

INFIDELS

Written by

Mark Bianculli

ANONYMOUS CONTENT
310.558.3667

WME
310.285.9000

STAR THROWER ENTERTAINMENT
310.855.9009

According to the interpretation of the Quran subscribed to by members of ISIS, martyrs killed by an adversary in battle are honored and rewarded with eternal paradise.

Unless that adversary is a woman.

In which case, they go to Hell.

This is a story about a lot of people going to Hell.

EXT. ISIS DETAINMENT CAMP - RAQQA

"Detainment Camp" is a generous phrase. Imagine the grimmest, bullet-ridden, iron-and-rubble prison cell in the hottest, bleakest, sweat-soaked nightmare of a city in the fucking colon of the Middle East.

Goat shit too hot for flies to eat. That kind of hot.

There's no stereotypical ominous Arabic music to set the scene. No title telling us where we are. We get it.

Just a few coughs and grunts, the sound of someone shifting.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

We see FOUR SOLDIERS. American boys. Young and strong, the kind you want on a recruitment poster, not chained to hooks in the dirt floor like they are right now.

We'll meet them one by one soon enough, but for now, we get the impression that this situation is relatively new.

They're not disheveled. Their wits are intact. They're tired, and hungry, and afraid -- but not broken.

Not yet, anyway.

They look to each other, having long ago run out of small talk, or perhaps conditioned not to speak around the guards.

Their view, besides each other, is a vast desert landscape on the other side of the bars. A solitary bush fights for life in the distance. The sun bakes the sand, creating that infamous mirage of dancing heat on the horizon.

Oh, and one GUARD. Sitting on a shitty BAR STOOL next to the cell. In second-hand black commando gear, Kalishnikov around his back. He stares at videos on his iPhone. (How or if there is any service out here is a mystery.)

One of the soldiers, DEX (21) finally breaks the silence, woozy and slow to speak. His heavy eyelids can barely open.

DEX

Hey, Scrubs. In your esteemed
medical opinion, why do I feel like
I'm about to pass the fuck out?

"SCRUBS" (24), is a fresh-faced pre-med with no business in war. But alas, here he is. He looks to Dex.

SCRUBS
Dizziness?

Dex is almost too tired to nod.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)
Headache?
(another nod)
How's your heart rate?

The GUARD turns and YELLS. We can assume it means "Shut the Fuck Up."

SCRUBS (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Onset heatstroke. It's gotta be a
hundred-twenty out here.

DEX
No. Something's wrong, man.

Scrubs scoots over as quietly as possible.

SCRUBS
Look at me.

Dex opens his eyes long enough for Scrubs to realize:

SCRUBS (CONT'D)
(shit)
They drugged you.

Then - A SOUND. A truck approaching?

Definitely. The GUARD abandons his stool to join outside.

The prisoners trade looks. The truck comes to a stop. A bit of small talk in Arabic, muffled through the wall.

One of our boys, KHAN (25), happens to be an interpreter.

KHAN
(straining to hear)
Set it up over there.
(then)
I want the others to see it.

No one guesses what "it" is. But it probably isn't good.

We HEAR a door latch open off screen.

Then a VOICE we certainly don't expect yells out - or, at least, an accent we don't expect:

British. That South-London grime rapper British, but British nonetheless. A man speaks in English, boisterous and loud, clapping his hands like an over-eager college bro.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
 Alright boys, it's hotter than a
 fat nun's cunt out here. Who's
 ready to fucking die today?

He marches into frame, boots pounding. We get a look:

Maniacal smile. Freshly-shaven face. Racially ambiguous. The swagger and looks of a footballer with the cosmic determination of a cult leader.

And since this twisted piece of shit is why the entire story is about to kick off, we might as well meet him properly:

OVER BLACK.

TITLE CARD: **MEET ROB.**

BACK TO:

ROB
 (like a radio host)
 Good morning, Caliphate. Allahu
 akbar - What up, fam. This is your
 Jihadi-in-a-black-Bugatti a.k.a.
 Raqqa Rob. And boy, do we got a
 show for you today.

ANOTHER GUY COMES IN HOLDING A HIGH-QUALITY VIDEO CAMERA.

This is performance art.

ROB (CONT'D)
 You. Let's have a little fun.

He PICKS OUT DEX. The GUARDS swing open the barred door and rush in to grab him as we TIME CUT TO:

EXT. DETAINMENT CAMP - RAQQA - LATER

CLOSE-UP OF ROPE being tied around a torso. Tight.

Pull back to reveal Dex being wrapped to an EIGHT-FOOT WOODEN CROSS. It's grim, and medieval, but we can only be thankful he's not being nailed to it.

FOUR MASKED ISIS HENCHMEN stand behind him.

Another HENCHMAN, off to the side, is FILMING THIS.

Still groggy, Dex only lifts his sinking eyes when spoken to.

ROB

You know the bad guy in the movie
never thinks he's the bad guy,
right?

Rob stands face to face with Dex, making sure his lulling
head hears every grandiose word of his speech:

ROB (CONT'D)

That's what I love about you
Americans. Your total fucking
ignorance to the fact that you're
reading your own story all wrong. I
mean, every hero you have, your own
fucking founding fathers, were
rebels. Underdogs. Terrorists and
smugglers. Committing atrocities in
the hopes of starting their own
country, with their own rules.

Rob nods to a henchman.

CLOSE ON DEX as his face is COVERED IN POURING LIQUID.

Despite his grogginess, he snaps his head around in pain,
wincing and coughing.

It's gasoline.

The henchman throws the now-empty GAS CAN onto the hot sand.

This somehow just got more fucked.

Rob, being the Bond villain he is, takes out a CIGARETTE and
LIGHTS it with just the right amount of dramatic flair.

A long inhale. A long exhale. And he continues.

ROB (CONT'D)

And your culture eats that shit up.
Take Star Wars. Most popular film
in the world. Who are the villains
in that movie? The Empire, right?
The cold, greedy empire with its
vast reach. Stamping out
civilizations...

He gets closer with his cigarette, hanging from his lip...

ROB (CONT'D)

... Annihilating cultures...
Killing innocents.

Still closer. TOO close.

The desert heat alone feels like enough to spark a flame.

ROB (CONT'D)
And who takes them on? Who do you
root for, but the brave and scrappy
"rebels?"

BACK AT THE CELL - We glimpse our guys' POV of this: They
can't hear it, but they watch on in disgust.

All of them, wanting to yell out past the AK-47 aimed at them
by the GUARD.

BACK WITH ROB AT THE CROSS -

ROB (CONT'D)
Now tell me, do you bat an eye when
a Storm Trooper falls in battle?
When you see one, do you think of
his mother back home? His wife and
his children? Of course not. He is
expendable. A soldier on the wrong
side of history.

He holds the cigarette up, waves it past Dex's reeling face,
then puts it behind him to tap some ash to the sand.

ROB (CONT'D)
But if you were a Storm Trooper,
you would care. If you'd been
drafted out of high school by some
uniformed cunt with a picnic table
full of brochures - you'd believe
you were fighting for good, right?
Protecting the empire's freedom?
And when you fell in battle, your
little wife would cry, and your
little Storm Trooper comrades would
raise their light sabers to your
bravery...

DEX
Rifles.

ROB
What's that?

DEX
(with his last ounce of
energy)
Jedis carry light sabers. Storm
troopers carry rifles.
(MORE)

DEX (CONT'D)
(adding, 'cause why not)
E-11 blasters.

Rob can't help but smile. Dex shoots back a defiant smirk that would make Harrison Ford proud.

ROB
That's right, innit? Jedis get to
play by a special set of rules.

A beat. Another long pull from the cigarette.

ROB (CONT'D)
You boys drove the wrong fucking
jeep into the wrong fucking town.
And no one is coming to save you.
You're a faceless trooper dying for
a cause you don't even understand.
But before you do, I want you to
know that you, my friend, are the
bad guy. You're the empire.
(a beat)
And those men behind you? They're
the rebels.

Dex has had enough of this. He lifts his head one last time.

DEX
What's that make you, then?

ROB
A fucking Jedi.

He lifts his cigarette. But instead of flicking it, gives a quick command in Arabic.

A henchman behind the cross pulls out a KNIFE - the savage kind that cuts through bone - and runs it across Dex's neck.

There's no ceremony to it. It's ugly.

We're spared the image after the first few seconds as we
CLOSE IN ON ROB.

But we hear the sound.

When it's done, Rob walks over and LIFTS DEX'S HEAD by his gasoline-soaked hair.

He carries it toward the prison cell, flicking his cigarette at Dex's body as he does.

THE ENTIRE CROSS GOES UP IN FLAMES.

POV FROM THE CELL: Rob marches toward them, sun blazing on the flames in the b.g.

He approaches the empty guard's STOOL next to the cell and --

THUMP

Drops Dex's head so it faces them through the bars.

Dex's eyes, finally closed.

ROB (CONT'D)
See ya tonight, ladies.

Rob marches off, acting more like he sank a three-pointer than beheaded and torched a man.

We PUSH IN on the remaining five soldiers, enraged, and scared shitless.

CLOSER on Scrubs...

CLOSER still, onto his uniform's NAME PATCH: LOYA.

GENERAL BURGESS (V.O.)
(PRE-LAP)
Captain Loya.

INT. GENERAL'S OFFICE - MILITARY BASE - AFTERNOON

A matching name patch reveals PAZ LOYA (mid-20s), Scrubs' much tougher sister. Eternal flame eyes. Posture of a Navajo brave. Try fucking with her.

Across a desk we find GENERAL BURGESS (60s), a man who commands respect even without a dozen medals hanging from him. But if you need that sort of thing, he's got them.

He sits. She stands.

GENERAL BURGESS
You know the answer I have to give you, right?

PAZ
I - due respect, sir - I haven't asked a question.

GENERAL BURGESS
Not yet. But you're going to. And when you do, I'll have to say "No."
I'm just hoping you understand why.

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLE: MEET PAZ.

THEN:

PAZ

Permission to speak freely, sir?

GENERAL BURGESS

I think on a day like this, you're entitled to say whatever you want.

PAZ

It's been six days since my brother and his team were captured. Three since...

(they both know what happened)

... Private Heller. And if I'm not mistaken, no one's asking for a ransom. Or an exchange. So if they're not hostages, and not POWs, then they're just waiting to be killed.

GENERAL BURGESS

I'd like to think they're waiting to be rescued. But I concede. Not ideal.

PAZ

There's talk at the base about a mission.

(correcting, quickly)

An unofficial mission. To rescue them.

GENERAL BURGESS

Remember when I said you were about to ask a question?

PAZ

I've served in combat before. Multiple engagements. I'm one of the few women who has.

GENERAL BURGESS

Yes, I've seen your file. I knew your name well before any of this happened. They call you "La Loba," right? Your C.O.'s say if you were a man, you'd have a ten inch dick and battalion command.

(MORE)

GENERAL BURGESS (CONT'D)

So I'll give you the respect of telling you what you need to hear. Officially, we're looking into ways to respond and get those boys home as soon as possible.

(then)

Unofficially, this mission has complications. Drones are out of the game, and the target moves every twenty four hours, through the most densely populated region of an enemy caliphate whose border we haven't yet breached with conventional weapons.

PAZ

Tell me you're at least trying, Sir.

GENERAL BURGESS

Unofficially? It's complicated.

Paz tries a different tone. The closest she will ever get to pleading. And it hurts.

PAZ

Yes, but I promised I'd - He's not like the others, sir. He's not going to make it out there.

The General isn't being antagonistic. Just coolly explaining, as if to a child, why the world can't be a certain way.

GENERAL BURGESS

I've got a room full of men working on it. We're going to find the men who took your brother. And they will get their justice. It's just not going to be you who gives it to them.

PAZ

Yes, sir.

GENERAL BURGESS

(gently)

You're guarding a wall at the edge of Hell right now. That's more than enough. Go back to your post, Loya.

One thing you'll learn about Paz is she can keep her cool. But it's pretty fucking difficult right now.

PAZ
Yes, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. MILITARY BASE - AFTERNOON

Paz STORMS out of the building, past an active base of TRUCKS and TROOPS buzzing about.

A couple DOUCHEBAG ALPHAS hoot and cat call as she passes -

ALPHA SOLDIER
Where you goin' beautiful?

- but she's on fire.

STAY ON HER FACE, NICE AND CLOSE.

And the BACKGROUND CHANGES around her face as TIME PASSES.

QUICK SHOTS:

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

-- *Cleaning her weapon.*

EXT. LOOKOUT TOWER - DAY

-- *Standing her post on a lookout tower.*

INT. MESS HALL - EVENING

-- *At the noisy Mess Hall, not eating.*

INT. SHOWER ROOM - EVENING

-- *In the shower.*

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

-- *Meticulously organizing her bunk.*

-- *Lying in her bunk at night.*

ALL WITH THE SAME STEELY FACE. SILENT. DETERMINED.

Like a rebellious kid in detention staring at the clock.

And the music underscores this:

Something primal. Pulsing. Clocks. Heartbeat. Drums.
Anything that builds... builds... BUILDS... until --

It STOPS.

She sits up. Slides out of her bunk. Opens her FOOT LOCKER.

We see her grab a few items, making sure she doesn't wake anyone.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - MILITARY BASE - NIGHT

In a dim and empty room with a BANK OF COMPUTERS, Paz eagerly taps a few keystrokes under the blue glow of a computer monitor.

ON SCREEN: COORDINATES, MAPS, B&W AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS, etc.

She mouths along as she reads, like a high-schooler quizzing herself with flash cards.

Then she shuts down the computer, and hurries out the door with a --

INT. HALLWAY - GENERAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

-- SLAM. MATCH SOUND TO double doors bursting open as a CORPORAL charges through the hallway to the general's office.

He's at once in a rush and trying to stall what he's doing.

Because he's about to tell the General:

INT. GENERAL'S OFFICE - MILITARY BASE - MORNING

CORPORAL

Sir. We have a problem.

GENERAL BURGESS

Problems are the only thing we deal
with out here.

CORPORAL

We have a DUSTWUN, sir.

(before he asks)

Loya.

WE FLASH TO VARIOUS QUICK SHOTS AS HE SPEAKS:

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 Last anyone had eyes on her was
 twenty-three hundred, last night.

-- *Paz's EMPTY, MADE BED.*

-- *Paz's EMPTY SENTRY POST.*

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 She left her service weapon and
 most of her gear.

-- *Paz's LOCKER, half-full of clothes, boots, etc.*

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 Couldn't have taken more than a few
 personal items.

GENERAL BURGESS
 And there's no way you'd come to me
 with this before you'd checked
 every inch of this base...

CORPORAL
 She's gone, sir.

The General stands and looks out the window to the base.

CORPORAL (CONT'D)
 We've asked around. She didn't say
 a word to anyone about where she
 might be going...

GENERAL BURGESS
 (still looking out)
 Oh, I know where she's going. I
 just hope she realizes what she has
 to go through to get there.

Off the FORTIFIED WALL the general is staring at through his
 window...

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - DAWN

For a second or two, we might be struck by the beauty of the
 desert at dawn. The sun is nowhere to be seen yet. Just that
 blue, disorienting twilight. At once, cold and warm.

The first thing we hear is a WOMAN'S VOICE.

Barely more than a whisper. Shaky. But growing louder.

No subtitles for a moment. But even an untrained ear can hear that it's the same phrase, being uttered again and again, with the rhythm of a frightened heartbeat.

The SUBTITLES finally kick in:

SYRIAN WOMAN (O.S.)
*Please forgive me. Please forgive
 me. Please forgive me.*

Then, FOOTSTEPS.

Finally, we tilt down from our beautiful blue-lit horizon to see SIX VILLAGERS, ALL MEN, pulling a FULLY-CLOAKED WOMAN by a rope, like a sheep.

If one of them wasn't holding a VIDEO CAMERA, you'd think we were in the stone age. And remember, this is tragically real.

