

ESCAPE FROM SARAJEVO

by

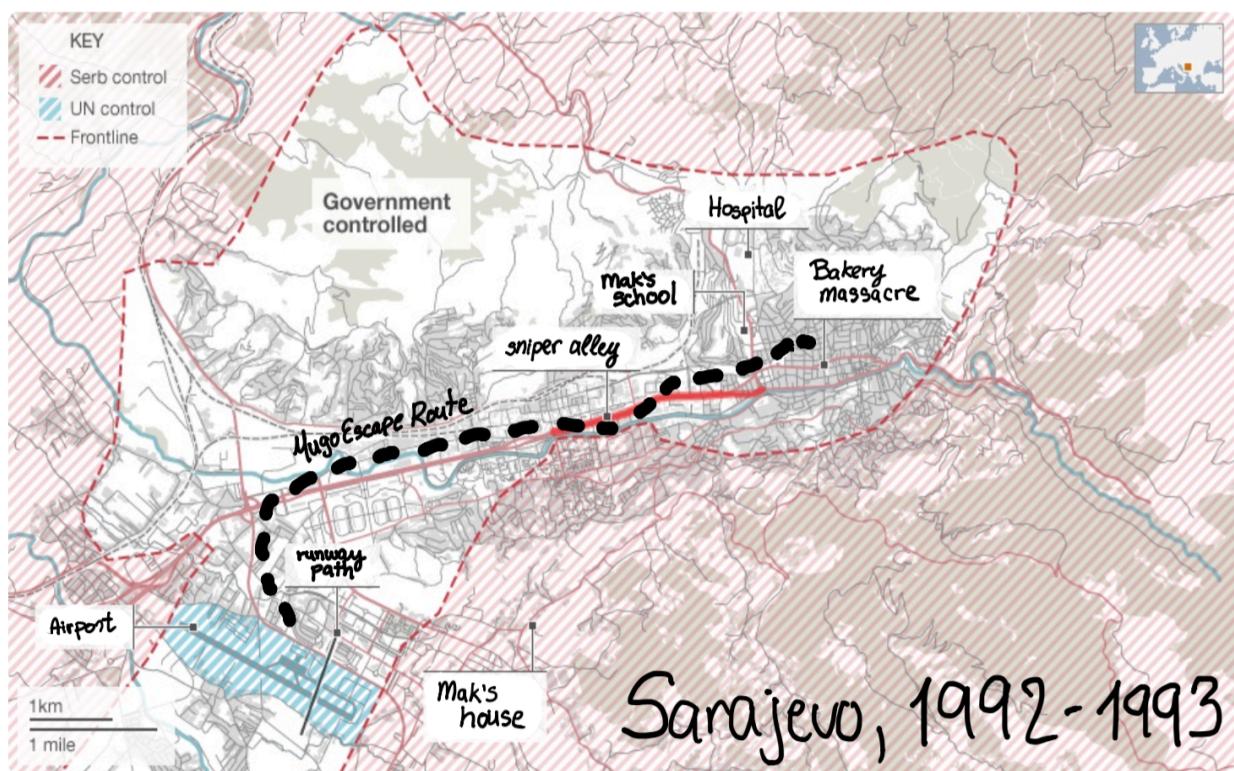
Vanya Asher

GRANDVIEW
05.31.2016

1992. After Bosnia & Herzegovina declare independence from Yugoslavia, 15,000 Serb soldiers encircle the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo.

The siege, which lasted 1,425 days, is the longest siege in modern warfare.

This is my father's story.



EXT. SARAJEVO - ACROSS TOWN - CAFE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A packed cafe. Effortlessly stylish 90s crowd. Loud Eastern euro accents yell over each other.

Suddenly in the distance...THWACK!

Some pigeons fly off.

Everyone falls silent. All heads turn in the general direction of the noise. Tendrils of blue smoke rise from their cigarettes.

Was that a GUNSHOT?

The moment passes. Everyone goes back to their business.

A WIRY WAITER pushes through the crowded tables carrying a tray with the works: a traditional copper pot filled with "KAFA" - steaming Bosnian coffee, small ceramic cups, and a dish of sugar cubes.

At a corner table, three friends smoke and chat.

MAK, 37, a Bosnian-Muslim professor with a mischievous glint in his eyes. Judo fighter build. Moustache. Overly optimistic if not naive. He's telling a joke.

MAK

So... after a night of drinking,
this policeman stops Mujo.

DARKO, 40s, a Croatian-born surgeon with a perma-furrowed brow and a short temper rolls his eyes.

DARKO

You already told this one, man.

BOJAN, 30s, a happy-go-lucky Serbian-born baker with a rock star smile eyes the approaching tray. A guitar case at his feet.

BOJAN

Which one?

MAK

See? He doesn't remember.

The Waiter sets the tray down in front of the guys. He crosses his hands and listens.

MAK (CONT'D)

Cop pulls Mujo over. Wife's in the passenger seat. Mujo rolls down his

window. "Can I help you?" The cop takes one whiff and says "I can smell the booze on your breath." Mujo's like "Well that's cause I've been drinking." Cop goes "Then why isn't your wife driving?". Mujo looks the cop dead in the eyes and says to him, he goes..."I'm drunk, not crazy." Haaaaa!

Bojan laughs. Darko cracks up too. The Waiter does the so-so motion with his palm.

MAK
(to Waiter; laughing)
Get out of here.

Mak leans over the kafa. Inhales the bitter-sweet aroma.

DARKO
Professor. Would you like to do the honors?

Mak squints happily and rolls up his sleeves. The familiar ritual starts. He spoons the foam out of the pot and into a ceramic cup. He pours kafa into the other three and then divides the saved foam.

Bojan sips water. Darko takes a bite out of a sugar cube and places it under his tongue. They take their first sip in unison and lean back in their chairs. For a moment everything is perfect.

Mak exhales in pleasure. Darko yawns.

MAK
Late night?

Darko shrugs.

BOJAN
Let me guess. Cveta?

Darko smirks. Mak shakes his head. Another sip of kafa.

Bojan grimaces at the hills surrounding Sarajevo.

BOJAN
It'd be so easy to take this goddamn city.

He points to the hills and traces a circle through the air with his index finger. All around them.

BOJAN (CONT'D)
We could be surrounded in a blink.

DARKO
Don't tell your fellow Serbs.

BOJAN
Man, my dad-

MAK
He made it up, Bobo.

DARKO
Huh?

MAK
His dad called him-

BOJAN
He saw... I don't know-

MAK
He says he saw soldiers in the
woods. Or something. Like he knows.
He's going senile.

BOJAN
He wouldn't lie.

MAK
He's a poet.

BOJAN
Truckloads of them. His words.

DARKO
Well? Are they yours or ours?

BOJAN
I was born in the same hospital up
the goddamn street as you.

DARKO
Sure. Fine. But is your loyalty
with us? The fine folks that you
came up with? The Croats and, yes,
even the Muslims?

Darko motions to himself then Mak. Mak throws a thumbs-up.

DARKO (CONT'D)
Or do you side with your
motherland? The greatest Serbia.
May she always be pure of blood.

BOJAN

Well. I'm here aren't I?

DARKO

Just checking. Cross him off the list.

MAK

(laughing)

You picked the wrong team, Bobo. Cause if your angry cousins ever decide to pay us a visit with their weapons and tanks and bullets? We're fucked. It's simple math.

DARKO

(to Bojan)

How about now?

BOJAN

You're the one fucking Cveta. A full on nationalist conservative Serb.

DARKO

Well...hate fucking. She's a good lay. It's the right thing to do.

BOJAN

No foul.

Darko and Bojan high five. Another sip of kafa.

MAK

How many of them can there be? Crazy nationalists. Seriously. Most are like us. All mixed in and just fine. Wouldn't change a thing. It's just a moment.

DARKO

Just a reaction to Bosnia going independent. That's all.

Bojan doesn't look convinced.

MAK

Would have been all over the news already. Right?

BOJAN

I mean, yeah.

(beat)

Yeah. God. He's so crazy. He just

freaks me out. All like 'Get your money out of the banks! Before it's too late!'

Darko shakes his head.

In the distance it sounds like FIRECRACKERS. SOME PEOPLE in the cafe look up because it could just as easily be AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE. The guys barely glance up.

DARKO
(re: coffee)
Uf. Weak.

EXT. SARAJEVO STREET - DAY

Regal concrete buildings lining the street suggest a long and complicated history to this place. A charming tram speeds through. Fashionable folks of all ages.

Mak whistles a cheery tune as he tears off pieces of a steaming pretzel and walks along a busy sidewalk. The pastry is too hot to touch, let alone chew, but he just can't help himself.

A PRETTY WOMAN, 30s, pushes a FAT BABY in a stroller. The Fat Baby holds a streamer which flutters in the wind.

It distracts Mak from noticing a CONVOY OF SERBIAN ARMY TRUCKS passing behind him.

It doesn't escape the attention of a few STUNNED BYSTANDERS.

INT. SARAJEVO - UNIVERSITY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Grungy melancholic freshmen take notes.

Mak scribbles equations on a giant chalkboard. In his element.

MAK
-we define a functional measuring
the length of a curve between two
points-

He clears his throat when he speaks in public -a nervous tick - as his hand deftly marks up the board.

MAK (CONT'D)
-which is to say the shortest
distance between two points is, you
got it, a straight line.

He draws a perfect vertical from one dot to another. Red chalk dust swirls off the board like smoke.

MAK (CONT'D)
You just have to prove it. That's homework.
(beat)
Now. Your exams.

GROANS from the STUDENTS.

MAK (CONT'D)
No, I'm impressed. A few of you actually passed.

INT. SARAJEVO - UNIVERSITY - CLASSROOM - DAY - LATER

The students file out of the room. Mak erases equations off the board. Lost in thought.

SEJO, 20s, a chubby and jovial student sidles up to Mak.

SEJO
Professor Mak.

Mak jumps.

MAK
Shit. You almost gave me a heart attack.

SEJO
Sorry.

MAK
What's up? What do you need?

Sejo waits until the last student shuffles out of the room. Mak frowns.

SEJO
I'm only asking 'cause...you're Muslim, right?

MAK
If the next words out of your mouth are 'do you want to go to evening prayer with me', I will be very disappointed.

SEJO
No. I know you're not religious-

MAK

Correct. That's one more than you had on your exam.

(he makes a zero with his fingers)

Might do you some good to open your textbook every once in a while.

SEJO

Actually, I'm collecting donations.

MAK

OK... For what?

SEJO

To buy firearms and hand them around. For our neighbourhood.

Mak wipes the chalk dust off his hands. Not looking up.

SEJO (CONT'D)

So we can protect ourselves. If it comes to that. I thought, since you live down the street from me, I thought-

MAK

Sejo.

SEJO

Yes?

MAK

If we take up guns against each other, we all lose.

Sejo looks at him. Cocks his head. Confused.

SEJO

You can't be that blind.

Sejo leaves. Shaking his head.

Mak turns back to the board. He blinks anxiously.

EXT. MAK'S HOUSE - DAY

Mak pulls his black Alfa Romeo into a garage. Gets out. ACO, 30s, his next door neighbour, an intellectual always lugging around books, is leaving his own house. They're separated by a small fence.

ACO
Mak.

MAK
Aco.

Mak is about to shut the garage gate when...

ACO
Mak. Offer still stands.

Mak turns. There's a strange expression on Aco's face. Like he's in pain.

ACO (CONT'D)
Just for a few days. Just until-

MAK
No. No thanks.
(beat)
Have a good night.

ACO
Yeah. You too.

Mak watches Aco scurry away to his car.

Mak looks up at the clouds. The dying light of day looks almost supernatural.

In this private moment, Mak looks scared.

INT. MUJIC HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Pixelated lips. A hysterical LOCAL REPORTER is fired up about something on the TV.

We see a shot of armed and bearded SERB SOLDIERS driving by in an army truck throwing up THREE FINGERS and the SERB FLAG. They chant "SERBIA! SERBIA!" but we can barely make it out because...

"Black Velvet" by Alannah Myles is BLASTING from the radio.

JANA, 30s, highest highs to lowest lows in under 3.5, dances and sings along in front of the TV. Not a care in the world.

Her curly blonde hair whips around her face. Only one of her eyes is heavily made up. She looks feral.

JANA
*"Every word of every song that he
sang was for you. In a flash he was*

*gone, it happened so soon, what
could you dooooo?"*

Her son IVAN, 5, a jump first think later kinda kid, dances along like a boy with too much energy when he stumbles on an acceptable outlet.

The song ends. Ivan claps.

Jana plops down into her chair like a diva after an exhausting show and gets back to putting on eyeliner.

IVAN
Where are you going?

JANA
Concert. With your auntie. Wanna come?

IVAN
No. I have plans.

JANA
(laughing)
Oh really?

She tickles his cheeks with a make-up brush. He giggles.

We hear a METAL GATE SQUEAL SHUT outside. Ivan peeks through the window and then ricochets to the fridge.

He grabs a beer. Deftly POPS it open with an opener and starts out.

JANA
Nuh-uh-uh.

Ivan runs back and pecks her on the cheek. She pretends to maul him.

IVAN
Stop!

He squirms out. But he loves it.

INT. MUJIC HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ivan tries to take a secret sip of the beer but it makes an audible SLURP.

JANA (O.S.)
Heard that.

Ivan laughs his way into the next room.

INT. MUJIC HOUSE - MAK'S STUDY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A controlled mess of 90s tech. Keyboards. Hard drives. Screens. Cables. A giant PC.

Ivan puts the cold beer next to it and turns it on. It spits out CLICKING and SCRATCHING noises foreign to kids born in the 2000s.

INT. MUJIC HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Ivan bobs around impatiently in front of a frosted glass door. A silhouette grows on the other side. The door swings open.

Ivan's face lights up. It's Mak. Ivan jumps into his arms.

JANA (O.S.)
Hi! Just putting my face on.

