

BY GOD

by

CJ Walley

cj@cjwalley.com
www.cjwalley.com

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - MORNING

Wheelchair wheels clatter along an empty sidewalk in the morning sun.

MILLER, an OAP wearing a bodywarmer and a baseball cap emblazoned with Navy insignia, jostles around grumpily.

MILLER

I tell ya, I should have gone electric. I'd be there already!

AUSTIN, an African-American man of similar age wearing a suit and overseas cap, grimaces while hunched over the handles.

AUSTIN

Quit your yapping. The only thing you should be sitting in is a damn stroller.

Miller checks his watch and winces.

MILLER

Ten minutes late! That'll be the cheesecake GONE! And it'll be Rogers! He'll have eaten the lot! That greedy schmuck bastard!

AUSTIN

You'll get your damn cheesecake.

MILLER

Ya know what? Even if we swapped places, we'd still be moving faster!

Austin shakes his head dourly as they approach a modest community centre that stands proudly among a nurtured garden, birds singing in the rustling trees.

Austin cuts a sharp turn, and Miller clings on tight.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Jeeze! Whaddya trying to do here? Kill me? Whaddya think this is? The damn Indy Five Hundred?

Austin shakes his head, frustrated.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

ROGERS, another OAP in a US Army uniform, slouches in a chair in the foyer with a cup of coffee in his frail old hands.

A table decorated with war photos wears a large banner reading *WELCOME VETERANS* as he slurps coffee peacefully.

The door slams, and he frowns at the disturbance.

Miller and Austin pause in the entrance and stare back incredulously.

ROGERS

What?

MILLER

Well, where is everyone?

ROGERS

Rollerblading, whaddya think?

Miller sighs as Austin wheels him over.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

They had to stop. Take a piss.

AUSTIN

I bet you that's Carter. That guy's pecker spends more time out his pants than in.

Rogers nods as he sits back and sips his coffee.

Miller sighs, looks around the room, and smiles mischievously.

MILLER

Okay, so a Jewish kid, a Muslim kid, and a black kid are playing in the schoolyard together.

Austin and Rogers groan.

AUSTIN

Oh, here we go.

MILLER

Guys, listen. It's a good one this time. I promise.

ROGERS

You said that last time. You say that every time.

MILLER

So the Jewish kid says, hey, let's all play the penis game!

(MORE)

MILLER (CONT'D)

And the black kid says, howdya play
the penis game?

BERNIE, a stocky African-American security guard in his 50s,
strolls out of a room with a grin on his face.

AUSTIN

Here's the man, right here.

BERNIE

Hey, how you guys makin' it?

MILLER

I'll be doing better when I've had
some cake. I'll tell you that!

BERNIE

You and me both. They still not
arrived?

ROGERS

Carter had to take a piss.

AUSTIN

I tell you, that guy got a bladder
the size of walnut. I swear, I once
saw him running into battle doing
up his fly.

Rogers and Bernie snigger.

ROGERS

Charging deep into enemy territory,
desperately trying to liberate a
commode.

Austin, Rogers, and Bernie laugh heartily as Miller glares.

MILLER

Guys! Don't cut in! I'm the one
doing the gags here! So, a Jewish
kid, Muslim kid, black kid, yadda
yadda yadda-

BERNIE

-Woah! Why black?

Miller looks up, puzzled.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Why not say, umm, a white kid, a
brown kid, and a black kid? Or
Jewish, Muslim, and African-
American?

Miller stares, worried, as Bernie holds a stern look for a moment then beams a big grin and pats him on the shoulder.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm just messin' with you.
Given I've heard the words 'penis
game', I've a feelin' that,
whichever way this goes, me and
Austin are comin' out winners.

Austin and Rogers smirk as Miller frowns impatiently.

MILLER

Okay, so the black kid asks, howdya
play the penis game? And the Jewish
kid says, it's easy, we all take
out our penises, and whoever has
the longest wins. So, they all
unzip their flies and take out
their-

The door clicks shut, and they all look down the foyer at KATHARIA, a beautiful-looking young blonde woman with bright blue eyes wearing a pristine white hoodie.

She stands nervously, her petite frame silhouetted against the entrance door windows.

She smiles shyly, and they shoot a friendly smile back.

AUSTIN

You here for the veteran's meeting,
sweetheart?

She nods, crosses to a wall, and stands alone.

ROGERS

You waiting for somebody?

She nods, and Rogers nods proudly back.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

Well, they'll be here any minute.

She smiles a little.

MILLER

So, anyway...

Austin, Bernie, and Rogers wince as they visually urge Miller not to continue in front of Katharia.

MILLER (CONT'D)
 They all get out their
 (beat)
 pistols.
 (nodding to Bernie)
 And the, ya know, kid's is by far
 the biggest. It's freaking huge!

Bernie nods smugly and gestures a gun.

MILLER (CONT'D)
 And the, umm, other kid, says, hey,
 why's yours so much bigger than
 ours? And-

ROGERS
 -Hey, which other kid?

Miller looks back wide-eyed as Rogers sits back confidently.

ROGERS (CONT'D)
 Which one asks that? You know,
 outta the other two. You see, I'm a
 sucker for detail, and I'm
 cherishing this story, I really am.
 So, which one?

Miller glances at Katharia as she stands staring at the floor
 and glares back at Rogers.

