

THE HUMANITARIANS

by

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FADE IN.

EXT. AFRICA - SERENGETI PLAINS - NIGHT

The entire landscape glows a vivid green through the lens of a pair of night-vision goggles. A dense brush thicket frames the left perimeter; open, vast plains expand ahead and to the right.

The low sounds of exotic jungle animals echo against the subtle rustling of heavy fabric. Someone is walking steadily across the dirt ground, softly humming the rhythmic melody of "I'll Fly Away."

An arm wearing a wrist altimeter reaches to an on/off switch; a gloved finger flips the switch to on and pushes the start button. Sound of engine idling—the revs increase.

Running toward open plains. Sounds of breathing, footsteps, and engine. Lifting off of the ground... flying now. The ground gets further away.

Silhouette of a woman flying with a powered paraglider, gaining altitude.

Below, an aerial view of the plains; herds of animals move slowly, dreamlike. Above, the velvet sky is dotted with thousands of stars.

Swooping to treetop level, buzzing animals at a watering hole—they scatter. A large ranch house compound comes into view, enclosed by a high wall.

A gloved finger turns the switch to off. The engine stops. Sound of wind.

Gliding above the compound. Below, large dogs look up, turning in circles, confused by what they hear. Steaks fall to the ground; the dogs run to the steaks.

Circling the house, aiming for the backside of a hedge row. The ground approaches fast... twenty feet... ten feet... five feet — FLARE sail. A perfect landing. Sound of harnesses releasing.

EXT. GENERAL NKWATCHA'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

Silhouette of a woman walking crouched, moving toward the house. Looking around, the dogs lie motionless. The silhouette sprints toward the house, disappearing behind the bushes.

Looking into the bedroom window—a man is asleep on the bed.

INT. GENERAL NKWACHA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Through the green glow of goggles, a large room; an eclectic mix of African and West Indies furniture. A collection of tribal masks, mounted exotic animals.

Pictures of a round-faced black man in a military general's uniform, posing with world dignitaries; the uniform reads NKWATCHA.

Moving to the bed, General Nkwacha is asleep, a closed-lip smile on his face. He tosses slightly, as if awakening; his smile widens.

A pistol with a silencer moves toward his head.

MADELYN (O.S.)
(slight Afrikaans accent)
Sweet dreams you bastard.

The POP of the pistol is heard.

INT. WASHINGTON D.C. - GRAND BALLROOM - HOTEL - NIGHT

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

FADE IN AND OUT:

An overhead view of a formal gala. A big band plays. People dance, talk, and laugh.

Move to a small group. A waiter with champagne and a tray of champagne flutes approaches the group.

The POP of a champagne cork is heard.

Champagne pouring into glasses, sparkling effervescently. Men and women's manicured hands reach in, taking glasses.

The waiter begins to leave; a man's hand, less manicured, reaches and takes the last glass.

The group includes DR. MADELYN PUGH, a pediatrician in her thirties, petite, demure, and the recent recipient of the Humanitarian Award. The bangs of her bobbed hair often fall across her face, impishly.

BILL ROTH, sixties, tall, weathered, a wealthy Texas cattle and oilman, and a longtime family friend of Madelyn.

His wife, BARBARA, bejeweled, tall, slender, fifties, a traditional Southern lady.

The latecomer to the group is MIKE ANDERSON, late thirties, handsome, athletic build, rough-edged, but mannered; a constant look of suspicion in his eyes.

The group raises their glasses to toast. All glance suspiciously at Mike.

BILL

To the Humanitarian.

Guests toast—the sound of clinking glasses. All drink champagne.

BILL

Madelyn, your daddy would be so proud.

Tight-lipped, Barbara cuts her eyes at Bill. She turns and smiles at Madelyn.

BARBARA

Congratulations honey, we're all so proud of you.

Others in the group are MRS. ZUMBADO, South African, fifties, pudgy, dressed in richly colored tribal attire.

MALE GUEST, forties, short, fat, half-drunk. The male guest raises his glass; champagne sloshes out.

MALE GUEST

And you more than anyone deserve the award... and my money!

All politely laugh.

MRS. ZUMBADO

(Afrikaans accent)

So many of our children will live because of your work. You make the world a better place, Dr. Pugh.

She raises her glass to Madelyn.

MRS. ZUMBADO

To your foundation, life for many, and to you.

Madelyn looks at the group.

MADELYN

Thank you, if I died in my sleep
they would find me with a smile on
my face.

All laugh. Mike raises an eyebrow in amused suspicion at Madelyn.

MIKE

I'm an admirer of what I believe is
your work, Dr. Pugh.

Madelyn moves through the group to Mike.

MADELYN

I don't believe we've met.

MIKE

Mike, Mike Anderson.

Mike extends a hand to Madelyn. They shake, holding hands extendedly. They look deeply at each other, eyes locked together.

MADELYN

And you --

MIKE

Don't practice medicine or open
hospitals, but I make the world
better too. We help a lot of the
same people.

MADELYN

I'm surprised we haven't met
before, Michael.

Mike downs his champagne. A waiter approaches; without taking his eyes off of Madelyn, he places his glass on the passing tray.

Mike covers his nose and mouth, slightly choking on the champagne.

MIKE

Umph! Excuse me.

He blots his mouth on his sleeve.

MIKE

Mike, it's just Mike, and I'll be
looking for you in the future, Dr.
Pugh.

Madelyn pushes her bangs from her face, smiling at Mike.

MADELYN

Madelyn, it's just Madelyn.

MIKE

Madelyn... It seems I always miss
you by a day or so... but I'm sure
I'll see you again.

Mike nods to the guests, looks at Madelyn, and smiles.
Madelyn looks at Mike with suspicion and interest.

MIKE

Congratulations Dr. --

Mike holds up his hand.

MIKE

Madelyn.

Mike nods to Madelyn, runs his hand through his hair, and
leaves the group. The guests look at each other, bewildered.
Madelyn's eyes follow Mike as he walks away.

Mrs. Zumbado places her hand gently on Madelyn's arm.

MRS. ZUMBADO

I don't know how you do it, the
suffering you deal with; where does
your courage come from?

Madelyn looks down, forcing a smile. The guests glance at
each other, aware Mrs. Zumbado has touched a nerve.

MADELYN

I grew up on a ranch in South
Africa, not far from our new
hospital. My vader was active in
anti-apartheid; I saw the cruelty
and suffering... I learned very
young to handle challenges with
courage.

As she speaks, Madelyn gets a faraway look in her eyes.

BEGIN FLASHBACK
SEQUENCE:

EXT. AFRICA - MR. PUGH'S RANCH - DAY

SUPER: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS EARLIER

FADE IN AND OUT:

YOUNG MADELYN, in jeans, boots, a duster coat, a hat, and a ponytail, is running, screaming for help, hysterical with fear.

A lion is running at full speed, snarling.

Young Madelyn jumps into the arms of her father, MR. PUGH, rugged, late thirties, weathered face, dressed nearly identically to Madelyn. His right hand is clutching a large pistol.

The lion pounces on a young calf, violently bringing it down, ripping its flesh.

Young Madelyn is in the arms of her father, her feet dangling, her father clutching his pistol.

MADELYN

Why? Why didn't you do something
vader? Why didn't you stop him! Why
did he kill Lucy! She was mine! Why
vader?

Mr. Pugh, squinting, his eyebrows in a deep furrow, a scowl on his face, watches the lion drag the carcass of Madelyn's pet calf into the brush. A look of revenge boils across his face.

MR. PUGH

(Afrikaans accent)

Don't worry, vader will teach you
what equal and exact justice means.

He holsters his pistol. Young Madelyn slides from his arm; he holds her hand. They walk away. Young Madelyn is sobbing gently.

The father puts his arm around Young Madelyn, pulling her in close to his side.

MR. PUGH

It'll be okay.

EXT. MR. PUGH'S RANCH - PLAINS - DAY - LATER

The lion is stretched out asleep, the calf carcass nearby, flies buzzing around it. Vultures lurk in the branches. A lioness watches cubs play tug-of-war with a hunk of calf meat.

Young Madelyn watches, mouth agape, her lower lip quivering, her face damp from crying. A tear streaks down her cheek; she wipes it with her backhand.

Young Madelyn and her father are crouched, her father on one knee, in a sniper position. He pulls back the bolt of his rifle, chambers a shell, and slowly locks the bolt.

Young Madelyn's face is a collage of nervousness and fear. She looks at her father.

MADELYN

Do you have to kill him vader?
Maybe it's not right...

Mr. Pugh raises the rifle to his shoulder, peering into the scope.

MR. PUGH

It's the right thing to do.

Young Madelyn clutches his right shoulder, pulling slightly, moving the rifle off-target.

MADELYN

But he was just feeding his family,
maybe it wasn't bad... maybe we...
I don't know vader.

Young Madelyn's eyes blink quickly, her chest heaving. She stops blinking, her brown eyes opening wide, sparkling like topaz. Her look is youthful naivete; a child seeking truth.

Mr. Pugh lays his rifle across his knee, placing his hand on Young Madelyn's cheek. He rolls his lower lip in his teeth, sighing. He pushes Young Madelyn's bangs back, looking straight into her eyes.

MR. PUGH

Evil grows; it becomes empowered if
allowed to exist. Sometimes one
must die, so many can live. That is
a truth to live by. Remember
this... always.

He raises his rifle, peering into the scope.

The sleeping lion is in the crosshairs. Focus on the lion's head; his lips curl into a smile.

MR. PUGH (O.S.)

Sweet dreams you bastard.

He slowly squeezes the trigger. The crackling sound of the shot echoes across the plains.

The lion's head drops. He is dead.

MR. PUGH
If you must be humane... kill them
in their sleep.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. WASHINGTON D.C. - GRAND BALLROOM - HOTEL - NIGHT

MRS. ZUMBADO
I didn't know that you were from
South Africa. I wish my husband
were here to meet you, but the
unfortunate incident with General
Nkwatcha has our country in much
turmoil.

Smiling widely, she hugs Madelyn.

MRS. ZUMBADO
But, how wonderful that you take
care of our children.

The MALE GUEST reaches into his inner jacket pocket, removing
an envelope.

MALE GUEST
Well I know why we're here, to
raise some money! I'll get the ball
rolling.

He hands Madelyn the envelope.

Bill reaches into his jacket pocket, removing a five-hundred-
thousand-dollar check, made payable to: "A Smile to a Child
Foundation." Bill gives Madelyn the check.

Madelyn smiles humbly, blotting a tear with her gloved
backhand.

MADELYN
Thank you all for your support, I --
I...

Madelyn searches for words.

MADELYN
You're helping a little girl's
dream come true.

Bill leans in close to Madelyn; he hands her a handkerchief.

BILL
My friends hope that money goes to
your project in Central America,
and if you have any more delays
from that arrogant little dictator
Ruiz, call me. His pride won't stop
our progress.

Madelyn smiles wryly, shading her mouth with her hand.

MADELYN
I can handle any trouble. If I need
help, you'll be the only person I
call.

BILL
You know your daddy and I could
control the climate of a country.

Bill sweeps an arm across the air; his hand moves downward,
fluttering fingers simulating rain.

BILL
And if I have to, I can still brew
up a storm!

He raises his glass to Madelyn, drinks his champagne, and
massages his temples. Madelyn touches his arm.

MADELYN
I know you can, Bill. What about
those headaches? You need to see a
doctor.

Bill laughs.

BILL
I'm seeing a doctor now.

MADELYN
Really, Bill, how do you feel?

BILL
They hurt, I hurt -- but hell,
everybody hurts... and never mind
me, I'm so proud of you!

Bill holds Madelyn's hand, patting her arm. He looks warmly at her, smiling.

BILL
Congratulations darl'n.

Bill hugs Madelyn.

BILL
That's my girl.

The ballroom windows illuminate from a flash of lightning. A crackling sound of lightning echoes across the ballroom.

The lights go out.

EXT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - MAGGIE VALLEY, N.C. - DAY

The house sits atop a mountain; it is a sleek, modern, glass and rock structure, featuring a panoramic view of the Blue Ridge Mountains awash with fall foliage. The sky is crystal blue.

INT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Madelyn enters the great room wearing night clothes, carrying coffee. She sits at a grand piano by a wall of windows.

She sets her coffee on the piano, picking up a picture of herself, her father, and her pet calf Lucy. She smiles, setting the picture back down.

MADELYN
I miss you vader.

She picks up an acoustic guitar. She pushes the record button on a recorder; a sound of a mandolin plays, and she plays along on the guitar.

A phone rings. She puts the guitar down, answers her cell phone, and puts it on speaker.

MADELYN
Hello, Bill.

She picks up her coffee.

BILL (V.O.)
Turn on the news, you need to see this.

Madelyn turns on the television. An ANCHORWOMAN reports the news.

ANCHORWOMAN

...the government said rebel forces are responsible for General Nkwatcha's assassination two months ago. The Peoples Council of Kwatza has unanimously appointed Mr. Zumbado as Council General...

MADELYN

This is good!

ANCHORWOMAN

...Zumbado's plans to unite Kwatza are unknown. He will allow foreign businesses and humanitarian interests to help. Controversially, he also plans to expand oil and mining interests...

MADELYN

This is real good. I'll be damned.

Madelyn turns off the television, walks to the window, and stares out.

BILL (V.O.)

Congratulations little girl, we're in, but I do have one concern.

MADELYN

Concerned? You? About what?

BILL (V.O.)

Remember that man at the fundraiser last month, Mike, Michael? You seemed attracted.

MADELYN

Anderson, Mike Anderson, just Mike... and I wasn't attracted, friend of yours?

BILL (V.O.)

No! No! He headed up the U.S. investigation on Nkwatcha. Now he's nosing into Zumbado's connections to U.S. businesses being allowed in, like my friends, and your hospital.

MADELYN

They blamed Nkwatcha on the rebels.

BILL (V.O.)

We'll be okay in Africa, but honey,
Mike's CIA.

MADELYN

CIA? No kidding... that's not good.

BILL (V.O.)

Yeah, no kidding, and we don't want
any more roadblocks. My friends
want to help with your hospital in
Central America, but Ruiz is
trouble, and Anderson is nosey and
hot on what little trail we have.

Madelyn runs her hand through her tousled hair. A grimace
grows across her face.

MADELYN

Bill, I was going to call you. I
have a bad feeling, and now this
Mike is --

BILL (V.O.)

A bump in the road. Listen darl'n,
we need this to happen down there.

MADELYN

Bill, I just want to save the
children; that's been my only dream
since childhood. This is all
becoming... feeling wrong.

BILL (V.O.)

I've known you since you first had
that dream; we put this together to
fulfill your dream, and lot's of
others as well.

Madelyn picks up the picture of her and her father, holding
it tightly against her chest.

MADELYN

I don't know, Bill. I just feel
like this --

BILL (V.O.)

This needs to happen. Ruiz is a
hold-up to the good of his country,
to the children. He needs to go.

(MORE)

BILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
What if my friends put together
nine million, do you think --

MADELYN
We could call it done.

BILL (V.O.)
Great! That's my girl! The
Independence Carnival is next
month. Hell of a lot of fun, noisy,
lots of fireworks, and there's some
great parasailing.

MADELYN
Oh! A vacation?

BILL (V.O.)
My freinds'll sponsor your flying
troupe on a trip; they keep the top
floor suites at the Miraflores
Palacio Hotel for business, all for
you and your flying females.

MADELYN
What's your plan?

BILL (V.O.)
Ruiz will be one floor below you.
He goes to bed every night at
eleven p.m., like clockwork. I'm
taking a boat down the Pacific
coast, and your gonna get sick the
day before your group leaves.

MADELYN
While you get things prepared, I'm
going to Slovanka next week to
visit the hospital. It's up and
running, and overflowing; they
asked that I come, they said I need
to see some things for myself.

BILL (V.O.)
Good deal darl'n. Be sure to tell
our friend Vidmar hello for me.

MADELYN
Will do, I'll be in touch, Bill.

Madelyn hangs up, picks up her coffee, and stares out at the
mountains. She smiles perfidiously. She walks toward the
kitchen.

As she passes the recorder, the record light is still blinking. She exits the room.

EXT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - PATIO - DAY - LATER

Madelyn lies on a chaise lounge typing an email, sipping a cocktail. The email reads:

MADELYN (O.S.)
 Hi everyone, our sponsors are
 treating us to a parasailing trip
 in Porte Valerdera for the
 Independencia Carnival. Private
 jet, penthouse suites, we just have
 to fly over the carnival with their
 logo's on our sails. I assume your
 all in? Madelyn.

Madelyn presses send, closes her laptop, picks up her cocktail, and sighs heavily.

MADELYN
 It's just too easy.

She raises her glass and toasts the mountains.

MADELYN
 Vir die kinders... for the
 children.

INT./EXT. CAR - HIGHWAY (EASTERN EUROPE) - DAY

Madelyn gazes at the beautiful Slovanka countryside.

Driving the tiny car is the hospital administrator, DR. MATIJA POTONIK, a soft-spoken man, short, stout, sixties, with thick hair, even thicker eyebrows, and a constant eye twitch. He is a benevolent man.

MADELYN
 I forget how beautiful this area
 is.

Cresting the hill, the winding road heading down the mountain into Siran looks like a serpent.

Built on a peninsula, the ancient city juts into the Gulf of Siran. The gulf sparkles like an aquamarine gemstone.