MAK
OK.
(beat)
Battle stations?

IVAN
Battle stations!

INT. MUJIC HOUSE - MAK'S STUDY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ivan tries to climb into a swivel chair. Can't manage. Mak pulls him up by the seat of his pants and plops him down on his own lap. Ivan giggles and settles.

Mak clicks away on a mouse until a game appears on screen - LEMMINGS. Ivan takes over the keyboard.

On the screen, the Lemmings take turns jumping over a spike filled pit.

Mak looks at his son's reflection in the screen. Ivan's mouth hangs open when he's concentrating.

Mak grabs the beer.

He lays his forehead on the back of Ivan's head. Closes his eyes. The 8bit video game soundtrack lulls us and him.

Jana pops into the room. She kisses the top of Mak's head.

JANA

You ok?

Mak nods.

MAK

How was work?

JANA

Fine. Barely anyone there.
Everyone's taking time off.

Her words hang in the air. Mak is about to say something but Jana kisses him again.

JANA (CONT'D)

I'm late. Love you.

She dances away. The lights from the screen reflected on Mak's face make him look a decade older.

EXT. MUJIC HOUSE - NIGHT

Six inch heels and a mini skirt click their way to a GRUMBLING red convertible.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

ELECTRIC GUITARS and LONG ROCKER LOCKS, 30s, on a low key stage. A full hall. The AUDIENCE screams along to a pop rock tune. "A I Ti Me Iznevjeri" by Bijelo Dugme.

Jana dances with MIRA, 30s, her equally striking blonde sister. They live for this.

We get swept away by their beauty and the really fucking good music until...

BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.

Jana strains to make out the muffled BOOMING noises from somewhere outside the concert hall.

She looks up. The ornate chandelier trembles like Godzilla is coming through.

From Jana's POV we feel her immediate vertigo. People are too close. Too fast. Too loud. But Mira is still dancing.

Jana reaches for her wine glass and then sees the table SHAKE. Then stop. Then SHAKE again. Harder.

Jana looks at Mira. Mira stares at the table too.
It's not just in Jana's head. This is happening.
The music stops. BAND MEMBERS look around. Confused.
One more BOOM! Loudest one. The chandelier shakes violently.
Jana stands there. Paralyzed.
Mira grabs Jana's hand and pulls her through the crowd
towards the exit.
As Mira pushes the doors open we catch a glimpse of the
night sky lit up by GLOWING PROJECTILES.

INT. MUJIC HOUSE - MAK'S STUDY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Mak stares out of the window. Breathing heavily. Either he
saw the projectiles too or some instinct is kicking in.

He turns back to his son, still in his lap, but Ivan isn't
paying attention to the video game. He's looking at Mak's
face in the reflection of the screen.

Mak hugs his son a little tighter. Inhales this fleeting
moment of normal.

On the screen, the mindless Lemmings hurtle off a hill to
their death. One after another.

Huge captions read: SARAJEVO, 1992

EXT. SARAJEVO HOLIDAY INN - DAY

A sea of people. Marching men and women of all ages. A
HUNDRED THOUSAND PROTESTORS. They carry SIGNS: "Peace Now!",
"Free Bosnia" and the like.

BRUNETTE, 20s, porcelain skin and leather jacket, throws up
her HAND DRAWN PEACE SIGN.

BRUNETTE
(chants with the group)
Give peace a chance!

BLONDE, 30s, crystal eyes and beat-up converse all-stars,
pumps her fist into the air.

BLONDE
We won't give up Sarajevo!

Infectious smiles all around. More parade than protest. The infamous Holiday Inn, a red and yellow monstrosity, looms over the crowd like a giant misplaced Lego castle.

PHOTOGS scramble to get their shots. Through a CAMERA MAN's lens, the crowd's rhythmic movements resemble a dance.

An ANGRY ACTIVIST, 30s, flanked by protestors, pleads to the camera.

ANGRY ACTIVIST
Citizens of Sarajevo. Citizens of
Bosnia. Get out on the streets.
Help us stop *this thing*, this thing
which can take us down in the dead
of night-

EXT. SARAJEVO HOLIDAY INN - VRBANJA BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The front row of fearless 90s bohemians start across the scenic bridge towards the Inn. Among them are the Brunette and the Blonde.

BRUNETTE
-those for peace! Muslim. Serb.
Croat. If you walk with us you walk
for Bosnia! Don't be afraid-

The two women look directly into the Camera Man's lens, directly at us.

BLONDE
-we can't let them tear down
Sarajevo. Do. Not Be. Afraid.

CHANTS of "WE WON'T GIVE UP BOSNIA!" sync with rhythmic CLAPPING.

The two womens' magnetic gazes pull us in until-

All sound is CUT OFF by a GUNSHOT. Then ANOTHER.

The crowd ducks. Confused faces all around.

The women's eyes are still trained on us...

The Brunette's pupils expand until they are pools of black. The Blonde's eyes roll so far back all they leave is white.

Dark red blood. Streams down the Brunette's forehead. Gushes out of the Blonde's chest.

The women fall towards each other in slow motion. Their

bodies hit the cement in unison with a wet THUD.

All hell breaks loose. More GUN SHOTS. SCREAMS spread like a virus. Shoes TRAMPLE discarded protest signs.

The Camera Man's lens morphs as it zooms in.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - HOTEL ROOM

A FACELESS SNIPER with a SERB FLAG on his chest pocket reloads in a window while POLICE OFFICERS return fire from the ground.

EXT. SARAJEVO - HILLS - NIGHT

POWERFUL BLASTS. Distant GUN SHOTS.

The glittering hills of Sarajevo are lit up by GLOWING PROJECTILES arcing across the night's sky. *There's so many.*

INT. MUJIC HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A night light in the shape of a sea shell. It bathes the room in red light. Mattresses are up against the walls and the glass door. Just in case.

Mak sits on the floor, his back against a mattress, spooning Jana from behind, who's spooning Ivan. Using their bodies as shields. Just in case.

Every once in a while, MUFFLED GUNSHOTS from outside.

Mak and Jana stare into nothingness. Ivan is asleep.

JANA

We have to...we have to get him out. I don't want him to-

MAK

I know. I'm working on it. You'll go to your cousin's. Just until-

JANA

What do you mean? What about you?

MAK

I'll hold down the fort.

(beat)

This will stop. You'll be back home in a few days.

Mak kisses Jana's neck as she stifles tears. Ivan's little brown eyes open. He heard every word.

EXT. MUJIC HOUSE - CRACK OF DAWN

Morning sun shines through the leaves of a cherry tree.

Combat boots pace. Mak's neighbor, Aco, is antsy in a crisp new uniform. The SERB FLAG on his chest pocket.

Aco opens the SQUEALING METAL GATE to Mak's house. He RINGS the DOORBELL.

He wipes his boots on the doormat. He can't stop. He keeps wiping the boots like the act will rip them off his feet.

The door opens. Jana answers. Her face drops. She stares at Aco's uniform.

JANA
What the hell, Aco?

ACO
Mak here?

Jana reaches for his cap. He backs away.

ACO
...please Jana.

JANA
Mak!
(beat)
Tell that wife of yours to come
over for coffee. Haven't seen her
in days.

Aco avoids eye contact. We hear MAK'S STEPS down the stairs. Mak glances at Jana with a look that says "I got this". Jana shakes her head as she goes upstairs.

Aco shoves an envelope into Mak's hand.

ACO
The tickets. Where's your car?

MAK
Downtown by the university. I
couldn't get it by the barricades-

ACO
Airplane leaves in four hours. We
have to go. Now.

Mak swallows hard.

INT. MUJIC HOUSE - IVAN'S ROOM - DAY

We hear the adults YELLING through a door. On the door is a picture done in children's crayon.

A BROWN BEAR IN A CAGE.

JANA (O.S.)

I can't! I'm not going without you.
This is insane.

MAK (O.S.)

Shhhh. He'll hear you. Jana, the
airport shuts down tonight.

Ivan trembles in a baby crib he's clearly outgrown. He wears 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle' pyjamas.

There's a LITTLE RED BACKPACK in the corner of the room.

EXT. MUJIC HOUSE - DAY

Aco fires up a red Renault.

Mak leads a raging Jana holding a crying Ivan into the backseat of the car. Mak gets into the passenger seat clutching the LITTLE RED BACKPACK.

Car doors are SLAMMED shut.

INT. RED RENAULT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Aco speeds down a street of big stone houses.

Through the windows, Mak and Jana watch a group of ARMED SERB SOLDIERS barge into a neighbour's house. SCREAMS from inside.

Ivan digs his head into Jana's neck. Jana glares at Aco in the rearview.

JANA

Not in a million years.

(beat)

Who would have thought, Aco, that
one day you'd throw me out of my
home...

Aco blinks.

MAK
Jana, he's helping us.

JANA
-is this what you wanted, Aco? When
you put on that uniform?

A BMW erupts from of a driveway and almost hits Aco's car. Aco swerves hard to avoid it and everyone is thrown to the side.

JANA
Oh my god.

Ivan starts crying again.

ACO
Are you ok?

IVAN
Mama, what's happening?

JANA
Well, baby, once upon a time all
kinds of people lived together in
Sarajevo. Some Serbs, like Aco,
others Croatians, like me, and some
of them Muslims, like your dad. And
we were happy. Very happy. But then
some bad people made up a lie that
we couldn't all live together in
peace anymore. And they kept
repeating this lie. And others
started to believe it. And then...
it became true.

Ivan thinks hard.

IVAN
Aco, do you believe it?

Aco stumbles as he reaches for a walkie-talkie.

ACO
Aco in the red Renault. Papers OK.
Open her up. Over.

As they round the corner they see a barricade. A giant GLEAMING TANK blocks half the street. It's surreal. TWO SERB SOLDIERS at the metal grate that blocks the other half. Not budging.

Mak's jaw hangs open in disbelief. Jana blocks Ivan's eyes. He moves her hand away to see.

We see the SARAJEVO UNIVERSITY BUILDING past the barricade.

A HUNGOVER SOLDIER sticks his hand out. Stop.

ACO
Fuck...don't move.

The Hungover Soldier fists the car window. Everyone jumps.

HUNGOVER SOLDIER
A word.

Aco gets out of the car and walks the Hungover Soldier to the tank. The two argue out of earshot.

The other SERB SOLDIERS glare at Mak.

Mak glares back.

Aco shuffles back to the car. Signals them to get out.

EXT. BARRICADE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mak helps Jana and Ivan out of the vehicle.

ACO
Where's your car?

MAK
Just down the block.

ACO
Don't go left. You hear me? There's snipers in those buildings. Stick to the right side of the street.
Go.

With Jana out of earshot, Aco grabs Mak by the arm.

ACO
(whispers)
They're making lists of Muslim names on our block... you're on it. Don't come back around 'til things settle. I won't be able to protect you.

Mak turns to see the Hungover Soldier twist his fingers into a gun and "shoot" at him.

Mak blinks. He turns back to Aco.

MAK

They? You're one of them now Aco.

Aco hangs his head and walks away.

Mak takes Jana and Ivan by the hand. They start the long walk.

They shuffle past the terrifyingly quiet SOLDIERS at the barricade.

Baited breaths. Hearts beating.

Ivan peeks at the Soldiers. Their faces tattooed. Their eyes filled with hate. Ivan hides behind Mak's arm.

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS loudly drags the grate along the ground. Mak, Jana, and Ivan pass him. He drags the gate closed behind them.

No going back. They're out in the empty street. The car suddenly feels like it's miles away.

The eyes of the soldiers pierce their backs.

Step by step the family inches closer to the other side when suddenly-

A small round object arcs across the sky and BOUNCES off a nearby wall.

JANA

What was-

A GRENADE rolls to a stop in a bed of dandelions only steps away from Ivan and Jana. Pin out.

Mak stares at it for a moment and then...

In a split second, he pulls Jana and Ivan around the corner of a building.

He drags them to the ground, covers them with his mass as a DEAFENING EXPLOSION rips through concrete.

The air is replaced by suffocating dust.

TINNITUS fills the soundscape but then morphs into the SOLDIERS' LAUGHTER.

A screaming Ivan escapes from Mak's grasp and runs down the street, his pyjamas soiled.

He turns LEFT, the direction Aco told them not to go.

JANA

Ivan!

Jana runs after him.

EXT. SARAJEVO STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The world is in slow motion as Mak and Jana run after Ivan.

Mak sees the cement behind Ivan's feet POPPING like it's being torn up by heavy rain. BULLETS.

Ivan throws his tiny frame into a wall and frantically tries to scale it.

Mak snatches his son and whips around to grab Jana.

Running as fast as he can, he heaves them into a building entrance.

He reaches for the metal door but it's locked.

JANA

Open the door! Someone! let us in!

A windows in the building across the street swings open. An OLD MAN emerges.

He BANGS together a COOKING POT and a FRYING PAN.

OLD MAN

You sons of bitches! What are you doing to our city you dirty sons of bitches!

The dust starts to settle and the BANGING METAL reverberates like a GONG.

Mak blinks. He spots his car - the black Alfa Romeo - right in front of them. He blinks. Not a mirage.

INT. MAK'S CAR - DAY

Doors SLAM. Keys PIERCE the ignition. The tires SQUEAL as the car speeds away from the cloud of dust.

INT. MAK'S CAR - DAY - LATER

Mak steadies his breath as he wipes the dust off his face. In the passenger seat, Jana cradles Ivan in her lap. Definition of shell-shocked.

Jana spots dark red marks on her house coat.

Blood.

She frantically searches Ivan. Realizes his fingertips are bleeding from clawing up the wall.

She holds his little palm in her hand. Looks at his guilty face.

IVAN

I peed myself. I'm sorry.

Jana wraps her arms around her child. She starts hyperventilating.

MAK

Jana...

Mak reaches for her but she pushes his hand away.

JANA (CONT'D)

No. No. No. No! No! NO!

