans take them to hospital, but Abu-Haider children dead, mother dead, and his wife, she lose both her leg.

JACK

Jesus...

GHASSAN

I know. Very bad. Very bad...

JACK

Ghassan, what can I do?

GHASSAN

We must take food to funeral. Two lambs at least. This is Iraqi way...

JACK

I don't care how much it costs, Ghassan. Whatever I can do. Whatever we can give to the family...

EXT. ABU-HAIDER'S HOUSE. LATER.

Jack and Ghassan start pulling big trays of food out of the back of the Jeep. From inside the house comes the sound of women WAILING and men SHOUTING. Intensely.

Abu-Haider comes out. He's bandaged and badly injured. And crying. Surrounded by very agitated RELATIVES.

He comes over to Jack and kisses him on each cheek. But the other men start to SHOUT and PUSH Jack. The women start YELL at him too. One of them RUNS up and SLAPS Jack in the face, SCREAMING at him. He's stunned.

The crowd SURGES forward toward him. Abu-Haider tries to stop them, Ghassan tries to speak, but an ugly anger overwhelms them. Ghassan PUSHES Jack into the SUV.

GHASSAN

Jack, you have to go.

ABU-HAIDER

I'm sorry, Jack. Please go. I'm sorry.

Jack quickly starts the truck as the crowd BANGS on the doors. As he speeds off, a rock SHATTERS the back window.

INT. AL-RASHID HOTEL ROOM. A FEW NIGHTS LATER.

Jack and Chuck are sitting around drinking in his room.

JACK

Sorry. He kept saying he was sorry. His kids are killed, his wife loses her legs, and he's saying sorry to me.

CHUCK

Jack, fucked up shit happens in war. You can't let it get to you.

JACK

How can you not let it get to you?

CHUCK

You can't get too involved, Jack. You're not an Iraqi. You're an American. You're here to do a job, that's all.

JACK

Chuck, I've made so much money here.

CHUCK

You're risking your life helping this country. You deserve to get paid.

JACK

What the fuck have I done to help?

CHUCK

What are you talking about? What about the democracy campaign you love so much?

JACK

It's over. State Dept. pulled the plug.

CHUCK

I'm sorry Jack. I didn't know.

JACK

Sometimes I wonder whether I'm still here because I would feel like a failure--like a pussy--if I pulled out now...

CHUCK

What about all the people that depend on you? What happens to them if you leave?

JACK

Honestly? They'd all do fine without me.

CHUCK

OK. So why are you still here then?

JACK

I guess I feel like...like there's been so many mistakes. We fucked up so many things. I feel bad about even thinking about leaving when I know what a mess we've made here...

CHUCK

Jack, I've been in the Army almost 40 years.

(MORE)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

I seen a lot of wars and a lot of fucked-up shit. All I know is you gotta do the best you can--where you can. 'Cos you can't do shit about the big picture. You'll just make yourself crazy trying...

JACK

I'm sorry to keep you up with this stuff Chuck. I don't know who else to talk to.

CHUCK

Don't worry about it. Look, it's late, why don't you just crash here?

JACK

Thanks, dude, but I think I'll take my chances with the curfew. See ya tomorrow.

INT. JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE. MINUTES LATER.

A bleary Jack drives slowly through the dark streets. Every few seconds, explosions or tracer fire LIGHT UP the sky. There are firefights everywhere. Jack sees US soldiers spraypainting over Al-Sadr grafitti and tearing down his democracy posters--indiscriminately.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA BEDROOM. EARLY THE NEXT MORNING.

Brent sits on the end of Jack's bed, gently shaking him.

JACK

What the...Jesus, Brent. What did I tell you about coming into my room at night?

BRENT

Jack. There was a missile attack...

INT. AL-RASHID HOTEL HALL. MORNING.

Jack and Brent walk down the hall. It's still filled with smoke and debris and workmen. When they get to Chuck's door, a MARINE GUARD blocks their path.

AL-RASHID GUARD

I'm sorry, you can't go in there.

JACK

That's my friend Chuck's room. I was there last night...

The Marine starts to say something, but Jack pushes past.

There's a huge gaping hole in the wall where the rocket struck. The balcony and half the living room are gone. In the bedroom, the floor is covered with concrete pebbles, glass and Chuck's congealed blood.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Aw, shit...Chuck...

INT. CPA PALACE RECEPTION ROOM. DAYS LATER.

Jack and Brent stand with hundreds of soldiers and civilians in one of Saddam's reception rooms. At the front, a pair of boots, an M-16 and a helmet stand next to a podium where Chuck's boss is giving his eulogy.