MADELYN
 God, that's gorgeous! It's just
 idyllic.

DR. POTONIK

(Eastern European accent)

Ah yes, beautiful Siran, a jewel on the seashore. One could not believe it has suffered rebellions, revolutions, and war since before the Romans were here.

MADELYN

It sure looks peaceful from up her.

DR. POTONIK

That, Dr. Pugh, is merely an illusion... but the children are excited to meet you; many call you Saint Madelyn... which is upsetting the local priest.

Dr. Potonik smiles at Madelyn. Madelyn looks at him as though he were joking. He glances at Madelyn.

DR. POTONIK

No, I'm not kidding. We don't know what we would do without your hospital. Since the assassination of President Horvat last year, the fighting in the region has become worse than ever.

Madelyn's smile turns into a look of distress. She looks attentively at Dr. Potonik.

DR. POTONIK

The new administration cares nothing about the country's people, and has let in foreign companies to exploit our natural resources and jobs.

Dr. Potonik shakes his head, gazing at Madelyn with sadness.

DR. POTONIK

But the children suffer the most from it all. Last week the hospital was spilling over with injured children.

MADELYN

What?

DR. POTONIK

Yes, this is why I asked you to come, to see.

(MORE)

DR. POTONIK (CONT'D)
Perhaps because of your
Humanitarian Award you can talk
politics, talk sense to the
politicians... perhaps stop the
violence caused by the
assassination.

Madelyn looks peaked.

DR. POTONIK
Last week, a bus full of children
were caught in crossfire, the bus
was hit by a small rocket; but
because of you, we have the
hospital and were able to save many
lives.

He looks at Madelyn; his hurt for the children and his
country is evident.

DR. POTONIK
Thank you, Dr. Pugh.

Madelyn massages her cheeks with her hand, distressed,
shocked, trying not to break down.

MADELYN
(quivering whisper)
Uh-huh, it's what I do... or, what
I've done.

They drive through the narrow, cobblestone streets of Siran;
the city's medieval architecture looks as though time has
stood still. They arrive at the hospital.

The children are waiting outside. Madelyn and Dr. Potonik
exit the car.

EXT. SIRAN - HOSPITAL - DAY

As Madelyn walks toward the entrance of the ancient building,
the children cheer for her; some make the sign of the cross,
others call out.

CHILDREN
Saint Madelyn!

As Madelyn approaches, she sees the severity of the
children's injuries. Many are in wheelchairs, still bandaged.
As she passes through the group, the children reach out to
touch her. Madelyn begins to cry.

DR. POTONIK
It's touching, yes? They love you.
But cheer up, Dr. Pugh, tonight we
must attend a party in your honor.

The Minister of Health is throwing you a party aboard his new yacht, and we must go and pay homage.

MADELYN
Homage?

Madelyn wipes her face, looks back at the children, and turns to Dr. Potonik.

DR. POTONIK
Oh yes, since Minister Vidmar was appointed by the new president, he feels he deserves our respect, and a monthly stipend for allowing the hospital to help the children. He is even in our annual budget.

Madelyn and Dr. Potonik enter the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL - MAIN LOBBY - DAY

The juxtaposition of a modern children's hospital within the shell of a Roman-era building is startling, monastic.

Dr. Potonik introduces Madelyn to the hospital's head nurse, LEJA NIKOLA, late thirties, long, thick black hair, chiseled features; she looks like a Roman goddess. She is stoic and cold... for good reasons.

DR. POTONIK
Dr. Pugh, this is our head nurse, Leja Nikola. She will show you around, give you the grand tour of our historic structure.

Madelyn shakes Leja's hand.

MADELYN
Nurse Nikola, it's a pleasure to meet you.

LEJA
(thick Roman accent)
It is a pleasure to finally meet you, Dr. Pugh. If you don't mind, my daughter would like to come with us; she is a big fan of yours.
(MORE)

LEJA (CONT'D)

She says she wants to become a
doctor, just like you.

MADELYN

That would be wonderful, I can't
wait to meet her.

LEJA

Ah, here she comes now, my baby
girl.

Madelyn turns around; she turns pale, her legs nearly giving
out beneath her.

A nurse rolls a wheelchair toward Madelyn and Leja.

In the wheelchair is Leja's daughter, LARISA, ten, missing
her left hand, her left leg below the knee. Her disfigured
face is oozing from burns; she is missing her right eye.

Larisa is a ray of sunshine—the epitome of a child's
boundless hope and innocence. Her personality is
effervescent.

LARISA

(with impediment)

Dr. Pugh! Dr. Pugh!

Larisa nearly pushes herself out of her wheelchair as she
reaches to hug Madelyn. Her joyful spirit radiates beyond her
monstrous disfigurements, many still wrapped in blood-stained
bandages.

Madelyn bends down, face-to-face with Larisa. She gives
Larisa a loving hug. Madelyn breaks down and cries.

She has to walk away, excusing herself to the ladies' room.

INT. HOSPITAL - LADIES ROOM - DAY

Madelyn runs to the sink, her hurried steps echoing loudly
from the polished marble floors.

She braces her hands tightly on the edges of the porcelain
basin, leaning forward, nearly sick from the weight of seeing
Larisa.

Cold, flickering fluorescent light bathes the sterile tile.

Madelyn stands alone before the stainless-steel sink. She
doesn't speak. She stares directly into the cracked mirror;

her reflection is fractured cleanly in two, splitting her visage into two distinct images. Her breathing remains shallow, uneven.

She turns on the cold water faucet to maximum flow. Filling her cupped hands with the icy current, she splashes her face repeatedly to break the nausea.

Slowly, she lifts her head to face the glass once more.

Her gaze remains locked on the mirror layout, tracking her own split images. She refuses to blink, utterly unable to reconcile the savior in the white lab coat with the phantom in the sky.

Suddenly, the heavy door swings open.

LEJA enters the ladies' room, her footsteps echoing on the hard tile as she walks directly over to Madelyn's position.

Leja's image appears sharply behind Madelyn's in the cracked mirror layout. She stares at Madelyn coldly, searchingly.

They lock eyes through the reflection.

LEJA

Are you alright, Dr. Pugh?

MADELYN

Yes... yes, I'm... I'm sorry. I don't --

LEJA

Don't worry, Dr. Pugh, I understand. She is my daughter, my pain for her stolen innocence is --

Madelyn turns to Leja, hugs her, and cries on her shoulder. Leja stares off, her eyes empty.

With resistance, she pats Madelyn's back, gently pushing Madelyn away. They look at each other. Madelyn wipes her eyes.

MADELYN

I'm okay. I'm sorry.

Madelyn and Leja exit the ladies' room.

INT. HOSPITAL - MAIN LOBBY - DAY

Madelyn and Leja return to the others. They all smile.

MADELYN

Oh sweetie, you don't want to be
like me.

Larisa beams, her single eye wide and full of genuine warmth.

LARISA

I do; I'm alive because of you. I'm
so happy to be alive... my name
even means joyful!

Leja looks on, her chiseled face tight and completely devoid
of emotion.

LEJA

And mine means, weary, sorrowful...
how ironic names are. Come, Dr.
Pugh, let's show you around,
please, follow us.

Leja pushes Larisa's wheelchair out of the lobby into an
arched hallway; Madelyn follows them.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAYS - DAY

The faded frescoes on the arched ceilings still reveal
cherubs and seraphim. The footsteps of Madelyn and Leja echo
off the medieval travertine floor.

As they stop to admire the frescoes, it escapes no one that
several of the angels' faces bear an uncanny resemblance to
Madelyn.

Madelyn looks at Larisa and Leja.

Larisa smiles at Madelyn. Leja glares at Madelyn.

LEJA

This building has been a hospital
several times throughout the
millennia. The angels were painted
by the Catholic Church during the
thirteenth century, as a symbol of
God's protection over the
children... it was a children's
hospital then as well.

LARISA

The nun that ran the hospital was
sainted. You should be sainted too,
Dr. Pugh.

Leja points to the two angels in the frescoes.

LEJA

The angels are said to be a
 portrait of the sainted woman.
 Legend says her heart was not true,
 that she was not a saint... but a
 devil.

Madelyn is numb. She glances at the frescoes.

Leja looks at the frescoes, then looks back at Madelyn.

LARISA

I'm so glad you made this a
 children's hospital again; if not,
 I would have died.

LEJA

If we still had President Horvat,
 perhaps the children would not need
 this hospital.

Leja drops her head, looking toward Madelyn. Her eyes show
 hurt and sorrow.

LEJA

I'm sorry, Dr. Pugh, I did not mean
 disrespect; we are all grateful for
 your work.

She leans down and kisses Larisa on the head.

LEJA

I especially am, I just meant --

MADELYN

I know what you mean. I feel the
 same way.

As they continue, they pass rooms filled with injured
 children. The further they go, the more confident Madelyn
 appears—as if she were metamorphosing.

Dr. Potonik approaches.

DR. POTONIK

Oh, there you are. I trust you
 ladies got to see enough. I hope,
 Dr. Pugh, you can see what we are
 up against, what we're facing.

MADELYN

Yes, Dr. Potonik, I saw the problem
 clearly... as if I were looking in
 a mirror.

The sound of church bells ringing.

DR. POTONIK
 My goodness, the bells of St.
 George tell me it's getting late.
 I'll see you tonight then, Dr.
 Pugh.

Dr. Potonik exits.

Madelyn stoops down face-to-face with Larisa.

Larisa smiles, her cycloptic eye darting back and forth as she admires her hero, Madelyn.

MADELYN
 Goodbye sunshine, I'll come see you
 before I leave.

LARISA
 Promise?

Madelyn crosses her heart with her finger.

MADELYN
 Hope to die...

Madelyn walks away.

Larisa waves with her one hand, her one leg bouncing with excitement; her smile beams.

EXT. GULF OF SIRAN - MINISTER VIDMAR'S YACHT - DECK - NIGHT

A warm Mediterranean breeze sweeps across the teak deck boards. The distant city skyline glows against the black water.

Madelyn leans against the railing, staring at the twinkling lights of Siran. Sounds of the party are heard in the background.

A man walks toward her: MINISTER VIDMAR, early fifties, immaculate in a tailored linen suit, stands by the mahogany railing. He swirls an expensive single malt whiskey in a heavy crystal glass, staring out at the harbor.

VIDMAR
 (thick Eastern European
 accent)
 Dr. Pugh, you miss your own party.
 Come, be happy, for the people
 adore you.

MADELYN
I don't feel well.

VIDMAR
What? Is this not the reality you
expected? Do you not like what you
see? Are you not happy with what
you have created?

He takes a slow sip of his drink, letting the weight of the
silence hang in the air.

Madelyn stiffens, her fingers tightening around the stem of
her glass. Her face locks into a neutral mask, but her eyes
turn ice-cold.

MADELYN
(calmly)
No—to all of your questions.

VIDMAR
Some men mine the oil. Some mine
the gold. You... you mine the
casualties. It is a flawless
business model.

He takes a slow sip of his drink, his eyes peering over the
glass edge, staring directly at Madelyn.

MADELYN
I fix what your people tear apart,
Vidmar. It's called medicine.

Vidmar lets out a soft, echoing chuckle, turning his full
torso around to lean casually back against the railing.

VIDMAR
Don't hide behind the red cross, my
dear. We are partners in this
theater. My contacts create the
fractures, and your foundation
sweeps in to harvest the
compliance. We pave the roads, and
you heal the survivors. It is the
perfect ecosystem of modern
statecraft.

MADELYN
The ecosystem is about to
experience a severe climate shift.

VIDMAR
You and I share one thing, Dr.
Pugh.

MADELYN
And what would that be?

VIDMAR
We both find fortune in others'
misfortune.

Vidmar sips his drink, gives Madelyn a look of pity, turns, and walks away.

As he walks away, he laughs, finishes his drink, and throws the glass overboard. His back remains turned toward Madelyn.

VIDMAR
Well, Saint Madelyn, perhaps you
need to count your blessings. How
many businesses let you create your
own customers... like yours.

He walks away. His laugh resonates through the open air as he disappears into the darkness.

INT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is sleek, with top-of-the-line appliances. Walls of windows frame the fading fall foliage. Madelyn is cooking.

The phone rings; she answers it.

MADELYN
Hello... yes, Bill, I'm back. How
was my trip? You're kidding, right?

She listens for a beat.

MADELYN
Oh no, I'm through! Bill, I told
you I'm not able to --

She listens for another beat.

MADELYN
After the things I saw in Slovanka,
and in myself --

Madelyn is silent. The sound of Bill's angry, indistinguishable voice is heard bleeding through the receiver. Madelyn's countenance shows complete defeat.

MADELYN
Bill, don't threaten me! Bill...
have you lost your mind? I --

Bill hangs up.

Madelyn holds the phone away from her ear, her jaw plunged open; she looks at the phone. She slowly hangs up.

Madelyn picks up her glass of wine, drinking it straight down.

She sets down the glass, slowly stirs the pots, sets the spoon down, picks up her phone, and dials a number.

The sound of a phone ringing.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Hello.

MADELYN

(faking ill)

Susan, Madelyn.

SUSAN (V.O.)

You sound awful, are you okay?

MADELYN

No, I feel terrible. It must have been something in Slovanka. Look, there's no way I can go to Porte Valerdera; you're going to have to handle everything.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Aw, Mad, we need you; you're so good at all that.

MADELYN

No way, but it's all set up. A guide will meet you at the airport; all of the parasails are there and set up. I'm sorry, but I just can't make it.

SUSAN (V.O.)

Alright, we're gonna miss you. Hope you feel better, I'll e-mail you some pics.

Madelyn hangs up, then calls Bill. She gets his answering machine.

BILL (V.O.)

If it's important, leave a message.
If it's not, why are you calling?

The sound of a voicemail beep. Madelyn frowns.

MADELYN

All set to sail, captain!

She hangs up, serves herself a plate of food, sits down, and pours a glass of wine. She bows her head.

MADELYN

(in Afrikaans; English subtitles)

Use me to make the world a better place, amen.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - LUXURY YACHT - TOP DECK - DAY

Madelyn and Bill sit at a table. A steward serves fresh fruit. Sounds of the sea and birds.

BILL

We're all set. Holes are tapped, windows ready, and the roof is clear. Ruiz arrived yesterday, in bed by eleven, took sleeping pills 'cause of the carnival noise.

Bill signals for coffee. He touches Madelyn's hand; she draws it back.

BILL

It's perfect, just perfect. Your group flew in yesterday. The flying stuff is on the roof; it's all arranged for them to take off and land on the roof.

MADELYN

Then no one will think anything about me landing on the roof?

BILL

Not a thing; no one will even know you've been in Porte Valerdera. We'll be back in U.S. waters by the time things heat up.

Madelyn looks distracted. Bill looks concerned.

BILL

Are you ready? We can't have you off focus.

Madelyn stares at the ocean. She snaps back to consciousness, shakes her head, and sips her water.

MADELYN

No, I'm fine, I'm okay. I'm ready.
I'm just thinking. I'm just ready
to be home... or to have one.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - LUXURY YACHT - TOP DECK - NIGHT

The deck lights cast an eerie illumination around the boat.

Madelyn straps on the parasail engine. The wind blows steadily, gusting hard at times. Bill holds the folded sail.

Madelyn slips on her night vision goggles. The ocean has an iridescent green glow. The shoreline is visible in the distance. Madelyn looks all around.

MADELYN

I feel like I'm in the Emerald
City, it's so green.

Bill looks at the skies, concerned.

BILL

I feel like we're in Kansas! You
sure these winds aren't too strong?

MADELYN

I'll be fine.

BILL

I'm worried about --

MADELYN

I'm not. I said I'll be okay. I'll
just have to fly higher.

Madelyn tightens her harness and sets her altimeter. Bill raises his eyebrows.

BILL

Won't that just --

MADELYN

Bill, shut up! You sure worry a lot
lately.

Madelyn presses the start button. Sound of the engine idling.

She increases the revs, nodding to Bill. He releases the sail; it flares instantly.

Madelyn is unexpectedly dragged across the deck. She starts running, leaves the deck, and drops out of sight toward the water.

Bill runs to the deck edge. Madelyn flies straight up past Bill, tossing in the wind. She gives the engine full throttle, gaining altitude.

She disappears from the lights of the boat into darkness. Bill hears her singing as he peers into the blackness:

MADELYN (V.O.)
 "I'll Fly Away Old Glory, I'll Fly
 Away..."

EXT. ABOVE PACIFIC OCEAN AND PORTE VALADERA REGION - NIGHT

Approaching the coastline, Madelyn sees glowing beaches and mountains covered in thick growth. The wind buffets her sail.

Cresting the mountains, she struggles to keep the sail full and steady. Below, the lights of Porte Valerdera twinkle.

Flying above the city, circling the carnival, sounds of the festival are heard. The Miraflores Palacio Hotel comes into view.

Madelyn begins her descent. Gusting winds blow her off course. She makes another circle.

MADELYN
 Damn! I'll have to land under full
 power.

Approaching the roof. Coming in fast, unsteady, unnoticed. Powersail equipment is scattered across the roof.

Madelyn aims for a clearing in the clutter.

MADELYN
 Damn it, damn it -- damn it!

She comes in high, FLARES her sail. She stopssix feet above the roofand turns the engine off. The sail collapses. She drops, landing hard.

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - ROOF - NIGHT

Winching in pain, Madelyn grabs her right ankle. She stands.