She starts wailing. Guttural. Involuntary. Rocking back and forth as she sinks into a fugue state.

Ivan cups his ears. Jana can't help herself. Can't stop.

For a moment it seems like this is the 9th circle of hell and then...

Mak flips on the car radio.

He fiddles with the AM/FM dial until he lands on a station halfway through "Moj Bijeli Labude" by Prljavo Kazaliste, a bright pop tune.

Jana's eyes pop open like she's been jerked awake from a nightmare. She stops crying out. She stops rocking. She listens. Her breathing calms.

She slowly extends a trembling hand and puts it in Mak's. He grasps it. Tears stream down her face.

Jana turns up the VOLUME dial until there are no GUNSHOTS just the RASPY VOICE of the pop singer.

They drive.

EXT. SARAJEVO AIRPORT - PARKING - DAY

In slow motion, We follow, Jana, Mak, and Ivan wrapped

around his neck and facing us, as they run towards the crowded terminal.

An AIRPLANE TAKES OFF in the distance. Soundless.

INT. SARAJEVO AIRPORT - MONTAGE - DAY

IVAN'S DEEP BREATHS. Like they're coming from inside our head. That's all we hear.

Ivan's tiny and bloody palm grips Mak's huge hand as they trot through the terminal.

Mak rummages through his coat for the envelope with the tickets with his free hand.

Jana embraces a WOMAN, 40s, in a similar state of shock, someone she knows from the city.

Desperate crowds are everywhere. Confusion. Crying WOMEN and CHILDREN parting with FATHERS.

Ivan sees everything and his grip on Mak gets a little tighter.

An ARMED GUARD points them in the direction of their gate.

As they reach it they slow their pace but Ivan's BREATHS GET FASTER.

INT. SARAJEVO AIRPORT - GATE 4 - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mak, Jana, and Ivan stare at the last of the passengers disappear into the tunnel funnelling them to the army plane visible just outside the building.

Mak finally turns to Jana. Forces a goofy smile.

MAK
Honey. A little underdressed don't you think?

She looks down at her blouse and house coat. She can't help but laugh but then the laughter turns into tears.

MAK (CONT'D)
Everything will be ok.

She nods. Wanting to believe it.

JANA
How could we not see this coming?

Mak just shakes his head.

SOLDIER 3
Tickets? You got tickets? You have
to go through.

Mak tries to release Ivan's grip. He won't let go.

IVAN
No.

MAK
Honey, it's ok. You're going on a
big plane-

IVAN
No.

Jana and Mak exchange a look. They know what they have to do.

JANA
Mak. You have to get out. You can't
stay here. Do you hear me?

He kisses her. Quickly. Lovingly. Mak bends down and hugs Ivan. Inhales the smell of his hair.

MAK
(he smiles; whispers)
Be brave. For me.

Ivan digs his bloody little nails into Mak's neck. He starts screaming as Mak quickly peels him off and hands him to Jana. It takes all her strength and the help of the SOLDIER to pull Ivan away.

IVAN
No! Mama. Tell him he has to come!
Say it! Do something!

MAK
(voice breaking)
I love you. I'll see you soon.

Mak blinks. A LIGHTBULB POPS (O.S.)

EXT. SARAJEVO AIRPORT - NIGHT

Mak watches an airplane take off from the parking lot.

He exhales like he's been holding his breath for an eternity.

The airplane disappears into the clouds.

It suddenly hits him. Mak is alone.

He covers his mouth to stop himself from crying out.

Red scratches are visible on the back of his neck from Ivan's nails.

The LITTLE RED BACKPACK still in his grasp.

The SOUND of the AIRPLANE fades.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: 1 YEAR LATER

EXT. SARAJEVO - DAY

The sun peeks over the familiar horizon.

We hear the sound of LOUD SNORING.

No gunshots. No grenades. Just SNORING.

MAK (V.O.)
Got one. Got a good one.

INT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - APARTMENT - DAY

Sunken cheeks and hollow eyes. A rail thin man carries a familiar round tray with ceramic cups, sugar cubes, and a coffee pot. Takes us a moment to realize this shell of a human is Mak. He's lost at least 50lbs.

MAK (CONT'D)
Up. Up. Up.

Darko is passed out on the couch. He snores and cradles a half empty bottle of home-made liquor. He looks like shit.

Mak sets the tray on a table in front of him. Darko wakes with a start.

DARKO
Fuck you so peppy for?

Bojan comes out of another room. Still a star but visibly dimmed. Mak throws him a pack of cigs.

BOJAN
It's Tuesday, Darko.

(re: cigs)
Thanks professor.

Three skeletons huddle around. The coffee ritual hasn't changed. Darko steals one of Bojan's cigs.

MAK

So. On the frontlines, this soldier gets shot in the leg and he's screaming his head off. After a while, Mujo can't take it any longer. "Come on man, your leg gets grazed and you won't stop yelling, but that guy over there gets hit by a mortar and you don't hear a peep out of him."

Mak flashes a toothy grin.

BOJAN

Don't get it.

DARKO

The other guy is dead.

BOJAN

(laughing)

Shit.

Bojan plops down a tiny bun on the tray. He tears it into 3 small pieces and gives one to each of the guys. They eat. They sip.

DARKO

Look at this mother fucking feast.

BOJAN

Dig in while you can. We're almost out of water. Everywhere. So no more bread in a matter of days.

MAK

Peace is in the air. You'll see.

DARKO

(laughs)

Another cease fire. Another fucking peace treaty. God, I miss cheese.

Another sip in unison. Bojan grabs his guitar. Starts tuning.

DARKO (CONT'D)

There he fucking goes. If he plays

the same fucking REM song again-

Bojan plays strings from "Losing My Religion" by REM.

DARKO (CONT'D)
This son of a bitch will kill me
before a sniper does.

MAK
You wish.

Darko cackles.

BOJAN
Fuck you. They blew up the fucking
cassette shop. I'm out of the loop.
(beat)
Ahhh they ruined the best years of
my life man.

MAK
Keep strumming. Kids, I'm late.

DARKO
Hope you got clean ones on. Slight
chance of sniper rain out there.

MAK
Right back at you. Your turn to do
a water run.

And Mak is out the door. Bojan eyes the coffee cup in
Darko's hand. It trembles.

DARKO
Another fucking peace treaty.
(beat)
Hear him talking to himself again
last night?

Bojan starts into "Losing My Religion". Darko's eyes glisten
as he watches the guitar strings vibrate. He taps his leg to
the beat. Takes another sip of the coffee.

DARKO
Uf. Weak.

INT. SHELLLED BLUE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Over the REM cover, we step towards a glass doorway at the
bottom of a staircase. Scarred by shelling but it holds.

The scarred glass cuts the sun's rays into a brilliant

mosaic on the wall. We get closer and closer and...

EXT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mak bursts out. His breaths are clouds in the crisp morning air.

The balconies of the blue building he's staying in have collapsed on top of one another. Like toppled dominoes.

It's so quiet.

He looks left. He looks right. He trots away with his suitcase above his head. Just in case.

EXT. SARAJEVO - STREET - DAY

The regal concrete buildings are pockmarked by shrapnel holes. The streets are too. Vehicle carcasses litter the street. Smoke rises from the charred tram.

But there are still people walking the streets. Hollow faces. Skinny frames. But they're far from defeated.

Mak passes the same PRETTY WOMAN he saw in town before. She pushes that same stroller, but now there are two water canisters in it instead of a child.

GUNSHOTS in the distance.

An OLD WOMAN is too tired to quicken her pace. Mak and a few others break into a run.

Mak sneaks around with practiced stealth. He's done this route countless times:

- He pushes aside a loose board in a wooden fence and sneaks through an overgrown backyard. A ROTTWEILER lunges at him but gets pulled back at the last moment by the chain around its neck. Mak throws him a tiny piece of bread and keeps going.

- Mak runs into a makeshift tunnel in the side of a blown out building. He WHISTLES as he makes his way through the pitch black darkness. CHATTER ECHOES in the distance.

- We're blinded by light as Mak emerges on the other side of the tunnel. As his eyes adjust he sees a familiar cardboard sign taped to a street lamp with "WATCH OUT FOR SNIPER" written in black marker.

- Mak waits in a cursory line-up at the corner of a

building. Some of the BYSTANDERS MAKE SMALLTALK. One by one they take turns running across an exposed street. We hear BULLETS WHIZZING BY. They casually nod and wave before their turn. Then break into a run.

- We're with Mak as he runs across with his suitcase over his head. BULLETS ZIP PAST every now and then.

- Mak hides behind a car abandoned in the middle of the street to catch his breath.

- Mak sprints by his old University building. Half of it blown to pieces. He glances at it but he keeps going.

- He dives into the blown out entrance of an APARTMENT BUILDING and disappears into the dark basement.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - BASEMENT CLASSROOM - DAY

Harsh halogens. A smattering of light pours in through two small windows near the top of one wall. One is covered with a fluttering plastic sheet.

AMELA (O.S.)
They said it would never happen
again. After world war two. Well.
It's happening.

Mak stands in front of a cracked chalkboard. Listening.

IBRO (O.S.)
That's crazy. You can't compare.

The classroom is made up of just SIX STUDENTS. As skinny and pale as Mak. They listening to AMELA, 20s, outspoken but overly activated, argue with IBRO, 20s, a self-proclaimed realist.

AMELA
Sarajevo is a giant concentration
camp. They're cleansing "their"
land of Bosnian muslims like us.
This is a genocide.

IBRO
Picking us off one by one from the
hills isn't exactly efficient.
Where are the gas chambers?

AMELA
There are mass graves out in the
villages. It's true. You can't
trust what the TV tells us anymore.

IBRO

The TV is telling the world what's happening here. It's just... complicated.

AMELA

So the world does fuck all.

MIRSADA

Maybe if they did something, they would have to admit it.

MIRSADA, 20s, an exhausted redhead, pipes in.

IBRO

What?

MIRSADA

That it's happening again. Genocide. And if it's happening again *here*... why couldn't it happen in one of their cities?

AMELA

OK. Great. Help is never coming. Why are we still here?

ANA, 20s, too cool for school, lights up a cigarette.

ANA

Said it yourself, honey. Unless you can score a Blue Card, the only way out of Sarajevo is in a body bag.

Amela breaks down. She hides her face on the makeshift school desk like a hurt child.

ANA (CONT'D)

I was just summarizing.

AMELA

Fuck you Ana...

Mak walks over to Amela. He crouches down so he's eye level. He lightly squeezes her arm.

MAK

Good question. Why are we still *here*?

After a few moments, she looks up. She shakes her head.

AMELA

We don't have a choice.

MAK

We do. We can't leave but...we can fight. In our own way. I'd rather die than pick up a gun but getting to class in one piece and teaching? For me, that's fighting. Knowing that all of you might learn something in here despite what's happening out there? That's fighting. Not letting them get- (he taps his temple) That's victory. That's why I've kept coming here for the last year.

AMELA

I can't do this much longer.

MAK

Honestly? Me neither. But how much longer can this go on?

(beat)

So, I'm gonna need you to hold on for just 55 minutes. Because today...we're learning about fractals.

He puts on a big smile. Amela almost cracks a smile.

ANA

Well aren't you a ray of sunshine today, professor.

MAK

Ana, cigarette out.

She puts it out with a dramatic exhale just as a LATE STUDENT, 20s, pops into class.

LATE STUDENT

Sorry.

He sits in an empty desk.

MAK

People. Come on. Sniper get you?

LATE STUDENT

No, but-

MAK

Then you don't have a very good reason to be late for my class. I'm marking you down.

He's dead serious. The students giggle.

MAK (CONT'D)
Notebooks open!

And they hop to it, forgetting for a moment to fear anything but Professor Mak.

EXT. BAKERY - DAY

Thirty people stand in line up at a bakery. The hot noon sun is out. Some of the women fan themselves. Mak runs by and waves to Bojan, who's working the till.

MAK
I'm calling Jana. I'll see you in a minute.

Bojan throws up a peace sign. Mak slips into the entrance right next to Bojan's bakery.

INT. MIKI'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

A BUZZER.

MIKI, 40s, a rail thin ex-rocker with polaroid sunglasses answers the door. Mak is at the door. Miki bearhugs him.

MIKI
My man. How are you?

MAK
Good Miki, good. How's it going?

INT. MIKI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

In the corner of the room is a amateur radio set up.

There's a NAKED WOMAN, 30s, in Miki's bed. Miki grabs a blanket and covers her sleeping body.

MIKI
Sorry, I forgot it was Tuesday.
S'Ok. She'll sleep through anything. Come on.

He waves him over. They sit down in front of the ham radio set up. Mak puts on headphones. Miki rubs his forehead.

MAK
Hungover?

MIKI

Nah. Nah. Well, yeah, I am. Lady
can't drink.

A knowing smile spreads on Miki's face.

MAK (CONT'D)

Wait...are you... She's pregnant?

MIKI

You're not gonna be the only proud
tata around here.

MAK

Miki, holy shit! Congratulations.

They hug again and after a few moments go silent. Unspoken
words ring loud.

MIKI

I don't know. We'll figure it out.
We always do, right?

MAK

And all this shit will end before
the little one comes. Has to.

Mak nods. Miki puts on his headphones and fiddles with the
radio controls.

Mak's heart races. He wipes his sweaty palms against his
jeans. He fixes his hair like he's actually gonna see his
family.

MIKI

You look like shit.

MAK

Fuck you.

RADIO STATIC.

MIKI

Charlie 347. Charlie 347. Looking
for Zeta 661. Zeta 661. Over.

Nothing. Just feedback.

MIKI (CONT'D)

Charlie 347 looking for Zeta 661.
Over.

More feedback.

HAM RADIO GUY (V.O.)
Zeta 661? Looking for Charlie 347.

Mak shoots up.

MIKI
We're here. Miki here. Hello from Sarajevo. Over.