BERNIE
 Yeah, which one?

Miller angrily snaps around to Bernie.

MILLER
 (mouthing silently)
 The Muslim one

BERNIE
 The what now?

MILLER
 (mouthing silently)
 Muslim.

ROGERS
 Munchkin?

BERNIE
 I must have missed this scene in
 The Wizard of Oz.

Rogers, Bernie, and Austin chuckle as Miller narrows his eyes.

MILLER

The Mus-

BANG! The door suddenly slams.

Miller looks around and shakes his head.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Oy vey!

They all stare down the foyer at AAMIR, a middle-aged Arab-American man wearing a work jacket with a bandaid on his neck. He stands boldly by the door, clutching a black bag.

His big brown eyes twitch as sweat runs down his unshaven face.

They all stare back.

He draws a pistol from his jacket and sweeps it around.

Katharia flinches as he aims at her, the gun shaking, his eyes filled with contempt.

He snaps around to Bernie.

AAMIR

No!

He glares down at Bernie's hand hovering by his pistol.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

Slide it over.

Bernie crouches down and slides the pistol across. It skates to a rest by Katharia's boots.

She stares down at the pistol and glances at Aamir as he continues to watch Bernie.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

And the cuffs.

Bernie nods, and slides them over by the pistol.

Aamir stares at Katharia down his gun sights as he crosses over to collect them.

She slides her hands behind her back as he crouches down, keeping his aim on her as he retrieves the pistol and handcuffs.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

Okay, this is a hostage situation.
Do as I say, and nobody gets hurt.

ROGERS

You're holding a veterans meeting
hostage in a community center? Jeez
Louise! Just what the fuck is wrong
with you, son?

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL - MINUTES LATER

Tables neatly fill the community hall. Katharia, Austin, Rogers, and Bernie all sit against the wall with Miller alongside them in his wheelchair.

A shadow sweeps across their faces as Aamir shuts the blinds.

Austin catches Katharia's eye and forces a reassuring smile.

Aamir crosses over to a table with a phone on it, dumps the bag down, sits, and stares at them.

He reaches for his pocket, but the bag jolts, handcuffs binding his wrist to the handle. Aamir reaches with his other hand and takes out notes along with a calculator. He reads the notes and does some sums.

Miller leans into Bernie, worried.

MILLER

You filed your tax return on time,
right?

Aamir snatches up the receiver, dials, and scans across them.

AAMIR

(into receiver)
Police.

He studies the notes for a few moments.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

(into receiver)
I want you to record what I am
about to say. My name is Aamir
Mansur, and I am holding five
hostages captive in the Greenville
Community Center.

Katharia listens intently.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

(into receiver)

My message is to the Federal Reserve Board Of Governors. You merrily clink champagne glasses with those who created the financial crisis. You accompany them in their private jets as you soar over the millions of American taxpayers having their jobs, their houses, and their investments stripped from them.

Rogers and Austin look at each other concerned.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

(into receiver)

You have bailed out yourselves and your friends with your government-funded money press. You never asked us permission to do so because you do not answer to us. We never had the opportunity to vote because we're not welcome in your boardroom. When we were already struggling, you furthered our burden, selling us your fictional assets to the tune of fifteen trillion dollars, laying the foolish risks you were willing to take at our feet. We now not only have to pay the crippling debts granted to us before the crisis, but we must now also pay off your debts to this country. All so you, your families, and your friends can live in luxury while we suffer.

Rogers thinks as he listens.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

(into receiver)

I am now taking this stolen money back. We wish to sell our assets back to the Federal Reserve. Fifteen trillion is fifty thousand dollars per citizen. There are six of us here. That is three hundred thousand US dollars I demand. If we wish to help your precious banks survive, we can choose to do so ourselves by investing or paying off debts as we see fit.

Miller looks at Bernie, puzzled.

MILLER
(mouthing silently)
Three hundred thousand dollars?

Bernie shrugs back.

AAMIR
(into receiver)
Call me when you are ready to make
the arrangements. As soon as the
money is received, these people
will be freed.

He hangs up the phone, sighs, and runs his hands through his hair.

Miller stares at him incredulously.

MILLER
That's it? Three hundred grand?
That's bupkes!

AUSTIN
We're worth that, right? That's
easy?

BERNIE
In this economy?

ROGERS
(to Aamir)
Are you taking the whole three
hundred for yourself?

Aamir thinks for a moment and shakes his head.

Rogers stares back, shocked.

ROGERS (CONT'D)
Just your fifty thousand?

Aamir nods as the others stare at him, confused.

AAMIR
You have to understand that what
I'm doing here serves a higher

EXT. DEMOLISHED BUILDING - DAY - PAST

Aamir's work boots crunch over the rubble of a demolished building as funk crackles. He dumps down a tattered plastic tub.

GABRIEL, a young Latin-American man, picks through bricks and tosses a few unbroken ones into the tub before wincing up at the sky.

GABRIEL

It's oppressive, man. This heat.
It's a wet heat, you know? A dry
heat I can work in all day long,
but this, this is so humid it could
perm your hair.

Aamir sorts bricks as Gabriel takes out a bottle and cringes.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

This isn't enough water for a dog.

He swigs a little back and watches Aamir heave up a section of debris, his strength bear-like.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

We'll kill ourselves working like
this.