SYRIAN WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (through the thick fabric
 cloaking her face)
*Please forgive me. Please forgive
 me. Please forgive me...*

A GENTLE OLD MAN is the only one who will touch her. He puts a helping hand on her shoulder to guide her over the patches of grass and rocks.

GENTLE OLD MAN
 (almost soothingly)
 God will forgive you.

A few more steps and the shivering woman is stopped.

She is unceremoniously DROPPED onto her knees INTO A FOUR-
 FEET-DEEP HOLE next to two discarded SHOVELS.

Five yards ahead, a MASSIVE PILE OF STONES.

Welcome to an honor killing.

EXT. HILLTOP - DESERT LANDSCAPE - SAME TIME

SUDDENLY - we SHIFT POV and see the scene through a RIFLE
 SCOPE'S CROSSHAIRS, two hundred yards away.

EZO (O.S.)
 (subtitled, Kurdish)
 Shit. She's right in the middle. We
 can't miss.

We see the person behind the spying rifle scope. A woman, 25, confident with a Zen-like calm, afraid of nothing except failure.

This is SEYDA.

SEYDA
I don't miss.

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLE: MEET SEYDA.

THEN:

Next to Seyda, also in the prone sniper position with a menacing RIFLE, is her partner in crime, EZO (21). A complete supernova, Ezo drinks, dances, fights and fucks like it's her last day on Earth.

She barely acknowledges Seyda's cockiness, used to it.

EZO
That's her father? The one holding her?

SEYDA
Yes. He lives.

EZO
He's leading his own daughter to be slaughtered like a lamb.

SEYDA
A lamb gets the mercy of a knife.

EZO
Seyda, --

SEYDA
We're not killing him.

Ezo knows Seyda's not weak, but faults her for being too merciful. She looks back into her scope:

EZO
It's starting.

BACK TO:

EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - DAWN

RE-ESTABLISH the MASSIVE STONE PILE as one of the men, a local MULLAH (60s, thick beard, mean and ugly), recites:

MULLAH

We brought you here this morning to implement the punishment of stoning for adultery. A crime to which you have confessed. A crime you willingly committed. So, surely, you do not contest the verdict of Allah?

We can only hear the woman's panicked BREATHING. She can't even make out the word "No."

BACK ON THE HILLTOP:

EZO

You're hesitating.

SEYDA

I'm waiting.

EZO

You're stalling.

SEYDA

I'm aiming.

Ezo has zero chill. Her fingertips tap and roll over the trigger guard like it's a stack of poker chips.

EZO

In ten seconds, I'm shooting anything with a fucking beard.

SEYDA

Calm down, Ezo.

EZO

I don't calm down.

Seyda refocuses her rifle scope with the care of a surgeon.

SEYDA

Well, I don't miss.

BACK AT THE STONE PILE:

MULLAH

Let this be a lesson to the women and wives of Islam.

(MORE)

MULLAH (CONT'D)
 (looking into the CAMERA)
 And the husbands who leave your
 wives alone beyond the time
 recommended by the shari'a. Do not
 make the same mistakes.

He looks to the Gentle Old Man, who doesn't seem so gentle
 now...

MULLAH (CONT'D)
 Do you have any last words for your
 daughter?

SYRIAN WOMAN
 Baba! Please, forgive me.

GENTLE OLD MAN
 (to Mullah)
 No.

SYRIAN WOMAN
 (through panicked tears)
 Baba!

MULLAH
 Very well.

CLOSE-UP of the STONE PILE, as one by one, the men lift a
 stone to hurl.

Some as big as softballs. Some as big as cinder blocks.

SYRIAN WOMAN
 (to herself now, or to God)
Please-forgive-me, please-forgive-
me, please-forgive-me, please-
forgive-me...

One of the men leans like a baseball pitcher, putting all his
 weight into his vicious throw when --

POP! HIS HEAD RECOILS, BLOOD BLOOMING in the air.

The stone THUDS in the dirt. And before his limp body
 follows...

The WASP-LIKE SCREAM of another bullet and --

POP! Second man down.

A third starts to yell out --

POP! POP!

-- Oh well, guess we'll never get to hear it.

Two more fall.

The Woman's head shifts within her cloak like an anxious deer in the forest, desperate to make sense of the sounds.

SYRIAN WOMAN (CONT'D)

Baba?!

The only men left standing are the Mullah and the Gentle Old Man. They lock eyes with each other when --

POP! A spray of dusty blood, and the Mullah drops.

The Gentle Old Man RUNS OFF to wherever he came from.
(*Incidentally, abandoning his daughter yet again.*)

BIRDSEYE POV: We see the instant massacre in its totality. Bodies strewn on the ground. Blood pooled in the sand.

Pulling back... back... farther away until:

The AGONIZED SHRIEK of the Mullah pierces the morning air.

He's alive. Writhing in pain, pressing a BADLY WOUNDED SHOULDER.

BACK AT THE HILLTOP:

EZO

What the fuck?
(*"after all that..."*)
You missed.

Seyda stands and starts disassembling her rifle mount.

SEYDA

I didn't miss. I want that one alive.

Hey, sure. More fun for Ezo this way. She smiles.

The PRE-LAP SOUND of a TRUCK brings us to --

EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - DAWN

-- The Mullah. Moments later. Still writhing helplessly.

Dust spreads over him as truck tires SCREECH to a halt, missing his head by mere inches.

Then, out of the truck, two by two...

BOOTS HIT THE SOIL.

A proper hero tilt reveals a UNIT OF WOMEN, exiting the cab and the flatbed of a civilian truck. Six total. You'll remember them better as you see what each of them can do, but let's just get the formalities out of the way:

ASTI: Young enough to be in high school. Stylish, petite, with an innocent face. But put a gun or a knife her hand, and she's nothing short of ferocious.

GERDANA: Book smarts for days. Wanted to go to college. Found this to be more important. Not naturally aggressive and over-thinks things a bit, but gets massive points for bravery.

BELAR: Strong, quiet type. SCARS on her face. Terrible things have happened to her, so now, terrible things happen to her enemies.

NUSA: The one that doesn't need a weapon to knock you the fuck out. Big. Tough. Relentless. And possibly crazy.

SEYDA and EZO, we've already met.

The group stands in a casual line, staring unfeelingly at the squirming Mullah.

Seyda approaches the cloaked woman and removes her hood.

The Woman doesn't know what to process first. The horror of bodies around her. Or the cavalry of badass female soldiers who, from below, look haloed by the raw morning sunlight.

SYRIAN WOMAN

My Baba...?

Seyda nods to Belar and Nusa, who LIFT her from her pit and untie her.

SEYDA

He's alive. He ran.

Despite her father being an inhuman piece of shit, the Woman is awash with relief. She's still processing everything when:

SEYDA (CONT'D)

Do you know who we are?

SYRIAN WOMAN

(finally focusing)

You're the Ghosts. Of the Desert.

You're supposed to be a myth.

SEYDA

Would you like to come with us? To our village? Where you can be protected, and fed, ...

EZO

And free.

SYRIAN WOMAN

But my Baba...

EZO

Your father was going to crush your head with a stone.

SYRIAN WOMAN

I was impure. I--

SEYDA

Let your father live with his shame. Free yourself from yours.

A long beat. The woman looks to her saviors. Then back to Seyda. A nod. She'll go with them.

Seyda nods back, and the group protectively leads the woman to the cab of the truck.

Then - A GROAN from the ground. The Mullah, trying his best not to scream in pain.

Seyda picks up the toppled VIDEO CAMERA from the sand.

SEYDA (CONT'D)

(into camera)

Daesh. Let this warning spread as quickly as your cancerous ideas. Allah does not condone murder. Allah does not condone rape. Allah does not command brutality in his name. And if Allah will not punish you for your crimes against the innocent...

She hands the CAMERA to ASTI, who focuses on her:

SEYDA (CONT'D)

We will.

Big bad Nusa DRAGS the Mullah across the dirt.

MULLAH

No-no-no-no-no, wait...

TIGHT ON THE RESCUED WOMAN, staring from the safety of the truck, as we HEAR THE SOUND OF SHOVELS SLICING EARTH.

We see all the pain her eyes, as she watches, contemplating the fate she just escaped.

Finally, we SWITCH TO THE MULLAH'S FACE. TIGHT. ALMOST TOO TIGHT. He stares back up to see:

The same haloed heroes, only now they're grinning widely.

REVERSE to find the Mullah, buried neck-deep. MOUTH GAGGED AND DUCT TAPED. The occasional muffled moan in vain.

The rescued Woman is led back to her tormentor, placed in front of him -- and handed a LARGE STONE.

She looks at it. Looks at him.

He stares right back. His face, a cocktail of hate, shame, and unconvincing bravery.

The Woman feels the weight of the stone in her hands. Then:

Lets it drop to the ground.

SYRIAN WOMAN
Peace be upon you.

She walks past her protectors, back to the truck.

The other women trade looks. Seyda nods, approvingly.

Mercy.

Seyda walks to the truck and hops in, putting a comforting arm around the woman. And perhaps distracting her from what's about to happen:

Ezo, not so kind and merciful, picks up the stone...

Mullah's POV: Ezo looks down, puckers a kiss and winks...

EZO
(pleasantly)
See you in Hell.

And SLAMS THE STONE INTO HIS HEAD.

Lights out.

EXT. UNKNOWN TOWN - SYRIA - EVENING

OVER BLACK - We finally hear that stereotypical Middle-Eastern music we so often see paired with movies like this, BUT, to anyone who is actually Muslim, they will recognize it instantly as the Adhan, the call to prayer that plays five times a day from loudspeakers atop Mosques in city squares.

It's actually quite beautiful.

We see said SPEAKERS, and we see said MOSQUE, gorgeous ivory bathed in pink light at sundown.

And we glide over said CITY SQUARE, bustling and alive, to descend on a WOMAN, cloaked in a burqa, doing her very best not to be noticed as she approaches --

EXT. MAHDI'S HOUSE - EVENING

-- a modest home in a row of others just like it.

We get a look at her eyes, and there's no mistaking it:

IT'S PAZ.

KNOCK-KNOCK. She looks around as she waits...

After a moment, a MAN opens the door. Slight features, tired eyes and a warmer smile than Paz has seen in a long time.

His real name is MAHDI. But he'll never go by that.

MAHDI
You must be The Wolf.
(checking around)
Quickly. Come in.

He puts a protective hand on her shoulder and leads her --

INT. MAHDI'S HOUSE - EVENING

-- inside, to a surprisingly cozy home, adorned with tapestries, instruments, candles and photographs.

Paz takes it all in, but she's exhausted from a long journey.

MAHDI
Please... You won't need this
anymore.

He gently unwraps her face.

PAZ
You speak English.

MAHDI
I deal with many people. Speak many
languages.

They study each other.

MAHDI (CONT'D)
I thought wolves run in packs.

PAZ
I'm more the lone kind. Looking for
a new pack.

Mahdi smiles that annoyingly safe, reassuring-father smile.

PAZ (CONT'D)
You're not what I thought you'd
look like.

Mahdi walks out of frame, clinking some dishes.

MAHDI (O.S.)
That's a fortunate thing, in my
profession.

Returns with a CUP OF STEAMING TEA.

Paz tries to be polite, but begins GULPING it from thirst,
steam and all. Again, Mahdi just smiles like a sage.

MAHDI (CONT'D)
People are looking for you.

This much she knows.

PAZ
Do you think they'll find me?

MAHDI
Not as long as you're with me. They
call me The Wind. I pass right by
people, through every town, across
every border, and no one ever sees
me. I'll get you where you're
going.
(self-amused)
The Wolf. And the Wind.

He stares down at Paz's hand, slightly shaking the TEA CUP.

MAHDI (CONT'D)
I was worried you wouldn't make it.
We must leave by sundown. But
first, please... join me, to eat.

INT. MAHDI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

He leads her into a modest kitchen with two chairs and a simple meal of meat and rice and warm flat bread.

Paz salivates at the sight.

PAZ
I thought you weren't allowed to
dine with women.

MAHDI
(amused)
You don't know enough Muslims.

They sit. Paz fights an animal urge to devour the food.

MAHDI (CONT'D)
(gesturing to a PHOTO)
My daughter and I used to eat every
night together and tell stories and
sing songs. It was just the two of
us. Without her, it gets very
quiet. So, this is - how do you
say? "Like old times."
(gesturing to eat)
Please.

No formality here. Paz begins eating as politely as she can.

She looks at the PHOTO: A young girl, 15 at most, with
UNFORGETTABLE GREEN EYES. (So, don't forget them).

PAZ
She's beautiful.

MAHDI
Ah, yes. Eyes like...
(says the word in Arabic,
then finds it:)
Emerald.

PAZ
Where is she now?

For the first time, Mahdi loses his charming air, stabbed
with a thousand memories... But he stays composed.

MAHDI

She was taken from me. Very bad men.

(then)

I pray she is with Allah.

Paz should leave it alone, but she's always one to press:

PAZ

You mean she might be alive?

MAHDI

If she is alive, she's in a place worse than Hell.

Mahdi looks to her, his tone and his eyes, never betraying his wounded warmth.

MAHDI (CONT'D)

This is why I help people like you.
So that one day, praise be Allah,
there will be no more people like
them.

A long beat. Paz studying his sadness. Then:

MAHDI (CONT'D)

Come. The sun is setting.

PRE-LAP: THE SOUND OF A TRUCK ENGINE STARTING leads us to:

EXT. MAHDI'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - EVENING

Mahdi's backyard. Gated on all sides. Dirt. Tires. Two stray dogs and a DUSTY WHITE COMMERCIAL TRUCK, idling next to a HUGE PILE OF ROLLED PERSIAN RUGS.

It's a bit later. Paz is wearing a pared-down version of the cammo gear she was wearing on base.

She loads and checks her SIDEARM, currently her only weapon.

Mahdi brings PAZ a SMALL BAG and gestures into the RUG PILE:

MAHDI

I hide fine cigars and scarves
inside the rugs, so if someone
happens to look - they think I
smuggle goods and I pay small
bribe.

He then gestures to the TRUCK BED:

MAHDI (CONT'D)

Next. Two sets of floor planks. If by chance someone pulls the first to check beneath boards -- which has never happened, mind you -- you will be hidden safely under the second.

Indeed. In the REAR RIGHT OF THE TRUCK'S TRAILER, TWO SETS OF PLANKS STAND UPRIGHT, creating a snug little claustrophobe's-fucking-nightmare-of-a-bunk above the axle.

He hands Paz the BAG he is holding. She looks in...

MAHDI (CONT'D)

Tight space inside floor. A bottle of water to lie next to you, with straw. One pill to help sleep. One adult diaper.

(off her look)

Long ride.

(back to:)

Air gets in from underneath, to breathe. The only thing to worry about - is boredom.

Paz produces an ANCIENT MODEL IPOD with EARBUDS from the bag.

Curious, she hits a few buttons.

PAZ

All that's on here is Elton John.

MAHDI

What? You don't like Elton John?

INT. CRAWL SPACE / INT. TRUCK TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

POV inside the tiny "bunk" or "crawl space" within the lower floorboards as PAZ's lean body fights to squeeze in.

Then we're in the TRUCK'S TRAILER again, packed fully with UPRIGHT ROLLED PERSIAN RUGS, except the exposed area where Paz's floorboards are upended.

Mahdi looks down to her before sealing her inside.

Smiles, amused that Paz has her arms crossed the way a vampire sleeps, clutching her HANDGUN like it's a teddy bear.

MAHDI

It's none of my business, but --
what are you planning to do when
you get there?

PAZ

First I'm going to find my brother.
Then I'm going to find the man that
took him - And I'm gonna cut off
his head.

Mahdi stares a moment. Then, as softly as he says anything:

MAHDI

(in Arabic)

May God guide your journey.

PAZ'S POV: A BOARD SLIDES OVER HER AND SHE IS ENTOMBED.

OVER BLACK, we HEAR a hammer POUNDING in the nails.

MATCH THE SOUND TO --

INT. HOLDING CELL / HALLWAY - NIGHT

-- THE POUNDING of the butt of a knife against METAL BARS.