The wind pulls the sail along the roof ledge. Sound of the sail ripping.

Madelyn releases the harness, limps to the roof ledge, and grabs the sail, seeing a large tear.

MADELYN

Kak!

Madelyn pulls a knife from her leg sheath, cutting the sail loose. She looks around at the parasail equipment.

MADELYN

Great, nothing but small sails.
Just great, it's going to be a
rough ride home.

Hurriedly, she attaches another sail to her harness. She empties a backpack, stuffs her torn sail into the pack, and throws it off the roof. It lands on an adjacent building's roof.

Madelyn locates a hidden rope, clips it to a roof stay, clips it to her body harness, and climbs over the roof ledge.

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - Side of Building - NIGHT

Madelyn lowers herself toward her suite's window, her feet pushing against the building in intense pain. She pushes the window with her foot—it is stuck. She kicks it; it swings open. She slips inside.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - MADELYN'S SUITE - NIGHT

Looking through her goggles at a large parlor. She looks at her watch: 10:45 p.m.

She takes off her pack and opens it, laying out her tactical equipment, including a specialized firearm, camera gear, and a casing.

She looks at her swelling ankle. With her knife, she cuts a pillowcase into strips and wraps her ankle. She stuffs the remaining fabric into her pack.

Limping silently, she moves a round table, pulls back the rug, and locates a small knot in the flooring. She pops the knot out.

She feeds the camera through the floor cavity and unscrews a plug from the ceiling below. She turns the camera on.

On the screen, three armed guards are visible: a FAT GUARD and two YOUNG GUARDS. She pulls the camera back and moves into the bedroom.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - MADELYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Madelyn removes a knot in the floor. She repeats the process with her tools, then feeds a camera through the opening.

ON-SCREEN - VIA
CAMERA:

RUIZ (60s) is a short, bald, pudgy Hispanic man dressed in cowboy pajamas. He gets into bed.

Madelyn looks at her watch: 11:00 p.m.

She twists the fiber-optic camera, scoping the room.

ON-SCREEN - VIA
CAMERA:

A PERSONAL GUARD (40s) is a large Hispanic man with thick hair and a mustache, wearing a black suit and cowboy boots. He sits in a chair reading a newspaper.

Madelyn waits, massaging her ankle. She looks at her watch: 11:25 p.m.

On-screen, Ruiz is snoring. The personal guard looks out the window at a carnival outside.

Madelyn assembles the gun and attaches the fiber-optic camera-scope. She waits.

11:50 p.m.

On-screen, the personal guard looks at Ruiz, exits the bedroom into the parlor, and leaves the bedroom door open.

Madelyn feeds a curved tube down through the holes. She SLAMS a spent .25 caliber cartridge through the tube.

On-screen, she watches the casing land silently on the rug next to the bed. She removes the tube.

On-screen, the personal guard re-enters the bedroom, closes the door, goes to the window, opens it, and leans out to watch the carnival.

She slips the gun barrel through the holes. She turns on the gun camera-scope. Ruiz is on-screen.

Madelyn looks at her watch: 12:00 a.m.

Outside, FIREWORKS EXPLODE like bombs.

Madelyn aligns the crosshairs. She squeezes the trigger. The gun FIRES.

Ruiz slumps over. The job is done.

She quickly pulls the gun through, replaces the floor plugs, pulls the rug and table back, and packs up. Limping to the window, she attaches the rope to her harness and exits through the window.

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - SIDE OF BUILDING - NIGHT

Madelyn painfully begins scaling the wall to the roof. Behind her, colorful fireworks continue to explode.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - RUIZ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The personal guard leans back in from the window, looks over at Ruiz, and panics.

Brandishing his gun, he runs to the bed. He spots the spent .25 cartridge, quickly picks it up, and shoves it into his pocket. He shakes Ruiz. Ruiz is unresponsive.

PERSONAL GUARD
(Hispanic accent)
Oh mierda! No, no, no.

He runs to the door, gun in hand, and yanks it open, startling the other guards outside. He stands frozen in the doorway.

PERSONAL GUARD
Senior Ruiz is dead!

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - ROOF - NIGHT

Madelyn reaches her paraglider. Struggling to stand, she harnesses herself in. Sounds of the carnival echo from below. She starts the engine.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - RUIZ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Guards yell at each other in Spanish, searching the room for clues. They find nothing. They shrug at each other, then turn their eyes to the personal guard.

PERSONAL GUARD

I was looking out the window, at
the carnival; I turn around... Ruiz
is dead, shot. I have the shell.

The personal guard removes the spent cartridge from his
pocket.

The FAT GUARD takes the cartridge, notes the caliber, and
shakes his head. He turns to the young guards.

FAT GUARD

(Mexican Spanish accent)
.25 caliber.

The young guards exchange glances, then look to the fat
guard. He nods. They grab the personal guard.

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - ROOF - NIGHT

Madelyn pushes the throttle to FAST and flares her sail. She
begins running, stumbles. The sail collapses.

She hobbles to the roof ledge, looking down. Carnival
revelers pack the streets below.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - RUIZ'S SUITE - NIGHT

The young guards hold the personal guard tight.

The fat guard plucks a live round from the personal guard's
own gun, holding it next to the spent cartridge—they are a
perfect match.

The fat guard slaps the personal guard hard, then shoves the
live bullet halfway up the personal guard's nose.

FAT GUARD

You idiot, did you think you could
get away with this? You killed Mr.
Ruiz!

PERSONAL GUARD

No! No! I did not kill him, I was
looking out the window, I turned
around and he is dead. The bullet
was on the floor... I swear to you.

FAT GUARD

You think we are stupid? We know
how you felt about Ruiz!

(MORE)

FAT GUARD (CONT'D)
You will pay for this crime against
our country.

The fat guard spits on the personal guard.

FAT GUARD
You pig!

The fat guard handcuffs the personal guard and turns to the
young guards.

FAT GUARD
Call the policia.

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - ROOF - NIGHT

Madelyn perches on the edge of the roof ledge. She REVS THE
ENGINE, flares her sail, and steps out into empty air.

She drops down, out of sight. FIREWORKS EXPLODE.

EXT. ABOVE PORTE VALADERA AND REGION - NIGHT - TRAVELING

She gains altitude, passing directly by Ruiz's window.
Inside, the fat guard is still yelling at the personal guard.
Madelyn smiles.

Flying high above the buildings, the revelers look like
dancing ants. FIREWORKS EXPLODE. The city lights begin to
fade away.

Coastal mountains come into view. Turbulent air makes
controlling the sail difficult.

Fighting the heavy winds, she crests the peaks—

Madelyn flies straight into a thick fog bank. Zero
visibility.

The GPS signal goes sporadic. The altimeter reads 3500 feet.
She begins a blind descent.

The fog thickens. A sail line slips; a corner of the sail
collapses. She begins losing altitude, listing hard to the
right.

Madelyn checks the GPS. It reads: SEARCHING FOR SATELLITES.

Madelyn hits the call/lock button on her radio.

MADELYN
Bill! Bill! I'm in trouble.

The RADIO CRACKLES.

MADELYN

Bill! Can you hear? I'm in trouble!

BILL (V.O.)

Madelyn! What's wro—

The RADIO CRACKLES. The GPS reads: NO SIGNAL. The altimeter reads 1500 feet.

MADELYN

I'm past the range, over water.
Can't see. I'm losing altitude. I
can't find you.

BILL (V.O.)

Your— ove— wa—

The radio drops into pure static.

MADELYN

If you hear me, shoot a flare.
Shoot a flare!

No response. Madelyn checks her altimeter: 600 feet.

MADELYN

Shoot a flare! Bill!

She checks the gauge again: 450 feet... 300 feet... 150 feet.

MADELYN

Damn it, Bill, can you hear me?
Shoot the flare!

A FLARE TRAIL rushes into the night sky. The fog glows a burning green.

Madelyn turns hard toward the light. The altimeter reads: 100 feet... 60 feet... 40 feet.

MADELYN

I'm in the flare zone. I'm going
down, I have to jettison glider.
I'm hurt.

Down on the water, BILL scans the sky with a searchlight. The beam blindly bounces off the heavy fog layer.

The paraglider ENGINE GOES DEAD.

The heavy SOUND OF A SPLASH echoes nearby.

Bill strains to hear. He cups his hands around his mouth, yelling into the pitch blackness.

BILL
Madelyn! Madelyn!

Another SPLASH. Then... silence.

BILL
Madelyn! Madelyn!

Bill and the crew frantically get the rescue boat launched, rushing toward the coordinate zone of the splashes, the searchlight bouncing wildly across the fog.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - NIGHT

Madelyn treads water. Waves roll over her body in slow motion. The ocean landscape is a ghostly green through her night-vision goggles. She is losing strength.

MADELYN
Help me vader...

She begins sinking. She pulls off her goggles.

As she sinks beneath the surface, the ocean above her becomes brightly illuminated with white light.

MADELYN (V.O.)
Go to the light.

She struggles upward toward the illumination.

Hands reach into the cold water, grabbing her coat. Bill pulls her head completely above water. Madelyn gasps for air.

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A DOORMAN stands waiting on the curb.

The carnival crowds bustle about as hotel guests come and go.

A hand pushes a polished brass revolving door, revealing the warm lobby inside.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The grand marble floors and elegant, old-world architecture are completely filled with carnival revelers and traveling guests, many dressed in elaborate costumes.

The lower torso of a man walks purposefully toward the receptionist desk. His steady footsteps echo sharply off the marble floor.

The RECEPTIONIST is young, beautiful, and Hispanic. She immediately readies herself for the approaching person, smiling warmly.

Stationed at the desk are two men: the MANAGER, fifties, impeccably dressed, the gray wings of his hair looking very distinguished; alongside a muscular, bald SECURITY MAN wearing a tactical earpiece.

RECEPTIONIST

Buenos tardes señor. How may I help you?

A hand lays a heavy leather badge flat onto the counter surface. The shield reads: "Mike Anderson, Special Agent CIA."

The receptionist tracks the credentials, her smile fading as she looks over at the hotel manager.

RECEPTIONIST

Sí señor. Un momento please.

The manager and the security man cross over to face Mike, delivering a brief nod to the receptionist. She exits the desk area.

The men study Mike's badge, then exchange a quizzical look.

MANAGER

(Hispanic accent)

We weren't expecting you. Why is the Americano CIA here before the local policía?

Mike looks back blankly at the manager.

MANAGER

You are here about Señor Ruiz? Yes?

MIKE

I'm here to --

The sudden, piercing sound of approaching police sirens cuts his sentence off entirely. Everyone at the desk turns their heads sharply toward the front doors.

Flashing emergency lights from the arrival of local police cars are visible through the glass panels outside.

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Police exit the vehicles.

A well-dressed DETECTIVE, toned physique, forties, a chain smoker, stands erect, barking orders at everyone. He stomps out his cigarette, heading toward the front door.

The doorman opens the door; the detective enters the lobby.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The detective angrily approaches the manager, looking at Mike. The detective tightens and adjusts his tie, glaring at the manager.

DETECTIVE
(in Spanish; English
subtitles)
Who is this man? Why are you
talking to anyone? What the hell is
going on?

MANAGER
He is American... CIA.

The detective squeezes his upper lip, turns to Mike, looks him up and down, and grunts. He extends his hand. They shake hands.

The detective removes a silver cigarette case from his inner coat pocket. He takes out a cigarette, packs it hard against the case, and puts it in his mouth. He is agitated.

DETECTIVE
(smooth Hispanic accent)
Well, I am not surprised to see you
here; lately your government seems
to be everywhere... before we are.
What is your business here?

Mike hesitates, looking around at the commotion.

MIKE
I'm here to see Dr. Pugh. I
understand she and her group are
staying here.

The detective lights his cigarette, looking suspiciously at his watch.

DETECTIVE

You work strange hours, or is your
visit to this Dr. Pugh more...
social?

The manager looks at the detective, then at Mike.

MANAGER

Dr. Pugh is not here. She canceled
the day before the others arrived.
Her suite is empty. The others are
leaving tomorrow.

The detective throws his arms up in mock surprise, gesturing
to the commotion in the lobby.

DETECTIVE

Oh! So surprising, yes? But
nonetheless, such perfect timing.

He rolls an arm toward the elevator, bowing slightly, falsely
accommodating.

DETECTIVE

Come, Mr. Anderson, let us go to
Senior Ruiz's suite; his guards are
holding the man they believe shot
Ruiz.

The detective and several police officers walk toward the
elevator. Mike takes a deep breath, looks around, and shakes
his head in confusion. He follows the men.

The detective pushes the elevator button, tapping his Italian
loafer impatiently. He pushes the button again... repeatedly.

The elevator doors open. The men crowd together into the
elevator. The detective stomps out his cigarette. The doors
shut.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Reflections of the men are seen in the polished brass
elevator doors.

The detective mutters to the officers in Spanish; the only
distinguishable words are "CIA," and the grunts of the
officers' disapproval. The detective pinches his lip. Mike
runs a hand through his hair.

They continue up in silence.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - LUXURY YACHT - LOWER DECK - NIGHT

Crew members lift Madelyn out of the water and onto the deck. Madelyn is wet, shivering, and in mild shock.

They wrap her in blankets. All of them go into the cabin.

INT. PACIFIC OCEAN - LUXURY YACHT - MAIN SALON - NIGHT

The crew members lay Madelyn on the couch. Bill kneels down by Madelyn, rubbing her forehead.

BILL

It's okay, Madelyn, it --

Madelyn puts her hand over Bill's mouth. She shakes her head. She is exhausted and drained.

MADELYN

It's not okay. I've had enough. I can't do this anymore. Get me home.

BILL

But your father --

MADELYN

Is dead. He's gone. It's over.

Madelyn closes her eyes. She falls asleep.

BEGIN DREAM
SEQUENCE:

EXT. SOUTH AFRICA - MR. PUGH'S RANCH - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

SUPER: 1987

A blinding, baking sun beats down.
A cloud of thick dust rises as an
angry white MOB surrounds the
farmhouse. Shouted threats in
Afrikaans pierce the heavy air. In
the dirt yard, several Black
farmworkers are held at gunpoint by
the rioters.

INT. MR. PUGH'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thick wooden shutters are bolted shut, cutting the harsh daylight into sharp stripes across the floor.

MR. PUGH (40s) methodically lines heavy firearms onto the dining table. He slams a magazine into a rifle. He is cold, rigid, and carved from stone.

He hands a shotgun to MOTHER (30s). She stands hollow, frozen in a colorful sundress that contrasts horribly with the weapon.

Outside, a heavy rock SMASHES through the exterior wooden shutters, fracturing the slats and sending shards of window glass exploding inward.

Mother drops to the floor, pulling MADELYN (8) down with her to avoid the debris.

Mr. Pugh doesn't even flinch. He racks a round into his rifle.

MR. PUGH

I'm going out. If anyone tries to cross that threshold, you shoot them.

Madelyn stands up, gripping a heavy rifle. Her small hands shake, but her eyes are wide and fearless.

MADELYN

Yes, Vader.

Mr. Pugh drops to one knee, grabbing Madelyn's arms with iron authority.

MR. PUGH

Remember the lion, Madelyn. Do not compromise. Shoot them!

He plants a hard kiss on her forehead, turns, and marches toward the front door.

EXT. MR. PUGH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The mob falls silent as Mr. Pugh steps onto the porch, rifle bared.

JOHN, a towering man seething with rage under the hot sun, steps forward. He points a trembling pistol at Pugh, then waves it toward the terrified Black families trapped in the yard.

JOHN

(thick Afrikaans accent)
I've had enough of your self-righteous charity, Pugh!

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

You break the relocation laws, you
let them stay on your soil—

MR. PUGH

This is my land. All of you, drop
your weapons and get off it now!

JOHN

There is no justice anymore! I'll
kill you all before I let them take
what's mine!

SIRENS wail in the distance. Flashing emergency lights cut through the rising dust clouds at the edge of the property. The police are arriving.

The mob begins to panic, scattering in the heat and haze.

John looks at the approaching police vehicles, his eyes wild and cornered. The world he knew is ending. He snaps his pistol back up, aiming directly at Mr. Pugh.

MR. PUGH

John, don't—

A sharp GUNSHOT rings out.

Mr. Pugh takes the bullet directly to the chest. He stumbles backward, crashing hard against the porch steps.

INT./EXT. FARMHOUSE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Madelyn screams from the window. Driven by pure survival instinct, she raises her heavy rifle, points it through the shattered glass, and FIRES blindly into the chaos.

EXT. MR. PUGH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The scene erupts into utter bedlam. John drops to the dirt, wounded or dead.

Madelyn bursts through the front door, throwing her empty rifle aside. In the doorway behind her, Mother stands paralyzed in shock, her hands clamped over her mouth.

Madelyn throws herself onto her father's body.

MADELYN

Vader! Vader! No!

She sobs hysterically, her hands pulling at his shirt. Her white blouse and face are instantly smeared with deep, bright crimson under the midday sun.

Two POLICE OFFICERS rush forward, grabbing Madelyn under her arms and violently tearing her away from the corpse.

Madelyn fights like an animal, kicking and scratching. She breaks free from their grip, sprinting toward the edge of the sun-baked perimeter fence, screaming into the empty, burning veld.

MADELYN

Lion! LION!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PACIFIC OCEAN - LUXURY YACHT - MAIN SALON - NIGHT
(PRESENT)

Madelyn is asleep on a plush leather sofa. Bill pours whiskey into a crystal tumbler.