AAMIR

A mind consumed with work is a
healthy one. A man alone with his
thoughts only breeds madness.

GABRIEL

You think this work is healthy?
There's probably asbestos out here,
you know? Why let them keep taking
advantage of us?

Aamir stumbles over rubble and fetches a sledgehammer.

AAMIR

Because our contract is clear; A
day's hard work for a day's minimum
wage. That's what it states.

GABRIEL

Our contract probably states masks
too, man. You see us wearing those?

Aamir swings into the bricks over and over, pauses, gathers his breath, and stares at blood weeping from his tattered glove.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

You see! You're not even worth a good pair of gloves to these people.

AAMIR

Look, the people we work for, for them, I hold nothing but contempt. But we have a deal, and the path to reward is clear to me.

Aamir looks at Gabriel confidently and holds his hands out.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

One day, these gloves shall come off, my friend, and these scared hands will be the ones pulling the strings. You shall see.

Gabriel shakes his head and goes back to sorting bricks as Aamir strikes a section of wall over and over, his eyes filled with determination.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

As Katharia stares vacantly at the floor, Aamir's chair suddenly scrapes back, and she jolts to her senses.

Aamir crosses over to them, his boots clumping, the bag in one hand and pistol in the other.

Miller clutches his wheelchair and looks up worried as Aamir stares down coldly.

AAMIR

Do you have children?

MILLER

Yeah.

AAMIR

Tell me about them.

Miller looks to the others. Austin nods back.

MILLER

Well, I gotta daughter. She's married, two kids, homemaker. Best damn wife and mother you could ask for, I tell ya that. Makes the nicest pecan pie you ever tasted, believe me.

Miller smiles sheepishly before he pauses and frowns.

MILLER (CONT'D)

And a son. He's working as private security.

(beat)

Over in the Middle East.

Miller swallows, worried, as Aamir crosses to Bernie.

AAMIR

You?

BERNIE

None that I know of.

(smirking)

But I'm just waitin' for that phone to ring one day, if you know what I mean.

Aamir crosses to Rogers, who stares up defiantly.

ROGERS

Two boys, twins. One back from serving his country in the Korengal Valley, fighting for the people of Afghanistan. The other in 'Frisco with his partner, a guy. He does something with computers. I don't know what the hell it is, but believe me, each of those boys are twice the man you'll ever be.

Roger's eyes lock into Aamir's indifferent stare.

Aamir crosses to Austin.

AAMIR

You?

Austin looks up hopelessly, his eyes glistening.

AUSTIN

One daughter, hard worker, real hard. One of those girls who could show the guys a thing or two about business. But kids, that's all she ever really wanted.

He pauses sombrely and rubs his weathered brow.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Fighter too. I didn't think she'd
 ever give up until the day the
 doctors told me she'd gone.

He sighs, his chin quivering.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
 I always thought it would be the
 other way round, you know?

Austin grits his teeth and breaks down.

Aamir stares for a moment and looks to Katharia as he crosses
 to her.

AAMIR
 And you?

EXT. STREET - DAY - PAST

Katharia leans against an old beat-up truck while a German
 Shepherd sits panting out an open window.

She slices an apple with a hunting knife, takes a bite, and
 gives the remainder to the dog while stroking him lovingly.

KARL, a bulky man in a desert camo jacket and combat trousers
 carrying a heavy bag, walks around the street corner, and a
 big, infectious grin creeps across his face.

Katharia beams back, jogs over, and embraces him tightly as
 he strokes the back of her head.

KARL
 Now, have I missed you, girl.

They cross over to the pickup, arm-in-arm.

KATHARIA
 So, how are the troops?

KARL
 Unwashed and unruly.

She laughs, drops the tailgate, and takes the bag from him,
 struggling with the weight.

KARL (CONT'D)
 Easy now.

She heaves it into the bed, and he strokes his jaw.

KARL (CONT'D)
Now I'm thinkin' breakfast.

KATHARIA
I can fix you breakfast.

KARL
No, let a man spoil his daughter
for once in his life.

She grins, delighted.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Aamir towers over Katharia.

AAMIR
Well?

KATHARIA
I gotta little girl. Aged five.

He narrows his eyes.

AAMIR
Five?

She nods and forces a friendly smile.

KATHARIA
She's adopted, but she knows how
important she is to me. I wouldn't
trade her for the world now she's
mine. No sir, no way... She's
Asian, like you.

Aamir's eyes glower.

AAMIR
That's not true.

Katharia shakes her head, protesting.

KATHARIA
She's gettin' ice cream with my pa
right now, I promise you. She just
loves candy. She'll do anythin' for
it.

Aamir waves the gun around angrily.

AAMIR
You're lying!

The others look at each other, confused.

KATHARIA

I can show you a picture right now
if you want?

Aamir paces back and forth as she pulls out her phone.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

Here, look!

She holds out the phone and Aamir freezes as he sees a young Arab-American girl on the screen. He glares as she smiles proudly.

Police sirens echo in the distance.

Aamir roars with anger, crosses the room, throws over a table, and points back at her venomously.

AAMIR

That isn't true! That can't be
true! That isn't right!

KATHARIA

You should be pleased she's okay!

AAMIR

You have no business with her! She
should be with her mother!