ROB (O.S.)

Wake up you fuckin' pussies, guess
who's back!

SCRUBS is the first to open his eyes.

We're in a different location than last time.

The guys look like shit now. Dirty. Greasy. Tired.

And since you were promised a proper introduction to the last
two soldiers, now seems like a good time:

KHAN: The brightest of the grunts. Interpreter. Speaks three
languages and can still shoot a gun pretty well.

And ARNOLD (last name, not first): The guy with the cleanest
bunk in boot camp. Military teacher's pet, born to be a
soldier. But currently SICK, on the floor, SHIVERING.

ROB (CONT'D)

Now, now, now, now. Here I thought
we were treating you like royalty,
yeah?

(MORE)

ROB (CONT'D)
I even moved you all from the
Garden View to the Presidential
Suite, no extra cost. What the fuck
happened to him?

Scrubs looks to the corner where Arnold shuffles in pain.

ROB (CONT'D)
(with a loud SNAP)
Oi. Doogie fucking Houser. I'm
talking to you.

SCRUBS
He's sick.
(afraid that sounded
condescending)
Very sick. He needs medical
attention immediately.

ROB
Or what?

SCRUBS
What?

ROB
I said: "Or what?"

Scrubs doesn't want to scare Arnold any more than he already
is, but --

SCRUBS
Or he'll die.

ROB
Right.

But he says it like "That's kind of the whole point."

ROB (CONT'D)
Tell you what. How bout we play a
little game? Someone's about to
step up to the chopping block. The
weak little twat shittin' himself
in the corner... Or you. The fun
part is: It's your choice. But it's
only your choice. Say his name
right now, and you live to see
another day.

The others look to Scrubs, whose eyes are locked on Rob.

ROB (CONT'D)

It seems so easy. I mean, you said it yourself ten seconds ago, your boy's gonna die anyway. Put him out of his misery. Save yourself.

(with that shit-eating grin again)

Say his name.

Scrubs looks to the GUARD who holds that ominous VIDEO CAMERA. But it's not on. Not aimed at them.

ROB (CONT'D)

Oh, don't worry. No one'll see this part. It's just us here.

(then)

Oh! I forgot to add: If you don't decide, I'll kill two of you instead of one. It's kind of like Sophie's Choice, except -- well, to tell you the truth I never saw that fucking movie.

SCRUBS

You're just going to kill us all anyway.

ROB

All the more reason to pick the sick one.

(then)

Oh, come on. May I remind you cunts that I didn't kidnap you from your safe little beds in the night? You walked into a lion's den. And now you're mad when the lion bats you around a bit before biting your neck? Where's the sport in that?

(to Scrubs)

You've got ten seconds to say a name.

He doesn't count aloud.

We should *feel* what ten seconds feels like - as long or as short as you think that is when you're facing imminent death.

Just when we think ten seconds MUST HAVE passed...

SCRUBS

Me.

(barely able to speak clearly)

Take me. Not him.

Rob grins ear to ear, starting a sadistic SLOW CLAP.

ROB
What. A. Stupid. Fucking. Choice.

He gives a command to his GUARD, who FIRES UP THE VIDEO CAMERA and starts recording:

ROB (CONT'D)
You know, Doc, I was hoping you'd be a hero tonight, because I think you and I can teach these boys quite the anatomy lesson. Some real hands-on learning. Shall we?

TIME CUT: We see through the CAMERA'S POV for a moment, but it will cut back and forth throughout. Mostly reality, but in a strange way, sometimes video makes things feel more real.

When we glimpse the soldiers on their knees, forced to watch, we notice their MOUTHS ARE DUCT TAPED AND GAGGED.

SCRUBS IS TAPED AND GAGGED AS WELL.

ROB (CONT'D)
Today's lesson, children, is about the reality of gettin' your throat cut. See, in movies and TV, it's so clean, innit? One nice slash across the ole windpipe, and it opens up like a pretty little gash, flowing blood like a tall pour of a wine.

He takes his time relishing in his speech, producing a SCARY FUCKING KNIFE to press against Scrubs' neck every so often.

ROB (CONT'D)
But. Like most things in life, the reality isn't as clean and tidy as the fantasy. See, the windpipe, formally known as the trachea, is only about 2.6cm in diameter. But it's strong. Thick rings of cartilage, tough membranes holding them together. So while it looks easy to slice, it's really more like sawing through an industrial garden hose.
(with pleasure)
Tell me if I'm getting any of this wrong, Doc.

Scrubs is silent. Not merely because Rob is correct, but also, you know, because this is the most horrifying fucking experience of his life.

ROB (CONT'D)

Now, sure, you could cut the carotid arteries running up the side of the neck. Those are the ones you can feel with your own fingers, through the skin, pulsing nice and juicy whenever you're angry...

(gently gliding the knife)
Or frightened.

(then)

That'll kill you quite quickly. Full rupture, both sides? Unconscious in seconds. Dead in a minute, more or less. But you know why I love the windpipe? Because it's the maximum amount of pain. Shock can do its job best it can, but, make no mistake, you're feeling this when it happens.

Scrubs' chest begins heaving. Trying to hide his panic, but animal instincts have surpassed will power.

Rob leans close to inspect the PUMPING VEINS in his neck:

ROB (CONT'D)

(to the others, with earnest excitement)

See?

Back to his speech:

ROB (CONT'D)

'Cause, when your trachea's opened, blood flows into your lungs while you're still gasping to breathe. In essence, it suffocates you from the neck up, and drowns you from the neck down. Don't get much worse than that, bruv.

(then)

But the real art is in the cut itself. The motion. Steady, clean, sawing, back and forth, like carving up a nice bird.

Suddenly, he drops the cool guy act and FIRMLY tilts Scrubs' head back like a Pez Dispenser, exposing his neck completely.

ROB (CONT'D)
Here, lemme show you. Ready...

A tear glides down Scrubs' cheek as he blinks.

ROB (CONT'D)
Steady...

We hear the desperate breaths through his nose...

... Until Rob softly releases his head.

Laughing.

ROB (CONT'D)
Aye, I'm just fuckin' with you boys. No, see, I want that image to spin in your heads for a while. No fun if you always know when it's coming. I've been called a lot of things in my time, but "predictable?" Now, that would break my fuckin' heart.

He admires his knife one last time, then sheathes it.

ROB (CONT'D)
(to Scrubs)
Clean the piss off yourself, mate.

A brotherly SLAP to the back of Scrubs' head, a bit too hard, and Rob is off.

Scrubs recovers, staring into the middle distance, on his knees. Breathing, unable to calm. Traumatized for life.

PRE-LAP: The warm, plush piano intro of Elton John's "GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD" plays over, taking us to --

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

-- the middle of nowhere. Night. Endless desert bisected by a thin highway, like a snake crawling through sand.

A single TRUCK on the road. Drifting by as calmly as the wind itself.

The lyrics to the song kick in, then the beat. You can take it as ironic or earnest, but either way, it gives us a momentary break from the traumatic near-death experiences.

... *momentary*.

INT. CRAWL SPACE - MAHDI'S TRUCK - NIGHT

The song is now sourced from Mahdi's iPod, the earbuds resting in restless ears.

We see Paz, but barely. Not much light in here. She's staring at nothing, trying her best to relax in the confined space, something between a tanning bed and a closed casket.

The truck hums and bumps with a rhythm that would put a baby to sleep, until suddenly...

The rhythm is broken. The truck is slowing to a stop.

EXT. DESERT ROAD / MAHDI'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Outside, A WALL OF HEADLIGHTS. Trucks idling. A PATROL STOP in the middle of nowhere. GUARDS. GUNS. The whole thing.

A HIGHWAY GUARD (40s), the leader of the group, approaches Mahdi's window. {ALL OF THIS IS IN ARABIC.}

HIGHWAY GUARD
Peace be upon you.

MAHDI
And also unto you.

HIGHWAY GUARD
May I see your papers, please.

MAHDI
Of course. Is there some kind of danger down the road?

HIGHWAY GUARD
On this road, sir, we are the danger.

His intimidating face finally curls a slight smile. He's just being friendly. He hands back Mahdi's papers.

Mahdi follows suit, relaxed and cool.

MAHDI
Of course. I only ask because this road is so quiet. Usually the checkpoint isn't for miles.

HIGHWAY GUARD
You know, that's what I thought when we were sent here. This road is so tediously quiet.
(MORE)

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)
Certainly this is a waste of
manpower, but... I'm not here to
think. I'm here to follow orders.

MAHDI
If anyone understands quietly
following orders, it's a delivery
man.

HIGHWAY GUARD
Well, I suppose that leads me
directly to my next question. What
exactly are you delivering?

This guy doesn't talk like a goon stuck on border guard. And
it's making Mahdi (almost) visibly nervous.

INSIDE THE CRAWL SPACE:

We see Paz, straining to hear the foreign words, praying like
a driver on the highway with a police car behind them:
"please, not tonight."

BACK AT THE TRUCK WINDOW:

MAHDI
Rugs. Persian. Custom and hand-
sewn, though, not the cheap
knockoffs you see at the bazaar.
(adding, as if the guy
cares)
Some of them have been delivered to
the Presidential Palace. Would you
like to see them?

HIGHWAY GUARD
Well, I'm required to see them. But
after your description, yes, I
think I'd actually like to, as
well.

TIME CUT: The truck's trailer gate SLIDES open, loudly,
revealing wall-to-wall RUGS, rolled and stacked vertically.

TWO PATROLMEN (basically skinny armed soldiers in black) jump
in and start parting the rugs, lightly investigating.

A THIRD PATROLMAN stands to the side of the road.

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)
(continuing his thought)
I wonder what kind of rug draws
Assad's eye.

MAHDI

(keeping totally cool)

The kind that takes a long time to make. It's what separates an artist from a craftsman. Art's value can be inflated. But craft is undeniable. It takes time. And a man's time is the most valuable thing of all.

HIGHWAY GUARD

I couldn't agree more. And in the spirit of not wasting either of ours, I don't think it will be necessary to search through your truck, or unravel your finely crafted rugs. Unless, of course, there is something hidden in them that would be of interest to me?

MAHDI

No, sir. Other than an interest in fine tapestry, I'm afraid you'd find this truck rather boring.

HIGHWAY GUARD

Very good. Because I wasn't ordered to rifle through people's possessions. Or to slow down what must already be a long journey. I was ordered to find something. Something very specific.

(then)

A person, to be exact.

Don't worry. Mahdi's a pro. He doesn't suddenly turn white from fear or anything...

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)

(to his men)

Take the rugs out of the truck. But lay something beneath them first.

(looking to Mahdi)

This is fine craftsmanship, after all.

The men throw a tarp from their truck across the ground and begin unloading the rugs, laying them on their side.

One pulls a razor to slice the cord that binds a rug, when --

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)

No, no. Don't search the rugs.

Unload the rugs.

(MORE)

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)

(a beat)

Then get some tools from the truck.
We're going to have to lift the
floorboards.

MAHDI

Sir, is this necessary?

The Highway Guard is turning his attention when --

MAHDI (CONT'D)

You said you were looking for a
person? I know many people, maybe I
can help you. What does this person
look like?

HIGHWAY GUARD

Valuable.

A spark. Mahdi tries:

MAHDI

We were just talking about that,
no? How value is a funny thing.
Feels like it can go up and up and
up...

(if he's not being clear
enough)

As long as someone's willing to
pay.

The Highway Guard stares at Mahdi... a long time.

HIGHWAY GUARD

(leaning in, voice lowered)

The jackals behind me would happily
eat the scraps you throw to them.
But me? I hunt for bigger game.

Okay, Mahdi's a bit nervous, but again -- ain't his first
rodeo with a border guard...

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)

See, there are rumors of a great
smuggler, who takes important
people to important places.
Operating right under our noses.
But the problem with operating
under people's noses is that,
eventually, they catch the awful
scent of a filthy, sniveling rat.
And as clever as you are, you can
never get rid of that stench.

PATROLMAN #1
It's empty.

HIGHWAY GUARD
The boards beneath the boards.
Remove them as well.

Okay, fuck it. He's scared now...

MAHDI
Sir, please, --

PATROLMAN #2 (O.S.)
BE QUIET.

Mahdi turns to see a KALASHNIKOV aimed at him. Fuck.

INSIDE THE TRUCK TRAILER, the men begin REMOVING THE NAILS with a board-bending CREAK, then RIPPING THEM UP.

CREAK... SNAP... CREAK... SNAP...

(They're starting from the left side.)

(Paz is on the right.)

INSIDE THE CRAWL SPACE: Paz squirms to ready her gun, "aiming" up at her hardwood coffin ceiling...

CREAK... SNAP... CREAK... SNAP. Getting closer and closer.

OUTSIDE: Mahdi watches the truck like a poker player waiting for a river card that can't possibly save him.

This is happening, and it's not going to end well.

IN THE TRUCK TRAILER: The men pull the planks with the efficiency of a Daytona pit crew.

CREAK... SNAP... CREAK...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(in Arabic)
WAIT!!!

SNAP!

A ripped plank reveals A MAN WE'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE, HIDDEN IN THE CENTER OF THE TRUCK'S FLOOR.

Not two feet from where Paz is hidden.

Has he been there this whole fucking time?

MAN IN THE CRAWL SPACE
Don't shoot. Please. I surrender.

IN PAZ'S CRAWL SPACE: Paz is as shocked as we are.

IN THE TRAILER: The patrolmen snap two more boards and pull The Man from his space with very little love.

They put him on his knees and tie his hands behind his back.

**The spot where Paz is hiding is left untouched - glaringly obvious to us, but hey, they seem to have what they came for.*

OUTSIDE: The Highway Guard looks to Mahdi, satisfied.

HIGHWAY GUARD
Well, there you have it.

He gestures to the Patrolmen holding the AK.

Mahdi turns to beg for his life when --

A SPATTER OF BULLETS, and Mahdi drops like a blanket yanked from a clothesline.

It's merciless and quick. He's gone.

IN THE CRAWL SPACE: Paz is trying not to breathe. Totally confused by what she's hearing.

BACK OUTSIDE: The Highway Guard walks past the pile of rugs to see them SPRAYED WITH BLOOD...

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)
Hm. We ruined his fine crafts.

... then approaches the MAN IN THE TRUCK, who is now on his knees.

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)
Mr. Abergel. Nice to finally meet.

IN THE CRAWL SPACE: A Patrolman's boot shifts directly above where Paz's face is, CREAKING the wood.

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)
Come, you can ride with me. The accommodations are more comfortable, I assure you.

*All of this is an Arabic, mind you. Paz can't understand a word being said, and can't see a thing.

HIGHWAY GUARD (CONT'D)

(to his men)

Keep whatever's hidden in the rugs
for yourselves. Take this truck
back with us. Then burn it.

PATROLMAN #2

What about him?

The Highway Guard barely glances at the fallen Mahdi.

HIGHWAY GUARD

Leave him.

And with that, he walks back to the ominous wall of
headlights.

The men do what they're told, and their new prisoner is
dragged off the truck to await his fate.

IN THE CRAWL SPACE: The sound of Paz trying to coax her
breath into silence.

"What the fuck just happened?" ... "How am I still alive?"...

And more thoughts. About everything. Racing through her head
until THE ENGINE REVS BACK UP. The voices grow distant.

And the truck begins driving again, down the endless, snaking
road in the desert.

DISSOLVE TO BLACK.

A LONG BEAT.

THEN: Voices...

INT. CRAWL SPACE / INT. TRUCK - MORNING

Arabic. Waking Paz from a shallow sleep.

A ribbon of light peeks through from the underbelly of her
crawl space. It's morning.

And it's HOT. She's sweating through her clothes. Can hardly
breathe. Hair stuck to her forehead like a shower tile.

EXT. TRUCK / ABANDONED BUILDING - SAME TIME

We see Mahdi's truck, parked outside some kind of shot-to-
shit industrial building. It kind of looks like an elementary
school, or medical clinic.

But has long lost its initial purpose.