He turns toward Madelyn, walking closer to strain and hear her low mumbles.

MADELYN

Lion... lion.

BILL

Get the poor girl a sedative and
get her to her cabin, and captain,
get us into U.S. waters.

The captain exits.

Bill walks to the rear cabin doors, stepping outside onto the rear deck with his drink in hand.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - LUXURY YACHT - REAR DECK - NIGHT

Bill leans against the rear railing, sipping his drink. He stares at the sparkling bioluminescence of the boat's wake, completely mesmerized.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elevator doors open; the men step out. The detective lights a cigarette.

They walk toward Ruiz's suite. Two young guards stand in the hall. The detective greets them, and they all enter the suite.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - RUIZ'S SUITE - NIGHT

The fat guard is standing over the personal guard, staring angrily. He shakes his head at him as the others approach.

DETECTIVE
Don't touch anything!

Mike leans forward, peering into the bedroom. The body of Ruiz is lying in the bed, the area stained a deep crimson.

MIKE
What the...

The detective goes to the personal guard, squatting down to stare him dead in the eyes. His gaze darts across the guard's face. The guard looks back at the detective, unflinching, but pleading.

The detective stands up, looking suspiciously at the fat guard. The fat guard nervously looks away. The surrounding police officers look at each other. Mike stands by, looking quietly amused.

The rhythmic chopping sound of the ceiling fan echoes through the room.

The detective takes a deep drag from his cigarette, exhaling loudly as he looks around at everyone. He stomps out his cigarette.

DETECTIVE
This man did not kill Ruiz.

Everyone looks surprised. The personal guard breathes a sigh of relief, dropping his head. The fat guard steps toward the detective.

FAT GUARD
But detective, we found the empty casing, he was the only one in the room. I think --

DETECTIVE
You think wrong!

PERSONAL GUARD
Gracias Jesus, Madre Mary. Gracias detective.

The detective turns to the personal guard, nodding.

DETECTIVE

You're welcome my friend, I believe
you're innocent.

The detective takes another cigarette from his case, packing it tightly before putting it in his mouth. He shakes his head at the personal guard, turning around to walk away, muttering under his breath.

DETECTIVE

But no one else will. You will pay
for this crime.

The personal guard shrugs at the fat guard, shaking his head. The fat guard runs a finger across his own neck.

FAT GUARD

He said you're a dead man.

The detective lights his cigarette, starting to walk slowly around the room. He stops at a POLICE SERGEANT, a large man with a thick handlebar mustache, wearing an ill-fitting uniform.

DETECTIVE

Take him to the police station.
Charge him for the murder of Ruiz,
and I want everyone out, except Mr.
Anderson... from the CIA.

He takes a deep drag of his cigarette, exhaling upward while scanning the ceiling. Mike looks up.

The detective looks back at Mike, extending an arm toward the bedroom door.

DETECTIVE

Well, Mr. Anderson, from the CIA,
shall we?

Mike begins to walk past him, pauses, and turns to face the detective fully.

MIKE

Mike, it's just Mike.

The detective raises one eyebrow at Mike, taking a slow drag. He exhales loudly, nodding his head up and down in a slow rhythm.

DETECTIVE

Ah yes, the informality of the
Americanos. I forget, your
presidente doesn't even wear a tie.
Por favor, after you, Mr. Mike.

Shaking his head in disbelief, Mike enters the bedroom. The
detective follows close behind.

MIKE

Mike... damn, it's just Mike.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - RUIZ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The two men enter the room, walking directly toward the bed.
Mike splits off to the right side; the detective moves to the
left. They both stare down at Ruiz.

The detective looks across the bed at Mike, taking a drag of
his cigarette. He looks up, pointing to the ceiling with the
glowing tip of his cigarette. A small trailing flake of ash
falls onto the bed sheet.

Mike looks up at the ceiling holes, then looks down at the
ash. Mike frowns.

The detective looks back down at Ruiz, his attitude entirely
nonchalant.

DETECTIVE

He's going to be cremated, what's a
few more ashes, Sí?

Mike shakes his head, continuing to study the entry wound.
The detective points back up with his cigarette.

DETECTIVE

And so, Mike, you say you came to
see a Mrs. Pugh... who was supposed
to be in the suite above?

MIKE

(distracted)

Uh... Yeah... Dr. Pugh

DETECTIVE

Who is not here? Humph.

He waves his hand over Ruiz's body; ashes fall on Ruiz again.
Mike looks at the detective, then looks at the ashes. Mike
shakes his head.

The detective points down to Ruiz.

DETECTIVE

At least it's not a wasted trip.

Mike scans the ceiling; his eyes dart side to side. His eyes stop, widening into a fixed stare. He smiles.

MIKE

He was killed in his sleep!

Mike looks down at Ruiz, nodding his head as he runs a hand through his hair.

MIKE

Just like Nkwatcha.

Mike quickly heads toward the door, stops, and turns back to the detective.

MIKE

Detective, I need to see upstairs.

The detective pinches his upper lip, looking at Mike with puzzlement and suspicion.

MIKE

Please, let's go upstairs.

The detective shrugs his shoulders, stomps out his cigarette, and spreads his arms as he heads for the door.

DETECTIVE

Yes, of course, Mike... from the CIA.

Mike follows the detective to the door, shaking his head in disgust.

MIKE

Mike. Just Mike.

Mike misses the subtle smirk spreading across the detective's face.

DETECTIVE

Sí.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - MADELYN'S SUITE - PARLOR - NIGHT

Mike looks around the parlor. Everything is in perfect order.

He checks the windows; the snap locks are secured. He enters the bedroom and immediately drops to his knees, beginning to inspect the floor.

The detective remains entirely unconcerned. He lights another cigarette, leaning against the window frame to watch Mike work.

DETECTIVE

I'm unsure what you look for. Ms. Pugh did not stay here; besides, we have our killer. This case is solved, it is closed.

MIKE

Your mind is closed. Ballistics will tell a different story.

The detective bristles, opens the window, and flings his cigarette outside. He turns back to face Mike fully.

DETECTIVE

Oh Sí, ballistics tests. No, señor, we don't have those here. We wanted to get that equipment, but they had none... Hollywood had bought it all.

Mike cuts his eyes toward the detective; a brief smile escapes. He continues examining the pine flooring.

MIKE

With all respect, detective, you don't seem interested in finding who really killed Ruiz.

The detective takes another cigarette from his case, packing it tightly before lighting it. He takes a deep, long drag.

He pinches his lip, walking over to Mike to look him up and down.

DETECTIVE

I wish I could say I'm sorry that Ruiz is dead, but in truth, Mike, I'm not. Ruiz was evil; he will not be missed.

MIKE

But that doesn't change the fact that the truth needs to be investigated.

DETECTIVE

Investigate the truth? The truth is, ninety percent of my country's people would like to see Ruiz dead; most of them would have killed him themselves.

He takes another long drag from his cigarette, shrugging as he exhales a swirling cloud of blue smoke.

DETECTIVE

His own army talked of a coup. I do not have the time to, as you say, investigate. Nearly every person in this country has a motive worthy of killing Ruiz.

Mike stands quietly, studying the detective.

The detective takes a final drag, looks at Mike, raises an eyebrow, and throws up his hands. He walks back to the open window, staring outside.

MIKE

Who rented this suite?

DETECTIVE

An Americano oil company, from Texas; they reserve this entire floor for the year.

The detective takes a drag and laughs.

DETECTIVE

They come, try to get our oil. This hotel is a politico, how you say, hot spot. There are perhaps... even more suspects in this case, no?

The detective throws his cigarette out of the window, turning to walk toward the door. He stops at the threshold, turning back to Mike as he takes another cigarette from his case, packs it, and places it in his mouth.

DETECTIVE

If you will excuse me, Mike, I must go get ready for a press conferencia. Let the people know I solved this murder. You look around, but please, don't touch.

Mike stands up, shaking the detective's hand.

MIKE

Gracias detective. Buenos noches.

The detective lights his cigarette, nods to Mike, and walks out of the room, disappearing behind his own smoke screen.

Mike walks over to the open window, leaning against the sill to look out. The carnival outside is finally winding down.

He runs a hand through his hair, searching around the window sill.

MIKE

(excited slow whisper)

Well, hello...

Mike grabs a chair, sets it by the window, and stands on it.

He looks closely at the top window frame, discovering a rub mark etched into the wood and a loose rope fiber. He hangs out of the window, peering directly up toward the roof stay.

Mike leans back inside, steps off the chair, and begins pacing the room, focusing his eyes on the knotted pine floor.

MIKE

I know she was here. I know it!

Mike quickly walks to the door.

MIKE

It's time to wake up her friends.

Mike exits the suite.

INT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mike begins pounding heavily on the surrounding doors.

The flying troupe women open their doors, looking at Mike—sleepy and muddled. Mike flashes his badge directly in front of them.

MIKE

Good morning ladies; we need to talk.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - LUXURY YACHT - DECK - DAY

The sea mirrors the colors of the dawn sky as a light breeze blows across the water.

Bill sits at the table having coffee while a steward serves fresh fruit.

A disheveled Madelyn limps out onto the deck on crutches. Bill glances over the rim of his glasses at her.

BILL

Good morning. Sit down, sit down.
Have some coffee and fruit.

Bill stands up to help Madelyn. She grunts in pain.

Bill hands the crutches over to the steward, gesturing toward his coffee cup and Madelyn. The steward nods and leaves the deck.

BILL

Listen hon, we need to talk.

Madelyn rolls her eyes at Bill, letting out a sharp grunt.

BILL

After breakfast.

EXT. MIRAFLORES PALACIO HOTEL - ROOFTOP - DAY (DAWN)

Parasail equipment is scattered about. The rooftop door swings open.

Mike escorts SUSAN, a fiery redhead, and two other women out onto the rooftop. All of the women are in their late twenties or early thirties, attractive, slim, with athletic builds.

SUSAN

Hey! My sail is gone! And my lines
are cut!

Mike checks the severed lines. He walks to the roof ledge, stoops down, and inspects marks on the roof tiles directly above Madelyn's suite window.

Mike stands, walking around the roof ledge to look down. He spots a backpack resting on an adjacent building's rooftop.

He walks over to Susan, extending his hand. Susan smiles seductively as they shake. Mike puts his hand on Susan's shoulder, gently nudging her back toward the roof door. Susan keeps her grip on Mike's hand.

MIKE

Thank you ladies for your help,
sorry to wake you this morning.

SUSAN

It would be a pleasure to wake up
with you any morning...

MIKE

I hope Dr. Pugh is feeling better.
I'll have your equipment shipped
back to you. You all have a safe
trip home.

Mike herds the women toward the exit, gently pushing them through. Susan continues her silent flirtation as she disappears inside.

Mike closes the door behind them, then returns to the roof ledge to look down at the backpack.

EXT. ADJACENT BUILDING - ROOFTOP - DAY

Mike picks up the abandoned backpack, glances back up at the Miraflores Palacio Hotel, and dumps out the contents.

Out falls Madelyn's torn black sail, cut pieces of a harness, and a length of rope. He stuffs the gear back inside, smiling as he stands up.

The sharp crack of a gunshot rings out. A bullet ricochets off the concrete right next to his foot.

Mike bolts for cover. A second shot rings out, missing him wide.

Mike peers toward the hotel roof, catching sight of a distant figure dressed in black fleeing the scene. He pins himself safely behind a vent stack.

MIKE

What the hell?

Mike stands up, brushes the roof dust off his clothes, and darts toward the rooftop stairs.

MIKE

I'm going to find me that shooter.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - LUXURY YACHT - REAR DECK - DAY

Bill and Madelyn sit on chaise lounges under the open sun. A steward sets down a tray carrying a pitcher of tea and glasses. Bill waves him away.

Bill sits up, leaning forward toward Madelyn.

BILL

Close call last night. Listen, I know you're in a little shock, and a lot of pain, but I need to bring you up to speed on some things you don't know... and should.

Madelyn tracks him with growing concern.

MADELYN

I sense bad news coming.

BILL

What do you know about me and your father's relationship?

MADELYN

You were friends, close friends?

BILL

Hon, it was more of a business relationship. He worked for me, if not always with me.

Madelyn tracks his words with a muddled expression.

MADELYN

What are you talking about?

BILL

Me, you, your dad, Mike Anderson.

MADELYN

Anderson? You said Anderson is CIA. I'm not making the connection.

BILL

Madelyn, I'm CIA... have been for years. Your dad was an operative. After your mother's suicide, everything you've learned, everything you've done, has been orchestrated by the agency--through me.

MADELYN

Orchestrated? My life is not your symphony!

Bill purses his lips, raising his eyebrows.

BILL

Well... it really is... kind of; but listen --

MADELYN
No! Fuck you, Bill!

Madelyn snaps, striking Bill with her crutch as she spins into hysterics.

A crewmember bursts outside onto the deck, brandishing a weapon. Bill scrambles out of Madelyn's physical reach as she pulls herself up.

BILL
(pleading)
Madelyn, sit down. Listen to me,
nothing's different.

MADELYN
Nothing's different? Everything's
different! I told you last night,
I've been telling you, I'm through.
I've had enough. I knew some --

She stops mid-sentence, turning her focus onto the armed crewmember, shaking her head defiantly.

MADELYN
And what? Are you going to shoot
me?

She glares back at Bill.

BILL
Yes, if he has to. Now sit down and
shut up! We need to figure some
things out, now!

Madelyn sinks back down into her seat, casting her crutch aside to stare blankly out at the ocean. She turns her gaze toward the crewmember.

MADELYN
Put your weapon away, the only shot
I need is whiskey.

BILL
Bring the bottle.

Bill tries to shift the heavy mood.

BILL
Hon, could you watch your language?
You sound like a sailor.

Madelyn scans their surroundings.

MADELYN

We are on a fucking boat, Bill!

They drop into tense silence. Madelyn stares out at the water while Bill watches her.

The yacht sways against the low, steady rumble of the engine. The steward returns, places a decanter of whiskey and two crystal tumblers on the table, and leaves.

Madelyn turns to Bill, resting her elbows on the table with her hands open.

MADELYN

I just... I need to... my father?
Anderson? I don't...

Bill touches Madelyn's shoulder. She pulls away instantly.

BILL

Let me make this simple, okay?

Madelyn nods her head, knocks back her whiskey, and pours another.

BILL

Your father worked with the agency
doing Intel during apartheid. He
got too involved. He cared too
much; he went too far.

Madelyn looks at Bill, craning her neck forward as she squints her eyes. She silently mouths the word: what?

BILL

When he began representing those
families against the state
relocation board—which I begged him
not to—he pissed off a lot of
people. We couldn't help him any
longer.

MADELYN

So you threw him to the wolves?

BILL

He chose to --

MADELYN

To die? To die, Bill? You let him
die. The CIA did that? You did
that!

Bill shifts his gaze away; his guilt is completely obvious.

MADELYN
What about Anderson?

Bill smiles.

BILL
Mike's a little green, he doesn't even know I'm in the agency; but the boy's got talent, you two would be a great team.

MADELYN
What?

BILL
Just say'n, y'all'd be good together.

MADELYN
And you knew he was... is, investigating me?

BILL
I'm trying to see how good he is; hell, I'm trying to see how good you really are. I've been grooming you --

MADELYN
Grooming me! Now I'm a fucking circus poodle? You've been playing me, Bill... say it.

BILL
Well darl'n, as they say in the Carolinas, like a well-tuned fiddle.

Madelyn sits with her arms crossed--angry, disgusted.

MADELYN
That sucks, Bill. That really sucks.

BILL
Listen to me, Madelyn. Listen carefully.

Bill slowly sips his whiskey, then sets the glass down.

BILL
The agency wants you to come in and work for us, on a much larger scale. We need you to --

MADELYN

Now! You're telling me this now?
I'm through, especially now. I
don't want this anymore. I want to
be a doctor—you know, one that
saves lives.

BILL

Cut the philosophical crap! We've
been through this since you were a
child. It makes sense; you got your
dream.

MADELYN

Sense? I'm a doctor who kills
people. I kill people, Bill. You
made me a killer. I'm a killer!

BILL

And thousands live because you are.

MADELYN

That's not what I saw in Slovanka.

BILL

You're losing focus.

MADELYN

You took my pain, my anger, and
mixed it with your ambition... you
took the perfect ingredients and
made a killer.

BILL

Be sensible, Madelyn.

MADELYN

How can I be sensible when it
doesn't make sense? I feel like I'm
part of a machine. And for good or
bad reasons, people die,
revolutions begin, and more people
die.

She looks at Bill, shaking her head defiantly as the reality
clicks.

MADELYN

Revolution. In every country your
friends wanted something. My
hospitals, the children, me—all
pawns in your political play. You
bastards, that's not right.

BILL

It paid for your Ivy League
education. These friends finance
your hospitals. Face it honey, the
CIA gave you your dream.

Madelyn grabs her crutches. Bill flinches instinctively.

She stands up, starting to walk toward the cabin door. She
stops, turning back to face Bill fully.

MADELYN

And you... you killed my father. I
will never forgive you for that.

She walks away.

Bill stands up, looks toward his crew, and nods his head to
the captain. The captain nods back to the surrounding
crewmembers; the crew immediately gets busy.

BILL

It's all in how you look at it.

Bill sips his whiskey, shaking his head. Madelyn yanks open
the cabin door.