ROGERS

Hey! Hey! Calm it down!

Aamir aims at Rogers.

AAMIR

You stay out of this for your own
good!

Rogers clenches his jaw as tires screech outside.

Aamir crosses to Katharia, snatches the phone from her, and stares at the photo.

She glares up angrily.

KATHARIA

Her father's a violent thug who
beats women! He's scum. She's
better off away from him! Her
mother wants it that way!

AAMIR

You're lying! You shouldn't be
anywhere near her! This is sick!

He roars, bowls her phone hard at the wall, and storms around
the room, kicking over tables.

KATHARIA

Hey, I need that!

Katharia gets up and retrieves the phone.

AUSTIN

Stay down!

She studies her phone, distressed, the screen cracked.

KATHARIA

Why did you do that?

More sirens draw in.

AAMIR

Why do you think?

He marches toward her. Her eyes bulge. He aims for her head.
She freezes.

BERNIE

No!

SMACK! Aamir hits Katharia around the head with the pistol,
and she screams, cowering. He smacks her the other way, and
her hair whips around as she cries in pain.

Bernie goes to get up, but Aamir snaps around and aims at
him.

AAMIR

Stay down!

Aamir kicks Katharia, and she crashes against a wall before
slumping to the floor.

Austin's eyes bulge in horror.

She struggles to her hands and knees, but Aamir kicks her
back down.

Rogers shakes his head furiously, and Miller watches deplored
as Katharia lies clutching herself.

Aamir puts the pistol against her head, and she glares back, shocked, through her ruffled hair. He stares down at her, his trigger finger twitching.

Rogers struggles to his feet.

ROGERS

Enough!

Aamir crosses toward him, and Rogers stares back defiantly, his frail body tensed.

AAMIR

Don't try anything!

ROGERS

Believe me, son. If I thought I stood a cat in hell's chance of taking you down, my boot would be two foot up your asshole right now!

Rogers and Aamir lock in a dead-eyed stare.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

Just lay off her. She's done nothing wrong. She can adopt who she damn well wants. This is a free country. Don't you know that?

Katharina looks back, thankfully, as Rogers eases back down.

Aamir marches across the room, kicks over a chair, and sits on a table in the corner while glowering back.

AAMIR

(to Katharia)

Get back with the others.

She slithers across the floor as Austin outstretches his hand.

She refuses it, gets back against the wall, and winces as she looks at her arm.

Austin goes to pull up her sleeve, but she snatches her arm away, not wanting him to touch her.

She stares at the floor, shocked, her chest heaving.

EXT. BAR - DAY - PAST

A small bar on the outskirts of town with a few cars parked outside. Trucks bustle by down the road.

Country music croons as a shot of whisky is placed on a table and a coffee mug is refilled.

Karl and Katharia eat in a booth opposite each other, hacking away at their breakfasts eagerly.

He pours the shot into his coffee, takes a swig, and judders comically as she grins back.

KARL

I tell you, it's been an honor to be in the presence of so many determined individuals.

She nods, intrigued.

KARL (CONT'D)

The war may go on and may often seem endless, but they wake up every day ready for battle. Their passion is pure, their determination relentless, their faith unquestionable. Nothin' will stop these boys.

Katharia forces a smile and goes back to eating.

Karl watches her carving into her food.

KARL (CONT'D)

Now, what's got your feathers ruffled?

KATHARIA

Nothin'

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

Sure don't look like nothin. Come on now. Spit it out.

Katharia pauses, sighs deeply, and looks back frankly.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

It's just boys, you know? Always boys.

KARL

Well, I apologize. What I meant to say is, nothin' will stop this army, AND everyone who supports it.

KATHARIA

You were right first time round.
Anythin' worth doin' is for men
only. Simple as that.

Katharia goes back to eating, brooding as she chews.

KARL

Your role here is vital. You know
that. You're the very thing we're
protectin'.

KATHARIA

Just because I'm a woman doesn't
mean I'm only good for stayin' at
home and makin' babies.

She stares out of the window and rubs her neck, worried.

KARL

There's new roles all the time. Let
me enquire for you.

KATHARIA

Don't bother, I already checked.
It's all community work, and I hate
that. Or it's background stuff
nobody cares about.

KARL

That community work. That's right
on the front line. They don't let
just anybody do that, you know?

KATHARIA

But that's not what I wanna do.
That's not me.

Karl frowns and looks at Katharia sternly.

KARL

This organization has values
stemmin' back centuries. You're
lettin' the modern world intoxicate
your mind. Bein' a good mother is
the greatest, purist thing a woman
can do.

She thinks, unconvinced, and looks back ambitiously.

KATHARIA

I just wanna make a difference, is
all. Get a chance to prove myself.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Aamir sits on a table, staring into the middle distance as the community centre phone rings. He picks up the receiver.

AAMIR
(into receiver)
Yes?

He takes out the notes and scans across the hostages.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
(into receiver)
Five. Four men, one girl.

Rogers stares at the bag handcuffed to Aamir's wrist and looks at the others curiously.

ROGERS
(whispering)
I wanna know what's in that bag.

Bernie nods back.

AAMIR
(into receiver)
There's also some more information
you need to know. You have until
the eleventh minute in the eleventh
hour to meet my demands.