ISIS SOLDIERS, the real deal, black-clad, masks, leather gun holsters, straight out of an internet video, patrol the grounds. Some stand around smoking. Some play cards.

Only a handful of them. It's not a military base or anything. But something important enough goes on inside.

We'll get to that in a minute. Right now we're with Mahdi's truck. Parked far away from the others, maybe fifty yards.

A SOLDIER approaches with TWO GAS CANS and begins pouring a TRAIL OF GAS, beneath the truck, walking away...

When he gets far enough, he lights it.

The flames ride across the surface of the sand, racing to the truck when --

INT. CRAWL SPACE / INT. TRUCK

-- *BOOM!* If Paz had enough space, the sound alone would make her spring up like a mousetrap. But since she's locked in a claustrophobic tomb, she just gropes at her surroundings wondering what the FUCK that was.

(CUT BETWEEN THE OUTSIDE AND THE CRAWL SPACE)

The FLAMES from the exploded gas tank embroil the truck's underbelly, licking the side walls, rising.

Paz pushes desperately, not knowing what's happening yet...

Until the SMOKE begins to enter her air vent.

And it starts to HEAT. Not *baby-in-a-hot-car* heat, like it felt already... *baby-in-a-burning-fucking-building* heat.

Her face registers:

She's about to burn alive.

OUTSIDE: A few of the guards go into the building. Maybe that was their only job. Maybe they have better things to do.

THREE STAY. Playing cards. Not giving a shit about the truck.

IN THE CRAWL SPACE: Paz FURIOUSLY pushes. Knees. Kicks. Like Houdini in a straight jacket, if he was, you know, *on fire*.

And this isn't "KILL BILL." She's not going to Kung Fu her way out of here.

Time to see if all those push-ups made her stronger than nails in wood.

ALL HER MIGHT, she pushes.

ABOVE: We see the BOARDS rise slightly, nails creaking, only to slam back down.

Oh, and MORE SMOKE.

Outside: MORE FLAMES.

Every time she pushes now, it's like pressing her back onto a hot skillet. But she does. Gritting teeth, sweating...

EXT. TRUCK / ABANDONED BUILDING - SAME TIME

... AND SCREAMING.

THIS gets the attention of the three remaining ISIS boys. They trade looks.

Yep. Distant SCREAMING, MUFFLED. They're not imagining it.

The Masked Soldier who lit the fire walks back toward the truck, more apprehensively than he should for someone hearing a woman yelling helplessly.

The OPEN TRUCK TRAILER is now a SMOKE FILLED BOX with a few remaining rugs that no one wanted to plunder.

He hears POUNDING... COUGHING... WOOD BREAKING? ...

ISIS SOLDIER #1
(in Arabic)
Who's in there?

Then SILENCE.

He takes the final steps toward the truck, shielding his face from the heat when --

BANG-BANG-BANG!

He drops as PAZ comes running from inside the trailer, also shielding her face from the SMOKE and FLAMES.

The TWO CARD PLAYERS, proverbial dicks in their hands, can't even grab their weapons before Paz races toward them, COUGHING, STUMBLING, and SHOOTING.

She EMPTIES HER CLIP. They die.

It's inelegant, but hey, give her a break.

PAZ
(collapsing)
Fuck. Shit. FUCK.

She kneels next to her too-slow victims and grabs an AK-47.

Coughing, hyperventilating, looking around panicked.
Realizing she wasn't exactly a ninja with those gunshots.

Right on cue, VOICES YELLING from inside the structure.

They're going to come get her.

But who is "they?" And where-the-overheated-Hell *is* she?

INT. STRUCTURE - HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Inside the rundown building, we follow TWO MORE ISIS SOLDIERS following the sound, walking down the hallway in no huge hurry. More annoyed than worried.

ISIS SOLDIER #2
What the fuck is going--

AUTOMATIC RIFLE SPRAY puts them both down. Quick and LOUD.

INT. STRUCTURE - VARIOUS HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

The scene is one continuous shot, unflinching, as Paz saunters her way through the hallways of the grimy building, SHOOTING DOWN ISIS SOLDIERS like a video game from Hell.

It's not stylized. It feels real. Sickeningly real.

Less John Wick, more wide-eyed Clarice Starling in Buffalo Bill's basement. Paz is terrified. In battle mode. Still completely unaware of her surroundings.

She takes down EIGHT MEN total. Turning corners. Exchanging bursts of fire.

Then, checking each DOORWAY for danger as she passes, she enters a particular doorway to see --

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - STRUCTURE - SAME TIME

-- A MAN TIED TO A CHAIR.

Alone in a tiled room. Beaten and bleeding from the head.

Staring back at her, with a defeated, neutral gaze.

*(We recognize him as the MAN FROM THE TRUCK. Paz has never seen him before, though).

No time to make sense of this fucked up mess. She checks the room, clears it, and exits back into the --

INT. STRUCTURE - VARIOUS HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

-- hallway she came from. It's unnervingly quiet, except we swear we can HEAR Paz's heartbeat.

She's about to choose which way to explore next, when a sound makes her decision for her:

GUNSHOTS. WAVES OF THEM.

MEN YELLING, then SILENCED.

SHELLS landing on tile floors, with an echo.

Then a single THUMPING SOUND. Repetitive. Metronomic.

Paz steels herself and walks toward it.

Thump... Thump... Thump...

TURNING THE CORNER, she sees:

A complete fucking mess. SIX DEAD ISIS SOLDIERS. Shredded. Blood pooling. Guns by their sides.

One has a DAGGER buried in his head, the handle sticking out from beneath his chin. (Yeah, *that* way.)

And while he's very much dead, some leftover reflex is making his leg KICK the hallway wall:

Thump... Thump... Thump...

Paz stares at it, wondering what we should be wondering, too: If they were coming to shoot Paz, who shot *them*?

But alas, no time for thinking...

REVEAL: A GUN BARREL pressed to the back of Paz's head.

EZO (O.S.)
[Kurdish command]

PAZ
I don't underst--

EZO
(in English now)
Drop your weapon.

Paz complies.

EZO (CONT'D)
Turn around.

Paz complies again.

And is rightly angry at herself for not hearing SIX SOLDIERS sneak up behind her. Our "Ghosts." Our pack of badasses.

But strangers to Paz.

Paz watches as the MAN FROM THE TRUCK is freed and let out of the interrogation room, joining them. A familiar ally.

None of this makes sense.

Seyda approaches Paz. Two great rebels, face to face.

SEYDA
My name is Seyda Nahai. Who the fuck are you?

Off Paz, CUT TO:

INT. COVERED TRUCK BED - DAY

We're rumbling along in the back of a covered truck.

The GHOSTS sit, scattered around, casual. And the MAN FROM THE TRUCK, known better as ABERGEL(40), sits directly across from Paz, staring inquisitively.

The back of Paz's shirt is pulled over her shoulders, as her BURNS are being salved and bandaged by Gerdana (the shy, booksmart Ghost).

A beat, as Paz and Abergel stare at each other in silence.

Paz couldn't look more tired.

ABERGEL
You're the one from the news.

PAZ
You're the one from the truck.

ABERGEL

And the chair. Being kindly beaten
and tortured.

PAZ

If I'd known everyone here spoke
English, I wouldn't have butchered
my Arabic manual for two years.

ABERGEL

I speak English. Seyda and Ezo
speak it. Gerdana, a bit. The rest,
mostly Kurdish.

A jolt of hope brightens Paz's eyes.

PAZ

(to the women)

So it is you? The Ghosts?

(off their poker faces)

The Women of the Desert. The Soul
Takers.

ABERGEL

You forgot "Gatekeepers of
Paradise."

EZO

Where did you hear of The Ghosts?

PAZ

Are you kidding? You're legends on
the bases. Everyone out here's
heard of you.

EZO

And what exactly do they hear?

PAZ

That you're like Special Forces,
only you're all women. And ISIS
doesn't much like fighting women.

(off their poker faces)

They say a bullet from you sends
them to whatever version of Hell
they've got.

GERDANA

"Jahannam."

PAZ

No seventy-two virgins. No
martyrdom. Game over.

No one's confirming or denying any of this, so...

PAZ (CONT'D)

Look, the Wind said you're the only ones in the Peshmerga that go behind enemy lines out here, and--

SEYDA

(finally speaking)

The Wind is dead. Someone knew our friend was on his way to meet us. They found our friend. We found them.

(adding)

You weren't part of any plan.

EZO

No one told us about some frightened American girl.

PAZ

Who said I'm frightened?

EZO

You were covered in your own piss when we found you.

PAZ

Well, it was a long ride.

SEYDA

What's your name?

PAZ

Loya. Paz Loya. Sergeant First Class, US Army.

(actually...)

Until three days ago.

SEYDA

Your brother is a prisoner of Daesh. And you're here to try and save him?

PAZ

That's the short version.

SEYDA

Alone, with nothing but a pistol, on the wrong side of the Caliphate border?

PAZ

Well, that's where you come in.

EZO
(audibly chuckling)
We don't go on suicide missions.

SEYDA
Problem with those is you only get
to do those once.

PAZ
Once is enough for me.

ABERGEL
I think what Seyda means is: if the
might of the US military hasn't
found the men you're looking for,
what makes you think you have a
chance in Hell on your own?

PAZ
I'm sorry, I don't think you've
introduced yourself yet.

ABERGEL
That's right. I haven't.

Okay.

PAZ
(back to the Ghosts)
I have a trade.

No one seems interested.

PAZ (CONT'D)
The location of a prison. Full of
young girls and women. From
villages just like the ones you
come from, if I'm not mistaken.
Trapped and waiting to be sold to
the highest bidder.

Okay, now they're interested. But would never admit it.

PAZ (CONT'D)
Intel on the base calls it The
Dungeon. They found it about six
months ago, just below Mar Mattai.
But it doesn't have any strategic
value to the US at the moment, so,
fuck it. Why tell people like you,
right?

EZO
Bullshit.

PAZ

Bullshit, you don't think it exists, or bullshit, you think you would have found it by now?

EZO

Bullshit, you don't know where it is.

PAZ

So you have heard of it.

Seyda and Ezo look to Abergel who remains stoic.

PAZ (CONT'D)

They say there's a thousand girls in there, maybe more. Isn't that your whole M.O.? Saving young women from monsters?

(pointed)

I can help you save a thousand lives. If you help me save one. That's my trade.

SEYDA

Ezo is right. This is bullshit.

Paz is physically and mentally too exhausted to play games:

PAZ

35.4907 degrees North, 38.4425 degrees East. Guarded by fifteen men, on its best day.

The Ghosts trade looks.

EZO

(in Kurdish)
She's bluffing.

SEYDA

(in Kurdish)
She's begging.

EZO

(In Kurdish)
She's lying.

SEYDA

(In Kurdish)
She's desperate.

EZO
(in Kurdish)
Then she's foolish. Or crazy.

SEYDA
(in Kurdish)
She's alive.

EZO
(in Kurdish)
She's lucky.

And... She's sleeping...

They stop their bickering to find Paz has fallen asleep where she sits.

The adrenaline has worn off. She's completely drained.

And for the first time in a week, she feels safe.

The team shares a look.

Asti, the youngest, covers Paz with her jacket.

GERDANA
(in Kurdish)
So what now?

Off their looks --

GENERAL BURGESS (V.O.)
 (PRE-LAP)
Nothing?

INT. GENERAL'S OFFICE - MILITARY BASE - EVENING

That useless General we met in the beginning - Paz's General from the base - talking to that even-more-useless Corporal.

GENERAL BURGESS
 No phone calls? No contacts made?
 Not a single local noticing a girl
 from fucking TEXAS strolling around
 the streets of Raqqa?

CORPORAL
 No one's claimed her as a prisoner,
 so, it might be safe to assume she
 didn't make it, sir.

GENERAL BURGESS
 "Safe to assume?"

We get the feeling he hates every one of those words.

CORPORAL

(how about:)

A strong possibility.

GENERAL BURGESS

Yes, but that would be too easy,
wouldn't it? And in my experience,
nothing's ever nice and easy.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROADSIDE - DESERT - AFTERNOON

We split between ROB and the CAMERA'S POV of the TWO MEN
RECORDING HIM.

Between the vast desert behind him and his rockstar swagger,
you'd think Rob was Slash in the "November Rain" video.

But alas, no guitar solos here. Just THREE MEN IN FADED
ORANGE SCRUBS - OUR REMAINING SOLDIERS - behind Rob, in the
distance. On their knees.

ROB

Alright, ladies and infidels, lets
end the wait. *From the caliphate-*
you-love-to-hate / Got mens-on-
knees-and-heads-on-plates. What do
you say we get down to business,
yeah? After all: where *is* all of
this going?

CLOSE ON our soldiers.

ROB (CONT'D)

See, I've got in my possession
three more of your brave American
soldier boys. Covered in their own
tears and shit, but otherwise no
worse for wear. And YOU have three
military battalions encroaching on
three of our borders. Damas. Dier
ez Zor. Ramadi. Your president is
famous for making deals. How about
this for a proposal: Retreat your
army now, and I'll send your little
boys home back to their mums. Do
nothing, and every night, for the
next three nights, I'll show you
what one of them looks like without
his head.

He smiles at his pets, upset that they don't find this as amusing as he does.

ROB (CONT'D)
 Now, you might think: *"Oi, he's just gonna body these twats no matter what. Why negotiate with a madman?"* And I suppose that's fair. But if anyone's capable of building a bridge of trust between two nations, it's a diplomat like me, don't you think?

With a smug laugh:

ROB (CONT'D)
 You've got twelve hours.

A truck REVS up off screen.

ROB (CONT'D)
 (with a whistle)
 Alright...

As he walks out of the shot, leaving us with our soldiers:

ROB (CONT'D)
 Movin' on, boys!

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK / EXT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

PAZ wakes in the back of the truck she fell asleep in. It's some time later, but she doesn't know how long.

The Ghosts are gone. She gathers herself.

ABERGEL sits in a folding chair with a cigarette, watching her.

ABERGEL
 Don't worry. I'm just here to make sure you're okay. They thought it might be traumatic for you to wake up in a truck in a strange place again.

Paz looks around. They seem to be parked on some kind of DESERTED FARM, stretching for miles. A SMALL RANCH HOUSE sits on the property.

PAZ
Where are we?

ABERGEL
A safe-house. If you can call
anything "safe" out here.

PAZ
Well, that's reassuring.

ABERGEL
Call me Abergel.
(off Paz's look)
Before. I never introduced myself.
(extending a hand)
I'm Abergel.

PAZ
Abergel. Is that a first name, or a
last name?

ABERGEL
It's a fake name.

PAZ
You and I really need to work on
our trust issues.

ABERGEL
I work in Intelligence. The less
you know about me, the better. I'm
the only thing people out here hate
more than an American soldier.

PAZ
A spy?

ABERGEL
A Jew.

A smile between them.

PAZ
Mossad?

Abergel gives her a smug grin, like that's what a child would
guess.

ABERGEL
Let's just say I'm on your side.
(then, re: the house)
Come on in. They're waiting to see
you.

Paz collects herself and follows Abergel into --

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

-- the ranch house, which is actually pretty cozy for a military "safe house." A family of farmers must have lived here before. Wealthy, too. It's the first truly nice space Paz has seen in a long time. A fireplace, rugs, functioning kitchen, furniture.

The Ghosts are sitting around the couches in the living room talking when they see Paz enter and look up.

Seyda stands. Gets right down to business:

SEYDA

What would justice be for you?
Rescuing your brother alive or
killing the men who took him?

PAZ

Can't it be both?

SEYDA

Killing them is vengeance. Only God
brings justice.

PAZ

Well, no offense, but I don't
believe in God. So to me, any
justice in this life is gonna get
done right here.

SEYDA

We're in the business of freeing
the innocent. If wicked men are in
our way, so be it. But punishment
for its own sake, that can send you
fighting the wrong battles.

(then)

Didn't anyone ever tell you to
choose your battles?

PAZ

Yeah. I chose all of them.