PSYOPS GENERAL

Chuck was a great soldier, a great father and a great man. But I think what I loved the most about Chuck was his complete absence of bullshit. In a place where it sometimes seems like we're swimming in the stuff, Chuck was just here to get the job done. And if he didn't know how, he'd tell you straight up, 'I don't know much about this but together we'll be able to figure something out.' I know you're up there, Chuck, wearing one of those godawful shirts of yours, looking down and telling us don't worry--we'll figure out how to get along without you. But you know what? It's not gonna be that easy. You were one of a kind....

(choking up)  
And I can't believe you're gone...

INT. PALACE HALLS. LATER.

Jack walks dazed through the halls with Brent.

BRENT  
Jack, I know it's rotten timing, but if we don't talk to the Brits now, we'll never salvage the democracy campaign.

JACK  
Leave me alone, Brent.

INT. VILLA ROOFTOP. THAT NIGHT.

BRENT

You're just upset about Chuck.

JACK

Yeah, Brent. I'm upset about Chuck.  
What do you want from me?

BRENT

You have to put it in perspective. This  
is Iraq. It's not like people haven't  
been getting killed here the whole time.

JACK

This is Chuck, Brent. And Abu-Haider's  
whole family. These are our friends.

BRENT

Listen, Jack, I feel terrible too. But  
Chuck was a soldier. And Abu-Haider's  
family...well, unfortunately, it's not  
the best time to be an Iraqi right now...

JACK

Jesus, I can't believe you just said  
that. What's wrong with you?

BRENT

Jack, we didn't come here to change the  
world. We didn't come here to make new  
friends. We came here to make money.

JACK

And we've made money, Brent. Tons of  
money. Too much money.

BRENT

Speak for yourself, Jack. There's a  
number in my head--and I'm not there yet.

JACK

That's just...that's just insane.

BRENT

Listen: I have a job to do, and I'm  
bloody well going to stay and do it.

JACK

Fine. But you're gonna have to do it  
without me. Cause I'm leaving.

INT. SHERATON PENTHOUSE. LATER.

Another staff meeting. Everybody's there: Oz; Fluffy Ahmed; Metallica Omar; even the hairy pussy guy.

JACK

So I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is, I'm leaving. Which might not be all that bad, 'cos the good news is, I'm giving the radio station to you guys.

(they're stunned)

You're doing great, and I know it'll be a big success. I'm just glad I had a chance to be here in the beginning.

The guys all get up and start hugging Jack. Hard. This makes Jack a little uncomfortable.

INT. PRINT SHOP. LATER.

Jack walks through the print shop with Ghassan.

JACK

I want you to have my share in the contracts.

GHASSAN

No, Jack. I take care of them for you.

JACK

Ghassan, it's only right. Look, just take care of the print shop for me, OK? Make sure Abu-Haider gets his share...

GHASSAN

I can't believe you really go.

JACK

Hey, out with the infidels, right?

Neither of them quite knows what to say.

EXT. BAGHDAD VILLA DRIVEWAY. GOLDEN HOUR.

BRENT

You'll be back. Two weeks. I give you two weeks in the real world and you'll realize what a huge mistake you made.

Brent is watching while Jack and Ghassan load up a red BMW 740--the getaway car. The local kids watch as well.

BRENT (CONT'D)

You really think you can go back to being cubicle slave? After this.

JACK

I'll figure something out.

BRENT

You know you're making a terrible mistake, don't you?

(no response from Jack)

How do you expect me to do this on my own? You know how I am with numbers.

JACK

I'm sure you'll be fine. Just be careful. I don't want to see you on CNN.

BRENT

Hey, the next time you see me on CNN, I'll be the Ambassador from New Zealand.

Jack goes over and gives Brent a handshake--which turns into a half-hug. Brent reluctantly returns it.

BRENT (CONT'D)

(all emotional)

You are such a bloody idiot.

JACK

Take care of yourself, Brent.

Jack gets in the BMW. Ghassan's already at the wheel.

As the car drives slowly away, the locals kids chase after them, waving and screaming "bye, bye, bye..."

EXT. AIRPORT HIGHWAY. MINUTES LATER.

The BMW sails down the highway at 120 mph.

Jack stares out the window as dozens of Hummers and tanks FLASH by in the opposite direction. Apache attack helicopters ROAR overhead. It's one big fort out here.

INT. BAGHDAD INT'L AIRPORT. DAY.

Jack stands at the gate. A few high-ranking officers and a bunch of fat middle-aged contractors are boarding.