Austin looks up at the clock to see it's a little past ten, then looks at the others, shocked.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
(into receiver)
If the money fails to reach us,
then this will happen again and
again until all you have left is
your precious banks.

Aamir hangs up the phone.

MILLER
An hour? Whaddya think you're doing
here, you klutz? Ordering a goddamn
pizza?

AUSTIN
They can still get the money in
that time, right?

BERNIE

That ain't gonna happen. No way in hell.

ROGERS

Maybe that's the point.

They look round at Rogers as he stares at Aamir suspiciously.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

Aamir, right?

Aamir nods.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

What's in the bag, Aamir?

Aamir gets off the table and crosses toward them as they stare at the ominous black bag.

He takes a knee. The zipper clicks, and the fabric splays apart. Austin, Bernie, and Miller stare shocked.

BERNIE

Goddamn.

Rogers nods to himself, unsurprised, as he looks into the bag to see it's crammed with explosives and a timer, a red digital countdown flicking to one hour and ten minutes.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE LOCKER ROOM - DAY - PAST

Aamir slams a locker shut, and braces himself against it angrily.

He pounds the door with his fist and kicks a box across the floor, scattering the contents.

He stares down at a picture of a wife and baby, sighs, and picks them up.

Gabriel stumbles into the room, out of breath.

GABRIEL

Shit, I just heard. The first cut?
I'm sorry, man.

AAMIR

Tell me Gabriel, is this because of what I've done or who I am?

GABRIEL

Maybe it's because of what you're gonna do?

Aamir narrows his eyes, confused.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Do you believe in karma?

Aamir shirks away and gathers his items from the floor.

AAMIR

I need to go.

GABRIEL

At least join me for one last drink. You drink, don't you?

Aamir nods back guiltily.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

You like tequila?

AAMIR

I've never tried it.

GABRIEL

Then I insist! I cannot let you leave without first being educated!

Gabriel beams an infectious grin as Aamir smiles back and nods.

Gabriel unlocks a locker and pulls out a tequila bottle, a can of soda, and two glasses.

They ease down at an old table.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

One hundred percent aged agave. Nothing but the best!

AAMIR

The best? There is no worm?

GABRIEL

You're as bad as the others! That little worm is like the ambassador for my country. Yet, really, he's a sign of infestation.

He eagerly pours a shot into each glass.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
We shall have slammers!

AAMIR
I don't know how...

Aamir motions the act of licking salt off his hand.

Gabriel shakes his head, disappointed.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
Your head's already filled with
this country's misconceptions!

He pours fizzing soda into the glasses, covers one with his hand, and looks at Aamir sternly.

GABRIEL
Now watch.

Gabriel slams the glass hard against the table, causing the contents to bubble and fizz. He nods to Aamir to copy.

Aamir pours in some soda, covers his glass, and slams it.

Gabriel raises his eyebrows, and they both neck their drinks back.

Aamir nods, impressed, as Gabriel pours another.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
You see, a sudden shock agitates
everything. It releases something
that amplifies the intoxication.

They slam their glasses, knock them back, and sit reflecting.

AAMIR
So, why do you talk about karma?

Gabriel pours them both another shot.

GABRIEL
It's my belief that, right now, you
could be being punished for
something you've done in the past.
Or perhaps you are being persecuted
now because great reward is coming
in your future.

Aamir watches Gabriel pour soda and stares at the contents fizzing.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Bernie sits thinking as Aamir walks slowly by him. He watches the bag and swallows deeply.

Aamir picks up Katharia's phone and looks at the little girl on the cracked screen. He glowers back at Katharia, puts the phone in his pocket, and takes out the notes.

As Aamir crosses back across the room, Bernie takes a deep breath, coils his body, and bursts up, lunging at Aamir.

MILLER

Bernie!

Bernie pins down Aamir's arms. Aamir tries to aim the gun and drops the notes. Katharia watches them slide under Miller's wheelchair.

BERNIE

Run for it!

Bernie heaves Aamir over, and they crash to the floor. He stares back at the others, his eyes bulging.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Just go! I got this!

Rogers struggles up and grabs Miller's wheelchair.

Austin gathers himself up and clutches Katharia's arm.

AUSTIN

Come on!

Katharia holds back and stares up at Austin, worried.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Come on, now!

BANG! They all jolt and snap around to see Aamir slithering away from Bernie, his eyes wide, the smoking gun trembling in his outstretched hand.

Bernie croaks as blood pools from under him.

The phone on the table starts ringing.

Austin releases Katharia's arm, and she stares at Aamir, shocked, as he sits up against a table, sweat running down his face.

Rogers and Austin pour over Bernie as they try to tend to his wound.

Miller perches up in his wheelchair, concerned.

MILLER

Bernie?

BERNIE

Mother... fucker.

The ringing continues as Rogers pulls out a handkerchief. Austin takes it and applies pressure to Bernie's wound.

Aamir's breathing slowly calms as the phone stops ringing. He looks at Katharia, and she stares back coldly.

EXT. FORREST - DAY - PAST

In an endless maze of twisted silver birch trees, gunshots echo from within the forest.

A human silhouette target takes multiple shots to the neck.

Katharia stares down a Glock pistol as it kicks back in her hands, a baseball cap shielding her cold, mean eyes and the muzzle flash lighting up her face.