BILL

Madelyn, get ready to go; a chopper
is coming in to take us all to
Texas. Be ready to leave in ten
minutes.

MADELYN

No thanks, Bill. I'll take the boat
back.

BILL

Honey, this boat was never here.
I'm not asking you, I'm telling
you: be ready in ten minutes.

Bill knocks back his whiskey, rubbing his forehead as he
searches the open sky.

The distant sound of a helicopter echoes across the water.
The crew prepares to disembark.

Stewards bring the luggage up to the top deck. Another
steward assists Madelyn up as she struggles against her
injury. Bill continues to scan the gray horizon.

The heavy chopping sound of the helicopter grows deafening.

A massive Chinook transport helicopter hovers directly overhead, pushing the ocean water into large, outward waves around the hull of the yacht.

Life lifts are lowered down from the bay. Everyone is hoisted up, one by one, boarding the transport helicopter.

INT. HELICOPTER - PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

Bill shakes his index finger, signaling the pilot to go. The helicopter flies away from the yacht.

Bill looks back, pushing a red button on a remote control.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

An aerial view of the yacht adrift in the open water. The boat EXPLODES.

INT. CAR - HIGHWAY (HOUSTON) - DAY

SUPER: AIR FORCE BASE - HOUSTON, TEXAS

Ramp agents guide the helicopter to a landing pad; it touches down gently. The passengers exit.

A luxury Town Car pulls up to the helicopter. BARBARA exits the car, waving to Bill.

Bill and Madelyn walk toward the vehicle. Bill hugs his wife, then enters the front passenger side.

Madelyn walks past them, zombie-like, getting into the rear seat and slumping down like an angry teenager. Military personnel place the luggage in the trunk.

Barbara gets into the driver's side, starts the engine, and drives away.

INT./EXT. CAR - HIGHWAY (HOUSTON) - DAY

Barbara steers the luxury Town Car onto the open highway.

BARBARA
How was y'all's trip?

She peers into the rearview mirror, tracking Madelyn staring icily at the back of Bill's head.

BILL
What's for dinner?

BARBARA
Okay then...

INT. ROTH HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Bill, Barbara, and Madelyn sit at a large dining table meticulously set with china, crystal, and silver. Candles glow softly.

A tiered chandelier illuminates a traditional dining room furnished with a Queen Anne table and chairs, paneled wainscots, a sideboard, and an Aubusson rug. There is a massive feast of food spread before them.

BILL
(chewing loudly)
Mmmm, mmmm, honey this is
delicious. Now this is a great
steak! What do you think Madelyn?

Nothing like feed'n on the fatted calf. You grew up on a cattle ranch, you know choice meat, what d'ya think?

Bill takes another bite, exaggerating his enjoyment.

An old Golden Retriever sits beside Bill, gently setting a paw onto Bill's thigh. Bill slices a piece of steak and hands it to the dog. The dog takes it gently from his fingers.

BILL
Now see, even old King knows a good thing. Did you see how he took that steak? Gently, appreciatively... he knows not to bite the hand that feeds him.

He looks directly across at Madelyn. She returns his look with an angry smirk.

Bill slams his fork down hard against the china, shaking his steak knife as he chews and speaks.

BILL
We can dance around this issue all night, but I'm not in the mood to attend a masked ball. So let's cut the crap, Madelyn—you need to make a serious decision.

MADELYN

I told you, I'm through; that's it.
I've had enough. I'm finished,
Bill. I want change.

Bill swallows his food, letting out a sharp, sarcastic laugh. He sets his knife down, wipes his mouth with a napkin, and slaps the table hard with the palm of his hand.

BILL

Change? You want change? Well,
before you make that your final
answer darl'n, let me spell out two
or three things.

You just listen, and then you sleep on it, 'cause you seriously underestimate the consequences of your current decision.

MADELYN

Bill, really, you need to listen.

Barbara reaches out, touching Madelyn on the arm and pulling it gently. Madelyn turns to her.

Barbara has an expression of serious concern weighing on her face, her eyes pleading directly with Madelyn.

BARBARA

Madelyn, honey, just listen to
Bill.

Madelyn looks at Barbara searchingly, her eyes scanning Barbara's face. Barbara pats Madelyn's hand, nodding her head up and down in a slow rhythm.

BARBARA

Honey, just listen.

Madelyn glances back at Bill, giving a slight nod as she rolls her hand forward, yielding the floor.

BILL

Madelyn, we go back a long time,
but in reality, there's only the
present; and right now, you're at
the crossroads of your future... we
all are.

Bill slowly sips his wine, setting the glass down gently as he locks his eyes onto Madelyn.

BILL

Madelyn, the agency wants you to work on an assignment, one that I believe only you can handle. Prince Nasir, second to the throne behind Sarraf, needs to move up a notch. The king doesn't have long--hell, none of us do.

Madelyn looks at Barbara, completely startled. Barbara forces a cracked smile, her expression conveying a silent: "I told you so."

BILL

Sarraf needs to go. This operation requires a lot of inside prep. If you do this, my friends'll fund your foundation for fifty million dollars upon completion--all or nothing.

Bill takes another slow sip of wine, leaning in close across the table toward Madelyn.

BILL

I don't have to say, if you botch this, you won't need the money. If you complete it, you'll never need money again.

MADELYN

That region is unstable; this would light the fuse on a powder keg. Why?

BILL

Let me spare you play'n the forty questions game. Prep and logistics ahead of you will be tops. We already have a rogue agent in place as a fall guy. Every angle of this is covered. This is --

MADELYN

Insane. This plan is so destabilizing it's --

BILL

Your only choice. If you don't do it, the agency will ruin you. Funding, hospitals -- gone!

MADELYN

I'm not --

BILL

That's stupid. Madelyn, honey, these people aren't play'n around. You'll go down for Nkwatcha and Ruiz. They'll extradite you, and you know you won't make both trials.

MADELYN

I don't see where I have a choice.

BILL

You really don't. You're going to have to trust me, and I know you don't. This operation is going to be full of illusions; you won't be able to trust your heart, or what you think you see. You're gonna have to trust me.

MADELYN

That's asking a lot.

He looks at Madelyn; there is a distinct sadness lingering in his eyes.

BILL

Hon, the world's ugly, and the agency is the ugliest of all. I'm just the messenger darl'n, and the code of war has always been... don't shoot the messenger.

Madelyn sits in silent shock.

Bill wipes his mouth with his napkin, sets it down, and pushes his chair back, letting out a heavy groan as he stands.

He walks around the table, hugging Barbara from behind to press a gentle kiss onto her head.

BILL

Honey, that was delicious. I love your cooking. I'd miss that second only to your smile. You ladies excuse me, I'm going to bed; I have a hell of a headache.

He walks toward the dining room doors, massaging his forehead and grimacing from the pain with his back turned to Madelyn.

BILL

Madelyn, sleep on it. It's either-or; you only have one decision to make. Make the right one.

Bill walks out, his footsteps trailing away as he disappears up the stairs.

BILL (O.S.)

By tomorrow morning!

Madelyn rises from the table. Barbara lightly grabs her arm.

BARBARA

Let's talk for a while.

Madelyn sits back down. Barbara pours them more wine, lifting her glass high.

BARBARA

To the good times past. To the future... for better, and the worst to come.

Barbara shifts her gaze away, holding back tears. Madelyn sets her wine glass down, moving closer to Barbara.

MADELYN

Barbara, what's wrong? What's going on?

BARBARA

(breaking down)

Oh honey, it's Bill. He's not well; he has to get... he...

Madelyn hugs Barbara tightly. Barbara cries openly on Madelyn's shoulder.

MADELYN

Slow down, Barbara. Tell me what's going on.

BARBARA

(tearfully)

Bill's not well. He has a tumor—an inoperable brain tumor. It's making him like Jekyll and Hyde. And this mission in the Middle East, why he is even telling me about it, he never has tal --

Barbara stops mid-sentence, forcing herself to compose her thoughts.

She gets up and walks around the table, her closed hand bumping against her mouth gently. She stops right at Madelyn, placing both hands firmly on Madelyn's shoulders.

BARBARA

Madelyn, Bill is right; there's no time. You need to believe how dangerous his friends are, or the agency, whoever. Honey, they'll take everything. If I were you, I --

Barbara looks up toward the ceiling, exhaling deeply as she wipes her eyes.

BARBARA

I would take the offer. Bill will be dead within months; get out then. You can't say no. Take the money, get out, then you can save the children. Right now... save yourself.

Madelyn sits completely still with a hollow, frozen stare.

INT./EXT. MIKE'S CAR - HIGHWAY (MAGGIE VALLEY) - DAY

Mike drives down Main Street, looking obviously lost and growing frustrated.

GPS VOICE (V.O.)

Turn right in one hundred feet.

Mike shifts his gaze right, staring up at a near-vertical mountainside. He drives past it.

GPS VOICE (V.O.)

Recalculating... continue point two miles, then make a U-turn.

MIKE

You sound like a wife! How can you get lost in this town? How did Pugh ever end up in this mountain country.

Mike pulls into a restaurant parking lot and cuts the wheel, bringing the car to a stop.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - DAY

Mike dials a sequence on his cell phone. The sound of a line ringing echoes through the cab.

GLORIA (V.O.)
Hey Mike, what's up?

MIKE
Need a favor, Gloria. I need a link to our satellites; I'm driving in circles here. You say Pugh is home? Wherever that is.

GLORIA (V.O.)
Hang tight a second.

She pauses to search the terminal for a beat.

GLORIA (V.O.)
Should be linking up, and I'm showing Dr. Pugh's cell phone and computer at her house, in use now.

MIKE
Yeah, it's coming up. I'm going to see Pugh. Thanks, Gloria. Oh, Gloria, remember to unlink her signals in a few minutes and block any alarms. I'll be in touch.

Mike ends the call, pulls out of the parking lot, and accelerates back onto the roadway.

INT./EXT. MIKE'S CAR - HIGHWAY (MAGGIE VALLEY) - DAY

The vehicle tracks up the escalating grade.

GPS VOICE (V.O.)
Recalculating... drive three point six miles...

Mike drives through the town center, navigating down winding roads deeper into the Appalachian Mountains. He swings the car into a steep driveway draped heavily with trees.

Reaching the top of the drive, Mike pulls the vehicle up to Madelyn's stylish house perched cleanly atop the mountain crest.

MIKE
Nice place. I could live here.

He parks the car, holsters his firearm securely inside his jacket pocket, and glances into the mirror. He runs a hand through his hair, pats the concealed weapon, and exits the car.

EXT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - MAGGIE VALLEY, N.C. - DAY

Mike approaches the house, walking purposefully toward the rear. The surrounding mountains and his own moving reflection are cleanly mirrored in the massive glass walls of the structure.

MIKE

Hello! Dr. Pugh? Hello, is anyone home?

He taps firmly on the rear door, waiting. No answer.

Peering through the glass window, he spots a cell phone and a laptop resting on a table near the glass pane. A jumble of jumper wires run from the devices into a customized black enclosure; its LED indicators blink continuously.

Mike walks the physical perimeter of the house, calling out for Dr. Pugh while looking through the windows.

He returns to the rear door, pulling a specialized pick tool from his jacket. He picks the lock, opens the door, and slips inside.

INT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - GREAT ROOM - DAY

MIKE

Hello! Dr. Pugh, Mike Anderson, CIA, are you home?

Mike glances around the room, nodding his head in approval.

MIKE

Nice house...

Mike walks through the great room, the kitchen, and down the hall, examining knickknacks as he goes.

He enters Madelyn's bedroom, checking the bathroom, the closets, and sliding open drawers. He sifts through her personal items, nodding before pushing the drawer shut-leaving it just slightly ajar.

Mike returns to the great room, looking at pictures on the piano. He picks up the one of Madelyn, her dad, and their pet calf. He sets it back.

He walks around the room again, pressing keys on the piano and strumming a guitar as he passes. Mike sees the recorder and pushes the play button.

The sound of a mandolin track begins; a recorded guitar starts to play along.

Mike walks to the fireplace, examines the masonry details, and runs his hand across the stones. On the recorder, the sound of a phone ringing interrupts the music. The taped guitar stops, but the mandolin continues.

MADELYN (V.O.)
Hello Bill.

Mike swings his head around quickly, looking at the recorder.

MIKE
Hello indeed!

Mike walks to the recorder, smiling. He takes out his phone and begins recording the playback.

MADELYN (V.O.)
Bill, I don't know. I just don't
feel like this --

BILL (V.O.)
This needs to happen. Ruiz is a
hold-up to the good of his country,
and to the children. He needs to
go. What if they could put together
nine million, do you think --

MADELYN (V.O.)
We could call it done.

MIKE
Oh yeah, so done! You are so done.

BILL (V.O.)
Great! That's my girl! The
Independence Carnival is next
month, hell of a lot of fun, noisy,
lots of fireworks, and there's some
great parasailing...

The recorded conversation continues. Mike smiles like a lottery winner. The recording ends. Mike presses the stop button and calls Gloria.

MIKE
Gloria, Mike. I'm staying in North
Carolina, I'm going to get a room.
I'll be sending an encrypted file.
I need you to locate Dr. Pugh and
Bill Roth.

GLORIA (V.O.)
Will do, Mike.

Mike hangs up, walks to the door, and opens it. He turns and scans the room one last time.

MIKE
Oh yeah, Dr. Pugh, you could call
it done alright.

He walks out and closes the door.

EXT. ROTH HOUSE - PATIO - DAY

Madelyn, Barbara, and Bill sit at a patio table finishing brunch. A lush garden and manicured yard expand behind them. A man in a dark suit clears their dishes.

BILL
Thanks, could we get another
coffee.

Bill looks at Barbara; she nods. Madelyn puts her hand over her cup, shaking her head. The man leaves.

Bill slaps his hand down on the table, startling both Madelyn and Barbara.

BILL
Well, Madelyn, just say yes or no,
then we'll discuss any related
details or questions.

Madelyn looks at Bill, exasperated. There is an extended silence. Bill drums his fingers on the table. Madelyn looks at Barbara, then back at Bill.

MADELYN
Yes.

BILL
Well, that's my girl. You go
first-questions?

MADELYN
How soon?

BILL
A month -- tops. Lot of up-front
work, and that foot of yours needs
to heal. What else?

MADELYN

How fast can you get me home?

BILL

Today.

Madelyn gets up, sets her napkin on the table, and reaches for her crutches. The man returns with coffee and sets it down. Madelyn hobbles toward the back door.

MADELYN

I'll be packing.

Madelyn enters the house. Bill looks at Barbara, pats her hand, and smiles.

EXT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A cab pulls up. Madelyn exits the vehicle and limps to the front door. She enters the house.

INT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Madelyn checks the alarm control; it reads "Unarmed." The driver sets her luggage down, Madelyn pays him, and he exits.

Madelyn, leaning on a crutch, looks around suspiciously. She removes a pistol from her handbag, clears the kitchen, and moves down the hallway.

She enters her bedroom and notices a dresser drawer is slightly ajar. She opens it. Her belongings have been disturbed. She looks around the room with concern, then closes the drawer firmly.

She walks to the great room and presses a specific stone on the fireplace. A hidden panel opens, exposing six video screens. She presses a button.

The screens show Mike's movements inside and outside of her house. She watches intently.

Madelyn picks up her cell phone and calls Bill.

BILL (V.O.)

I didn't expect to hear from you so soon.

MADELYN

Anderson was here, in my house! Did you know that? He broke into my house! Did you authorize that?

BILL (V.O.)

Didn't know a thing about it. I'm going to Langley tomorrow, I'll arrange things. Chances are, he'll come back soon. Looks like you two get to meet again.

MADELYN

What are you going to arrange? What are you talking about?

BILL (V.O.)

I said you two would be good together. Mike's going to be your partner on the assignment.

MADELYN

What?

BILL (V.O.)

Yep. When he shows up, let him in, tell him whatever you want. Take down this number.

MADELYN

Bill --

BILL (V.O.)

Take down this number, don't worry about a thing.

Madelyn opens a small drawer and retrieves a pen and paper.

MADELYN

Ready.

BILL (V.O.)

757-555-0007

Madelyn laughs.

MADELYN

Really, 007?

BILL (V.O.)

Gotta have some fun with this job. Look, when Mike shows up, mess with him a little, have fun, then dial that number and give Mike the phone--tell him Gloria will explain.

MADELYN

What if --

BILL (V.O.)
Let him in. Mess with him. Tell him
whatever you want. Give him the
phone. That's it, all you need to
do. I gotta run, Barbara needs me.

Bill hangs up.

Madelyn holds the phone away from her ear, looking down at
it. She shrugs, hanging up the line.

MADELYN
That's it? Mess with him. Oh, I
will. Tell him anything I want to.
How about the truth? That's
stranger than fiction lately.

Madelyn crosses to the wet bar and pours herself a drink.

She walks over to the sofa, settling against the cushions as
she sips from her glass, grinning. She pushes her bangs out
of her eyes.

MADELYN
Come on down, Mike Anderson! You're
our next contestant...

She sips her whiskey and laughs, a tiny stray drop spilling
down. She blots her chin with her sleeve.

MADELYN
Mess with him any way I want...
okay.

INT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Madelyn sits at the piano, her fingers tracing a melody
across the keys. The sharp chime of the doorbell echoes
through the house.

Madelyn uses her crutch to limp toward the front door. Mike's
silhouette is cleanly visible through the glass pane.