HAM RADIO GUY (V.O.)
Hello from Zagreb. Is Mak around?
There's a little guy here that's excited to speak to him.

IVAN (V.O.)
(muffled)
That's me!

MAK
Yes! I'm here! I'm here.

IVAN (V.O.)
-ello tata-

Like heroin seeping into the veins of an addict.

MAK
Oh my god. Hi. Hello my baby! How are you?

IVAN (V.O.)
I'm fine! Guess what? Our neighbours got a dog. His name is Momo and I was playing with him.

MAK
That's great.

IVAN (V.O.)
Can I get a dog? When I come home?

MAK
Yes. Definitely.

IVAN (V.O.)
A german shepard? He'll be a dog cop like in that movie.

MAK
Perfect.

IVAN (V.O.)
We went shopping for school clothes yesterday.

A beat.

MAK
You what?

IVAN (V.O.)
I wish you could take me on my
first day. I'm a little nervous.

Sadness spreads across Mak's face.

MAK
Listen buddy...

And in that moment an EXPLOSION rocks the apartment.

The window SHATTERS and sends glass FLYING.

The ham radio set is ripped out of the wall.

Mak is stunned.

A moment of silence. As the rush of adrenaline slows down his world, Mak watches specks of dust dance in the light.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Miki! Miki! Miki!

MIKI (O.S.)
I'm here. Stay down!

Miki looks over and sees Mak still sitting in his chair. In shock. Cuts all over his face.

MIKI
Get down! They come in threes!

Mak snaps out of it. He drops to the ground and like clockwork, TWO MORE BOMBS EXPLODE outside the building rocking it to its core.

A moment of silence and then the sounds start pouring in from outside: SCREAMING and MOANING.

Mak stumbles to the door.

MAK
We have to help!

He turns and sees Miki holding his girlfriend's stomach. They stare up at him. Miki shakes his head.

EXT. BAKERY - DAY

Mak erupts out of the building and into a new level of hell.

The streets are red with rivulets of blood.

PEOPLE from the bakery line with their legs and arms blown off.

Those who are able carry bodies of the wounded into awaiting CARS.

Mak drops to his knees and holds back the vomit at the back of his throat.

And then he sees him.

Bojan.

Slouched against a wall. Surprise imprinted on his face. Half of Bojan's skull is missing. The glistening pink matter underneath is visible. Pulsating. Blood splattered on the pock marked brick behind him. On his apron.

BOJAN

Mak?

The words come so casually, like a greeting. Mak takes off his shirt and wraps it around Bojan's head.

MAK

Holy fucking...

BOJAN (CONT'D)

Did you talk to Ivan?

Mak throws Bojan's arm around around his shoulders and carries him into the street.

MAK

Heeeeeelp!

A JOURNALIST with a camera appears. His lens trained on Mak as he helps Bojan.

Mak flags down a blue Volkswagen. The DRIVER, 60s, a man with kind eyes, helps put Bojan into the backseat.

DRIVER

Ah shit. Got him good.

You hear the CAMERA LENS SHUTTER. It's totally surreal. Mak stumbles in after Bojan. The car speeds off.

The Journalist's lens morphs as it zooms in again.

INT. BLUE VOLKSWAGEN - DAY

Mak steadies Bojan's head in his lap. Bojan eyes start rolling into the back of his head. Mak slaps him.

MAK
No! Eyes on the prize.

Bojan's eyes flutter open again but he can't focus. Mak's hands are covered with blood. He pulls up Bojan's shirt and sees the countless shrapnel holes.

MAK
Oh god. Oh my god. Faster! We have to go faster!

The DRIVER steps on it.

DRIVER
I'm going! I'm going!

Mak spots a LITTLE CARTOON WOLF FIGURINE bounce from the rearview mirror. Big smiling snout. VUCKO THE WOLF. He holds the FIVE OLYMPIC RINGS in his hands.

Mak looks down at Bojan's grey face.

MAK (CONT'D)
Remember that one night during the olympics? Remember? After Jure won his silver and we got so fucking drunk?

Bojan stares up at Mak.

MAK (CONT'D)
Yeah, you remember. Snow was falling and we were on the hill and every single fucking person we knew was around us. Dancing. Remember what you told me?

Bojan blinks.

MAK (CONT'D)
You said you're not getting off this planet until you play a show for a stadium full of people. Guess what? You can't go yet.

No response from Bojan. Mak looks up to see Vucko the Wolf

again. His smiling snout looks more sinister with every bounce.

MAK
Faster!!!

INT. HOSPITAL - ER - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Mak pulls Bojan through the sliding door. The Volkswagen drives off in the background.

An EXHAUSTED NURSE, 40s, appears and grabs a MALE AIDE, 40s.

EXHAUSTED NURSE
We got another one!

MAK
Darko! He works here. Dr. Darko Simic? Can you please find him? He can help my friend.

EXHAUSTED NURSE
Patient's name?

MAK
Bojan.

MALE AIDE
Bojan what?

MAK
Bojan Vucevic.

A beat. The Male Aide and the Exhausted Nurse exchange a glance. They put Bojan on a stretcher.

EXHAUSTED NURSE
Have you been hit?

MAK
I don't know. No? No, I'm fine.

EXHAUSTED NURSE
Through there. We need all we can get.

The Nurse and the Aide push an unconscious Bojan into the ER.

MAK
(to Bojan)
I'm right here! Don't ruin my fucking Tuesday, you hear me?

INT. HOSPITAL - BLOOD DONATION ROOM - DAY

A needle pierces skin.

Blood runs through a clear tube.

Mak stares at the blood being drained from his vein. He's pale as death.

The PATIENTS' MOANS mix with the SOUND OF GUNFIRE outside.

From Mak's POV, the room is spinning. Blood is dripping into the collection bag.

Mak hears a CHILD'S LAUGH.

He turns to look for the source.

Mak hallucinates IVAN RUN ACROSS THE HALLWAY with a LITTLE RED BACKPACK on. His FEET SMACKING the floor and his arms out like he's an airplane. In a flash he's out of sight.

MAK

Don't go...

MALE NURSE

Alright. That's enough.

The blood collection bag is almost full. The Male Nurse pulls the needle out of Mak's arm.

Even blinking takes effort.

MAK

How is he?

But the Nurse is already tending to another DONATION.

Mak wavers as he gets up. Between the blood loss and shock he has to concentrate hard not to topple over.

INT. HOSPITAL - ER - WAITING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

No one in the waiting room.

MAK

Hello...

Mak pushes through the ER entrance.

INT. HOSPITAL - ER - MAIN AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Countless stretchers with PATIENTS in various states of life and death are lined against the peeling beige walls.

In a darkened corner, Mak sees Bojan slumped on his side in a stretcher, looking back at him. Mak lights up.

MAK

Hey, Bobo.

As Mak gets closer, he realizes that Bojan is staring past him. No life in his eyes. Mak grabs Bojan's hand. Shakes him. Nothing.

Mak drops to the floor.

DARKO (O.S.)

Why'd you tell them his name?

Darko, in his white lab coat, splattered with red, appears behind him. His face is soaked with tears.

MAK

What?

DARKO

Serbs go to the back of the line.

Mak turns to look at Darko. Fire in his eyes.

DARKO (CONT'D)

You know that. I told you what happens here. I fucking told you.

Darko lunges at Mak. They scuffles for a moment until Mak punches Darko in the gut. Hard. Darko slides down the wall.

MAK

What is wrong with you? I would have never... Don't put this on me.

Darko hangs his head in shame. Tries to catch his breath.

DARKO

Doesn't fucking matter. We wouldn't have been able to save him anyway.

Mak turns back to Bojan. His hand trembles as he closes Bojan's eyes.

MAK (CONT'D)

I...I wasn't...I couldn't...I'm... sorry. Oh God. I'm so sorry, Bobo.

Mak breaks down. He sobs into Bojan's shirt. After a few moments Darko pulls him away.

EXT. SARAJEVO - MILJACKA WALKWAY - DAY

CRACK of THUNDER. Or a GRENADE BLAST?

Mak trudges down on one side of Miljacka, the thin river that runs through the city. The walkway and bridges that connect the two sides look almost gothic.

Mak is dirty. bloody. He moves like a zombie.

Darko, still in his lab coat, is singing and crying. Bottle in hand. Drunk.

He bellows "Strah me da te volim" by Hari Mata Hari.

Darko launches the empty glass bottle. It hits the other side of the embankment and SHATTERS.

DARKO
Peace talks. Poof.

Mak says nothing.

DARKO (CONT'D)
We ran out of pain killers, and everything else you find in a hospital, days ago. We waited for a shipment from the UN. But no. I was walking down those hallways...just cutting off limbs. Cut. Cauterize. Next. Again and again. And...then I saw him. His eyes.
(beat)
Killed by his own.

MAK
He was one of us.

Darko trips and falls to the ground. He curls up into the fetal position and just lies there.

MAK
Get up.

We hear CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER. A bunch of NEIGHBOURHOOD KIDS are "playing war" on the other side of the river. The game is so precise it makes your stomach turn. Only kids that have seen war first hand can make it so specific. It's like they're re-enacting the massacre Mak just experienced.

The sight makes Mak recoil.

Another kid has a RED BACKPACK ON. He turns. For a moment it's Ivan's face. He looks so scared.

MAK (CONT'D)
This isn't gonna end.

DARKO
No shit.

Mak's eyes widen as the realization lands. His hands curl into fists. He nods at Ivan. Ivan smiles back.

A blink. He's gone.

MAK (CONT'D)
Get up. You piss yourself?

DARKO
No...

He looks down. Sees the stain.

DARKO
Yeah, I did.

Darko looks up at Mak.

MAK
Time to go.

In Mak's eyes we see something between resolve and madness.

The kids keep playing war.

INT. SHELLED BUILDING - NIGHT

Mak lies wide awake in his bed. The SOUND of the GRENADES gets LOUDER and CLOSER but he doesn't flinch.

And we spin into his eyes the EXPLOSIONS transforms into DRUMS. They POUND and we push into his irises until we finally hear the BULL HORN.

Mak doesn't blink.

EXT. SARAJEVO - HILLS - NIGHT

The glittering hills of Sarajevo are covered in twinkling lights. In an EXHALE about half of them go out as different parts of the city lose electricity.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Ten CONTESTANTS, 20s, a touch too skinny but undeniably striking young women, rehearse for a beauty pageant.

They walk the makeshift catwalk in oh-so-90s evening wear. One by one. No music. Each step makes a CREAKING SOUND as they walk to the edge for a turn. A fight in their eyes. Chic as fuck.

A sign hangs on the draped velvet wall behind them - "MISS SIEGE OF SARAJEVO '93"

PAGEANT DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Neda, slow down.

Rows of plastic folding chairs. In the first row, the PAGEANT DIRECTOR, 50s, a fashionista with a streak of silver in her jet black mane dissects the girls with her BEAUTY TEAM.

In the last row sits Aco. A cigarette that needs ashing burns away between his fingers. A year hasn't changed him much. Except he wears a different uniform now. A BLUE AND YELLOW SHIELD on his jacket. A symbol of the ARMY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.

Mak creeps into the auditorium. His face lights up when he sees the girls. He's cleaned up but the cuts from the explosion still mark his face. He sits next to Aco. Aco preemptively shushes him.

They watch a lithe blonde, 17, her sash bears the name INELA NOGIC. Walk. Kill with a look. Turn.

ACO
That's our winner right there. I'd put money on it. I will put money on it.

MAK
What's all this?

ACO
Beauty over bullets. What's it look like? Rebellion!

MAK
Wow...bet you're glad you switched sides.

ACO
I'm on the losing team and I've never been happier...Some of our

girls organized it.

Aco flashes a pervy smirk.

MAK
War looks good on you.

ACO (CONT'D)
You little shit. What can I say?
Thick skin. Not thick enough to be
a Serb Chetnik but still.
(beat)
You ok?

MAK
No.
(beat)
I want out of here. Can you get me
a blue card?

Aco looks at him. Exhales loudly.

ACO
(re: pageant)
Why do you think I wanted you to
see this?

Mak frowns. He's clearly confused.

ACO (CONT'D)
Thought you should get in a preview
since you won't get to enjoy the
big show.

MAK
...no you didn't.

ACO
I did.
(beat)
You're blowing this joint.

Mak blinks. Processing. Pushing back tears.

MAK
I don't even know what to say.

ACO
Nothing. I owe you. I owe this
city.

MAK
You don't owe me shit.

ACO

I do. For not despising me. I've been working on getting you papers for a while. They'll be done any day now.

(beat)

I heard about Bojan.

Mak watches the empty stage.

MAK

You ever watch news reports about wildfires?

Aco frowns. Confused.

MAK (CONT'D)

These people...they know it's coming. Right? They see it. They have time to escape. But they don't do shit until the flames are licking their doorstep. Clutching a bag of things they threw together at the last second. They run.

Finally. I used to wonder the hell were they thinking? I thought I'd be smarter but...this is my home.

He laughs at himself. The CLICKING of HEELS cuts them off. "Eve of Destruction" by Barry McGuire comes on.

On the makeshift stage the Contestants saunter back out for the bathing suit section of the show. One line. Single file. Pageant smiles. Lean legs. Glimmering suits.

They carry a long banner. When the last girl is up we see it reads "PLEASE DON'T KILL US".

Mak has to turn from the sight.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - BASEMENT CLASSROOM - DAY

Mak is back in front of the cracked chalk board once again. Writing something down.

MAK

Who hasn't solved yet? Amela?
Amela-

Mak turns to give the chalk over to Amela but her table is empty. Only 3 students today.

MAK
...is not here either. Right.
Anyone heard from her?

ANA (CONT'D)
She ran across the runway,
professor.

Everyone turns to Ana.

ANA
UN took over the airport so people
are escaping on foot through the
only gap in the serb noose on the
city.

MAK
And?

Ibro shrugs.