Ezo grins.

EZO

(in Kurdish)

I'm starting to like her.

SEYDA
(back to Paz)
Abergel looked into it. Your
coordinates check out. As well as
your intel. So. As a show of
gratitude...

She glances to her still-skeptical peers.

SEYDA (CONT'D)
We've decided to help you.

Before Paz can fully light up -

SEYDA (CONT'D)
But we have to do it our way.
Surgical. Calculated. Coordinated.
We don't run and gun here.

PAZ
Of course.

SEYDA
But that takes time. This isn't an
easy one. We need time to make a
proper plan.

PAZ
Right, only -

ABERGEL
Only time is of the essence.

PAZ
(hating that she's on the
verge of begging again)
Yes.

SEYDA
Abergel put a call in to a friend
or two. The moment we hear from
them - we form a plan that will
keep us all alive. From there, we
don't waste a single second. I
Promise.

Paz thinks, but Abergel can't help but point out:

ABERGEL
Considering your only other option
is a service pistol and a really
long walk in the desert...

Of course. Paz straightens up, and extends a hand for Seyda to shake.

PAZ
Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - SAFE HOUSE - DAY

Paz taking a much-needed shower. That exhausted, face-right-in-the-water-stream kind, leaning with one arm against the tiles. Burns on her back. Scrapes and bruises all over her.

QUICK SHOTS: Towels herself off. Faces herself in the mirror.

Gets dressed in new clothes the Ghosts have given her. It's by no means a uniform, but it does make her look like one of them.

She makes her way out into the --

INT. BEDROOM - SAFE HOUSE - DAY

-- bedroom, where a bunch of COTS are set up among an ARSENAL WEAPONS. Every RIFLE you can imagine. Boxes of AMMO. EXPLOSIVES. KNIVES. Some lying right on the pillows.

PAZ
(to herself)
Cozy.

When a polite KNOCK at the door brings her attention to Gerdana (the Book Smart one).

GERDANA
We're going to start cooking, if
you'd like to join.

PAZ
Thanks, but I'm not much of a cook.

Gerdana doesn't smile at her joke.

GERDANA
It's tradition here. Everyone cooks
together. Everyone eats together.
(then)
Please. Join us.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - SAFE HOUSE - DAY

MONTAGE of the Ghosts and Paz preparing a large meal.
Chopping vegetables, rolling dough, setting the table.

MUSIC plays over, so we don't hear them, but we see them bonding. Smiling. Even Paz. Then -

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAFE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Paz and the Ghosts sit around a table in the living room, mid-feast, mid-conversation. MUSIC plays from an old stereo.

Asti clears plates and refills drinks as everyone talks - This feels customary, like - despite being a trained killer - she's still paying her dues. As she goes back into the kitchen:

GERDANA

Asti's our newest. She wanted to fight beside us after we freed her village. And Belar -- She's been with us two years now.

PAZ

(re: Belar's SCARS)
Can -- um... Can I ask...?

GERDANA

Bad things. By bad men.

Understatement, but yeah, Paz gets the picture.

EZO

Don't worry. She's made sure to pay them back since.

Paz looks to Belar. Belar doesn't speak much - but her head is always held high, as if her disfigurement is a badge of honor, and her fierce eyes are all the beauty she needs.

PAZ

(to Gerdana)
How about you?

GERDANA

I was accepted to University, actually. A scholarship. In London.

EZO

(adding, like a proud mom)
At sixteen.

GERDANA

But I couldn't leave. There was too much to be done here.

PAZ

Handing back a first class ticket out of here? That's a brave choice.

GERDANA

It was the only choice.

PAZ

So you're saints as well as soldiers?

EZO

Not me. I was just good at it. I don't have a sad story. Or a noble story. I was strong. And mean. And fearless... And bored.

Gerdana smiles, knowing Ezo goes far deeper than that, but doesn't like people seeing her as anything but a badass.

PAZ

A born warrior.

EZO

"Warrior." That's a good word. A soldier fights because she's ordered to. A warrior fights because she wants to.

SEYDA

Or has to.

It's the first thing Seyda's said, so it weighs a bit more. Everyone is quiet for a beat until --

Asti re-enters with more PLATES OF FOOD, setting them down and serving Paz first.

PAZ

(to Asti)

Thank you.

(to everyone)

All this, and you guys can cook, too.

GERDANA

You helped.

PAZ

I chopped.

There's a brief moment, as the food is passed around, where everything feels sublimely safe, and familial.

Paz can't help but be reminded...

PAZ (CONT'D)
My brother used to do all the
cooking.

The Ghosts trade slight glances.

PAZ (CONT'D)
Our parents passed away, and -
Well, I think he was so tired of me
feeding him hot dogs and Easy Mac
that he learned how to do all the
cooking, and cleaning, and...

For the first time since we've met Paz, long-overdue tears
well up in her eyes --

-- and spill over.

She catches them as quick as they fall.

PAZ (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Seyda reaches out and puts a hand on Paz's shoulder.

And remember, they haven't even formally shaken hands yet.

The Ghosts, especially Ezo, look surprised by her overt
compassion for this stranger.

SEYDA
I used to have a brother, too.
You can cry. It's not weak.

Paz looks to Seyda with grateful eyes, but composes herself.

PAZ
I'm fine. I'm okay.

She tries to laugh it off - or at the very least, lighten the
mood:

PAZ (CONT'D)
So. What's for dessert?

CUT TO:

A COLD METAL TRAY WITH A FLY CRAWLING ON IT. Bringing us to --

INT. TRUCK BED - SOMEWHERE HOT - DAY

-- the back of a covered truck bed, where Arnold (The Sick Soldier) lies on his side, weak.

An empty beat-up plastic WATER BOTTLE and a PLATE with some discarded crumbs by his side.

Next to him, Scrubs stares down at the same meal, only he hasn't eaten his yet:

A stale piece of flat bread on a metal plate, and a bottle of water.

There aren't any guards with them back here. It's too hot.

So scrubs, despite his restraints, carefully scoots next to his ailing buddy.

He takes the tiniest sip of water, if only to balm his bleeding-chapped lips and feel the SLIGHTEST relief in his throat...

But then hands the bottle to Arnold.

SCRUBS

Arnold. Wake up. Drink this.

No response. He nudges.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)

Hey. Drink this. You need the hydration.

Arnold opens his tired eyes and mumbles:

ARNOLD

Don't.

SCRUBS

Come on, buddy --

ARNOLD

Stop. I'm gonna die, man.

SCRUBS

You don't know that. We don't know what's gonna happen, okay?

Arnold is too weak to argue, and is so thirsty, with such a fever, he parses his lips and lets Scrubs pour the entire bottle into his mouth.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)

Good.

He rubs Arnold's head like a child fading to sleep.

SCRUBS (CONT'D)

We're gonna be okay.

From the corner of the truck, Khan stares at Scrubs, both admiring his selflessness and pitying his optimism.

CUT TO:

INT. SAFE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Inside the safe house, Asti (the young one) cleans dishes in the kitchen. In the living room, Nusa cleans and dismantles a small cache of weapons while Gerdana plays chess against herself.

Through an open door, we see Seyda and Abergel, pacing and talking intensely in a back room.

Paz sits, propped near a window - so tense, she's making the chair she's sitting on nervous.

Ezo walks over with TWO GLASSES OF WHISKEY. Hands one to Paz.

PAZ

You're allowed to drink?

EZO

Remember, we're not Muslim, we're Yazidi. We pray five times a day, but we can drink. We can dance. We just can't eat lettuce - and our God is a Peacock Angel.

Paz wonders if she's joking. She's not. Paz politely smiles.

EZO (CONT'D)

You're welcome to pray to Him too, if you'd like.

PAZ

Thanks but - I don't pray.

EZO

Don't you think now's a good time to start?

Paz does a slight salute with her glass. Takes a swig.

PAZ

You know, I'm the reason my brother joined the army. His whole life he just wanted to be a doctor. But he followed me here first. I'm the one who always ran straight into trouble. He's the one who tried to fix it.

She polishes her drink and stares into the empty glass.

PAZ (CONT'D)

The part I can't get over is that I asked him if he was scared when he got here. He said "Why should I be? My big sis has my back."

EZO

It's not over.

Paz refuses to cry again - but -

PAZ

Every minute I wait...

POV: ACROSS THE LIVING ROOM - through the doorway, she sees Seyda and Abergel leaning over a map on a table like two of Churchill's generals.

EZO

They're working on it.
(off Paz's concern)
Don't worry you're not in there.
It's not you. Abergel shares things with Seyda he doesn't share with us.

PAZ

You mean they're...

A couple?

EZO

(laughing)

No.

(actually)

I don't think so.

(then)

No. They'll make a plan, like they always do. And we'll succeed, like we always do.

PAZ

You must be pretty confident in her.

EZO

Seyda? The best part about Seyda is that you'd follow her into certain death, but she's so good, you'll never have to. She wanted to do things differently: Choose smaller battles. Control emotions. Fight smarter. Focus on those you want to save, not those you want to kill.

PAZ

(with a smile)

Don't be a hothead driven by vengeance and rage?

EZO

Seyda can be - what's the word? - merciful. But to get to the people you want to save, you come across a few you have to kill.

(matching Paz's smile)

I try to make sure there's time for both.

PAZ

Cheers to that.

Abergel and Seyda finally enter the room with their plan. Time is of the essence. All eyes are on them.

ABERGEL

We found a way in. But I am going to warn you, you're not going to like the sound of it.

EZO

Well, this is off to a fun start.

ABERGEL

Sheikk Hilal Road. Through East Hama.

Paz doesn't follow, but the rest don't seem enthused.

GERDANA

You have a plane chartered?

ABERGEL

We drive.

EZO
You're crazy.

ABERGEL
I'm serious.

GERDANA
Sheikk Hilal? The deadliest road in Syria?

EZO
The deadliest road in the world.

ABERGEL
I told you you wouldn't like the sound of it.

SEYDA
But it's not.

Seyda's calm confidence brings the conversation back to reality. She nods to Abergel:

SEYDA (CONT'D)
Tell them.

ABERGEL
One of my contacts on the inside says it's been depopulated. No one's foolish enough to drive it anymore. The checkpoints are thin. Missiles have gone where they're needed more. My guy says it's the safest place to penetrate right now in all of the North.

EZO
But there still are checkpoints?

ABERGEL
Only one we need to get past.

PAZ
So what's your plan?

Paz says it with zero incredulity - she's ready for anything, just say the word. The others, not so much.

SEYDA
We ambush them. Kill everyone at the checkpoint. Make it look like someone else did it.

ABERGEL

(to Paz)

Once we're past, my contact will help get your brother safely to us, from the inside out. No one will have to fire another shot, if it all goes right.

EZO

That's a big "if."

ABERGEL

It's a big plan.

GERDANA

I'm sure there's more to it than that?

ABERGEL

Plenty. But that's step one.

Again, no one is enthused.

SEYDA

It'll work. We can do it. We leave at sundown.

(before Paz can talk)

We need the night.

EZO

(raising her hand
sarcastically)

Just one question. How exactly are six women just going to roll up and kill a bunch of border guards before they ever get suspicious?

ABERGEL

A little sleight of hand...

CUT TO:

INT. ISIS PRISON CELL - SOMEWHERE AWFUL - EVENING

Lights slap on and buzz to life. The ugly kind. Fluorescent, caged in wire.

We're in a basement holding cell. Stone walls, iron bars. It's cold. Medieval. Cozy, if you're the Man in the Iron Mask.

Our soldiers are spread about, Arnold (The Sick Soldier) lying down, Scrubs and Khan (the Interpreter) against the wall. HANDS TIED BEHIND THEIR BACKS. MOUTHS TAPED.

Rob stomps in with a morning-cup-of-coffee pep.

ROB

Alright, my sweeties. Them drugs should be kickin' in nice and toasty right about now. Today we're going to play a little game. A children's game. Good fun, I promise.

The usual HENCHMAN with a CAMERA enters.

We're pretty sure this isn't ending well.

ROB (CONT'D)

Did you know kids play "Duck, Duck, Goose" in Syria? They don't have ducks here. And they definitely don't have fuckin' geese. But they have this damn game. Only they call it, "Bata, Bata, Bijea."

The Cameraman finds an angle as another HENCHMAN props up the boys, one by one, making them face each other in a circle.

Rob takes out his signature KNIFE.

ROB (CONT'D)

And it's a great fuckin' game when you think about it. In what other game does a player wield such power? Walking around with your peers huddled on the ground in fear. In complete control. Choosing mercy, mercy, mercy, and then striking, without warning.

(as he circles them)

Bata... Bata... Bata...

With each pass, he gently touches their heads with his hand.

ROB (CONT'D)

Now, it's starting to hurt my feelings that you chaps think I'm some sadist who puts you through these exercises for my own pleasure. That couldn't be further from the truth.

(MORE)

ROB (CONT'D)

Like the Karate Kid waxing on and waxing off, everything I do is to teach you a higher lesson. So what's your lesson today? What's the point of this little charade?

(more serious now)

March 30th, 2017. Taqba, northern Syria. A US drone strike kills eighty-four civilians. Thirty of them, children. And do you know what game the children were playing when their lives were so casually snuffed out? Starting to see where this is going?

This time around, he lightly POKES the spear of the knife into their foreheads.

ROB (CONT'D)

Bata... Bata... Bata... Bata...

They wince, or lean back, but they take it.

Beads of blood roll onto their faces.

ROB (CONT'D)

See, you call us terrorists. But we're grown men, suited up, fighting a fucking war. Terror is being a civilian, huddled in fear, waiting for your turn to be stamped out. Terror is an enemy that doesn't even show up to fight, but pushes a button, while an unmanned drone turns you to ashes from a world away. *TERROR* is making innocent children afraid of a blue fucking sky.

(with much more force now,
tugging their hair)

Bata... Bata... Bata...

Staring at Scrubs --

ROB (CONT'D)

Bijea...

He instead tilts Khan's head back and SLICES HIS NECK.

Khan tries to fight, but he's a gazelle on the nature channel. It's ugly.

Arnold lunges to fight, but he's drugged and bound and sick, so he collapses with a helpless grunt.

The HENCHMAN pulls him away, as we switch to the --

VIDEO CAMERA POV: ZOOM IN on Rob who stops his monstrous sawing long enough to break the fourth wall with sociopathic calmness:

ROB (CONT'D)
Two more days. Say the word, and we
can stop playing games.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAFE HOUSE - EVENING

Paz stares out the window at the late afternoon sun, feeling time pass slower than it ever has in her life.

Seyda approaches.

SEYDA
I've been in your position before,
you know.
(off Paz's look)
I mean, I've had to wait, ready,
eager to rescue someone I loved.
But I promise, no matter how hard
you stare at that sun, it won't set
any faster.

Paz returns her jaded stare to the low-hanging sun above the mountains.

PAZ
What happened?

Seyda doesn't understand...

PAZ (CONT'D)
To the person you waited to rescue?

SEYDA
(choosing to be honest)
I was too late.

Paz nods as one does when nothing in the world is reassuring.

SEYDA (CONT'D)
But I wasn't the fighter I am now.
And I wasn't as careful.

Paz turns her focus from the setting sun to study her mysterious sister-in-arms for a beat.

PAZ
Well, I'm sorry.

SEYDA
Me too.

Paz has never seen Seyda even *approach* vulnerable, so she's unsure how tender to let this moment get. But there's something between them. A kinship of tragedy with a stranger on the other side of the world.

Looking back to the sunset:

PAZ
Where would you rather be right now?

SEYDA
Where would I rather be?

PAZ
You never play that game with yourself, when something fucked up is happening? Imagine if everything had turned out different?

SEYDA
Why did you join the army?

PAZ
Because I wanted to serve my country.
(seeing Seyda isn't happy with such a pat answer)
Because I couldn't get into college. Because they said women couldn't fight in combat, and I wanted to prove them wrong.

SEYDA
Yet you deserted. You left it all behind.

PAZ
For a cause.

SEYDA
And when your cause is over?