The slide stops back and smoke wafts from the chamber as she stands impressed, her chest heaving.

Karl trudges over bracken with a big grin and pats her on the back. She stands at ease.

KARL

Now, you two go together like a lazy dog and a hot summer's day.

She tilts the pistol around, fascinated.

KARL (CONT'D)

Trigger's like snappin' a cold bar of chocolate, ain't it?

Katharia nods slowly.

KATHARIA

Can I go again?

He smirks, and takes out box of ammo.

KARL

How could I possibly say no to those eyes?

Karl hands her bullets, and she studies them, confused.

KATHARIA

These ain't full metal jacket.

KARL

No, these are hollow points, or dum-dum's, if you prefer.

She looks up, intrigued, as he smiles back confidently.

KARL (CONT'D)

Now a full metal jacket, that's built for penetration, but penetration ain't necessarily conducive to lethality. What you want is for the bullet to dissipate all its energy into the target, not glide straight on through.

He holds up a bullet.

KARL (CONT'D)

These deform on impact. Expand. Do more damage. Gruesome damage. These little bastards, they're illegal on the battlefield.

She nods understanding as he leans in and checks side to side.

KARL (CONT'D)

The irony bein' it's also the ammunition of choice for the police. The reason? Reducin' collateral damage by protectin' innocent bystanders. Reducin' paperwork and protectin' cops from return fire, I say.

Katharia smirks, smacks in the clip, and cocks the slide.

KARL (CONT'D)

Yep, there's a culture breedin' here that we have to protect you from. And no protection is too strong for my little girl.

She raises the pistol in her outstretched arms and takes aim.

KARL (CONT'D)

And what does my little girl know about protection?

KATHARIA

Make every bullet count, and never
shoot a man in the back.

KARL

And why do we never shoot a man in
the back?

KATHARIA

Because the cops will know he was
runnin', and his mother will know
he was a coward.

Karl smirks, takes out a flask, and raises it to her.

KARL

Amen to that.

He takes a swig as she opens fire relentlessly.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Katharia continues to stare at Aamir as he composes himself.

Miller tries to peer at Bernie's injury.

MILLER

Is he gonna be okay?

Austin shakes his head dourly and snaps around at Aamir.

ROGERS

He needs a fucking ambulance!

Aamir stares at the floor, thinking while Katharia watches
him carefully and slowly adjusts her position.

Her hand eases around her back and teases up her hoodie,
revealing the Glock pistol holstered in the back of her
jeans.

She slips her hand around it, watches Aamir, and flicks off
the safety, wincing a little as she thinks.

EXT. FORREST - DAY - PAST

Katharia leans out the window of the pickup and cringes at a
rear wheel as it slithers around in the wet grass.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK

The dog barks in the back as rock music blasts.

She frowns and gives it some gas. The engine revs, and the tires whine. She sighs, frustrated, and floors it, causing the engine to clatter while the tires shriek.

KARL

Woah, woah, woah!

Katharina smacks the wheel as he stares across, disappointed.

KARL (CONT'D)

Just what are you doin'?

She stares ahead, pissed off, on the verge of tears with embarrassment.

KATHARIA

Makin' a mess. Don't blame me! I got the tires changed last week, just like you told me to!

KARL

Oh, it's the tire's fault, is it now? The tires done parked us in the mud. It's the tires tryin' to spin their way down to China.

Katharia looks down at the floor, shamefaced by failure.

KARL (CONT'D)

All you're doin', girl, is makin' a load of noise and diggin' a couple of holes. Look at me now.

She looks up at him angrily as he stares back sternly.

KARL (CONT'D)

Simmer. Down. You're better than this. Take control of the situation. Turn the darn music off.

Katharia clicks off the stereo, and he thumbs to the dog.

KARL (CONT'D)

And stop his hollerin'.

KATHARIA

Trooper, shup!

The dog goes silent. She composes herself, smiles apologetically at it, and rubs its head.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

Good boy,

Karl rolls his eyes.

KARL

Now you know what to do.

Katharia narrows her eyes and pulses the throttle, causing the truck to rock back and forth in the mud. She concentrates as she jostles in her seat.

KARL (CONT'D)

That's it. Rock it like a baby now.
Show it some love.

EXT. PICKUP TRUCK

The truck gradually pulls out the hole and scrabbles away.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK

Katharina exhales, relieved, and guns it as they race along the track. She focuses on the road, chewing her lip angrily.

KARL

See, now anger is the second strongest emotion there is. But too much of it, that'll just do more harm than good. You gotta know when to back off, take your time.

KATHARIA

Second strongest? What's the first?

He looks back at her, deadly serious.

KARL

Hate. Pure human hate.

KATHARIA

So, gettin' stuck back there. Are you sayin' there's some higher meanin' to all that?

He smirks to himself.

KARL

Maybe, but for the most part, I just didn't wanna get out and push.

She shakes her head, amused.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Katharia concentrates on Aamir as he stares at the ringing phone. Her hand slides from the grip of the pistol to the whole holster. She carefully unclips it from her jeans and lifts it away, revealing a skull and crossbones tattoo.

Aamir looks up and stares right at her.

Katharia stares back, her hand frozen in place.

He hangs up the phone and points at her.

AAMIR
(pointing at floor)
You. Stand here.

She stares, fixed.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
NOW!