JACK

So, dude. You gonna come visit me in California?

GHASSAN

Sure. If you get me visa, I come.

JACK

No problem. I got connections.

GHASSAN

Hey Jack, they say in California, when women go to the beach they don't wear any clothing. Is it true?

JACK

No dude! They wear bathing suits, like you saw on the lingerie show....

(suddenly it dawns on him)

Wait! Dude! There are beaches in California where women wear no clothes.

GHASSAN

Someone say this, but I don't believe it.

JACK

It's true. But dude. If you want to go: you can't wear any clothing either.

GHASSAN

What!? No. You serious? Men too?

JACK

Yeah! And I gotta tell ya, the whole no clothing thing sounds great--but there's things you really don't want to see...

GHASSAN

Well...I think I still want to see...

The airport announcer calls Jack's flight. A beat. Jack hesitates, then sticks out his hand to shake Ghassan's.

JACK

I guess this is it then.

GHASSAN

Hey, come on Jack. You are not in America yet!

Ghassan steps forward and kisses Jack on both cheeks, Iraqi-style. They hug, thump each other's backs hard.

GHASSAN (CONT'D)

Remember, Jack, schwee schwee.

JACK

Step by step. I got it.

As they break, and Jack turns to the plane, Ghassan touches his chest and holds up his hand in the Arab way:

GHASSAN

A-salaam-aleikum, my brother.

JACK

Aleikum-salaam, my brother.

INT. MAGIC CARPET AIRLINER. MINUTES LATER.

Jack watches out the window as the jet makes an insanely steep ascent. He just looks down at the city. At the Tigris river and Saddam's artificial lake. At the gold roofs of the Republican Palaces in the Green Zone. At the Sheraton and the Palestine hotels on Firdos Sq.

We FADE TO BLACK. And SUPER: FIVE MONTHS LATER.

INT. BAGHDAD VILLA. DAWN.

Masked gunmen KICK down the front door of the villa. We follow them as they KNOCK DOWN Yayhee and run up the circular staircase. And KICK open a bedroom door to see:

Brent, tangled up his sweaty bedclothes. Still sleeping on a mattress on the floor, surrounded by dirty laundry.

MASKED GUNMAN

GET UP, GET UP, GET UP. ARE YOU MOHAMMED ABU-AKBAR?

Brent springs to his feet. Buck naked. Soft and freckled and powerfully unattractive.

BRENT

(half-asleep, furious)

Do I look like a bloody Muhammed to you?

The gunmen, masked U.S. Special Forces and Iraqi Security Forces on an insurgent sweep, stand there dumbfounded.

BRENT (CONT'D)

You bloody idiots. Do you know who I work for? Who the hell's in charge here!

FREEZE-FRAME on Brent's naked indignation. As we SUPER over his crotch: *Brent Balloch now lives in Dubai. He continues to work on government contracts, including the election and democracy education campaigns.*

INSERT: News video footage of Mel, being arrested by federal agents as he steps off a commercial flight.

SUPER: *Mel was arrested at Newark Airport on charges of corruption and bribery on reconstruction contracts.*

INSERT: Oz and his brother rapping at the station.

SUPER: *Oz and his brother still run the radio station. After a suicide bombing on the hotel, it was off the air for two weeks. But it's back on now.*

INSERT: Ghassan, sitting on a Baghdad sidewalk, smiling and sipping tea with his buddies in front of a shoe shop.

SUPER: *Ghassan splits his time between working with Brent and running his chain of GHASSAN SHOE STORES.*

INSERT: Jack and Ghassan driving dune buggies in Dubai.

SUPER: *When Ghassan can get out of Iraq, Jack tries to meet up with him. But Jack is now...*

INSERT: Jack, walking through a leafy Ivy League campus, looking more like a professor than his fellow students.

SUPER: *...enrolled at Wharton, where he is studying business and Middle Eastern Studies.*

FADE TO BLACK. ROLL CREDITS AS WE:

INSERT: the real footage of Jack and Brent's FOX NETWORK NEWS interview as we ROLL CREDITS.

CREDITS CONTINUE over stills of the real Jack and Brent:

--posing on the fallen Saddam statue in Firdos Sq.;

--holding up their new CPA passes in front of the giant bronze Saddam heads at the Palace;

--joking with Fluffy Ahmed and Oz at the radio station;  
--holding the first Central Bank of Iraq check;  
--posing with bricks of hundred dollar bills;  
--and standing together with Ghassan in the street in front of their villa. We FADE OUT on their smiling faces as we WRAP CREDITS.

THE END.