Madelyn breathes in deeply, exhaling a long, slow breath.

MADELYN
(Bob Fosse style)
It's showtime!

Madelyn flings the front door open.

MADELYN

Hi, Mike! How are you? Glad to see you. Sorry you wasted a trip to Porte Valerdera to see me, but here I am!

She throws her arms high into the air, lowering them fluidly like a television game-show model. Her sudden, explosive energy catches Mike completely off guard. He stands on the threshold, speechless.

MADELYN

What's wrong, Mike? Cat got your tongue?

She hooks her hand around Mike's arm, pulling him firmly into the foyer.

MADELYN

Come in, Mike... again.

Madelyn turns, limping purposefully past him toward the great room. She pivots down the hallway, disappearing around the door frame into her bedroom.

MADELYN (O.S.)

I need to grab a jacket. Go on in, make yourself at home—you know where everything is. I'll be right out.

Mike stares down the empty hallway, tracking her voice. He steps forward into the great room, standing completely bewildered and highly dubious.

He pulls his coat back slightly, automatically patting his holstered weapon.

INT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Madelyn opens her dresser drawer. She glides a hand over her clothing, retrieving the exact pair of black silk panties Mike had disturbed earlier.

She slides the fabric into the deep side pocket of her light jacket. Her expression is focused, clinical, and cold.

INT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Mike paces the expanse of the room, scanning his surroundings.

MADELYN (O.S.)
I'll be right there, Mike. Get
something to drink; there's tea in
the fridge.

Madelyn re-enters the great room, crossing over to sit by the expansive window wall, facing inward. She gestures with her hand for Mike to occupy the chair directly across from her.

Madelyn props her injured leg up on the arm of the chair, her high-slit skirt shifting slightly as she settles in. Mike tries to force his voice to remain steady, fighting an internal stammer under her deliberate scrutiny.

MADELYN
Well, Mike, what's up? What is so
important that you would search the
whole world to come see little old
me?

MIKE
Yeah, uh, it's beautiful here...
look, I need to ask you... ah-

Mike cuts himself off mid-sentence.

Madelyn reaches into her jacket pocket. With a slow, fluid motion, she pulls out the black silk panties. She drops them squarely onto the small table between them, right next to Mike's hands.

Mike freezes, his eyes locking onto the silk. Madelyn smiles devilishly across the space.

MADELYN
You have expensive taste, Agent
Anderson. But if you're going to
break into an operative's house to
touch her things... you should
really learn how to fold them back
correctly. You left the drawer open
an inch. Sloppy.

Mike stands up abruptly, running a tense hand through his hair. His cool investigator shield instantly shatters.

MIKE
Okay. I can tell-

MADELYN
Tell what, Mike?

Madelyn stands up in a single, fluid motion, closing the distance between them.

She steps directly into his personal space, locking eyes as she looks up at his face. The playful facade vanishes entirely.

MADELYN

Can you tell I'm aware that you broke into my house? I know you went through my things.

Mike stands in absolute, frozen silence as he waits her out, his jaw tight. Madelyn brushes her bangs back with a cold, precise flick of her wrist.

MADELYN

Let's cut the crap. What do you want? What do you have to say to me? Because if you need to see the security footage of you trespassing and rifling through my bedroom drawers, I have it ready. Federal Agent Anderson, breaking the law... caught on a basic home camera.

Mike sinks back into his chair, his face locking into a strict, unreadable poker face. He remains dead silent.

Madelyn turns and limps toward the wet bar; Mike misses the sharp, victorious grin flashing across her face the moment her back is turned.

MADELYN

You want a drink? I've had a rough week.

MIKE

Yeah... gin, please.

Madelyn pours the drinks and walks toward the glass patio door, balancing a glass in each hand. She looks at Mike, then looks down at the handle.

MADELYN

Can you get the door? You know exactly how the lock works. Come on, let's sit outside and talk; so far you haven't shown any conversational skills.

Mike gets up, walking past Madelyn with his eyes fixed on her. He shakes his head, a slow grunt of a grin finally breaking through his defenses. He opens the door, and they step out.

MADELYN

Hit play on the recorder, Mike. You know where that is too. And leave the door open when you come out.

Mike walks over to the audio recorder, reaching down to press play. Smooth jazz track fills the great room. He turns and exits onto the deck.

EXT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - PATIO - DAY

Mike and Madelyn sit opposite each other at the patio table. Mike shifts his gaze out toward the sprawling mountain peaks.

MIKE

It is beautiful here.

He looks at Madelyn, a faint smile breaking through his guarded posture.

MIKE

Everything is.

Madelyn plays along with theatrical flair, fanning her face, fluttering her eyes, and lowering her chin as she looks back at him.

MADELYN

Aw shucks, I bet you tell all the girls that.

They each take a slow sip of their drinks, the air dropping into a brief, heavy silence as they hunt for words. Madelyn cuts through it instantly.

MADELYN

Tell me what you think you know. I have some things to say too, so get directly to the point.

MIKE

(clearing throat)

I think you're a stone-cold killer that works for Bill Roth. I think you killed Nkwatcha and Ruiz.

Madelyn nods her head slowly, casually sipping her whiskey.

MADELYN

Is that it? Any other suspicions?

MIKE

Not that concern me.

MADELYN

Do you have any physical evidence
that could actually convict me?
Honestly—yes or no?

MIKE

No.

MADELYN

Let me give you some. I killed both
Nkwacha and Ruiz. Others as well.
And I don't work for Roth.

Madelyn takes another measured sip of her drink, pausing to
let the weight of the confession hang between them.

MADELYN

But you do.

Mike's stoic expression remains fixed, showing zero emotion.
He knocks back his gin in a single shot.

The heavy spirit catches his throat; he chokes slightly,
setting the empty glass down hard.

MIKE

Got any proof? Yes or no?

Mike shakes his head, coughing a little as he tries to
recover his composure from the sudden burn of the gin.
Madelyn lets out a sharp laugh.

MADELYN

That you can't handle alcohol?
Yes—the fundraiser, and now here.
You choke every single time...
didn't you ever go to college?

MIKE

(chagrined)

Yeah, I went to college... Bill
Roth? Tell me about Roth.

MADELYN

Bill told me he works for the
agency. He's been using you to see
how good your tactical tracking
is—to see if you could get this
close to his top assassin.

Madelyn sips her drink. She reaches across the table, placing
a cold hand over Mike's fingers.

MADELYN

Oh, and he thinks we'd make a great team.

Mike stares at Madelyn, his mouth parting slightly in silent disbelief. He looks down, reaching automatically for his empty glass.

Madelyn stands up from the table.

MADELYN

Need another drink?

MIKE

How do I know you're not --

MADELYN

You don't. But Gloria does.

Madelyn pulls out her cell phone and dials the specific 007 sequence Bill gave her. She tosses the phone cleanly into Mike's lap, turning to walk toward the house.

Mike catches the phone, lifting it to his ear. The sound of a connection ringing through.

GLORIA (V.O.)

Hey Mike, surprise! Everything she's told you is true. Senior Agent Roth is right here beside me. He said to listen to Dr. Pugh and be back in Virginia tomorrow. Bye, Mike.

The line goes completely dead.

Mike slowly lowers the phone, setting it on the table. He picks up his empty glass, staring into the bottom before turning his head back toward the house.

MIKE

Yes, I do need another drink.

Madelyn returns, a devious smile on her face. She carries two fresh bottles, refilling both of their glasses before sliding back into her seat.

They lift their glasses in unison. Madelyn raises her drink toward him.

MADELYN

Well, Mike... who knew. To new adventures.

They clink their glasses together in a silent toast.

MIKE

I was told to listen to you. What the hell is going on?

MADELYN

I'm sure you know my history—read any of the internal files. My father was an operative; I believe the agency executed him. Bill and Barbara... they're the only family I've had since I was a teenager.

She shifts her gaze out toward the sprawling mountain peaks.

MADELYN

And killing... well, killing is all I've ever known to get things done.

Madelyn looks down, fighting to hold back tears as her chin begins to quiver. She forces her eyes back up to lock onto Mike.

MADELYN

I don't want to do this anymore. I've told Bill several times. He told me the agency would ruin me if I walked away. Mike, I have to do this next mission.

Mike draws his head back in surprise. Madelyn sips her whiskey, tilting her glass toward him like a weapon.

MADELYN

Oh, and by the way—you're my new partner.

MIKE

In what?

MADELYN

To eliminate Prince Sarraf, so Nasir can take the throne.

MIKE

Nasir take the throne? That's starting World War Three, literally. Kill Sarraf? No way! I won't be held responsible for the deaths of millions of people.

MADELYN

Bill said --

MIKE

I don't give a damn what Bill said!
You told me you don't work for
Roth. Who do you work for?

MADELYN

I really don't know anymore. It was
always Bill's friends with the
massive oil and cattle interests.
The money came directly from
them... or so I thought.

MIKE

I thought so.

Mike tilts his head back, staring up at the gray sky as he
runs both hands through his hair. He leans heavily across the
table, getting directly into Madelyn's space.

MIKE

Madelyn, I'm assigned as an expert
on Middle Eastern affairs.
Namely... keeping the peace. I've
been investigating Ruiz and
Nkwatcha as part of Intel chatter
about a possible coup in the Middle
East.

Mike shoots his gin. This time, he doesn't choke or grimace.

MIKE

A coup that would stir up trouble
on a global scale--trouble like
you're talking about.

MADELYN

Are you saying --

MIKE

I'm saying that your backers are
the warmongers I've been tracking.
They make billions perpetuating
wars and rebellions. They've been
using you for years to serve their
self-interests.

Madelyn looks down, hurt.

MADELYN

I've realized that, but I have to --

MIKE

Do the right thing; let one man
live so that millions won't die.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

Sarraaf is for peace. If Nasir takes the throne, he'll nuke the U.S. the next day. Nasir is hard-core crazy. Bill's plan is not going to happen.

Madelyn looks out at the mountains, sips her drink, titters, and shakes her head.

MADELYN

One lives so millions won't die...
the inverted creed I've lived by
for years—one must die so many may
live.

Mike looks puzzled. Madelyn holds up her hand, shaking her head at Mike in a silent "don't ask" gesture.

She looks at Mike, gently holding his hand.

MADELYN

So what do we do?

MIKE

About what, or who?

MADELYN

Saving Sarraaf, saving the world...

She looks around, shoots her whiskey, and slams her glass down on the table, pushing her bangs back.

MADELYN

I told Bill I was through, and I
am.

Mike raises his eyebrows, runs a hand through his hair, and pours them both another shot.

They both look out at the mountains in silence. Mike turns to Madelyn.

MIKE

How did you shoot Ruiz? I have to
know.

Madelyn leans in close to Mike, laughing as she gives him a flirtatious smile.

MADELYN

Are you going to arrest me?

MIKE

My mission is to keep peace in the Middle East; as I see it, mission half-accomplished.

They toast and shoot their shots.

MADELYN

I hate to talk shop at home, but Ruiz... that's a great story...

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS - LANGLEY, VA. - DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Bill and the DIRECTOR are in a stately office.

The Director, sixties, sports a full head of gray hair, wearing a dark blue suit and a white starched shirt with a tasteful red tie. He has a small American flag pin on his lapel.

Pictures of the Director with world dignitaries line the office walls.

The Director walks toward a lighted glass wall with shelves stocked with liquor. He walks past the photos, pausing to look at frames of himself with Ruiz and Nkwatcha.

DIRECTOR

Damn, I hate losing these allies; this is the kind of crap that can't happen again. Bill, we've got to stop this.

He shakes his head, approaches the shelves, and pours the drinks. He walks back to his desk, hands Bill a glass, and sits down.

Bill sits across the desk in a plush leather chair.

BILL

I'll see to it myself. I'll be in the Middle East to oversee everything. I'm putting my operative with Agent Anderson.

DIRECTOR

Don't let them trust each other—make sure the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. The stakes in this operation are too high, and I'm not sure if we have a rogue or a mole among us.

BILL

They think they're on separate missions, and I have an idea of who may have gone rogue.

DIRECTOR

You don't think Ander --

BILL

No, no, no, but give me some time; give me some room on this one. I may have to sail into uncharted waters, do some things not quite aboveboard.

The Director holds his hand up to Bill, nodding.

DIRECTOR

Great Bill, handle it; just don't let Sarraf come to harm, or better, don't let Nasir come to the throne. Do what you have to.

Bill finishes his drink.

DIRECTOR

You want another one? My wife says everyone in this business drinks too much... I'm not sure how else we would sleep at night.

BILL

No, I'm good.

Bill gets up, shakes the Director's hand, and walks to the door. He opens it, pauses, and turns back to face the Director.

BILL

Don't worry, I've got a plan. I'll be leaving for the Middle East in a few days. I'll need a week to set things up, but I need to say goodbye to Barbara tonight.

Bill exits, closing the heavy door behind him.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - DAY

Bill walks down the long hallway, sporting an iniquitous grin.

INT./EXT. LEARJET - ABOVE ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

The ocean sparkles below the private aircraft. The jet banks hard left, gleaming in the sun.

INT. LEARJET - CABIN - DAY

MIKE sits back, smiling as MADELYN slides into the leather seat opposite him.

MIKE

This sure beats business class.

MADELYN

Foundation time-share. Gets us to remote places fast. Plus... yeah, it's cool.

MIKE

Sold. But speaking of fast—we have a problem. Roth's intel from inside the palace doesn't match yours. We're going to have to work around him.

MADELYN

And keep Sarraf safe from Bill? Easier said than done. The palace is a fortress, and Sarraf and his brother Nasir are identical twins. They look, dress, and act exactly alike.

MIKE

Worse. With a coup brewing, they're both using body doubles. It's a shell game. We need a definitive biological marker to know which one is Sarraf.

MADELYN

Identical twins share DNA but have different fingerprints. What's the play?

MIKE

Exactly. No prints on file. I'll have to lift a clean set from Sarraf at the welcome banquet. Once we tag him, we don't let him out of our sight.

MADELYN

(scoffs)

Banquet? It's a men-only regime. I won't even get past the courtyard.

MIKE

I cleared your credentials. You're in.

A flying insect BUZZES past Madelyn's face. She swats at it, annoyed. It lands on her forearm.

Ouch! Damn it.

MADELYN

They're supposed to fumigate these cabins. This thing is swarming.

She swats it. It doesn't squish. It clings to her skin.

Mike pulls up his laptop, hitting a sequence of keys.

MIKE

(bad French accent)

Ah, mon chéri. Those are proprietary bugs.

He spins the laptop. The screen displays a blueprint of the jet's cabin. A glowing red dot blinks directly on Madelyn's left arm.

MADELYN

You're kidding me.

MIKE

Insect drones. Micro-optics, audio transmitters, autonomous navigation.

He hits another key. The screen shifts to a live, high-def video feed looking down at Madelyn's face from the ceiling.

MIKE

They fly, walk, listen, and see. They're our eyes inside the palace.

MADELYN

And the one that just bit me?

MIKE

Biometric sampler. It just lifted your dermal ridges.

The screen flashes: MATCH FOUND: MADELYN.

MIKE

It mapped your thumbprint in four seconds. At the banquet, you release a swarm. They land on the princes, scan their hands, and feed the data straight to my terminal.

MADELYN

...Incredible. No one notices a fly.

Suddenly, the jet JOLTS violently. The main cabin lights flicker and die. The roar of the jet engines WHINES DOWN into a low, sickening rumble.

The PILOT bursts from the cockpit, his face pale, gripping the doorframe.

PILOT

We've lost navigational computers! Mainframe just completely overrode manual controls. It's cutting fuel to the engines—we have twenty minutes before total shutdown!

MIKE

Can you override?

PILOT

It's locked us out! We're losing altitude. Prepare for impact!

The pilot ducks back inside. The jet pitches forward into a steep, STOMACH-CHURNING DIVE. Objects slide off the tables.

Madelyn grips her armrests, her knuckles white. Mike reaches across the aisle, grabbing her hand, anchoring her.

Suddenly, the laptop screen snaps from the drone software to a live video feed.

BILL (40s) appears on screen, smiling coldly from a sunlit office.

BILL

Just a quick reminder, kids. Insect drones aren't the only technology on the market.

Through the cabin windows, the clouds streak past at terrifying speed. The altitude warning KLAXON begins to WAIL.

BILL

I could fly this jet into the ocean right now. I could fly it into a mountain. Remember who owns the coordinates. You complete this mission exactly as assigned.

Bill delivers a mock, two-finger salute.

BILL

Now get back to work.

The laptop screen snaps black.

INSTANTLY, the ENGINES ROAR back to life. The nose pulls up, leveling out into a smooth, effortless cruise. The cabin lights snap back on.

The pilot sticks his head out of the cockpit, gives a shaken thumbs-up, and closes the door.

In the cabin, the silence is deafening.

Madelyn lets go of Mike's hand, her chest heaving, adrenaline spiking. She looks at the black laptop screen, then at Mike. The reality of the trap they are in fully settles over them.

MADELYN

(whispering, breathless)

He can kill us whenever he wants.

MIKE

(deadpan)

Then we better make sure we don't give him a reason to.

Madelyn pulls her knees up, staring out the window at the empty sky, the weight of the assignment crushing the remaining air from her lungs.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

An expansive, domed room meticulously decorated to resemble a massive Moroccan tent. Intricate Persian rugs overlay the floor, flanked by lavish pillow lounges, exotic delicacies, and echoing Arabic music tracks.