Katharia looks into his bulging eyes, the holster clasped in her hand.

She slips her hand behind a wastepaper bin as she pushes herself up, secluding the pistol behind it in one swift move.

Bernie winces in pain as his eyes follow her crossing over to Aamir and pausing in the centre of the room.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
Face away from me, spread out your
legs, and put your hands behind
your head.

She turns around, stands akimbo, and puts her hands against her head.

As he approaches, her pupils dart around nervously.

Aamir crouches at her feet and pads her legs.

Katharia winces as his bulky hand squeezes her thighs.

The vets watch silently while Aamir works his way around her waist, groping at the fabric of her hoodie.

She focuses on the wastepaper bin as his breath trembles by her neck, and he cups around her chest.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
Okay. Get back down.

She quickly crosses back to the wastepaper bin and sits down beside it, her fingers right by the pistol.

Aamir looks at Austin and points at the floor.

AUSTIN

You.

Austin reluctantly eases his hands from Bernie's flesh wound. Bernie groans as Rogers takes over and applies pressure.

As Austin stands ready to be searched, the phone rings. Aamir shakes his head, frustrated, as he crosses to it.

Katharia looks at the pistol, reaches over, and clutches it.

AAMIR

Enough!

She releases the pistol and snaps around, eyes bulging to see Aamir hang up the phone and bowl the receiver across the table. She flinches as the vets jolt.

Katharia quickly snatches up the pistol, slides the holster back onto her jeans, and pulls down her hoodie before sitting innocently.

Aamir searches Austin, padding down his smart grey trousers while he stands indignantly, his bloodied hands against his silver hair.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

Okay.

Austin returns to comforting Bernie and Aamir turns his attention to Rogers.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

Now you.

ROGERS

Can't you see I'm trying to stop a man dying here, you asshole?

AAMIR

Come here now!

Rogers shakes his head, hands over to Austin, and crosses the room to be searched.

Miller shakes his head angrily, spots the notes under his wheelchair, and looks up at Rogers. Rogers nods back surely for him to look at them.

Miller looks across at Austin. Austin shrugs back, unsure if he should.

Miller looks round to find Katharia staring at him intensely, shaking her head slowly.

KATHARIA
(mouthing silently)
Don't.

Aamir reaches into Roger's pocket, pulls out a cigar tube, and puts it back, before continuing his search.

Miller swallows deeply, drops his hand down the side of his chair, and tries to reach the notes.

Katharia shakes her head at him, urging him to stop.

Miller's fingertips skim the edge of the notes.

Katharia chews her lip while Bernie urges him on. Austin watches wide-eyed while Roger smiles wryly.

Miller's fingers pluck at the notes as Aamir's hand clasps at fabric.

Miller teases the notes into his grasp and snatches them up into his lap. He quickly unfolds them, and his face drops.

The phone rings, the receiver dangling by the cord.

Aamir looks around at it.

Miller shakes his head deplored as he scans through a list detailing everything to take place; Aamir's demands, asking people about their children, releasing hostages, and then on the final page, eleven minutes past eleven, the word BOOM!.

Miller glances around, shocked, as Aamir spots what he's doing.

AAMIR
Give me those!

He runs over and snatches the notes from Miller's hands as the phone continues ringing.

ROGERS
What do they say, Miller?

Aamir tucks the notes into a pocket and shoves Rogers back toward Bernie.

MILLER

This is a suicide mission! No...
it's a suicide BOMBING!

Aamir shakes his head angrily.

AAMIR

No! It isn't!

Miller jabs his finger in the air accusingly.

MILLER

It's there, in writing. Eleven past
eleven, BOOM! And he plans to take
at least three of us with him.

Austin closes his eyes forebodingly, shakes his head, and
looks at Aamir, disappointed as the phone stops ringing.

AUSTIN

Well, you're organized. I'll give
you that.

Rogers draws a knowing smile and locks eyes with Aamir.

ROGERS

If the government releases that
money, they set a precedent. Half
the country will demand the same.
It would start a goddamn
revolution. So they can't. You're
not holding us hostage, you're
holding the government hostage.

Aamir stares back indifferently.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

This is nothing but terrorism, and
either way, you win.

Miller, Bernie, and Austin sit stunned as Aamir stares back,
devoid of emotion.

Katharia slowly nods in agreement.

LOUD HAILER OUTSIDE

Aamir?

They all look to the window.

LOUD HAILER OUTSIDE (CONT'D)

Aamir, you need to listen to us.
We're trying to call you, but
there's no answer.

(MORE)

LOUD HAILER OUTSIDE (CONT'D)

We heard what sounded like a gun,
Aamir. We hope everyone's okay in
there.

Aamir looks regretfully at Bernie, his security uniform soaked dark red with blood.

LOUD HAILER OUTSIDE (CONT'D)

We need you to answer the phone,
Aamir. We need to talk to you.

Aamir looks at the receiver, swinging on the cord.

LOUD HAILER OUTSIDE (CONT'D)

It's about your daughter, Aamir.

Austin and Rogers look at each other, concerned, while Aamir continues to stare as if in a trance.

LOUD HAILER OUTSIDE (CONT'D)

It's about Hana.

Aamir snaps out of it, crosses to the blinds, and takes a peek through the gap.

LOUD HAILER OUTSIDE (CONT'D)

Where is she, Aamir? Where's Hana?