PAZ
I don't know. I guess I'll be done fighting.

SEYDA

Well I joined my army when I was fourteen. I joined because half the women I know have been kidnapped into slavery. Half the men I know have been killed. You fight for some idea. For identity. For vengeance. We fight for existence. You ask where I'd rather be, but I don't understand. We win a battle, it's back to the fight. We free the enslaved, it's back to the fight. And even when we get our vengeance, it's back to the fight.

(adding)

There's nowhere I'd rather be.

Well, shit. There's nothing Paz can say to that.

So she doesn't.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

TIME-LAPSE shots of the mountainous desert, as day flips like a coin into night. MUSIC builds.

It's go time.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - ISIS TERRITORY - NIGHT

A TRUCK being driven by ASTI (the young one) with NUSA (the big, strong one) in shotgun comes into frame on an isolated highway. Driving QUICKLY, almost erratically.

HIGH BEAMS piercing the darkness.

Then it passes us, and we stay on the side of the road.

We feel like we're lagging behind the action, when A SECOND TRUCK speeds by us, hidden in the darkness:

HEADLIGHTS OFF, BRAKE LIGHTS REMOVED, literally CLOAKED in THICK BLACK TARPS AND CURTAINS. The love child of Humvee and a Ring Wraith.

And we go --

INT. CLOAKED TRUCK - NIGHT

-- inside, where only the soft glow of a lantern illuminates the covered rear cabin. The low-rent version of the green "Lights-Out" setting in a military aircraft.

And the vibe is exactly the same. You'd think we were about to descend on Bin Laden's compound.

Ezo, Seyda, Gerdana, and Paz sit facing each other like German Shepherds, poised and focused. Guns at their sides. Occasionally swaying from the rough bumps of the road.

PAZ

I've been thinking about what you asked me.

Everyone looks to Paz, but it's clear she's talking to Seyda.

PAZ (CONT'D)

Before. About why I fight.

She struggles to finish, because this part's hard to admit:

PAZ (CONT'D)

It was an escape. A way out, from everything. From having to face responsibility. From looking after the one person who ever needed me. But it all followed me. And now that I'm ready to face it...

Seyda's lived through the nightmare running through Paz's brain right now, and won't let her punish herself any more.

SEYDA

We're not too late.

There's an assuredness to Seyda's tone. True belief, like a sinner counting on absolution. Maybe this mission isn't just about Paz and her brother.

But before we start speculating on their thoughts --

EXT. DESERT ROAD - ISIS TERRITORY - NIGHT

On the side of the road, THE SHELL of a US MILITARY TANK lies on its side like an elephant carcass.

Hiding behind its underbelly is a REBEL VILLAGER with an AK-47 who sees the HEADLIGHTS of the lead Ghost truck approaching...

INT. LEAD TRUCK - NIGHT

Asti and Nusa see MUZZLE FLASHES crack off from the roadside.

POP-POP-POP - Bullets ping off the truck's grill.

A stray CRACK is put in the windshield.

But Asti SLAMS on the gas and --

EXT. DESERT NIGHT - ISIS TERRITORY - NIGHT

-- the truck WHOOSHES past as our Villager shoots in vain at the passenger side.

A SECOND REBEL runs into the road with a bigger toy:
A Shoulder-mounted ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADE LAUNCHER (RPG).

INT. LEAD TRUCK - NIGHT

Picking up a WALKIE-TALKIE:

NUSA
(In Kurdish)
Right side. Two of them.

She checks the rearview to confirm, and sure enough...

EXT. DESERT NIGHT - ISIS TERRITORY - NIGHT

As the Rebel steadies the launcher on his shoulder --

POP-POP. With a hiss and a thud, a bullet finds each man.

A drive-by shooting from a truck they never saw.

The rebels drop, and BOTH TRUCKS screech to a halt.

The Cloaked Truck backs up to the scene.

INT. CLOAKED TRUCK - NIGHT

SEYDA
(to Paz and Gerdana)
 Stay here.

Seyda nods to Ezo who jumps out the rear with her.

IN THE ROAD:

Rifles ready, they inspect the TWO DEAD BODIES, and plant two rounds in each for good measure.

Ezo inspect the surrounding area, making sure there aren't any more men.

EZO
(calling out)
All clear.

IN THE CLOAKED TRUCK:

Seyda and Ezo rejoin, and the truck pulls out.

Slow at first, as if turning the corners of a haunted house - waiting for something to jump out.

Hell, it even *feels* haunted out here.

SHELLS OF TANKS and BURNT-OUT CARS line the road like skeletons in a pirate cave. This highway is a boneyard.

But after a moment, they pick up speed.

BACK AT THE SITE:

With the trucks far in the distance, we PAN ACROSS the two DEAD BODIES in the road.

As a PAIR OF SANDALS WALKS INTO FRAME.

Not good.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

ESTABLISH the desert at night. The crescent moon, barely shining. Plenty of stars, but the world still looks black.

(MUSIC plays over).

A bird's eye view of the trucks forging through the burnt-out wasteland. Getting closer.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHECK POINT - DESERT ROAD - ISIS TERRITORY - NIGHT

We've seen a checkpoint like this before. Not unlike the one where The Wind was executed.

A few TRUCKS, headlights on, in a semi-circle.

A GATE that stretches across the road.

No one's standing outside. It's dark and cold and no one much drives this way these days.

But TWO GUARDS get out when they see the SWERVING HEADLIGHTS approaching.

CHECK POINT GUARD #1
(in Arabic)
HEY!
(waiving his arms)
Slow down! Stop the vehicle!

The Guard reaches for the RIFLE strapped around his shoulder, aiming it when --

The TRUCK finally SLOWS, seemingly respecting the checkpoint.

FOUR OTHER MEN get out of the idling trucks, making a total of SIX very suspicious men with GUNS.

And remember - for right now - we're in the guards' POV.

All we see is dust floating in front of TWO BRIGHT HIGH BEAMS from a single truck. Then, we hear a VOICE:

ASTI (O.S.)
(in Arabic)
Help! Please! My father, he's very
sick. PLEASE.

We walk with the first Guard to the drivers' side.

And with the Second guard to the passenger side.

Flashlights illuminate.

Inside the truck - ASTI - who looks no older than a teenager, is faux-crying, holding up her hands.

CHECK POINT GUARD #1
What's going on in there?

ASTI
Please! Sir, my father, he needs
help...

They look to the PASSENGER SEAT, where a large body is slumped over under blankets.

The guards look to each other. Both a bit on guard, and both the slightest bit hesitant about handling some diseased farmer right now.

As they look to each other, we QUICKLY JUMP --

EXT. DESERT ROAD - ISIS TERRITORY - NIGHT

-- TWO HUNDRED YARDS BACK, where the doors of our idling CLOAKED TRUCK quietly open, and FIVE PAIRS OF BOOTS hit the dirt and scatter with precision.

It's Zero Dark Thirty back here.

EXT. CHECK POINT - DESERT ROAD - ISIS TERRITORY - NIGHT

Back at the checkpoint, Asti does her best to stall -

ASTI
Do you have a first aid kit?

CHECK POINT GUARD #2
(leaning to the window,
cautiously)
What's wrong with him?

Both Guards are next to the open windows now.

Their FOUR COMRADES stand back, guns relaxed, but ready.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - ISIS TERRITORY - SAME TIME

QUICK FLASHES to the Ghosts, CLAD IN BLACK, splitting up like a pack of wolves into the desert...

EXT. CHECK POINT - DESERT ROAD - ISIS TERRITORY - NIGHT

CHECK POINT GUARD #1
You. Get out of the truck.

ASTI
(leaning over)
Baba, --

CHECK POINT GUARD #1
NOT HIM. Just you.

Asti nods. And she should get an Oscar for the faux concern she's showing her not-father.

She turns to un-click her belt...

PULLS OUT A HANDGUN and PLANTS A BULLET IN THE GUARD'S FOREHEAD.

On cue, NUSA springs up from beneath her blanket and --

-- POP-POP. Goodnight, Guard #2.

Then, as we can probably predict, the WHIZZING OF BULLETS from our sniping Ghosts rains down on the four remaining halfwits -

BUT...

This time, not everything is such a slam dunk.

A SERIES OF TRUCK LIGHTS TURN ON - like a stadium at night, illuminating the road from behind the checkpoint.

There were FIVE OR SIX TRUCKS we didn't know were there.

A lot of doors begin opening.

And a lot of men begin jumping out.

Shit.

EZO
What the fuck is this?

SEYDA
No clue.
(shooting)
Stay cool.

EZO
(shooting twice as fast)
I don't stay cool.

WE JUMP AROUND to various positions as all Hell kicks off -

Everyone scatters, firing in the dark.

Nusa and Asti hold position for a moment, then desert their vehicle to run back to the CLOAKED TRUCK.

Only MUZZLE FLASHES light up the night. It's near-chaos to the observer - but those involved seem to know where to aim. BURSTS of fire. SCREAMS. Figures silhouetted in beaming headlights.

SEYDA
(calling out)
Back to the truck. *Let's go!*

An IED EXPLODES and CHUNKS OF A MAN fly into the night sky.

Okay... so there are IEDs out here, too. Great.

ISIS FIGHTER
 (to his men)
 Stay on the road!

A SECOND WAVE of men comes running through the headlights.

PAZ sees that this isn't ending.

She digs in, between the truck and the guard post, guarding the thin road access like the Greeks at Thermopylae.

Finds Seyda as the others retreat safely:

PAZ
 Go! I'll be right there!

Seyda readies her rifle to help her, but Paz pushes it away.

PAZ (CONT'D)
 GO!

And returns to her metronomic fire. Left to right. Right to left. An oscillating fan dispensing hollow points.

Seyda reluctantly retreats to the rear truck in the darkness, where the Ghosts are mounting up.

Nusa revs the ignition.

And as Seyda climbs in, she looks at the encroaching force and realizes Paz isn't coming out of this.

Nusa shifts into gear -

SEYDA
 Wait!

Bullets PING off their truck and CRACK the windshield.

EZO
 (to Nusa)
 Let's go!

SEYDA
 WAIT --

EZO
 (to Seyda)
 We have to go NOW!

Nusa kicks it in reverse, then fishtails around, gunning it back the way they came.

The enemy trucks posture to get around the barricade, but Paz's steady fire (and the IEDs lining the road) keeps them at bay long enough for the Ghosts to get a head start.

We wonder why they don't just run Paz over, but it becomes clear...

These people like their enemies captured. Alive.

Like a pack of hyenas circling a wounded giraffe, the men close in, keeping their cover as Paz doles out her remaining rifle rounds.

Then her handgun. Emptying a clip...

Loading another one...

Getting sloppier with each round, as if every shot is screaming "FUCK YOU."

Finally, just CLICKS. Empty trigger pulls, accompanied by the enemy's SHOUTS - coordinating how to close in on her.

She's finished. And she didn't even leave one in the chamber to take herself out.

FLASHLIGHTS click on all around her.

She spins like a cornered animal, taking aim with her unloaded weapon...

Then finally drops to her knees, under SCREAMED COMMANDS she doesn't understand.

PAZ
(to herself, or whoever's
listening:)
Fuck.

She puts her hands behind her head.

Game over.

CUT TO:

INT. SAFE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

It's later. Much later.

Abergel sits in a chair, awaiting the Ghosts. From his face, we guess he already knows what went down.

Seyda BURSTS in, livid:

ABERGEL
Before you say anything, --

SEYDA
Fuck you!

ABERGEL
You should consider yourself lucky.

SEYDA
Lucky? We almost died out there.
Every one of us.

ABERGEL
And the "almost" part is why you
should feel lucky.

SEYDA
You said it was the easiest way in.

ABERGEL
It *is*.

SEYDA
You said you had a man on the
inside.

ABERGEL
I *do*. But -- look, he gives us the
best information he can. He's not
in command.

SEYDA
It was stupid. The whole plan.

ABERGEL
Did you have a better one?

SEYDA
That's what we rely on you for.

ABERGEL
We took a gamble. And we lost.

SEYDA
WE took a gamble. YOU sat back and
let trouble find us. Which seems to
be a pattern with you lately.

ABERGEL
Are you questioning my loyalty?

SEYDA
Maybe just your ability.

This just became personal. Abergel won't stand to have his loyalty OR ability questioned.

ABERGEL

You lost the American girl. After she already gave you everything you need to move on.

SEYDA

So that's it, then? She's expendable?

ABERGEL

Your concern for her is admirable. Touching, even. But you and I are in the business of getting results. Not tilting at windmills.

SEYDA

We left her.

ABERGEL

You had to.

SEYDA

We failed.

ABERGEL

You lived.

Abergel's not apologizing. And even if he did, Seyda's not in the forgiving mood. Not for him. Not for herself.

She exits almost as abruptly as she entered.

CUT TO:

INT. PAZ'S PRISON CELL - ISIS VILLAGE - DAY

It feels like morning. But hot as high noon.

Paz is bound to a chair in a dusty, quiet cell, lit by a square of sunlight beaming through an IRON-BARRED WINDOW in the wall.

She's sweaty, and tired. We have no idea how long she's been sitting here.

Arnold (the SICK SOLDIER) lies DEAD ON THE FLOOR. A FLY lands and crawls on his open eyes and mouth.

This is a nightmare.

Paz struggles, as if for the hundredth time, to loosen her restraints in vain. She quits. Returns her look to Arnold.

ROB (O.S.)
Oh, him?

ROB enters the open doorway. And for the first time, Paz gets a look at the monster she's been hunting, in the flesh.

ROB (CONT'D)
He died, sadly. And to be honest, I was rooting for him to pull through.

Only something is VERY STRANGE:

HE ISN'T TALKING LIKE "ROB."

His accent is more like Anthony Hopkins than an East-End grime rapper.

His cadence is calm. His volume, composed.

Paz's eyes say what we're thinking: *What the actual fuck?*

ROB (CONT'D)
They call me Rob. Who might you be?

If Rob really doesn't know who Paz is, she's not about to give it away.

PAZ
No one important.

ROB
Now, now. What kind of self-esteem is that?

PAZ
You sound different in person.

ROB
Never meet your heroes, they say.

PAZ
So what, then? This is all fake?

Rob casually looks back to the DEAD BODY in the corner.

ROB
Does it look fake to you?
(then)
(MORE)

ROB (CONT'D)

I'm offended you don't grant me more depth than my on-screen persona. All opinions are trademarked and my own, and I believe my work speaks for itself, BUT - you're a service member, you understand. We operate in recruitment industries. And it's difficult to gather the masses --
 (dipping into "Rob" accent)
 -- *when you don't sound like the masses.*

PAZ

So, what are you, then?

ROB

That's the brilliant part. I'm whatever you need me to be, so long as you hate me.

Mission accomplished, but Paz remains cobalt cool.

ROB (CONT'D)

Now, back to our friend in the corner. I swear, I didn't even kill the poor lad, he just up and died on his own. Well - I suppose my neglect in treating his maladies may have expedited his departure, but now we're into semantics. And I hate semantics.

(a beat)

This is all to say I'm short one soldier.

PAZ

Lucky you, then.

ROB

You have no idea. Imagine my exquisite surprise when I wake to the news that we've snagged ourselves another red-blooded Yankee playing cowboy in the desert. And not just that... She's the SISTER of the charming young medic we've been having so much fun with. That's not just luck. That's divine intervention.

The penny drops. Paz knew she wouldn't be so lucky. This maniacal creep knows EXACTLY who she is and what she wants.

She stays composed, despite his odious, smug smile.

PAZ
Where is he?

ROB
Nowhere important.

Paz SPITS on Rob's chest, wishing it had hit his face.

PAZ
Where is he?

But Rob remains - as if determined to be seen as - calm.

ROB
It is touching that you came all this way to try and save him. But I don't think you give your brother enough credit. He's not as weak as he appears, you know. Just like your not as strong as you appear.

PAZ
Want to know how strong I am? Untie me.

ROB
Not a great negotiator, either.

PAZ
What are you afraid of?