IBRO
Who knows. Snipers pick off the
runners. It's Russian roulette.

Mak falls back in his chair like the air was knocked out of him.

The students exchange glances. Ana reaches into her bag and pulls out a pack of cigs. Pulls two out.

She gets up and leans on Mak's desk. She puts both cigs into her mouth and lights them at once.

Before Mak has time to react she puts one of the lit cigs between his lips. Mak frowns.

ANA
For good luck.

Mak takes a drag. They smoke.

ANA (CONT'D)
Say hi to Ivan for me.

Mak's eyes drift to the floor. Ashamed.

ANA (CONT'D)
Don't feel bad, professor. At some
point all of us have to run. To
survive.

Mirsada hums a sad song as she stares off into the distance.

Ana kisses Mak on the cheek.

ANA (CONT'D)
Thank you. We couldn't have made it
this far without you.

Mak closes his eyes.

INT. ACO'S OFFICE - DAY

Aco's hand, with a cigar between two fingers, slowly pushes Mak's BLUE CARD across a mahogany desk.

ACO
Tomorrow. UNPROFOR will take you
from here to the airport. You'll
take one of their cargo jets out.
Easy as pie.

Mak's hand slides the blue card off the desk.

INT. MIKI'S APARTMENT - DAY

The windows are boarded up with wood planks but some
sunlight shines through.

Mak has headphones on. Miki is beside him.

JANA (V.O.)
Hello?

MAK
Hi love.

JANA (V.O.)
(already crying)
Hi.

MAK
It's ok. I'm ok. How are you?

JANA
I'm alright. I guess. I don't know.
Working. Watching the news when I'm
not. Praying for this to end so I
can get a night of sleep... I miss
you.

MAK
How's my son?

JANA

He's good. Always talking about you. He's grown, Mak. I didn't want to hold him back. You know, from school. Who would have thought that... It's not cheap. Not sure how we'll afford it. They're cutting my shifts at the agency. God. I don't even know what I'm talking about. I'm sorry. Your voice.

MAK

Jana, I wanted to ask you something.

Miki slaps Mak's leg in anticipation like he's about to drop the punchline of a joke.

JANA

What?

MAK

Would you mind if I took him to school on his first day?

A long beat.

JANA

Wait...what? Are...Are you-

MAK

I'm getting out, Jana.

Another beat followed by a SCREAM OF JOY from Jana that's so loud Mak has to take his headphones off for a moment.

Miki jumps up.

MIKI

Gooooooooooooaal!

Mak and Miki laugh. Miki slaps Mak on the back.

INT. SHELLLED BLUE BUILDING - NIGHT

A red ember in the dark flickers like a firefly. Mak and Darko sit together in the dark. The light from Darko's cigarette is the only light in the room.

Darko gets up. Rummages around and comes back with a plastic bag. He hands it to Mak.

Mak pulls out a clean pair of underwear. Laughs.

DARKO

Mujo and Haso are coming home from work and Mujo goes: "I can't wait to get home and rip off my wife's panties." Haso rolls his eyes at him "You can't be that horny." Mujo goes "No, they're pinching the shit outta my balls."

Mak grins. Darko stares at the wall.

DARKO (CONT'D)

Uf, wish I could hear that REM song now.

MAK

You sure you don't wanna come with me? We could talk to Aco-

DARKO

Nah. you know how my boss gets. Fucking muslims.

Mak smiles. Shakes his head.

MAK

Fucking croat.

DARKO (CONT'D)

Don't know what I'm more scared of. Leaving or staying. You know I get more anxious now when I don't hear shelling. Fucked up.

(beat)

We need to celebrate your escape! Can't stay in this fucking apartment tonight. Too depressing. You know, heard there was a little get-together happening, a party in the building over. They got electricity.

MAK

You serious?

DARKO

Yes, I'm serious. I'm a serious person. Let's get drunk.

Off Mak. Thinking about the offer.

EXT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - NIGHT

We see a silhouette of two men run across the street like teenagers sneaking out.

INT. BUILDING BASEMENT - STAIRS - NIGHT

Mak and Darko brush past a COUPLE, 30s, making out in the staircase. A MUFFLED ROCK SONG reverberates through the concrete walls.

INT. BUILDING BASEMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A MAN'S HAND picks the strings on a guitar. A makeshift spotlight shines on the SINGER, 20s, his long hair covering his face. Ray bans and tattered flannel. 90s grunge.

The crowd is bigger than you'd expect. More hip than you'd expect. At least here the nihilism is more than an affect. It's all surprisingly normal.

Mak, clearly a little drunk, turns to see Bojan with a drink in his hand chatting up a SOMBER REDHEAD, 30s.

The SINGER leans into the mike. His hair covers his face. All we see are his lips. He starts in on "Ima Nesto od Srca do Srca" by Crvena Jabuka.

He sounds almost like Bojan.

Mak is enthralled. He glances over to Darko. Darko raises his glass to Mak.

Mak turns back to the Singer. He starts tapping his foot to the rhythm. He smiles.

The Singer's lips curl into a grin.

Mak raises his glass to him.

The song continues but we're out of time as...

INT. BUILDING BASEMENT - NIGHT - LATER

We see a drunk Mak and Darko at the peak of the night, jumping up and down with the crowd. Crazed.

EXT. SARAJEVO - DAY

Silence. A few gun shots. The sun rears over the familiar

Sarajevo hills.

SNORING

INT. SHELLLED BLUE BUILDING - DAY

Mak peeks out of the slits in the boarded-up window.

Darko is passed out on the couch. Hugging the Redhead he met last night. They're both SNORING.

Mak finishes packing some PHOTO ALBUMS and the LITTLE RED BACKPACK into a suitcase. Zips it up.

He stands and watches the sleeping couple. Rubs his temples. Overdid it last night.

He turns to leave. He kisses the door frame.

EXT. SHELLLED BLUE BUILDING - DAY

An ARMORED UNPROFOR TRANSPORTER, almost futuristic looking if it wasn't for the matte beige paint job, idles outside of the entrance to Mak's building.

CHRISTOPHE, 30s, a french soldier, patrols the outside of the van, an AK-47 slung on his shoulder, while ANOTHER SOLDIER, 20s, yawns away in the driver's seat.

Mak runs out of the building entrance.

Christophe instinctively points his weapon at him. Mak's hands shoot up.

MAK

Whoa!

CHRISTOPHE

Mak Mujic?

MAK

That's me. Yes.

CHRISTOPHE

Ah oui? Sorry. OK, let's go now.

Christophe opens the door to the Transporter. A smile on his rosy cheeks. Mak slowly puts his hands down.

CHRISTOPHE (CONT'D)

Ah, blue card?

Mak produces the blue card from his jacket and hands it to Christophe. Christophe quickly checks it and pockets it. All good.

Mak climbs inside. Christophe shuts the heavy metal door.

INT. UNPROFOR TRANSPORTER - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mak comes face to face with AMIR, 60s, a clean cut politician in an expensive navy suit with wire framed glasses that hang too low on his nose.

AMIR

Hey.

Mak holds for moment, surprised to see another passenger.

The inside of the transporter looks like a metal waiting room. Small windows, rusted compartments, weird netting, metal benches. The divider to the driver's section is shut.

Mak sits down on the adjacent bench at the back of the transporter. He puts his suitcase down.

MAK

Hey.

AMIR

Business trip?

MAK

Not really.

AMIR

(with a smile)

A vacation then?

Mak smiles and nods. Unsure. The transporter lurches forward. Mak grabs onto a ledge beside him. Amir is not thrown off-balance.

AMIR

I've done this route plenty of times. You have nothing to worry about. Kick back.

Amir throws Mak a smile you'd vote for. Mak takes off his jacket. Settles in.

AMIR (CONT'D)

You don't look like a politician.

MAK

I'm not. I'm a professor. Math.

AMIR

Wait. Mak. Mujic?

MAK

That's right. Your son-

AMIR

Oh! My son was in your class a few years back.

A beat.

AMIR (CONT'D)

Was never very good at math.

MAK

No, he wasn't.

AMIR

But he was a very funny young man.
Light of my life. He...

For a moment all we hear is the vibration of the passing road beneath.

MAK

I'm sorry.

AMIR

Right at the beginning. Almost a year ago.

Amir nods his thank you and goes back to his paperwork. Mak watches him for a few moments then looks through the rectangular window.

The world outside somehow looks beautiful even though every once in a while we glimpse apocalyptic destruction.

We stay on the speeding landscape for a few moments.

MAK

Where are you heading?

Amir pulls a map out of his suitcase. Slides it towards Mak. The top corner says Owen-Stoltenberg Plan. It shows a map of Bosnia divided into three colours.

AMIR

The new Bosnia-Hercegovina.
Bosniak-Serbs forces would be given

fifty two percent of the territory. Muslims would have thirty percent and Croats eighteen. A possibility of peace.

MAK
Is it gonna happen?

Amir thinks.

AMIR
It has to. You know, I couldn't stop my son from fighting. He wanted to. Always a very physical boy. I owe it to him. But there's only so much one politician can do.

The transporter starts slowing down. The metal creaks. Amir starts packing up his papers. Mak fidgets. Clearly getting anxious.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Roadblock. Probably. Don't get spooked. The Serb Chetniks like to cause a stir sometimes. They won't do shit with the UN around.

Somehow that only makes Mak more anxious. We can hear the FRENCH SOLDIERS slam the doors of the transporter.

For a few tense moments there's silence.

And then we hear VOICES. YELLING.

Something that sounds like a GUNSHOT. Silence. More YELLING.

Mak turns to Amir, who looks more worried than he should. He catches Mak's gaze.

AMIR
Chest thumping. For show.

In that moment the door of the transporter opens.

The sun bathes Amir who sits directly in front of the door. He raises his hand to shield his eyes.

Before he even has time to gasp a LOUD SHOT rings out and pierces his throat.

MAK
Fuck!

Amir lets out a sickening GURGLE before he covers the

sputtering wound with his hands.

Amir reaches his hand out to Mak. Mak goes to grab it but SEVEN MORE SHOTS rip through Amir's body at a burst only an AK-47 can dish out. Amir's blood sprays all over the inside of the transporter and Mak.

YELLING. The door suddenly shuts. A moment later so do the doors up front.

The transporter quickly spins into a turn and Amir's body is thrown at Mak, knocking them both to the floor. Amir's suitcase flies open and the papers inside fly everywhere.

A few more GUNSHOTS hit the side of the transporter but soon it's speeding away from the attackers.

We can hear the FRENCH SOLDIERS hysterically arguing up front.

Mak pushes himself out from under Amir's body.

MAK
Hey! Hey!

The soldiers stop talking for a moment.

MAK (CONT'D)
Heeeeey!

The divider opens and Christophe's eyes bulge through.

CHRISTOPHE
Mon...the other one is alive!

We can hear the Other Soldier sobbing as he drives.

OTHER SOLDIER
What the fuck! What the fuck was
that!

CHRISTOPHE
(to Mak)
Are you hit?

MAK
No.

CHRISTOPHE
Ok. Ok. Now what? What do we do
now?

OTHER SOLDIER
I don't fucking know! Fuck!

CHRISTOPHE

Calm down!

OTHER SOLDIER

I can't do this! I didn't sign up
for this shit!

The two soldiers keep yelling at each other as Mak leans back against the cold vibrating metal. The sound of their arguing fades. He closes his eyes. Tries to steady his breath. But he can't.

He opens his eyes. He sees the contorted bleeding body slumped in the corner. Beside Amir's body is the map of new Bosnia-Herzegovina that Amir showed him.

Amir's blood slowly swallows the whole map.

Mak screams at the top of his lungs but we don't hear a thing.

EXT. UNPROFOR TRANSPORTER - DAY

The Transporter tires SCREECH to a halt and kick up dust.

Christophe opens the door to the transporter and Mak shoots out like a drowning man out of water. Bloody suitcase in hand.

He drops to his knees. Inhaling fresh air. The Other Soldier looks inside the vehicle. When the stench of the carnage hits him he blows chunks.

OTHER SOLDIER

Fuck this shit. Fuck Sarajevo.

Mak lunges at the soldier. Grabs him by the collar.

MAK

Give me my blue card!

CHRISTOPHE

They took it! We don't have it.

MAK

You have to help me...you have to
get me out of this place.

Christophe shakes his head. Other Soldier looks away from Mak's desperate eyes.

Mak lets go of the Other Soldier's collar. Panic overtakes him. He stars backing away. Then he breaks into a run.

We're in a close up of Mak's bloody face. Getting more and more deformed as he picks up speed.

EXT. SARAJEVO - PIONIRSKA DOLINA - ZOO - DAY

Greenery. Lightly swaying reeds. Mak zooms past. He passes a large cage. Empty. Then another. We realize he's going through the zoo. But there are no animals anywhere.

Winded. He sits down on a bench in front of the largest cage.

Inside the cage is a fake cave. Unkempt. From the darkness within we hear BREATHS.

A low growl. Mak stares at the cave in the cage.

After a few moments a giant BLACK BEAR, fur badly matted, one eye sealed shut and ribs showing, slumps out of the cage. He has trouble walking.

The Black bear stomps to the bars of the cage. Some of them missing. He can walk right through them and walk out of the cage but he doesn't. He sits down and GROWLS at Mak. As surreal as it gets.

Mak blinks a few times. Rubs his eyes. Tries to make the hallucination disappear. It doesn't. Because it's real.

A JOLLY WHISTLE gets louder in the distance. A GREY MAN, 80, walking with a cane in one hand and a plastic bag in the other, whistles as he shuffles slowly towards the cage.

He glances in Mak's direction. Hard to know if his cataract covered eyes, milky white, actually register him.

The Grey Man walks up to the cage. Within reach of the bear.

The Grey Man pulls some scraps out of the bag and throws them to the bear. The bear gobbles them up in a breath. He looks up at the Grey Man and growls softly.