Unfazed stunt camels stand quietly in artificial sand beds beneath massive potted palms, rhythmically chewing their cuds.

From all corners of the venue, dancers emerge. Their traditional bedlah attire sparkles under the lights as they move. Their faces are wrapped in protective bukruk veils, revealing nothing but their eyes.

The guests in attendance grow visibly more alert.

Bill and Mike sit on a low lounge alongside PRINCE SARRAF, the absolute epitome of tall, dark, and handsome. He wears an elegant bisht adorned with the kingdom's royal colors; his sharp features and immaculate attire solidify his royal status.

Palace guards are stationed at every exit; the visible security grid is exceptionally high.

Several dancers drift over to surround the group of men. Heavy security personnel stand ready at their flanks. Prince Sarraf lifts a golden goblet toward Bill and Mike.

SARRAF

(Middle Eastern accent)

Welcome to my country. I arranged this banquet in your honor, so you can see our old and new customs, and perhaps, Mr. Anderson --

MIKE

Please, Prince, call me Mike. It's just Mike.

SARRAF

Yes, of course. And perhaps, Mike, you will find a partner here. Our women are wonderful; it is not good for a man to be alone.

The surrounding men laugh in unison.

Several women dance around the group, each pausing briefly in front of the guests. One specific dancer separates from the line to perform directly for Mike and Sarraf.

As she moves, she locks her eyes directly onto Mike. Her sparkling brown eyes are instantly familiar. It is Madelyn.

As she bows low before them, her fingers move with tactical precision, cleanly releasing an ant drone. She transitions back into her choreography and moves down the line.

SARRAF

Now she is exotic. Her eyes are, how you say... they captivate me.

The Prince slaps his forehead, knocks back a shot of liquor, and throws his head back, laughing loudly. He sets the crystal shot glass down on the table.

Unnoticed, the released ant drone navigates the fabric and attaches firmly to the inside of Sarraf's thawb.

BILL

Now I have to agree with you there,
Prince Sarraf. She does have
intense eyes.

Mike cuts an icy look directly at Bill.

MIKE

You know, Prince Sarraf, I bet
there is a person right here in
this room who would make a
spectacular partner.

Bill smiles back at Mike, an unreadable look passing between them.

Bill and Mike finish their drinks and set the empty glasses back down. Mike smoothly palms Sarraf's discarded shot glass, sliding it directly into his jacket pocket.

SARRAF

I am sorry your colleague, Dr.
Pugh, could not join us, but it is
our custom.

The Prince gestures broadly to the gathering filling the tent structure.

MIKE

Oh, she's here. If only in spirit.

BILL

Don't worry about Dr. Pugh; nothing
gets past her... usually.

Bill leans in close to Mike, dropping his voice to a low whisper.

BILL

I haven't seen so many men dressed
in robes since we investigated the
Klan.

Bill lets out a sharp laugh at his own joke, leaning back over toward Mike.

BILL

By the way, you two are going to be
watching the wrong prince.

Madelyn dances around the room, releasing the ant drones near Sarraf's security captain and advisors. Several flying insects are placed in the potted trees.

Madelyn dances before NASIR. Except for his clothing, he looks completely identical to Sarraf. Her every move is heavily scrutinized by Nasir's security men. She dances and moves on, not daring to release any drones near his perimeter.

Sarraf signals for more drinks, turning back to Mike and Bill.

SARRAF

You will excuse my absence
tomorrow, but I must visit my
father, who as you know is not
well—he is dying.

BILL

Of course, we'll get with you
tomorrow evening to discuss
business. Please, give the king my
regards.

The dancers exit. The feast continues around them.

Mike receives a text notification from Gloria; it reads:
"Insects online / on the move." Bill leans in close to Mike.

BILL

You'll be watching the wrong
prince.

Mike rolls his eyes, dropping his jaw as he shakes his head in disbelief. Bill simply throws his hands up.

BILL

Just say'n.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - SARRAF'S RECEIVING ROOM - DAY

The room features a modern Arabic architectural design dressed with deep tapestries, Persian rugs, and golden embellishments. Sarraf and Nasir are pacing the expanse of the floor, locked in a heated argument.

NASIR

You are my brother, but I will not
let you open our country to
foreigners and Western ways.

SARRAF

Like education for our women?

NASIR

Like marriage to foreigners. You
dilute our culture, and you cower
to the U.S.

Sarraaf stops his pacing, looking directly at Nasir before
touching his shoulder.

SARRAF

Brother, let us go and see our
father; he grows weak.

NASIR

As does our country.

They exit the room together.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - HALLWAY - DAY

Sarraaf heads down the hallway. Nasir stands at the open
threshold of the door frame, watching his brother walk away.

Nasir turns, heading sharply in the opposite direction.

NASIR

I will come. I must make a call
first.

The men walk away from each other.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - KING'S CHAMBERS - DAY

The chamber is vast and plush, explicitly befitting a
reigning monarch. It contains state-of-the-art medical
equipment, functioning as a fully private, in-house critical
care suite.

Sarraaf sits tightly by the bedside, holding his father's
hand. The King remains entirely unresponsive, but his eyes
are alert. A specialist doctor adjusts the breathing
ventilator.

SARRAF

Father, I worry about my brother.
He seeks to undo all you have done
for our country. He seeks a world
war. He is crazy.

The doctor looks over at Sarraf; his subtle expression is not agreeable to Sarraf's words.

The heavy chamber doors swing open. NASIR'S DOUBLE enters the space, looking visibly distracted. Sarraf stands up to greet him.

The Nasir double gestures firmly for the doctor and nurse to leave the room. The doctor adjusts the ventilator controls one last time, then exits alongside the nurse.

SARRAF

Are you alright, my brother? You
seem disturbed.

NASIR DOUBLE

I did not receive the news I wished
to hear, and it upsets me to be
near Father like this.

The King stares directly at the Nasir double, his eyes conveying deep discontent. Sarraf notices his father's fixed stare.

NASIR DOUBLE

Here Father lies, close to death,
while you entertain infidels in his
palace. It is a disgrace. If I were
king, I would expel all foreigners,
and I would destroy all infidels.

SARRAF

You would start World War Three.

NASIR DOUBLE

In Allah's name.

SARRAF

Allah would not allow such things
as you talk about.

NASIR DOUBLE

Allah told me to do these things.
He speaks to me.

SARRAF

Has he told you that you are crazy?
Besides, I am heir to the throne.

A flying insect drone buzzes through the high airspace of the room, landing squarely on the Nasir double's hand. It releases a automated prick mechanism, then flies away.

The Nasir double swats at it, scratching at his skin as he glares at Sarraf with rising anger.

NASIR DOUBLE

Your infidel friends have brought
flies to the palace—for they are
dung.

SARRAF

My brother, they are business
associates.

An ant drone navigates the floor, attempting to reach the Nasir double's robe. As the double turns sharply, his heel unknowingly crushes the miniature device.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - MADELYN'S SUITE - BEDROOM - DAY

Madelyn watches as one of her small monitor screens dissolves into static. The adjacent displays continue to track the palace security layout via the remaining drone network.

MADELYN

Drone down.

A separate terminal display shows a flying drone hovering right outside Madelyn's door frame. She crosses to the entrance, swinging the door open.

The drone enters, flying directly to the docking dock connected to her computer terminal, where it deposits the collected biological sample.

Madelyn carefully removes the automated syringe core from the drone chassis.

The computer terminal lets out a sharp electronic beep. Madelyn looks at the main display; the genetic sequencing data is up.

It does not match Nasir's DNA profile. Madelyn hooks her radio system to her ear, calling Mike.

MADELYN

Mike, we have some serious problems
developing.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - KING'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Sarraf and the Nasir double continue their intense argument beside the bed.

SARRAF

Brother, you talk nonsense—crazy talk. As king, I will do nothing to weaken our country, our people. But we must live and do business in the twenty-first century.

The Nasir double steps directly into Sarraf's space, placing his hands on Sarraf's shoulders to kiss his cheek in a traditional greeting.

NASIR DOUBLE

Brother, let us not fight.

He smiles warmly at Sarraf.

Suddenly, he firmly presses a concealed mechanical ring directly into the side of Sarraf's neck, administering a highly potent pharmaceutical sedative into Sarraf's bloodstream.

Sarraf's eyes widen in absolute shock. He stares back at the man he thinks is his brother as his vision begins to blur and his balance fails.

NASIR DOUBLE

To take the throne, you must be sworn in within one hour of the king's death; our laws dictate immediate passage of power. If you are missing, Nasir will become king.

SARRAF

(spacey, slurring)
When I come back...

Sarraf's eyes roll back; he passes out completely.

NASIR DOUBLE

Who said you were coming back.

The paralyzed King watches everything unfold from the bed, his eyes darting frantically across the space, his physical body remaining entirely motionless.

The Nasir double presses a hidden stone mechanism on the wall architecture. A secret structural door hidden behind the heavy hanging tapestry pops open.

Two tactical operators enter from the darkness. They strip Sarraf of his royal bisht and drag his limp body into the secret passage.

The Nasir double puts on Sarraf's clothes. A double for Nasir enters the room.

The King's eyes, filled with absolute terror, focus directly on Sarraf's double.

SARRAF DOUBLE

Your son Nasir will become the king
and rid the country of your Western
plagues. He will rid the world of
all infidels.

The Sarraf double deactivates the medical machinery. The King's eyes open wide, darting frantically from side to side in a silent, paralyzed scream.

The King passes away.

The Sarraf double immediately reactivates the equipment. Both doubles exit the King's chambers.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - SECRET CHAMBER - DAY

Nasir stands across the cavernous room from Sarraf. Two guards stand rigidly by Sarraf's side. The space is constructed of thick stone with no windows—Spartan, sterile, and entirely hidden.

NASIR

I have no intention to harm you my
brother, I only want the throne.

Sarraf looks at Nasir, his body swaying heavily from the lingering effects of the drowsiness.

SARRAF

This won't work.

NASIR

But it is working; in less than one
hour I will be king, you will still
be missing, unnoticed by your own
guards and your Western friends.
After I am king, you will be sent
to the far corner of my kingdom, to
live comfortably, and unseen.

SARRAF

My brother, you are mad.

NASIR
And about to be king.

Nasir exits the secret chamber.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - MADELYN'S SUITE - BEDROOM - DAY

Madelyn and Mike watch the glow of the surveillance monitors.

MADELYN
I'm losing track of who's who. I
only see one Sarraf and Nasir at a
time. I've lost the imposter.

MIKE
I said it was going to be a shell
game. We need some solid proof of
who's Sarraf, and soon.

Madelyn watches a screen displaying Nasir's chamber grid. The Nasir double is complaining to a security official about Sarraf's Western ways.

The adjacent monitors track the heavily guarded throne room and the sprawling hallways leading directly to it. All seems in order.

MADELYN
I wish we could get back into the
king's chamber.

A sharp knock echoes at the door. Mike opens it.

Nasir, posing seamlessly as Sarraf, enters the parlor with his head down. Madelyn steps into the parlor, her eyes meeting Mike's.

NASIR
Forgive me, I do not like to see my
father in his condition.

MADELYN
How is he?

NASIR
Weak, the doctor has adjusted his
ventilator, but I worry.

MIKE
Prince Sarraf, with the stakes so
high, and with Nasir's trickery, we
need to know for sure it is you
that will take the throne.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

We need to stay with you until you are crowned, we're here to protect you.

NASIR

Of course my friends, I understand. How can I help you?

MADELYN

A DNA test and a fingerprint scan.

NASIR

Of course.

Madelyn steps into the bedroom, returning quickly with a field diagnostic kit and her laptop. She draws a blood sample from Nasir and executes a rapid fingerprint scan. Nasir remains utterly confident.

The data results instantly populate on the screen terminal. The DNA sequence matches both Sarraf and Nasir, as anticipated. The fingerprints match the prints Mike previously lifted from the shot glass.

Mike smiles, visibly relieved. Madelyn shrugs over at him.

MADELYN

It looks like he's our prince.

NASIR

There, we are all now sure it is me; even with technology, fingerprints are still the key to the truth.

MIKE

Prince Sarraf, I'm sorry for any doubts, you know we back your plans for peace and change, world leaders needed to be sure.

NASIR

I understand, Mr. Anderson.

Nasir glances directly at Madelyn.

NASIR

And we know, my brother would not tolerate peace and the world's different beliefs from his. He calls you infidels. But, Mr. Anderson --

MIKE

Please, prince, call me Mike.

Nasir looks at Mike, shaking his head.

NASIR

I am not used to your Western informalities, Mr. Anderson.

Madelyn glances over at Mike.

NASIR

As I was saying, Mr. Anderson, I am not like my brother, I will learn to adjust to the different ways and cultures of the world.

Madelyn and Mike exchange a look. Mike shakes his head slightly.

Suddenly, the doctor and several security guards hastily breach the room.

DOCTOR

The king is dead.

NASIR

But you just adjusted his breathing apparatus. What have you done?

SECURITY

You must come, we have no king, word will spread.

Madelyn scrambles to buy them more operational time.

MADELYN

Prince Sarraf, would you mind if I run a methylation test on your DNA? I... uh... I just want to be sure.

Nasir locks eyes with Madelyn, looking visibly piqued and insulted. He maintains his rigid composure.

NASIR

Dr. Pugh, it is time for me to be crowned, you know our laws, I must go now. I am sorry that you doubt me, but you have the fingerprints. I must go.

Nasir and his security personnel pivot toward the exit. Nasir stops at the threshold, turning back to face Madelyn.

NASIR

If it is any consolation, Dr. Pugh,
we also conduct our own tests to
ensure that an acceptable man is
crowned king.

He turns to depart.

Suddenly, Bill rushes into the room, causing the security
personnel to stiffen. Bill holds his hands up at waist height
with his palms out, remaining entirely cool and calm.

BILL

Good, you're all here. I have word
there's danger. We need to stay
here for just a couple of minutes,
until it is safe.

As he speaks, Bill discreetly deploys the automated insect
drones. No one in the room notices the deployment.

BILL

I was notified there's men from
your own security, Prince Sarraf,
that are lurking, hiding between
here and the throne room. They want
to stop you from becoming king.

The security personnel look at each other, unconsciously
shifting their positions.

The miniature drones deliver targeted automated stings to the
security men and the doctor; all of them instinctively rub at
their necks.

Mike cuts his eyes toward Madelyn. Madelyn looks back at Bill
forebodingly.

BILL

I was sent to ask you to wait a few
minutes while the corridors are
given a security sweep, and
hopefully, Prince Sarraf, we can
find those who oppose you.

The security men and the doctor collapse, sliding to the
floor completely unconscious.

Bill draws his weapon, training it directly onto Nasir.

BILL

Don't move Nasir.

Bill looks over at Madelyn, his expression unyielding.

BILL

Do it Madelyn, complete the mission. Take the shot.

MADELYN

Bill, this is Sarraf, not Nasir. We ran the diagnostics and we have his fingerprints. I'm not doing this, Bill.

BILL

Finish the task, Madelyn, or the agency will completely dismantle your operations.

MADELYN

The agency has nothing to do with this execution plan. You and your network want Sarraf eliminated to force a regional conflict. It's not going to happen.

Bill remains entirely unaware that Mike has stepped up behind him, training a firearm directly at his back. Nasir stands perfectly still, maintaining absolute silence.

BILL

Madelyn, finish the job... or I will.

MIKE

Agent Roth, lower your weapon.

Bill shifts his gaze slightly toward Mike, but keeps his weapon locked on Nasir. Madelyn watches Bill, her eyes pleading. Nasir stays remarkably calm.

BILL

You're both disobeying a direct mandate. You've tracked the wrong target; this man is Nasir.

Bill looks back at Madelyn, his tone and demeanor shifting into a calm, soothing cadence.

BILL

Madelyn, one must fall so that many may survive.

MADELYN

One doesn't die—many do.

MIKE

Agent Roth, please, lower the
weapon... now. Bill, drop it.

Nasir remains a stone statue, tracking Bill, then looking
over at Mike. Bill focuses entirely on Madelyn.

BILL

Madelyn, you are misreading the
field. This is precisely why I
needed you to execute the target
you believed was Sarraf.

She listens for a beat.

BILL

Darl'n, you have to trust my
guidance—not your eyes, and not
your heart.

Madelyn looks toward Mike, her eyes searching for answers.

BILL

Hon, I know this breaks your
standard protocol, he's awake, but -
-

MIKE

But it fits mine.

Mike pulls the trigger. Bill pulls his trigger
simultaneously.

The double crack of gunshots shatters the room. Nasir drops
immediately, wounded but breathing. Bill collapses heavily to
the floor, a dark crimson stain rapidly expanding across the
chest of his shirt.

Mike slowly lowers his firearm, crossing over to safely
secure Bill's weapon.

Madelyn stands frozen in absolute shock, staring at Mike
before rushing over to kneel by Bill's side. Bill lets out a
faint murmur, weakly grasping Madelyn's hand.

BILL

That's my girl... knew you would
navigate the right path... my
device... retrieve my device.

MADELYN

Why did you orchestrate this?

Bill gasps against the pain. He physically moves Madelyn's hand toward his jacket coat; she reaches in to extract his phone terminal. Blinking across the main display screen is a single data word: "Transfer."

With a trembling finger, Bill taps the button. Madelyn watches him, her face washed with sorrow. The terminal screen reads: "Transfer in Progress."