ROB
Do I seem afraid?

PAZ
Terrified. Of dishonor. Because if someone like me kills someone like you, you wouldn't get into your precious Paradise.

ROB
Oh, you mean - because you're... a woman?

He stifles a laugh - genuinely amused.

ROB (CONT'D)
Just stories. To make the little Kurdish girls sign up to fight us. Recruitment industry, remember?

PAZ

So maybe it's just me? Because I'm a trained soldier, not one of your innocent child brides? Because I shoot bullets bigger than your dick? Because you're a fake, frightened coward, who knows if he lets me out of this chair for five seconds I would beat his skinny ass to death?

Rob leans close enough to smell Paz's hatred.

ROB

Is this the part where I burst into an impotent rage? Got any more reverse psychology to dazzle me with?

PAZ

Fuck you.

ROB

Guess not.

PAZ

Why are you doing this?

ROB

If I've failed to be clear on that, I really must work on my messaging.

PAZ

No, this. Right now. This isn't about religion, or America, or fucking *recruitment*. You're just a sick fuck who likes to torture people.

Rob doesn't blink. It's hard to hurt the feelings of someone with no feelings.

PAZ (CONT'D)

Here we are. No cameras. No one watching you act tough and play dress-up. You're just a wounded, evil little schoolboy.

ROB

Evil? You know, the bad guy in the movie never thinks he's the bad guy.

PAZ

Pro tip: The one tying women to
chairs and kidnapping their family?
Usually not the good guy.

ROB

How many men did you kill to get
here?

PAZ

One less than I was hoping for.

Rob relishes finally having a worthy sparring partner, but
there's something about her answer that changes his mood -

He's done playing around.

ROB

You're right. I'm not about to kill
you. And there are no cameras in
here.

(then)

They're set up outside, instead.

Paz's stomach drops through the floor. And that brave poker
face finally folds its hand.

ROB (CONT'D)

If I may point your attention to
the window...

TWO MASKED GUARDS storm in and --

PAZ

Wait, --

-- CUT HER LOOSE FROM HER CHAIR.

Her hands are still bound behind her, but she's lifted to a
standing position and MARCHED TOWARD THE BARRED WINDOW.

PAZ (CONT'D)

No-no-no, wait, ...

Her head is SLAMMED into the IRON BARS so her face protrudes,
staring out into whatever hellhole village she's captive in.

And as she winces from the pain, the guards WEAVE A ROPE
THROUGH THE BARS and TIE HER HEAD IN POSITION.

They want her to see this.

EXT. PRISON CELL - ISIS VILLAGE - DAY

Outside, maybe fifty yards from Paz's cell, we find SCRUBS, standing in a LARGE IRON CAGE fit for a circus bear.

He's wearing tattered burlap clothing, SOAKED head to toe with gasoline.

His mouth is bound and gagged, his eyes are heavy. And he wobbles, barely able to stand on his own.

ISIS TROOPS and CAMERA MEN surround him, from a distance.

A TRAIL OF GASOLINE wets the sand for a hundred feet.

INT. PAZ'S PRISON CELL - DAY

Her face pressed against the bars, Paz screams:

PAZ
Diego! Diego, look at me!

She struggles with all her might, but the two guards hold her in place, pressed against cold stone and iron.

PAZ (CONT'D)
DIEGO!

OUTSIDE: Scrubs hears the familiar sound of his sister's voice and wonders if he's hallucinating.

His bleary eyes raise in search of her.

IN THE CELL: Rob walks over and gets so close that his whispering lips touch Paz's ear.

ROB
One of those faceless men you
killed on your heroic little
journey... was my cousin. MY
family. So again: Good. Evil. Hero.
Villain. It's all just semantics,
isn't it?

PAZ
Not like this. Please. Take me
instead. *PLEASE!*

ROB
Excuse me. I have to go play dress-
up.

And he EXITS, leaving PAZ pressed between the window's bars, staring at the altar of her brother's sacrifice.

PAZ
DIEGO! Look at me, PLEASE.

AT THE CAGE: Scrubs finally sees his sister. And for the briefest moment, there's an illogical relief in his eyes.

PAZ (CONT'D)
I love you. I'm so sorry. I'm so
fucking sorry.

Paz has just enough slack to punitively SLAM her head against the bars as she cries.

Scrubs holds up a hand, in a motionless wave, and grips a bar.

It's the closest he can come to reaching out for her.

PAZ (CONT'D)
(softer now, in shock)
I'm so sorry... I'm so sorry... I'm
so sorry...

PAZ'S POV: We see Rob giving a speech to the cameras, but we can't hear it.

We stay inside, as Paz watches the worst moment of her life from the best seat in the house.

The TORCH is lit.

Rob looks back to Paz.

Lowers it to the ground...

And it's on. The fire accelerates toward the cage, where Scrubs almost welcomes the relief from this Hell.

CLOSE ON PAZ. From outside, looking back through the bars.

Her face staring at us, bound to witness.

We don't hear any screams.

Just the frightening WHOOSH of a fireball -

And we see PAZ'S EYES clamp shut as she struggles against her constraints.

Awful. Guttural. Sheer animal agony.

After a long beat - TOO long for our comfort -

Her eyes open.

But they focus only on Rob, in the distance.

Filled with a fire all their own.

CUT TO:

INT. SAFE HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

The Ghosts sit in the safe house, gathered around a TABLET at the table which has just played the gruesome VIDEO.

Even for hardened women, they're sick at the sight.

A moment of silence goes by - ultimately broken by Seyda.

SEYDA
Paz is still alive.

EZO
Not for long.

SEYDA
For one more day.

It hits Ezo that Seyda isn't saying this like it's a finality, but an opportunity.

EZO
You can't be serious.

SEYDA
She saved us.

EZO
From the danger she put us in.

SEYDA
She didn't put us there.

EZO
No. She asked us to fight a battle that has nothing to do with us. To save a soldier who was careless enough to get captured. And then she got captured herself.

SEYDA
And we promised to help her.

EZO

We promised to help our own people. Those girls? In prison? Those are our people. I can't believe I'm the one saying this to you, but you're acting crazy.

SEYDA

We can do both.

EZO

Not if we're dead, we can't. What happened to your whole philosophy? No emotions. No mistakes. Live to fight another day.

SEYDA

How long have we been looking for that prison? Our army couldn't find it. Abergel couldn't find it. And this runaway American girl falls into our lap with the Holy Grail - a THOUSAND young women we can return home. Getting to kill the men who take them. Who rape them. *Who scar their faces* when they're finished with them.

CUT TO BELAR (with the scars) as her backstory instantly comes into focus.

EZO

Right. So let's take the gift she gave us and risk our lives over something that matters.

SEYDA

Not like that. We were going to die. And she saved us. Someone as loyal as you should understand...

EZO

I understand that if we go after her, and we fuck it up, then everything we do here is over.

The others affirm with their looks.

Seyda takes this in. Seemingly persuaded.

SEYDA

You're right.

Ezo, despite her displeasure in being the logical one, is satisfied. Until:

SEYDA (CONT'D)
So let's not fuck it up.

The group trades looks as Seyda EXITS, ultimately coming to a silent conclusion:

Fuck it. We're in.

A SONG PLAYS OVER, as we visit --

INT. PAZ'S PRISON CELL - DESERT TOWN - NIGHT

-- Paz's prison cell, later that night.

TWO HENCHMEN enter to drag ARNOLD'S BODY out before it rots.

One takes out a WATER BOTTLE.

Paz salivates at the sight.

But alas, he's only using it to SPLASH on the floor, dispersing the caked, dried blood.

He tosses the empty plastic bottle when finished, and it rolls halfway to Paz's feet.

They leave. And she stares at the bottle, watching with chapped lips as the final drops *pat-pat-pat* on the floor.

(SONG STILL PLAYS OVER AS WE JUMP TO:)

INT. SAFE HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Ghosts sleep in their beds, RIFLES by their sides...

INT. SAFE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Seyda and Abergel sit over a MAP OF THE REGION, strategizing.

They're weighing options. Frustrated. Like NASA engineers who can't solve a problem yet...

INT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

We see the SHELL OF A VEHICLE on the "Most Dangerous Road."

Maybe one we saw already, maybe these are all over.

But we use it like a sun dial, showing the passing of time as the SHADOW glides left to right.

Sunrise. High Noon. Afternoon...

A DAY HAS GONE BY.

The SONG FADES.

CUT TO:

INT. PAZ'S PRISON CELL - DESERT TOWN - AFTERNOON

We're back in the one-window cell. Stone-walled and hot.

It's almost deja vu. Paz sits, tied to the chair, head slumped to the side. Sweaty. Pale. Lips so chapped, there's a 50/50 chance she dies of thirst before being executed.

But the lighting's different. The sun is setting.

It's closer to evening, when executions happen around here.

Rob walks in, HOLDING A LARGE SYRINGE.

ROB
Good evening, love.

Paz doesn't even look up.

ROB (CONT'D)
I do apologize, but this is going to sting a bit.

He unfeelingly PLUNGES the needle into her bicep.

She tries not to wince, but, damn.

ROB (CONT'D)
Good girl. Now, I would love to say this numbs the pain, but in truth, you're going to feel everything. This just keeps you nice and docile while it happens.

Finished draining the plunger, Rob removes the needle.

Paz stares up defiantly.

PAZ
I thought I wasn't as strong as I look.

ROB
Don't be flattered, everyone gets
it. Makes for a better show.

Paz starts laughing. At first for show, then uncontrollably.

ROB (CONT'D)
(not taking the bait)
Well, it's good to see you smiling
again.

He turns to go.

PAZ
It's just - this whole time I
thought you'd scared them into
submission. Broken their spirits.
Turns out you're such a limp little
dick you can't even keep a prisoner
in line without drugging them.

Rob really is Teflon, though. He won't even give her a
glimmer of the reaction she wants.

ROB
It really has been a pleasure. I'm
going to go set up, and come back
when you're a little less chatty.

PAZ
Bring your duct tape, then. 'Cause
I'm gonna remind you you're a
fucking coward til the minute you
kill me.

ROB
Oh, we're not just gonna kill you.
My friends are all gonna take a
turn with you. Then we're going to
torture you. And THEN we're going
to kill you.

PAZ
Well at least I won't feel the
first part much.

An infuriatingly polite smile from Rob, and he exits.

ROB
(over his shoulder)
See you soon.

Rob leaves, and Paz can't help but betray her brave face for
a single moment. Enough for us to see:

She's terrified.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRISON / COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

We tilt up on a BURNT IRON CAGE like it's the obelisk from "2001: A Space Odyssey."

Waiting in the fading sun for its next victim.

We got a glimpse of it before from Paz's window, but now we get a better sense of the surroundings:

We're in a VILLAGE at the edge of the desert - no more than a dozen buildings reduced to rubble. It's impossible to imagine people still live here.

The vast expanse of desert fills the background.

TRUCKS line what can generously be called the COURTYARD - the open area near Paz's prison where the cage sits.

But unlike last time, where only a few men witnessed and filmed Scrubs' execution...

This one has a proper audience.

20 ISIS SOLDIERS. Maybe 30. Hard to tell. But they'd certainly fill the bleachers of a little league baseball game.

And that's not too strange a comparison, seeing as this is just about the only form of recreation around here.

They stand and sit - some on BENCHES, some on their TRUCKS, but all congregated at the center of the square.

Ready for a show.

INT./EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING - DESERT VILLAGE - SAME TIME

TWO HUNDRED YARDS AWAY: Seyda and Ezo sit at the second story window of an abandoned bullet-ridden building.

It's a lot like the time we first met them.

They talk while looking through their RIFLE SCOPES, staring at the gathering of MASKED ISIS HENCHMEN.

In Kurdish:

EZO
Shit.

SEYDA
Yeah.

EZO
This is bad.

SEYDA
Yeah.

EZO
There's a lot of them.

SEYDA
I know why it's bad.

EZO
We could go outside-in. Trap them
in the middle.

SEYDA
Even we can't shoot that fast.

EZO
Speak for yourself.

SEYDA'S RIFLE POV: We see the CROSSHAIRS plan their route,
dancing from center mass to center mass, meticulously
navigating a hypothetical path to --

SEYDA
Fuck.

EZO
Yeah.

SEYDA
There's a lot of them.

EZO
Yeah.

A beat. Wheels spinning.

SEYDA
We might have to try something a
little less subtle.

Off Ezo's look -

BACK TO:

INT. PAZ'S PRISON CELL - DESERT VILLAGE - AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON PAZ'S EYES.

Drowsy. Lilting. Half-dollar pupils fighting to focus.

Paz inhales and licks her lips like a first-timer trying Molly. If this were a cheesy 80s movie, we'd be in Slo-Mo.

Suffice to say: shit's kicked in.

A MASKED SOLDIER enters.

Paz turns her head three seconds slower than she means to.

The Masked Soldier holds a KNIFE - not quite as menacing as Rob's, but it's pretty fuckin' Crocodile Dundee.

Paz doesn't know who this asshole is, but she'll be damned if she lets anyone see her "nice and docile" like Rob wants her.

PAZ
(straining to lock eyes)
You up first?

The MASKED SOLDIER looks to the doorway, then casually walks to the barred window and glances outside.

Paz can barely turn her head to follow him...

When he quickly kneels behind her chair with his knife --

MASKED SOLDIER
Abergel sends his regards.

-- and CUTS HER RESTRAINTS.

Before she can make sense of what's happening, or consider who this mysterious savior is, the Masked Soldier exits.

But not before DROPPING HIS KNIFE ON THE STONE FLOOR.

Paz stares at it, then examines her newly freed hands.

CLOSE ON THE KNIFE as we MATCH CUT TO --

INT. ROB'S "OFFICE" - SAME TIME

-- the ROB'S KNIFE, being slammed into a DESK, burying an inch of metal into the worn wood.

Rob sits in a small empty "office" somewhere inside the prison, alone and isolated.

The kind of place where he finally feels free to release that "impotent rage" he couldn't in front of Paz.

He POUNDS his fists against the desk, PUNCHING down - the wild tantrum of an 8th Grade bully.

Closing his eyes, he breathes his near-hyperventilation down to a calm, meditative exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Eyes closed.

Like a zealot finishing his self-flagulation, he feels purged of his demons, and refocuses his calm stare to his knife.

Until he sees something out the open-air WINDOW and rises to his feet.

ROB'S POV: Out the window, the MASKED SOLDIER walks briskly away from the prison.

Rob cocks his head.

Something's not right.

EXT. PRISON - COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Outside, by the cage, the THIRTY-ODD ISIS SOLDIERS mill about and smoke cigarettes. Talking.

One carries CANS OF GASOLINE like Gunga Din.

No sign of the Ghosts, or Rob, but we do finally see the PRISON Paz is being held in, and it's a bit bigger than the one room.

It's the biggest building in the "square," one-story, but enough space for 8 or 10 rooms, like a small town jailhouse.

A jailhouse Paz is currently --

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

-- navigating, quietly as she can, blade in hand.

Walking through the hallway - dim even in the day. So quiet, Paz can hear the individual conversations of men outside.

Every foot-dragged step is punctuated by a heavy breath.

Maybe because her adrenaline is dialed to "11." Or maybe because - let us not forget - she's high as a kite.

One moment, hyper-aware - the next, disoriented as a KO'd boxer.

But she persists.

Turning a corner...

Finding nothing.

Trudging a few more paces...

Expecting a fight she can't possibly win like this...

Until she comes to a DOOR.

Breathes. Steels herself. And OPENS it.

THE SETTING SUNLIGHT POURS IN, blinding Paz as she stumbles --

EXT. PRISON / COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

-- outside, where, in three clumsy steps, she finds herself in the middle of the dirt road by the courtyard.

THIRTY ISIS SOLDIERS turn and stare immediately.

If there was a record playing, this is when it would scratch.

It's comical, even. First man to aim at her, if he pleases, gets a kill shot.

And poor Paz brought a knife to an Isis-execution-fight.

Until --

WHOOSH.