The Grey Man turns to Mak. Very slowly. He TAPS HIS TEMPLE with his withered hand.

Mak relaxes for a moment. The adrenaline finally wearing off.

It starts raining. Mak looks up into the sky.

The rain starts washing the blood off Mak's face.

EXT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - ROOFTOP - DAY

Buckets. Different shapes and sizes. Laid out on the rooftop. Filling up with rainwater.

Mak strips naked. He grabs one and dumps it on his head.

He uses a rag to wipe the crusted blood off his shockingly skinny body.

INT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mak's suitcase is open. The little red backpack inside. A photo album opened to a page where a baby Ivan crawls between tables after a cat.

INT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

We see the silhouette of Mak's back lying on his side. The rain still pour outside.

IVAN (V.O.)

Tata...

(beat)

Tata?

Mak doesn't move a muscle.

MAK

Yes.

IVAN (V.O.)

That it? Are you giving up?

A long beat.

MAK

No.

INT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Darko smokes a cigarette in the dark. Trying to catch what Mak is saying to himself. Clearly worried.

INT. ACO'S OFFICE - DAY

Mak's weathered boot taps out a nervous rhythm on gleaming tile.

He sits in a leather chair in a surprisingly luxurious

office. Taxidermy game on the walls. He stares straight ahead.

A gold cigar cutter tears through a fat cuban with the CLIP of a GUILLOTINE.

ACO
Disaster.

Aco brings the cigar to his lips and lights it. He takes a puff.

ACO (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry Mak. I can't believe it.

MAK
Can you get me another one? Another shot?

ACO
I...No...Don't you get it? No more blue cards. This sets the whole peace process back months... a year? Longer.

MAK
A year? A fucking year?

Mak gets up and starts pacing around.

ACO
Calm down. Ok? You gotta look at the big picture.

MAK
What's the big picture here?

Aco taps the side of his temple. Mak stares back at him.

ACO
War is a game of attrition. Out of this city's ashes, a new guard will rise. It has to. We can be part of it. Just wait out the fire.

Mak eyes him like he's a stranger.

ACO (CONT'D)
Or you can try your luck on the runway.

ACO'S SECRETARY, 30s, a curvy bottle blonde, brings out meza, a selection of meats and cheeses.

As she pours wine her chest threatens to escape her top.

ACO

Well, don't just stare at it.

Mak turns and leaves without a word.

ACO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Mak. I really am.

EXT. SARAJEVO STREETS - DAY

The same GUNSHOTS and GRENADE BLASTS that we have heard before sound LOUDER than ever.

Mak runs down the street. Furious and terrified. We see his tattered adidas runners. The flat pavement under his feet becomes increasingly difficult to traverse as it turns into sloping rubble. Mak wheezes as the dust from the detritus starts filling his lungs. The detritus starts falling back down towards him. For a moment it seems like he's moments away from being buried alive.

INT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cold kafa. Darko eyes Mak like he's a mental patient. And right now he looks like one.

MAK

More and more people are doing it.

DARKO

Are you insane?

MAK

There's this government service.
This guy. He can get us to the
airport.

DARKO

Are you fucking kidding me? You
won't even survive the drive over.
Fucking government service.

MAK

If people are doing it, it means
that it's possible.

DARKO

Wait for the tunnel. Rumours are
it's just a few months away!

MAK
I can't, Darko.

DARKO
I already lost a fucking friend
this week, man. Don't do this. And
who fucking cares about me? Fuck
me. Your son will grow up without a
father, man.

MAK
If I stay here... worst case
scenario? Get drafted and killed.
Get sniped walking to class. Best
case scenario? I lose my fucking
mind. I'm halfway there. Either
way, my son grows up without a
father.

(beat)
I want my life back.

Darko averts his gaze from Mak because he knows it's true.
They sit in silence.

DARKO
You're not the only one, Mak.

We hear rhythmic SNARE DRUMS. Mak does spirit hands.

EXT. SARAJEVO - DAY

Another sunrise over the ruins of Sarajevo.

Throughout the scene the snare drums keep getting slowly
louder.

MAK (V.O.)
Jana?

JANA (V.O.)
Mak? What...what happened?

MAK (V.O.)
I'm sorry babe. I didn't...It
didn't work.

Jana can't stop herself from sobbing.

MAK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Don't cry. Please don't cry. I'm
gonna try again. I just...I just
wanted to hear your voice. One more
time. For good luck.

EXT. SHELLED BLUE BUILDING - DAY

The SNARE DRUMS speed up like a circus act is about to start. Because it is.

Mak walks out and sees MUJO, 40s, a short stout man with a moustache befitting a ringmaster is mid bow.

FATA, 40s, his heavy-set wife smokes a cigarette and acts as his Vanna White.

MUJO

Ladies aaaaaand gentlemen!

(hiccup)

I present to you the pride and joy
of our crumbling Yugoslavian union.
The one. The only. The lonely four-
wheel two-door comrade transport
machine made in our very own
junkyard.

(hiccup)

I mean backyard.

Fata reveals a little red Yugo car with a lazy wave of her cigarette.

The odd vehicle is shoddily retrofitted with metal slats that already bear hundreds of little dimples from deflected bullets. Even the windshield is armored except for two laughably tiny slits for the driver and passenger to look through.

MUJO (CONT'D)

Cobbled together from the blood,
sweat, and tears of well-meaning
fellow Bosnians. All inclusive. The
incredible Yugo!

Fata tries to open the passenger-side door but it won't budge.

MUJO (CONT'D)

Sarajevo '92 Special Edition. You
break it you buy it, you hear?

Fata kicks the door with all her might. It pops open.

Mak, ready to go with his suitcase in hand, stares at this death trap.

He swallows hard. He hands Fata his watch. She appraises it like she's evaluating a diamond. She winks at him. He sits inside.

FATA
(to Mujo)
Get your ass in the back.

MUJO
What's the problem? I had just a
very little tiny drink. Tiny!

Fata opens the driver's side door and pushes the driver's seat towards the wheel.

FATA
Get in that fucking car! "What's the problem". Almost kills me on the way over and then "what's the problem".

She raises her hand like she's about to backhand him across the face. He flinches but then immediately starts into the car.

MUJO
Oooooh, look at her. All important big boss queen.

Fata is about to get in the driver's seat when-

DARKO (O.S.)
Wait!

Darko trots out of the building with a small bag on his shoulder.

Darko runs to Fata and places a vintage ring in her palm as he dives into the backseat.

She turns it to see the glimmer in the sun. She bites the rock. Content, she gets in the car.

INT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

There's an exposed hanging bulb beside Darko's head. The only other light comes through the slits in the windshield.

MAK
What's this now?

DARKO
Making sure your ass gets out of this shithole alive.

MAK
Yea fucking right.

MUJO

Aw, now that's a good friend. Used
to be so many good friends in
Sarajevo.

Fata moves her seat back hard and fast, slamming into
Darko's knees.

DARKO (CONT'D)

Ow. Fucking hell.

MAK

What about the redhead?

DARKO

Non-smoker. Wouldn't work.

FATA

You.

MAK

Me?

FATA

Yes. You. You're gonna be my co-
pilot. If you see something that I
don't, tell me but don't yell. You
don't want to scare the driver.
Understand?

MAK

Yes?

Fata gives him a look.

MAK

Yes.

She adjusts the rearview angle but she can't see behind the
car anyway because it's metal.

She wrestles with the manual transmission and steps on it.
The car stutters but doesn't start.

FATA

Give me some gas, Mujo.

DARKO

Hold on. Mujo? That's his name?
Like in the jokes? You gotta be
kidding me.

MAK

Nope. Good omen, right?

DARKO

Oh, I'm dying laughing.

Mujo doesn't stir. He's passed out.

A few more turns of the key. A few more whimpers from the engine.

FATA

Wake up!

She hits Mujo. He wakes with a start.

MUJO

The Chetniks are coming!

FATA

Muzika!

MUJO

Opa!

Mujo takes a harmonica out of his pocket. He puts it to his lips and starts BLOWING a crazed tune.

The car finally roars to life.

EXT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Yugo blasts off. We follow the car as it tears down the streets of Sarajevo. Mujo's harmonica keeps the pace.

INT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

DARKO

The fuck is happening?

MAK

Wha? I can't hear-

DARKO

Who are these people?

MAK

(to Fata)

Watch it!

EXT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Yugo swerves to avoid a charred bus skeleton.

INT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

FATA
You scared me!

MAK
You said to-

FATA
We are the official sarajevo
underground exit strategy. At your
service.

A few BULLETS HIT the side of the car. Mak and Darko scream
but Fata keeps the car speeding ahead.

FATA
Ha! It's gonna take a lot more to
stop the Yugo you pieces of shit!

DARKO
We're going to die. What the fuck
did you get us into.

MAK
We're gonna be fine.

FATA
Buckle up kids.

DARKO
There's no...there are no
seatbelts.

FATA
Well then you better hold on
because we're about to reach the
strike zone.

MAK
Oh god.

EXT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The car swerves to the left and suddenly it's covered in
sparks as hundreds of bullets bounce off the metal plating.

The harmonica joins with Mak and Darko's SCREAMS as the Yugo
flies through the deserted streets like a burning roman
candle.

Swerving left then right then left.

INT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Fata's cigarette still hangs from her frown, a bead of sweat making its way down her forehead but she has got this.

Darko and Mak hold on for dear life.

Mujo, on another planet, keeps playing the harmonica.

FATA

Don't worry, we are home free as long as they don't start in with the tank artillery.

EXT. HILL - DAY

Of course, this is the moment when A HAND loads an anti-tank rifle with artillery. The rifle aims at us and...FIRES.

INT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The anti-tank bullet ROARS through the car. It whizzes past Mak's head and burns the side of Fata's hand.

FATA

Son of a bitch burn in hell!

She lets go of the steering wheel and the car swerves right.

EXT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Yugo swerves off the road and comes dangerously close to diving into a deep ditch but then it swerves back.

INT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mak is leaning over and steering the Yugo while Fata blows on her hand.

MAK

I can't see where I'm going! I can't see!

Fata finally looks up just in time to-

FATA

Leeeeeeeeeeft!

EXT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Yugo swerves just in time to avoid slamming head first into a wall.

INT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Fata grabs the wheel again.

FATA

Move it!

DARKO

Oh my god, I'm gonna vomit.

FATA

I just cleaned. Don't you dare!

EXT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Yugo zooms past the Grey Man, from the zoo.

The Grey Man waves at the passing Yugo.

EXT. DOBRINJA - BUILDING - DAY

The Yugo pulls up to a building entrance with a screech.

INT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mujo plays his last drawn out note on the harmonica.

Mak and Darko are frozen. Both their jaws hang open.

Fata presses the side of her timex watch.

FATA

Fuck!

Darko and Mak jump.

FATA

10:12. This close to beating my personal record. Fuck their mothers.

(beat)

We're here.

She pops open the glove compartment and pulls out some papers. She pushes the door open.

FATA (O.S.)
Mujo, look what they did to our
poor Yugo, Mujo.

MUJO
I'll fix it, I'll fix it.

Fata pushes the driver's seat forward.

EXT. YUGO - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mak pushes his plated door open. Darko gets out too. They're both shaking.

MAK
Is your hand ok?

FATA
Nothin' a bandaid won't fix. I
don't cry about everything like you
whiny hippies. Here are your
crossing papers.

She hands them papers.

FATA (CONT'D)
Apartment 15a. Ask for Big Ben.
When you get out there make sure
you tell them. Tell them what's
happening to us. Sajonara.

She gets back in the car. Won't start again. After a few tries it does. And Mujo and Fata are off into the unknown.

Mak and Darko just stand there.

EXT. APARTMENT 15A - HALLWAY - DAY

Mak's hand KNOCKS on a door marked 15A.

EXT. APARTMENT 15A - BALCONY - DAY

Blistering asphalt stretches across the horizon. The hot air above the airport runway ripples like an invisible veil. Just beyond it lies Butmir - a block of houses untouched by war raging less than half a mile away.

In front of the runway, a Control Tower juts out of a single terminal. Two UN planes parked in the apron spit out international aid packages onto awaiting transport trucks.

The airport is fenced in. Tall grass and wild weeds everywhere. GUNSHOTS echo.

Mak leans on the balcony railing. A hop, a skip, and a jump to freedom. Or so it seems.

A WHISTLE from inside the apartment.

Mak unglues his eyes from the runway.

INT. APARTMENT 15A - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A spare living room with two ragged leather couches. Tito's portrait on one of the walls. The others are covered with large oil paintings of nude women running through fields of grass.

BIG BEN, 60s, a very tall lanky man with a lazy eye and hair that would make Einstein jealous, holds court.

Darko is splayed across one of the couches. Cig in hand. NATASHA, 30s, and MARKO, 30s, clearly a couple, exhausted and dirty. ISAK, 20s, a Bosnian jew sits beside them.

Mak leans on the wall next to Big Ben.

Big Ben sits cross legged on the floor where a coffee table should go. He pours Bosnian kafa. If God had a voice it would be Big Ben's.

BIG BEN

Meliha, my dear, we're gonna
need...one, two...two more. Please.

MELIHA, 50s, painter and Big Ben's longtime lover, brings in two more cups. Her blue jean overalls are stained with paint. She perches on the side of a couch.

Big Ben looks up with a giant smile on his face. He throws his hands up.

BIG BEN

Welcome. You're so close!

Meliha laughs. The spontaneous act breaks the somber mood. The runners exchange unsure glances.

Big Ben points out the window.

BIG BEN

It's a ten minute jog to peace. To Butmir. Of course, might take you a few tries. You'll have a guide from

the Sarajevo Police to take you over the bosnian front line. From there you will have until sunrise to cross. If you don't make it, and you're still kicking, come back here. The only rule of the runway...If at first you don't succeed-

MARKO
-drink the milk and try again.

Big Ben smiles. Mak and Darko frown at each other. Confused.