MADELYN

Bill...

The digital layout updates: "Transfer Complete – Fifty Million Dollars."

A faint smile breaks across Bill's face. Madelyn stares down at him, a single tear rolling down her cheek before she sweeps it away with her backhand.

MADELYN

Why?

BILL

For you... for Barbara... for me...
for the timeline.

Mike kneels down squarely beside Bill and Madelyn, his eyes clinical.

MIKE

You set yourself up as the rogue target. You engineered it so I would take the shot, because you knew Madelyn wouldn't execute a target again.

Bill rolls his head weakly toward Madelyn.

BILL

I wasn't a rogue operative. In this agency, the full truth is always partitioned... that man is indeed Nasir... verify the terminal... Sarraf... the surveillance drones... I deployed the drones.

Bill gestures weakly toward Madelyn's active computer station. Madelyn shifts her gaze to the monitor screen; the live automated layout displays Sarraf and two unconscious guards trapped inside the hidden vault space.

BILL

Extract Sarraf... Nasir's tracking print... custom latex caps...

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)
a complete fabrication. Secure
Sarraf.

Bill coughs violently, his vision fading as he looks up into Madelyn's eyes one last time.

BILL
Don't harbor resentment toward
Mike... he bypassed the physical
degeneration... the tumor... this
is my extraction protocol.

Bill lets out a final cough, squeezing Madelyn and Mike's hands together, placing them on top of one another. He pats their gripped fingers, his lifeblood transferring onto their skin. He smiles faintly. His head drops back. Bill is dead.

Nasir looks down at the body, his expression deeply thoughtful.

Suddenly, the heavy chamber doors burst open. Nasir's tactical security detail rushes into the parlor, brandishing automatic weapons.

Nasir lifts a hand calmly toward the guards; they immediately freeze, lowering their weapons.

NASIR
It is handled. Go, extract my
brother Sarraf from the vault
architecture, and escort him
directly to the throne room. Let us
maintain stability in this region.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - HALLWAY - DAY

Madelyn and Mike move with urgent speed, following the guard detail through the labyrinth of corridors before breaching the late King's chambers.

A security official presses a hidden stone mechanism against the wall layout, triggering the secret structural door to pop open. They all enter the darkness.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - SECRET CHAMBER - DAY

The two unconscious abductors sit tightly zip-tied against the stone.

Sarraf pulls himself up as the arriving security personnel bow low before him. Sarraf steps forward, embracing Mike and Madelyn in a traditional greeting.

SARRAF

Mike! My friend, you located my position. Nasir... is he...

MIKE

He's secured. We need to get you prepared for the coronation protocol immediately—we are completely running out of time.

They turn and exit the secret passage in unison.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - HALLWAY - DAY

The high council, elegantly dressed in ceremonial thawbs, stands waiting. Sarraf, Mike, and Madelyn approach the delegation.

They begin walking down the main corridor together. Suddenly, security personnel step in, physically holding Mike and Madelyn back from advancing.

Sarraf detaches from the group, returning to stand in front of Mike and Madelyn.

SARRAF

Sorry my friends, you cannot enter the throne room.

Sarraf places his hands firmly onto Mike's shoulders, staring directly into his eyes for a quiet moment.

SARRAF

You have done a great thing for peace, for the world. I shall see you again as king. Thank you, Mike.

Sarraf delivers a traditional embrace, kissing Mike's cheeks.

Sarraf turns, aligning with the high council as they breach the heavy entry doors of the throne room.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

The space is vast and ornate, heavily decorated with ancient artifacts tracking the kingdom's history.

A golden throne sits directly in the center of the expanse, resting beneath a massive stained-glass dome. Elaborate ceremonial artifacts surround the platform.

Sarraf occupies the throne.

A stately COUNCIL LEADER has just placed the crown onto Sarraf's head. The leader backs away from the dais, bowing so low that his long white beard nearly touches the floor.

Everyone in the chamber bows in absolute unison.

COUNCIL LEADER
My king, how may I serve you?

SARRAF
Bring my brother, Nasir, before me.

INT. ROTH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room features an eclectic mix of high-end antiques, showcasing an expensive, tastefully decorated space.

Barbara and Madelyn sit opposite each other on a plush sofa, quietly sharing a pot of tea. Madelyn wraps her hand over Barbara's arm in a comfortingly tight grip.

MADELYN
Barbara, I'm so sorry. I'm worried about you.

BARBARA
Honey, don't be, I'm fine. I have Bill's benefits and retirement, and I received a little gift from King Sarraf.

Barbara extends her hand, showing Madelyn an enormous, shimmering bejeweled ring catching the light. She drops her voice to a low whisper.

BARBARA
It has a matching brooch and bracelet too. But really honey, I'm fine. I just miss Bill.

Barbara shifts her gaze down, exhaling a slow, deep sigh. She looks back up at Madelyn, taking her hand.

BARBARA
I know this sounds awful, but I understand why Bill wanted to be cremated; it really did save the grief of a funeral. Besides, who really were Bill's friends?

MADELYN
Barbara, if you need anything.

Madelyn gently pats Barbara's hand, a sudden spark of focus returning to her eyes.

MADELYN

You know, I could put you on the board of the foundation; it would keep you busy.

BARBARA

I'm going to travel, live in new places. When Bill went on his confessional spree, he told me a lot of things I had suspected. I just want a new life—one with truth in it.

Barbara smiles warmly at Madelyn. Madelyn drops her head, nodding silently.

MADELYN

Me too.

BARBARA

I found out three percent of the profits from every business venture Bill opened doors for has been accumulating for decades; they call it his insurance policy. I'm a very wealthy woman, but I appreciate your concern.

MADELYN

At least there's a light in all this darkness. I still can't understand some of Bill's actions, even with the tumor. I just wish I knew the truth.

BARBARA

I know you've been through a lot, but there are some things I need to share with you—truths Bill had to carry to his grave, but there's no way I can.

Madelyn sits bolt upright, bracing her posture against the sofa.

MADELYN

After all we've been through, what could shock me now?

Barbara gracefully sips her tea, gently setting the delicate porcelain cup back onto its saucer. She locks eyes with Madelyn, squeezing her fingers tightly.

BARBARA

Bill was your father.

Madelyn freezes, completely stunned, her mouth dropping agape.

MADELYN

Ah... ah, what?... I didn't see
that one coming. All these years...
why... why didn't anyone...

Madelyn runs completely out of words. Barbara squeezes her hand harder.

They sit in absolute, echoing silence. Madelyn scans the room wildly, her mind unable to focus on a single object, her eyes unable to form tears.

BARBARA

Honey, there's more.

Madelyn tracks Barbara's face, her expression turning somewhat frightened.

BARBARA

Bill and your mother were having an
affair... oh, it was more than
that, they were in love for years.

Barbara shifts her gaze away, catching a trailing tear with the tip of her finger. She turns back to Madelyn, gently pushing Madelyn's bangs back from her eyes.

BARBARA

Bill was going to leave me for your
mother. I wasn't able to have
children. Bill did lead your
father—Mr. Pugh—down a highly
dangerous operational path to his
death.

Barbara looks away briefly, wiping at her eyes.

BARBARA

Bill couldn't do it; he couldn't
leave me. Your mother was so
distraught.

Barbara gently rubs Madelyn's shoulder.

BARBARA

That's why she ended her own life... oh honey, you know the story from there. I'm so sorry to tell you all of this.

They drop back into a heavy silence. Madelyn sits perfectly still, utterly emotionless.

BARBARA

Oh, Madelyn, I'm sorry.

MADELYN

My entire life has been a deception. Everything. By everyone. I believed --

BARBARA

In yourself, and Bill knew that. Everyone was living their own lies; it's just how people in the agency live. Lies are the only truth they have. He didn't want to hurt you.

Madelyn lets out a sharp laugh, tears finally breaking past her defenses. She violently sweeps them away with her backhand.

BARBARA

Bill wanted you to pursue your dream. He set up the Middle East project specifically to get you out. That's why he did all those strange things--to get you out.

Barbara leans in, drawing Madelyn into a tight, maternal hug.

BARBARA

You're free now. You don't exist to them--no more lies. You can go and live your own life now.

Barbara gets up, walks over to an antique desk, and removes a sealed letter. She walks back to Madelyn, handing her the envelope.

BARBARA

This is from Bill.

MADELYN

What is it?

BARBARA

I don't know.

Madelyn slides open the envelope and removes the letter inside. It reads:

BILL (V.O.)

Madelyn, I'm sure by now Barbara has told you all she knows. I'm sorry for the secrecy-nature of the game. Regardless, it was your mother's wish that I never tell you while I was alive. I honored her wish.

Madelyn wipes her eyes with her backhand, continuing to read the text.

BILL (V.O.)

Give Mike a chance, he's a gentleman, and you'll find that you both share the same dreams. I handpicked him for you a long time ago. Go, live, follow your heart. Love, Bill, your father.

A solitary tear drops from Madelyn's eye, landing squarely on the word "father." The ink smears instantly; the written word becomes blurred.

INT. MADELYN'S HOUSE - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Madelyn and Mike lay on a blanket in front of the stone fireplace, sharing a bottle of wine. A warm fire glows behind them, flanked by dozens of lit candles. The space is deeply romantic.

MADELYN

What are you going to do now that you've quit the agency?

MIKE

Follow my passion. Use my college degree to help children.

Madelyn props herself up on one elbow, looking down at Mike with quiet curiosity.

MADELYN

Doing what? Do you want to teach?

Mike gently pushes her bangs back from her face, cupping her cheek in his hand. Madelyn tilts her head into his palm, smiling. Mike lets out a soft laugh.

MIKE

No, I'm actually a pediatric nurse practitioner. I just got sidetracked in life—I think you understand how that happens.

MADELYN

I didn't know that. I would have never guessed.

MIKE

Yeah, well, I guess we've been so busy living our lives in the shadow of the agency, we forgot that our true passion is to save them.

Madelyn cuddles up close against Mike, completely fascinated and intrigued by her new discovery.

MADELYN

What got you interested in pediatrics?

MIKE

I joined the Marines right after high school. Over time I transitioned into counterintelligence, working many times alongside the CIA.

Mike lets out a brief chuckle, taking a slow sip of his wine.

MIKE

During my tours in the Middle East, I saw a lot of hurt children—damaged for life from the indiscriminate carnage of conflict. It pulled at my heart. After the Marines, I went back to school.

MADELYN

And you ended up in the CIA how?

MIKE

Same way you did. I didn't recognize the trap when I stepped into it. I did some freelance work for them while I was in school; they convinced me to sign on full-time after graduation. I did, and here I am... out of work, looking for a job.

Madelyn sits up squarely, her expression beaming with infatuation.

MADELYN

I love this story! I had absolutely no idea.

Madelyn sets down her wine glass and moves closer to Mike, gazing alluringly into his eyes.

MADELYN

I know where you can find a job, but it has conditions... and a catch.

Mike rolls his eyes playfully.

MIKE

Don't they all. And where exactly can I find this job?

MADELYN

With me. Come work with the foundation. But I told you, it has a catch.

MIKE

What's the catch?

MADELYN

You.

Madelyn kisses Mike. They embrace, laying back together as they kiss passionately against the backdrop of the glowing hearth.

Suddenly, Madelyn pulls away, sitting up to look directly down at Mike.

MADELYN

Mike, will you marry me?

Mike sits up, entirely surprised, a broad smile breaking across his face. He pulls Madelyn in close, kissing her deeply. She draws back slightly.

MADELYN

Was that a yes?

Mike nods. They slowly lay back down together.

A heavy log in the fireplace POPS loudly, sending up a brilliant spray of glowing embers that resemble miniature fireworks. They kiss.

INT. CHURCH - MAGGIE VALLEY, N.C. - DAY

Mike and Madelyn break from their kiss, standing together at the altar.

Madelyn is stunning in a gorgeous white bridal gown, the long train flowing down the altar steps. Mike looks exceptionally handsome in a tailored black tuxedo.

The assembled wedding guests clap loudly for the newlyweds.

Mike and Madelyn turn, walking hand-in-hand toward the heavy rear doors of the sanctuary.

Walking down the center aisle, they pass a front row of familiar faces: Barbara, King Sarraf, Susan, Dr. Potonik, Leja, and Larisa.

Larisa is beaming with pure joy. Her white lace dress and radiant smile make her look entirely angelic.

Madelyn pauses right at Larisa's seat. She pulls a single fresh flower from her bouquet, gently weaving it into Larisa's hair before kissing the little girl's cheek.

Madelyn and Mike continue down the aisle. The church doors swing open, revealing a waiting Land Rover shoe-polished with traditional newlywed slogans.

EXT. CHURCH - MAGGIE VALLEY, N.C. - DAY

The crowd throws handfuls of rice as Mike and Madelyn make their way down the steps to the vehicle. They slip inside, close the door, and drive away.

The rear window reads: "Just Married."

An aerial view tracks the cheering crowd, the church, and the Land Rover driving away into the distance.

INT./EXT. CAR - HIGHWAY (MIDDLE EAST) - DAY

A swirling dust cloud rises behind the traveling Land Rover. A dusty shadow coating the rear glass window now barely reveals the fading shoe-polished words: "Just Married."

An aerial view tracks the vehicle traveling through the expanse of the vast desert. On the shimmering horizon, an oasis breaks the heat haze, featuring a large, gleaming, modern structure.

Madelyn is behind the wheel, driving steady. Mike looks up and out through the windshield frame.

A helicopter roars past them—low, fast, and kicking up sand—before touching down gently at the oasis perimeter.

Mike and Madelyn pull their vehicle up to the oasis compound gates.

EXT. OASIS COMPOUND - MIDDLE EAST - DAY

Sarraf exits the helicopter. Madelyn and Mike step down from their vehicle, and the three of them walk toward one another in the center of the clearing.

Sarraf greets them with open arms, a genuine smile breaking across his features.

SARRAF
Greetings my friends.

Sarraf embraces them, kissing Mike and Madelyn's cheeks before turning his attention toward the main compound.

Two stone-faced palace guards swing open the massive, ornate entry gates, exposing a gleaming, modern Arabic structure. It is a state-of-the-art children's hospital sitting cleanly amidst the lush green flora of the oasis.

They all walk forward into the open courtyard. Sarraf stops, turning back to face Mike and Madelyn fully.

SARRAF
My gift to you, and you are a gift
to our children.

He bows his head toward them in deep gratitude.

SARRAF
May Allah bless you both.

Sarraf gestures with his hand toward his security escort. A uniform guard steps forward, bearing a thick parchment envelope. Sarraf locks eyes with Mike and Madelyn.

SARRAF
Perpetuate your kindness to our
children's children.

Sarraf nods to the guard. The guard hands Madelyn the heavy envelope, which is sealed with the detailed wax insignia of the royal kingdom.

SARRAF

Some thought my death was worth millions. How much more should my country reward you for saving my life?

He bows respectfully to Madelyn and Mike. They both return the bow to Sarraf. Sarraf gestures subtly down toward the envelope.

SARRAF

From my country, thank you.

MADELYN

Thank you, King Sarraf.

Sarraf turns to face Mike, placing both hands firmly onto Mike's shoulders.

SARRAF

And what can be given to the man that saved the world from nuclear war? Mike, my friend, I have arranged a special gift for you.

He shakes Mike's hand firmly.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WASHINGTON, D.C. BALLROOM - NIGHT

The gleaming royal insignia ring on Sarraf's hand remains locked in a firm shake with Mike's hand.

The perspective expands out to reveal them standing on a grand, elevated stage. Sarraf wears his immaculate royal bisht and traditional attire; Mike stands beside him in a sharp black tuxedo.

An aerial view sweeps across the crowded, black-tie gala. Sarraf smiles at Mike, then steps up to the microphone stand.

SARRAF

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, tonight we honor and present Mike Anderson --

Sarraf looks back over his shoulder toward Mike, his smile widening.

SARRAF

Mike, this year's Humanitarian Award. His courage has maintained world peace and averted war.

Sarraaf holds an outstretched arm back toward Mike, anchoring the stage.

SARRAF

Because one man lives, so do millions.

The massive audience erupts into thunderous applause.

Madelyn walks gracefully onto the stage, joining them. Sarraf kisses her cheek before stepping back to address the microphone.

SARRAF

Dr. Madelyn Pugh, recipient of last year's Humanitarian Award, will present this year's award to her husband, Mike.

Sarraaf steps aside from the podium. Madelyn steps up, proudly presenting Mike with the heavy award.

An aerial view captures the sea of guests giving a massive standing ovation. Camera flashes pop continuously across the room like tiny stars.

Mike and Madelyn slide into a warm embrace, sharing a deep kiss. As they hold each other tight, Madelyn subtly runs Mike's hand down across the surface of her belly.

Mike's eyes widen, a massive smile instantly breaking across his face. Madelyn leans up on her toes, whispering directly into his ear.

MADELYN

Maybe it's time we take care of our own children for a while.

MIKE

Children? Did you say children... plural?

Madelyn nods her head, her eyes bright as she smiles. They pull each other back into a fierce, protective hug.

Sarraaf turns back toward the center of the stage, stretching out his arms toward the couple.

SARRAF
Ladies and gentlemen, the
Humanitarians.

An aerial view sweeps across the entire stage as the audience continues their thunderous standing ovation.

Mike and Madelyn stand in the center of the lights, locked in a passionate kiss.

FADE OUT.

THE END