Barreling past her, NEARLY KILLING HER where she stands, a TRUCK WITHOUT A DRIVER accelerates toward the CROWD.

Various YELLING as the 30-odd Soldiers scramble, but --

BOOM!

Too late.

The truck SMASHES into an ISIS vehicle and it's suddenly the 4th of July. Explosives packed to the gills, mushrooming on impact.

We take a single second to focus on PAZ - who just as comically - has zero reaction to what she's seeing.

BACK TO THE CROWD.

They run, yell, take cover, aim weapons -- but at what?

Until, like the Honor Killing in the desert, men start DROPPING LIKE FLIES as GUNSHOTS scream into the courtyard.

EXT. VARIOUS BUILDINGS / ALLEYWAYS / COURTYARD - SAME TIME

We jump perspectives rapidly.

From every corner, from every angle, a GHOST comes out of the woodwork to dispense death.

Nusa (the big, bad one) throws that useful RPG (from the roadside) on her shoulder and fires a grenade into the crowd.

Belar (with the scars) SNIPES from a rooftop with cold efficiency as men scramble like roaches.

Asti (the young one) hides behind a wall and GRABS a fleeing soldier, PUSHING A KNIFE into the bottom of his chin.

Gerdana (book smarts) lies prone-position beneath an ISIS truck, dropping men as they head for their rides.

EXT. PRISON / COURTYARD - SAME TIME

Then there's our two leaders - EZO and SEYDA - who pull up in their CLOAKED HUMVEE CHARIOT, skidding to a stop next to Paz.

SEYDA
(jumping out)
Here.

She tosses Paz a HANDGUN.

SEYDA (CONT'D)
Get in.

Paz would be disoriented regardless, but the drugs make her wonder if what she's seeing is real.

Ezo jumps out the passenger side, raises her rifle, and fires at what's left of the crowd.

PAZ
What are you doing here?

SEYDA
Something stupid.

Seyda aims her rifle and joins Ezo. The scene is insanely loud and chaotic, but Paz just remains, dazed and stoic.

SEYDA (CONT'D)

Come on!

She gestures for Paz to jump in the humvee for cover.

But Paz is staring at something.

POV: In the distance, at the rear of the prison, ROB PULLS OUT INTO THE ROAD, IN A TRUCK OF HIS OWN.

He stares at Seyda and Ezo...

... At PAZ...

Then PEELS OUT in the opposite direction, heading for the desert road.

Ezo spins and FIRES at his truck, but he's turned a corner.

EXT. VARIOUS BUILDINGS / ALLEYWAYS / COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Back among the alleys and rubble buildings, the tide of the fight is beginning to turn.

The soldiers who are still alive are beginning to wise up. And maybe there were a few more that weren't part of the crowd.

Our Ghosts, in their various positions, are feeling the heat.

ASTI

(for help)

Seyda!

And A PIERCING WHISTLE from Gerdana, tucked beneath a truck.
"Backup, please!"

EXT. PRISON / COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Seyda sees the look in Paz's eyes. Her tormenter - the Devil himself - driving into the desert. GETTING AWAY.

Ezo has already BOLTED to help her friends.

Seyda assesses. Then:

SEYDA

Go.

(intentionally echoing Paz
 from before:)

We'll be right there.

Paz doesn't have it in her to smile right now, but she acknowledges the sacrifice, and steps toward the Humvee.

AND COLLAPSES.

SEYDA (CONT'D)

Paz.

GERDANA (O.S.)

(in the distance)

SEYDA!

Seyda helps Paz to her feet, but realizes there's a giant fucking fire fight she needs to be a part of.

SEYDA

(shit)

Wait in the truck. I'll be right b--

PAZ

NO.

Paz leans against the truck for support:

PAZ (CONT'D)

I got this.

She looks into Seyda's eyes. There's no time for debate, so Seyda is either going to let Paz jump into this truck or not.

And she does.

With a nod, Seyda runs off to rescue her friends.

And Paz mounts the truck like a drunk mounting a horse. Inelegant, but damned determined.

She focuses (a bit too hard) to find the gearshift - and pulls it.

It's on.

The SOUND of a ROARING ENGINE pulls us to --

INT./EXT. ROB'S TRUCK - DESERT ROAD - AFTERNOON

-- ROB, flooring it across the bumpy desert road in the sunset.

He checks his rearview: vast, empty track, until...

The shimmer of a lone Humvee.

Someone is following him.

INT./EXT. PAZ'S HUMVEE - DESERT ROAD - AFTERNOON

Paz stares dizzily at the RPMs red-lining the gauge.

FROM ABOVE, we watch her TRUCK SWERVE all over the road, flirting with the countless IEDs that probably line it.

Her vision is blurred. Her hands fight to keep their grip on the wheel.

But FUCK. THIS. GUY. - She's not giving up.

In fact - she's gaining.

INTERCUT WITH ROB'S TRUCK:

That glint in the rearview is now the hungry grill of a humvee chomping on Rob's ass.

The trucks are a length apart.

Paz grabs the HANDGUN Seyda gave her. Raises it...

Now remember, aiming a gun while driving a truck on a bumpy road would be hard for Chris Kyle -

Let alone a tired, tortured and drugged prisoner of war.

The two trucks become parallel...

Paz FIRES TWO SHOTS.

Nothing.

The trucks dance, back and forth. Gaining, retreating...

EXT. VARIOUS BUILDINGS / ALLEYWAYS / COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Back in THE BATTLE, the Ghosts prove they aren't invincible.

NUSA takes a bullet to the shoulder and collapses. Alive, but DAMN, that hurts...

Gerdana barely has time to RELOAD A CLIP and aim before --

EXT. DESERT ROAD / PAZ'S TRUCK / ROB'S TRUCK - AFTERNOON

BANG-BANG-BANG - Paz tries for Rob's tires as the trucks barrel down the highway.

Nothing.

Maybe this gun isn't doing the trick.

She REVS the gas and RAMS Rob's truck.

Just a bit, from the side.

No dice.

Rob gains a bit of distance. Paz catches up.

Tries again. Ramming the rear of Rob's truck.

Not getting it done.

Fine -- one more try.

She slams the gas, gets PERFECTLY parallel to Rob's truck --

AND SLAMS INTO HIM, SIDEWAYS.

Bingo.

Both trucks seemingly ATTACH, veering off the road together in perfect lockstep - bumping, slamming, scraping - until -

BOOOOOOM!

An IED EXPLODES beneath them - sending BOTH TRUCKS flipping on their sides, like hands accepting a sacrament.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - AFTERNOON

The trucks GRIND TO A HALT in the DUST. On their side.

Wheels still spinning. Underbellies busted. Tires burned. Windshields cracked like spider-webs.

A passerby would assume everyone involved is dead.

But no one's out here to make that judgment. Just the empty desert, two beat-up trucks -

And the innocuous DING of a door ajar.

Rob crawls out of his truck. Banged up a bit, but alive.

INSIDE PAZ'S TRUCK: That stupid DING is the only sound bringing Paz back to reality.

She's disoriented. Even more so now. Upside down, caged inside an upended smoking death trap.

A few coughs. A steady drip of BLOOD from her forehead...

And she realizes she's still alive.

WITH ROB: As he rises from his hands and knees like a wide receiver who got his bell rung.

He inspects himself. Dinged up, but intact.

Looks at the empty expanse around him - then HEARS COUGHING.

Refocusing, he limps toward --

PAZ'S TRUCK: Where Paz is crawling out of the crunched open window, upside down.

She flops onto her belly and drags herself across the sand like a wounded snake, inching away from the smoking humvee.

When she sees Rob.

Reaching for her gun she realizes - It's in the humvee.

Wonderful.

The cut in her head is flowing down her cheek, matting her hair to her face. She drags her legs like anchors.

It's bad.

Rob's SILHOUETTE stands over her in the orange setting sun.

Paz belly-ups and stops, taking a much-needed breath.

ROB
What's a matter, sweetie? Cat
finally got your tongue?

And it has.

Paz can hardly move, let alone verbally spar with this asshole right now.

But she tries - chapped lips mumbling something, shakily.

But it's inaudible. The way a person follows a prayer in church.

ROB UNSHEATHES HIS KNIFE.

ROB (CONT'D)
Sorry?

Paz takes a breath, as if needing a second wind just to make a sound come out of her mouth.

PAZ

I said...

POP!

ROB'S KNEE SHATTERS - nearly tearing his leg in half.

Blood mists the air, and he SCREAMS as he collapses.

Paz is as surprised as he is.

INT./EXT. GHOST HUMVEE - DESERT ROAD - SAME TIME

A thousand yards away, WAY too far to accurately make a shot like that, SEYDA stands out the open roof of a second Humvee -

- having just discharged her rifle, despite the shaky ride and bumps in the road.

Ezo stands next to her with BINOCULARS, assessing the damage.

Nusa drives.

EZO

You missed.

It's just like the moment we met them.

Seyda grins. Ezo grins back.

EXT. PAZ'S HUMVEE - DESERT ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

It's eerily similar to the Ghosts' introduction:

A wounded man crawling in the sand.

Wheels SCREECHING up to the sight.

And the BOOTS OF THE GHOSTS dropping onto the ground, surrounding our bad guy.

ROB

(desperately hiding pain)

I don't think we've met yet.

God, Rob's a stubborn motherfucker.

But the Ghosts don't play along.

They aim their rifles at him like a firing squad while Nusa helps Paz to her feet.

Rob stares back with a fearless defiance. Credit where credit's due - he's not about to beg for mercy.

The others look to Paz as she's propped up by Nusa, waiting for her command on what to do with this piece of shit.

Without a word, Paz gently pushes Nusa's support away.

She puts every ounce of strength into standing on her own.

And takes a single step.

Followed by another.

The Ghosts watch with honor as Paz pushes her drugged, bloody body beyond her limits -

She kneels on the ground, and with a hand growing less shaky by the second, picks up ROB'S DROPPED KNIFE from the sand.

Like magic, she rises with twice as much vigor as she knelt.

She's finding her strength.

She trades nods to Seyda - *thank you for saving my life. But I got it from here...*

Rob winces from the agonizing pain in his leg, but doesn't make a sound. He looks up as Paz casts a shadow on him.

ROB (CONT'D)

So this is the part where the bad guy dies, huh?

PAZ

Oh. I'm not just gonna kill you, Rob.

(a beat)

My friends are all gonna take a turn with you. And THEN I'm gonna kill you.

The Ghosts can't help but smile.

Rob's face FINALLY betrays the cowardly fear he's hiding. But only for a moment. He straightens up, as if this is his final act of performance art:

ROB

See you in Hell, then.

PAZ
Count on it.

As Paz bends down with Rob's knife, THE SCREEN GOES BLACK.

BUT WE HEAR THE SOUNDS.

Meat being stabbed.

Rob's FULL-THROATED SCREAMING.

Wherever she's cutting him - it ain't his neck.

THEN - SILENCE.

FIVE LONG SECONDS, OVER BLACK.

UNTIL...

INT. HALLWAY - MILITARY BASE - DAY

That now-familiar PAIR OF POLISHED SHOES, clicking down the hallway to meet --

INT. GENERAL'S OFFICE - MILITARY BASE - DAY

-- General Burgess, who sits at his desk as the door knocks.

GENERAL BURGESS
(busy with paperwork)
Yes.

The door opens. The Corporal doesn't even know what to say:

CORPORAL
Sir...

GENERAL BURGESS
(seeing his concern)
What?

INT. HALLWAY - MILITARY BASE - MOMENTS LATER

Now TWO pairs of shoes click with purpose down the hall.

The Corporal fills General Burgess in as we INTERCUT VARIOUS SHOTS:

CORPORAL (V.O.)
It was sent this morning... With a note inside...

INT. MAILROOM - MILITARY BASE - DAY

In A CROWDED MAILROOM, a PRIVATE cautiously takes a PACKAGE (a brown box big enough for a microwave) from the X-Ray scanner...

He cuts the tape and opens it.

*CORPORAL (V.O.)
Addressed to you.*

Looks inside. Holy Shit.

INT. HALLWAY / RESTRICTED ROOM - MILITARY BASE

The two men reach a RESTRICTED ROOM at the end of the hallway, guarded by a SOLDIER.

The General -- a tough man, mind you -- reels instantly.

GENERAL BURGESS
Jesus Christ.

Displayed on a sterile table in the center of the room, surrounded by SOLDIERS and PROFESSIONALS IN MEDICAL SCRUBS:

ROB'S HEAD.

Bloodied, bruised, half-rotten from five hot days in a pile of packing peanuts.

The Corporal nods to a MAN IN SCRUBS, who hands the general the aforementioned NOTE.

A strip of paper with six words, hand-written:

*"SORRY - COULDN'T WAIT
FOR YOUR MEN."*

Off the General -

CUT TO:

EXT. PESHMERGA MILITARY BASE - DAY

For the first time, we see the sprawling (albeit a bit rustic) MILITARY BASE belonging to the Peshmerga army our Ghosts hail from.

Hundreds of TROOPS (both men and women) doing training drills. Mechanics fixing trucks.

And a DUSTY SOCCER FIELD being used to train a group of YOUNG WOMEN. Not for soccer, mind you. For war.

We glide over the tents and buildings until we land on a --

INT. HOSPITAL TENT - DAY

-- hospital tent. More "M.A.S.H." than Walter Reed.

A bunch of little YAZIDI GIRLS run up to the window with a smile, checking in on their favorite patient:

PAZ. Recovering, with a few remaining stitches and a brace on her leg, but looking much better now.

She waves and smiles to the curious girls, when -

SEYDA (O.S.)

So...

She looks back to find Seyda standing by her cot.

SEYDA (CONT'D)

We've all been talking about what to do with you. And it occurred to me I never asked you.

PAZ

Well. I finished what I thought I wanted. And I can't go home. And I deserted my army, so there's that.

SEYDA

A soldier without a country.

PAZ

Right.

(a long beat)

So. I hear there's a prison you need help liberating.

Paz curls the slightest smile as she says:

PAZ (CONT'D)

Back to the fight?

Seyda smiles. Nodding with pride.

SEYDA

Back to the fight.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. "THE DUNGEON" - ISIS PRISON - VARIOUS ROOMS - DAY

ESTABLISH a medieval-looking prison atop an isolated mountain in the desert.

We find ourselves floating omnisciently through the walls - through the cells, the hallways, the rooms.

It's grim.

WOMEN and YOUNG GIRLS (some of them children) crammed into tiny cells. Sleeping on the ground in dark rooms.

ISIS Guards watching over them lecherously.

We float past the disgusting scene until we reach --

EXT. YARD - "THE DUNGEON" - ISIS PRISON - DAY

-- the outside yard - walled in by IRON BARS.

The unforgiving sun beats down on a constellation of WATER BUCKETS, where TEENAGE GIRLS are washing laundry on their knees.

We float past their faces. Innocent. Precious. Doomed.

It's heartbreaking.

Until we reach a SPECIFIC GIRL near the edge of the bars.

With UNFORGETTABLE EYES. Like EMERALDS.

The Wind was right. His daughter *did* end up in a place worse than Hell.

But maybe not for long.

She stands, holding a wet garment she's washing, and approaches the bars.

HER POV: In the distance, beyond the base of the mountain, DUST GATHERS ON THE ROAD.

Someone is approaching.

(MUSIC begins over...)

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

CLOSE ON PAZ, standing out the roof of an open HUMVEE like Washington crossing the Delaware.

Air whipping her hair.

PAN TO FIND Seyda right beside her.

THEN ANOTHER TRUCK COMES INTO FRAME, joining like a bird to a flock...

Ezo, rifle by her side.

Then Asti, Nusa, Gerdana, Belar...

Then MORE.

As WE PULL BACK, MORE AND MORE TRUCKS come into frame.

Like ships of an armada, overtaking the road.

FIFTY TRUCKS, maybe more.

WOMEN. MEN. SOLDIERS.

Riding like cowboys.

Bringing Hell with them.

(MUSIC SWELLS). SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF FILM.