MELIHA
It's an obstacle course out there. You have three things to worry about: ditches, snipers, and the UN.

BIG BEN
The ditches can fit 3 to 4. Randomly placed. Slide in feet first cause some got barbed wire in em.

MELIHA
UN transporters patrol the runway all night. They shine lights on runners. -

BIG BEN
Which makes it really easy for the Serb snipers to pick you off.

MAK
Why would the UN do that?

BIG BEN
They want to dissuade people from escaping Sarajevo until they have a better grasp of the situation.

DARKO
A year in? That's insane.

BIG BEN
It is what it is.

MELIHA
If you see the transporter or you get hit by its light drop face down into a ditch. Dig a hole in the ground and breathe into it.

BIG BEN

Otherwise your breath acts like an arrow pointing to your location in the light.

MELIHA

You wait. A minute. Fifteen. Thirty. They will either grab you or give up.

BIG BEN

Don't run if they come for you. Use them as shields when they funnel you into the transporters.

MELIHA

Because the snipers are always watching.

BIG BEN

Do your best not to get shot.

Meliha lays out stacks of old magazines, black duct tape, small metal plates, sharpened spoons, and black balaclavas.

MELIHA

Made them myself.

Mak and Darko exchange glances.

INT. APARTMENT 15A - LIVNG ROOM - DAY - LATER

The runners prep. DUCT TAPE TEARING is the only sound.

Darko tapes magazines around his shins. Natasha helps Marko tape a small metal plate to each of his palms. Mak tapes magazines around his forearms.

Isak prays over a book in the corner. Mak cranes his neck to get a closer look.

ISAK

It's the Sarajevo Haggadah.

MAK

Sorry, I didn't mean to-

ISAK

S'ok, man. Here. It's a sacred jewish text.

He hands it to Mak. Mak leafs through it. Medieval paintings and hebrew writing.

MAK

I've heard of it. Never seen it in person.

ISAK (CONT'D)

Tells the story of the exodus of jews from spain. The original survived two wars, saved by muslims both times, actually. If it doesn't survive this time around I want to make sure at least a copy does.

MAK

Our very own exodus.

Isak laughs.

MAK (CONT'D)

Caring for the culture of your neighbour...that used to be the soul of Sarajevo. It's beautiful.

ISAK

Hey. What's the difference between Sarajevo and Auschwitz?

MAK

What?

ISAK

They never turned off the gas in Auschwitz.

MAK

Holy shit.

Mak cringe laughs. A beat.

He holds up the duct tape. Isak nods.

Mak helps Isak suit up for the run.

INT. APARTMENT 15A - BATHROOM - DAY

A man in a balaclava stares at his reflection in the mirror.

If it wasn't for the blue eyes we'd have no idea it's Mak.

He takes the balaclava off. He looks at himself like he's trying to figure out if he's scared.

INT. APARTMENT 15A - HALLWAY - DAY

Mak leaves the bathroom and interrupts a private moment between Natasha and Marko. They look at him. Suspicious.

Mak scoots by them. Apologetic but kind of weirded out.

INT. APARTMENT 15A - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mak walks by Meliha. She's grinding brick. Turning it into red paint.

MAK

There was a girl that crossed last week. Amela.

Meliha thinks for a moment. Grinds more brick into her palette. She looks at Mak's face.

MELIHA

I remember her. What a shame. Such a beautiful girl.

Mak's face drops.

MAK

She...she was my student.

MELIHA

Beautiful girl.

Off Mak's shocked face.

MELIHA (CONT'D)

Don't forget your spoon.

She hands him a spoon sharpened into a point. He grabs it.

EXT. RUNWAY - MAGIC HOUR

The sun sets over Butmir.

INT. APARTMENT 15A - LIVIN ROOM - NIGHT

The runners sit around with Big Ben and Meliha. Waiting in silence.

A KNOCK on the door.

BIG BEN

Finally.

He opens it. CIRO, 40s, a short little tank in a leather jacket, stomps into the apartment. Like the best undercover cops he looks just like a criminal.

Ciro surveys the runners. He's already geared up.

CIRO
Ok. Follow me.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

We follow the gang as they silently jog by the side of a building. They follow Ciro. Heads down. Mak carries his ridiculous little suitcase in his hand while everyone else has backpacks. GUNSHOTS RATTLE in the distance.

EXT. AIRPORT - BOSNIAN FRONTLINE - NIGHT

Ciro hands everyone's paper work to HAMO, 30s, a Bosnian soldier.

Darko eyes the AK-47 slung across his shoulder.

DARKO
You scared?

MAK
No. You?

DARKO
Pfffft. No.

EXT. AIRPORT - WIRE FENCE - NIGHT

The silhouettes of the five runners crouching up against the 10 ft fence. Ciro searches for something along its base.

He sees a RED ROCK.

Ciro picks the fence up at the rock's base and lifts it. The others slide under.

Ciro signals everyone to stay low.

EXT. AIRPORT FIELD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is huddled together. Crouching. You can hear the BULLETS WHIZZING through the air.

CIRO

The snipers are east. So you favor west. Don't crowd each other. Good luck.

Suddenly Ciro makes a dash for it. He crouches but moves surprisingly fast. Strangely enough he moves east. Almost towards the Serb front lines.

DARKO

Wait? What the fuck! What the fuck is he doing?

MAK

I don't know.

ISAK

He's leaving us.

They watch Ciro disappear into the darkness. GUNSHOTS ring out in the distance.

NATASHA

Son of a bitch.

The group doesn't move. Darko starts breathing heavily.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Fuck this. Let's go. Gentlemen, hope to see you on the other side.

Marko and Natasha start moving. Isak and Mak watch Darko spiral.

DARKO

The fuck are we gonna do? We can't do this without him. I can't do this.

MAK

Darko. Darko man. Hey. Breathe. Just breathe.

Darko's breathing calms.

DARKO

I want my money back!

MAK (CONT'D)

There we go. We can do this. Ok?

Isak puts his hand on Darko's shoulder.

The cloud cover moves to reveal an almost full moon.

Mak turns to survey the path ahead. It's more visible than before. In the distance we see Natasha and Marko jump out of a ditch and make it into another.

Mak scans for the nearest ditch.

MAK

Ok. Ready?

Isak nods. Darko nods.

DARKO

Why wouldn't I be?

Mak crouch runs a few steps. The guys follow him.

Mak slides into the first ditch gritting his teeth. Expecting barbed wire. Empty. The other two follow.

MAK

Ok. One down.

Mak peeks out over the ditch. His breaths hang in the cold night air.

Further west two other RUNNERS jump out of one ditch and make a break for it. They slide into another ditch. Mak gives it a beat to put some distance between them.

The WHIZZING BULLETS are terrifying.

Mak signals the guys. They crouch-run and slide into another ditch a few feet away.

Mak peeks his head out again. The first runway lane is a little bit closer.

Mak jumps out again and goes for another ditch.

As he slides in his feet connect with looped barbed wire. One of loops rips the side of his jeans.

MAK

Fuck.

He uses his metal plated palms and his magazine covered forearms to push the barbed wire away as Isak jumps in legs first. He helps Mak. Darko is in last.

We hear the GRUMBLE of a TRUCK ENGINE.

A HUGE BEAM OF LIGHT crosses above them. They freeze.

They scramble to get out of the ditch. They run to another

one. Slide in. Just as the light beam shines across.

They lie face down in the ditch. All three of them start digging small holes in the ground as fast as they can. They put their mouths into the holes and breathe into them.

The UNPROFOR beam illuminates the ditch they just jumped into.

From the POV of the beam we see that they can't see inside the ditch the guys are in.

The UNPROFOR transporter holds its position. The beam doesn't move.

In that moment we hear rustling in the ditch ahead of them. The light beam moves to track it.

NATALSHA (O.S.)

Shit!

We're on Mak's face breathing into the dirt but we hear bullets whiz by dangerously close. The transporter moves closer too. We hear Natasha and Marko whispering to each other but we can't hear what they're saying.

The transporter settles next to the ditch Natasha and Marko are hiding in. The door unlatches and swings open.

AMERICAN SOLDIER 1, 30s, ken doll jaw, pops out.

The American soldier walks up to Marko, who's lying face down on the ground. He stands up and hugs the soldier, making sure that his head is directly in front of the soldier's. The American is expecting it. They shuffle sideways and backwards towards the transporter. It looks like a dance. Their feet move in unison until they're inside the vehicle.

The American re-appears. He goes over to Natasha. Her face is at his boots. Her hand reaches into her jacket and she takes something out. She closes her eyes. She swiftly stands up and hugs the soldier.

They walk together and when she's sure that the transporter is obscuring the snipers' view she pushes the American away and holds out her hand.

A grenade. Her finger through the pin. Ready to pull.

A standoff. She looks into his wide eyes. Calm. She speaks in a loud and clear voice.

NATASHA

Take us to the other side.

AMERICAN SOLDIER 1

Wh...what?

NATASHA

Take us to the other side or I'm
pulling the pin.

Mak's eyes widen. He looks to Darko and Isak. They both
heard it too.

AMERICAN SOLDIER 1

Ok...Ok...just don't...

NATASHA

Hand your gun to my boyfriend and
tell your driver.

Mak slowly lifts his head out of the ditch. He sees Natasha
standing there still.

The American nods.

AMERICAN SOLDIER 1

Mike?

AMERICAN SOLDIER 2 (O.S.)

Yea?

AMERICAN SOLDIER 1

You heard her?

AMERICAN SOLDIER 2 (O.S.)

Yep.

The American hands his gun to Marko. He goes into the
transporter with his hands up. Natasha carefully follows him
in. The door closes. The transporter idles for a few moments
and then it starts moving. Slowly. Towards Butmir.

MAK

Holy shit.

DARKO

That crazy bitch.

ISAK

We need to move. Now.

MAK

No. No. Not yet!

But Isak and Darko are already on their feet and running.

MAK (CONT'D)
Fuck!

Mak jumps up too and follows them.

The BULLETS are WHIZZING past. The guys run as fast as they can. They're steps away from another ditch when Isak lets out a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM.

He drops into an empty ditch with Darko and Mak at his side.

ISAK
My leg. My fucking leg.

Mak looks down and sees Isak clutching his bleeding leg.

DARKO
Damn it!

Mak pops open his little suitcase and grabs a shirt. He tries to tie it around Isak's leg but he's screaming bloody murder.

All three of the guys are on their backs trying to catch their breath when another BEAM OF LIGHT shines on them.

Mak looks up into the starry sky and his breath travels into the air. When it hits the beam of light it becomes even more visible.

Within moments the second Transporter moves to the ditch they're lying in and parks beside them.

It looks like the stars are falling out of the sky. Then a snow flake hits Mak's face.

INT. UNPROFOR TRANSPORTER - NIGHT - LATER

Mak is the first into the vehicle. Another metal waiting room. He leans against the wall. Panting. Filthy from the run.

Darko is next. Somehow even dirtier. He waits at the door to help the ITALIAN SOLDIER, 20s, bring in a very pale Isak.

They sit Isak down on the metal bench.

The Italian Soldier rummages through a compartment and pulls out three cartons of milk. He hands one to each of the guys.

Mak opens Isak's and helps him drink. Darko downs his.

ISAK
Milk.

Isak starts laughing. Delirious.

Mak opens his own carton and looks at the liquid sloshing inside as Isak's laughter turns into groans and the Transporter starts moving.

DARKO
You're going the wrong way. We came from over there. We came from Butmir. I mean, ok, if you wanna do us a favor and drop us into Sarajevo. That's fine by me.

Isak laughs again.

The baby faced Italian Soldier looks at the floor.

EXT. WIRE FENCE - NIGHT

The Transporter spits out the three guys outside of the wire fence. Darko and Mak carry off a hobbling Isak.

EXT. BOSNIAN FRONTLINE - NIGHT

Darko and Mak pass off an almost unconscious Isak to Hamo, the Bosnian soldier.

ISAK
Wait. Wait!

He rummages through his backpack and grabs the copy of the Sarajevo Haggadah. He shoves it into Mak's chest. Mak eyes the red streaks Isak's fingers leave behind on the book. A bloody history made even bloodier. He nods at Isak. Isak smiles back as the soldier takes him away.

DARKO
One down.

MAK
You're an idiot.

Mak moves off. It snows ever harder than before.

EXT. APARTMENT 15A - HALLWAY - DAY

Mak's dirty hand KNOCKS on a door marked 15A.

INT. APARTMENT 15A - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mak lies on the couch. Cleaned up as much as he can be without water.

In front of the couch are Mak's milk cartons. Two empty and three more unopened. Remnants of failed attempts.

Darko sleep up against the wall.

Big Ben gives instructions to a new GROUP OF RUNNERS but we don't hear it. In fact there are no sounds.

Until we hear some RUSTLING. Like leaves. Or grass. Then FOOTSTEPS. Picking up pace. Running.

Mak looks at the painting above him. And then he notices it for the first time. The PAINTED NAKED WOMAN running through the grass has the smiling face of his student Amela.

He closes his eyes and drifts off into sleep.

EXT. AIRPORT FIELD - NIGHT

TWO GHOSTS in a sea of white.

In the light of the full moon, the snow-covered field looks like alien terrain but the familiar silhouette of Butmir looms in the distance. BULLETS whizz past.

As our eyes adjust we see that the two ghosts are FIGURES with WHITE SHEETS fashioned into capes to camouflage them in the snow.

The snow is deep enough to slow down the runners down and make sliding into the ditches that much more terrifying.

Only when they break in a ditch to catch their breath do we realize it's Mak and Darko and this is no dream.

MAK

It's so fucking bright.

DARKO

I know.

MAK

Should we turn back?

Darko looks out of the ditch for a moment.

DARKO

Mak.

MAK

What?

DARKO

This is the furthest we've fucking made it yet, man.

Mak peeks out.

MAK

Shit.

DARKO

It's just a straight run from here.

They look at each other. A moment of mental prep. And they're off.

We follow them in slow motion as they run the final stretch.

We're in a closeup of their faces. They bear the expressions of marathon runners during their final mile.

Suddenly Darko drops out of frame. Mak runs a few more feet until he realizes he can't hear Darko's steps beside him.

Mak jumps into a ditch and then spins to see Darko lying on the ground.

MAK

No...Darko!

Darko doesn't respond. A few more BULLETS WHIZ BY.

Mak ducks to the ground. Shaking from the cold.

MAK

Darko!

He jumps out of the ditch and crawls back towards him. When he gets closer he sees the blood stain growing on Darko's sheet.

He pulls Darko into the nearest ditch. Darko wheezes as his lungs fill with blood.

DARKO

Mak...

He coughs. Some blood spurts out.

MAK

FUUUUUUUUCK!

Mak holds Darko in his arms.

MAK
Hold on. Hold on man. They'll grab us any minute.

DARKO
Don't stop. You're almost there.
Just keep going.

MAK
Shut the fuck up.

We hold on them for a long time as Darko's wheezing gets louder.

Mak turns towards Butmir. It's so fucking close.

A LOUD SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

Mak turns to see Ivan staring down at them in the ditch. Ivan turns and keeps running towards Butmir with the little red backpack bouncing on his back.

Mak blinks. Ivan is gone. It's just Mak with his dying best friend in his arms on this desolate white field.

The pool of blood grows.

DARKO
Tell me a good one.

MAK
I don't...I can't think of...

DARKO
You're killing me, man.

Mak thinks.

MAK
Mujo runs into the bar all freaked out. Yelling. Haso! Haso!
Someone...someone stole our car man! Haso goes "did you see who it was?" Mujo goes "No, but I wrote down the license plate."

Darko smiles.

DARKO
That was always my favorite.

MAK

I know.

Darko gathers the energy to speak.

DARKO

Mak. It was my fault.

MAK

What was?

DARKO

Bojan. The nurse came and she said we got another Serb and I said...you know where to put him. I don't know what came over me. I never did that before. I was tired and angry. I had enough. But then... I saw his name. And I ran over here. It was too late. I'm sorry.

Mak tries to calm him down.

MAK

Stop. It wasn't your fault.

DARKO

You think he'll forgive me?

MAK

Yes.

DARKO

Will you?

A beat.

MAK

Of course.

DARKO

Ok. Good. Thank you.

(beat)

Fuck man, I can't believe I'm really not gonna taste cheese again.

Off Darko's pained smile.

EXT. AIRPORT FIELD - NIGHT - LATER

We travel with the Transporter from the terminal apron to

the two men at the end of the field, now covered with snow.

INT. TRANSPORTER - NIGHT

Mak sits in the Transporter with Darko's wrapped body beside him and the baby faced Italian Soldier looking away.

In his shaking hands is another carton of milk.

MAK

Where's his?

The SOLDIER looks him in the eyes.

ITALIAN SOLDIER

Do you want his? I can give it to you?

Mak nods yes. As the Italian Soldier hands it to him Mak slaps it out of his hands. Hard. It explodes all over the floor.

MAK

Why are you doing this? Why won't you let us pass?

The Italian Soldier shakes his head.

ITALIAN SOLDIER

I don't know.

EXT. BOSNIAN FRONTLINE - NIGHT

Mak slumps his way towards HAMO, 30s, the BOSNIAN SOLDIER that processed Mak's papers the night before. Mak looks like a walking corpse. Hamo smokes a cigarette and leans on the side of a car.

HAMO

Sun's not up yet.

MAK

No.

As Mak gets closer Hamo sees the blood on Mak's white sheet.

HAMO

Your friend make it across?

Mak can't bring himself to speak or move and somehow that's all the answer Hamo needs. Hamo stomps out his cigarette. He looks behind him and nods at another SOLDIER.

HAMO
You have half an hour left. Why
don't you come with me.

Mak looks at him.

MAK
I can't.

HAMO
Wasn't asking.

Halo grabs him by the hand and pulls him.

HAMO (CONT'D)
Don't make a sound or we're both
fucked.

EXT. BOSNIAN TRENCH - NIGHT

Mak follows Hamo through a 7 ft tall trench. They move fast.

The trench stops directly in front of the Control Tower.
There's a fence in front of it.

MAK
Where are you going?

HAMO
You're gonna go right under their
noses.

Hamo goes to the fence and pulls up a loose end.

HAMO
30 steps forward, 10 to the right
and then straight to avoid the
snowed in ditches. You'll figure it
out from there. I'm gonna nap in
that trench but hopefully I never
see you again.

Mak crawls under the fence. When Mak is on the other side
Hamo lets it drop. Hamo dusts himself off and turns away.
Lights another cigarette and disappears into the trench.

Mak turns towards the Control Tower.

He walks forward. Counting out steps in his head. Turns
right. 10 more and then straight until he hits the side of
the barracks.

From inside the barracks Mak hears ROSEANNE BARR ARGUING

WITH JOHN GOODMAN (O.S.). Somehow it only makes the moment more terrifying. Mak drops to his hands and knees and crawls directly under the window.

Through the window TWO SOLDIERS bask in the glow of the TV and chuckle to themselves.

Mak crawls to the other end of the barracks. As he stands the sheet strapped to his back catches on a loose piece of wood. RIIIP.

SOLDIER 1
You hear something?

CANNED LAUGHTER.

SOLDIER 2
What? No. Argh. I missed that joke.

Mak rips the bloody and dirty sheet off like it's trying to choke him.

EXT. AIRPORT APRON - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A crazed Mak flattens himself against a wall and peeks around the corner.

Nobody there. Just stacks of containers. UN Aid shipments.

He moves around them carefully when suddenly he bumps into NEDA, 20, a young girl in an army jacket and blue jeans.

Mak has a look in his eyes like he's ready to kill. Neda steps back in horror. Ready to scream. He puts his finger to his lips.

MAK
Shhhhhh.

NEDA
I... I got lost.

MAK
What are you going?

NEDA
To the bosnian frontline.

MAK
You're going into sarajevo?

NEDA
Yea. Medicine for my kid brother.

Mak is awed. He points back to the front line.

MAK

Crawl under the window. You'll see
my footsteps leading to the fence.
Follow them. There's a soldier in
the trench. He's a good man.

NEDA

Ok. Thank you. Neda.

MAK

Mak.

NEDA

Thank you, Mak.

She hugs him and whispers something in his ear that we can't hear.

And they split off in opposite directions. Mak passes by a few more rows of containers until he reaches the open field again.

Neda's footsteps in the snow are the only markings on the snow cover. They zig zag all over the place.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SARAJEVO - UNIVERSITY - CLASSROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mak's hand pulls a red line from one point to another. The dust off the red chalk swirls off the board in slow motion and hyper definition

MAK (V.O.)

The shortest distance between two points is, you got it, a straight line.

(beat)

Now you just have to prove it.

EXT. AIRPORT APRON - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Mak breaks into a mad dash. Not bothering to stay low he just runs as fast as he can. His suitcase still in his fucking hands.

We're in an extreme close up of his face. All we can hear are his breaths and the BULLETS FLYING around him.

Mak starts singing "Plima" by Indexi under his breath. We

hear a full verse.

INTERCUT WITH:

The song continues as others sing a word here and there. Jana. Ivan. Darko. Bojan. Amela. We only see their lips.

EXT. AIRPORT FIELD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Back on Mak out of breath but pushing forward. Just a little bit longer. He can see the windows of the houses in Butmir! Some of them have lights!

Suddenly he throws his hands up and drops out of frame.

Oh shit.

Silence. The line of his footsteps are already getting erased by new snow.

Mak COUGHS.

INT. FINAL TRENCH - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

We find Mak in a an eight foot deep trench.

His boots are mired in looped barbed wire but the wrapped magazines around his shins did their trick. He catches his breath. He looks up.

The Butmir side of the trench is closer to nine feet with the shovelled out dirt on top.

He carefully extricates himself from the barbed wire. Pushes it down and steps over it. He throws his suitcase down and starts digging through the contents.

MAK

The spoon. Come on. Where the fuck are you?

Uh oh. Mak starts to panic. He can't find he fucking spoon. He keeps rummaging but pretty soon it's clear that the spoon is nowhere to be found.

He desperately tries to kick into the dirt. Nothing. It's completely frozen.

He undoes one of the metal plates on his palms and tries to dig with it. It bends under the pressure. Useless. He throws it away.

MAK

No, no, no, no!

Mak paces up and down the side of the trench, mumbling to himself. He tries jumping and grabbing on but it's too tall.

The sky is turning the color of morning.

MALE VOICE 1 (O.S.)

I don't know man, I'm getting fucking worried.

A voice from the Butmir side of the trench.

MALE VOICE 2 (O.S.)

I'm telling you, she made it. I can feel it.

MAK

Wh...hello? Hey!

The voices fall silent.

MAK (CONT'D)

I know you're there. I heard you.

(beat)

I have a message from Neda.

MALE VOICE 1 (O.S.)

Bullshit.

MAK

I'm not fucking kidding. We crossed paths.

MALE VOICE 2 (O.S.)

What was she wearing?

MAK

An army jacket and blue jeans. And she had long brown hair.

A beat.

MALE VOICE 2 (O.S.)

What do you want?

MAK

I need you to pull me up.

MALE VOICE 1 (O.S.)

What was the message?

MAK
Pull me up first!

The two Men whisper on the other side and then we see KRESO, 20s, a curly haired nerd, lie down over the hump on the trench and stick his hands out.

Mak first hands him the suitcase. Kreso grabs it and throws it over.

MAK
Careful.

KRESO
Give me your fucking hands.

Mak locks hands with Kreso. Kreso's legs are pulled by NIKISA, 20s, his chubby friend. They huff and they puff they and pull Mak out of the trench.

EXT. BUTMIR - NIGHT

Mak crashes to the ground. Spread eagle.

The sun rises over the quaint houses of Butmir but we see it upside down from Mak's POV.

MAK
I'll see you in Sarajevo.

EXT. AIRPORT FIELD - DAY

Neda looks directly at us and smiles shyly.

KRESO (V.O.)
Thank you...

EXT. BUTMIR - NIGHT

Mak is sitting up. Kreso and Nikisa kneel on the ground with him.

MAK
Hey. You guys going that way by any chance?

He points away from the airport. They nod. Relieved smiles all around.

INT. RED VOLVO - DAY

Kreso drives. Nikisa is in the back.

Mak sits in the passenger seat. He stares at the reflection of the airport field getting further away. Sarajevo getting further away.

Finally.

Mak starts to cry.

MONTAGE - SCENERY

Over the sounds of a TRAIN we see images of the Bosnian and Croatian countryside.

EXT. CROATIA - ZAGREB - BUS STATION - DAY

The wheels of a bus roll to a stop.

PASSENGERS start pouring out.

Jana, dressed up to the nines, can't stop fidgeting with her hair. She checks her reflection in a window. She looks perfect but she decides to throw on another layer of lipstick. Her hand is shaking. She exhales deeply.

She turns back and starts making her way through the people flooding the platform.

She scans each and every face.

We see a flash of Mak's face. His hair combed back. Cleaned up. He stands in place.

Jana keeps walking. She doesn't immediately recognize him.

She suddenly gasps and stops walking. Realization like thunder after lightning.

ECHOING FOOTSTEPS sound like rain. Everyone on the platform keeps moving but Mak and Jana stand a few feet apart facing away from each other.

Mak has a giant smile on his face. The battered suitcase in his hand.

MAK

Love, hasn't been that long has it?

He turns to face her.

She slowly turns. Already hyperventilating.

Their eyes meet. She opens her mouth to speak but nothing comes out.

She runs and leaps into his arms.

Their hands wrap around each other like they're never letting go again.

Mak kisses Jana.

INT. APARTMENT - KID'S ROOM - DAY

The door swings open, letting light into the bedroom.

Ivan lies on his side. His eyes open. He looks a little older.

Mak is in the doorway. Jana stands in the doorway behind him, her makeup now a runny mess.

MAK
Up. Up. Up.

Ivan doesn't move. His eyes widen.

IVAN
(whispers)
Tata...

INT. ROOM - DAY

Mak's hands unpack the suitcase.

Photo albums.

The Sarajevo Haggadah.

The little red backpack.

EXT. ZAGREB - STREET - DAY

Mak holds Ivan's hand as they walk down the street. Sun is out. Cars drive by. Birds sing.

Ivan wears the little red back pack as he hops down the street.

IVAN
I'm nervous...

MAK

Why?

IVAN

I don't know.

MAK

You're gonna love it. Your teacher
is smart and nice and you're gonna
make all kind of friends...

Ivan picks a dandelion. He blows the petals off. They fly
everywhere.

IVAN

What kind of a button won't
unbutton?

MAK

I don't know.

IVAN

A belly button!

Ivan bursts out laughing at his own joke. He hugs his dad. A
dash of fear crosses his face. He doesn't let go.

IVAN (CONT'D)

And you're gonna pick me up?

MAK

Of course.

IVAN

And when we get home we will play
Street Fighter?

MAK

You got it.

IVAN

And everything's gonna be ok?

Mak shuts his eyes to stop himself from tearing up.

MAK

Everything's gonna be ok.

IVAN

Tata?

MAK

Yea.

IVAN

Thanks for taking me to school.

MAK

Hey no problem kid.

(beat)

I'm sorry that I took so long to-

IVAN

I'm just glad you're back.

Mak hugs him a little tighter.

IVAN (CONT'D)

You're squishing me.

Mak lets go. Ivan takes a deep inhale.

IVAN

Ok. I can do this.

MAK

You can do this.

IVAN

I can do this! Ahhhh!

He gives his dad a high five and runs off. Mak watches him go into the school.

Mak turns away from us and whistles as he goes. "Bjezi Kiso S Prozora" by Crvena Jabuka takes us out.

END