INT./EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT - PAST

Rasheeda, a scared Arab-American woman, peeks warily out of a dark window while hidden behind the curtains, the lights off.

The front door clatters as a fist pounds it, and she jolts, scared.

AAMIR

Rasheeda, I know you're in there!

She chews her nails nervously.

Aamir pounds the door again and slumps against it drunk.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

I need to see her!

RASHEEDA

Go now, or I'll call the police!

He works out where her voice is coming from and staggers across the lawn toward a window.

AAMIR

Let me into my own home!

He squints into the dark window.

Rasheeda peeks out and jolts.

RASHEEDA

You'll not lay a hand on her! Not
while your mind is so clouded!

AAMIR

Then I'll let myself in!

She darts from the window as he trudges through a flower bed,
fumbles down the side of the house, and crashes through
trashcans.

The backdoor clunks as Rasheeda frantically locks it.

Aamir rattles the handle and glares through the glass.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

I demand to see her!

He turns, slides away plant pots, and searches the ground
desperately.

RASHEEDA

You agreed! You're not fit to be
around her! You have lost yourself,
Aamir! You are shamed!

He overturns a rock and gropes around the ground.

RASHEEDA (CONT'D)

You won't find the key!

Aamir glares back over his shoulder, eyes filled with rage.
He heaves up the rock, stands tall, and turns to the backdoor
with it poised, ready to hurl through the glass.

Rasheeda shields herself and winces back.

RASHEEDA (CONT'D)

Please! Aamir! There would be no
coming back from this!

Aamir looks at her clutching her head as a tear trickles down
her cheek. He freezes and stares wide-eyed.

She cries as he stares through the glass, his eyes filled
with madness.

Aamir limply tosses the rock down and staggers away.

Rasheeda exhales with relief, braces herself against a table, and sobs distraught.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT - PAST

Advertising signs glow in the barred windows of a dilapidated convenience store.

Aamir stumbles out with a bottle in a paper bag and staggers down a dark alleyway to a side door.

INT. APARTMENT

A small, run-down apartment, the grubby walls barren of decoration, and a single light bulb above a tatty old sofa.

Aamir fumbles through the door, crosses to a radio, and clicks it on. A woman's voice sings softly over a melodic guitar.

He crashes onto the sofa and guzzles back liquor.

Aamir stares vacantly, his expression gradually turning to a dark glower.

KITCHEN

A tiny kitchen basks in the cold glow of a fluorescent light. Aamir slams the bottle down and scans around.

He heaves up an old toolbox, opens it, and clatters through construction tools.

Aamir pauses and slides out a bundle of industrial zip ties.

He studies one, the glossy, tough plastic tie a good twenty inches long.

Aamir feeds the clicking tape into the head, clutches it in both hands, and yanks it hard. The tie remains strong.

He looks back at the doorway.

FRONT ROOM

Aamir sits on the floor, toying with the tie. He lies back and stares up, hands together in his lap, fingers running around the plastic. He closes his eyes and raises his head.

His eyes stare vacantly as he puts the tie over his head and pulls it down to his neck.

He rests back, licks his lips, grabs the end, and yanks it as hard as he can. The zip clicks tight, his eyes bulge, and he croaks, the thick plastic tight around his neck, skin spilling on either side.

Aamir snatches the tie again, the head clicking a few teeth tighter, causing the cable to burrow deeper into his flesh.

His eyes clench shut, and his mouth quivers as a wet clicking echoes from his wheezing throat.

Aamir's arms and fingers twitch while his legs writhe in agony.

His eyes open wide, and his tear-soaked pupils dart around until they fix on a picture of Rasheeda with a baby.

Guitars thrash through the radio speakers as the woman's voice screams angry lyrics.

Aamir gags and clutches at the tie, his fingernails scratching at his neck, desperately trying to remove it.

He whips his head around, panicked, struggles up, and runs to the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Aamir crashes against the counter, opens the toolbox, rustles frantically through tools, and pulls out a pair of large cutting pliers.

His eyes bulge. His whole body spasms. He grabs at the toolbox and falls, bringing the liquor and toolbox down with him.

Aamir crashes to the dirty tiles as the bottle smashes and tools scatter everywhere.

He tries to grab the pliers but knocks them under the stove with his foot.

Aamir crams his hands under the filthy stove determined, his scrabbling fingers unable to reach by just a whisker. He grimaces, his bulky hand writhing.

Aamir lies on his back in the liquor and shattered glass and braces a foot against the stove. He heaves, and the stove creaks up an inch.

A fumbling finger teases the pliers into his clasp, and Aamir throws himself against the fridge, his eyes bloodshot.

He jams the pliers against his neck, and they pinch against plastic and bulging skin.

Aamir focuses, his hand weak, as he draws his last breath.

SNIP.

He gasps long and deep, his torso drawing up into the air.

Aamir slumps back, panting, as blood weeps from the gash on his throat, and the singer sings softly in the background.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Aamir sits against the wall, the bag containing the bomb between his legs.

Katharia sits against the opposite wall, staring at the floor.

Bernie lies wheezing while Austin and Rogers continue to press on his weeping wound.

Miller toys with his wheelchair as he studies Aamir. He coughs for attention, and everyone looks at him.

MILLER

I couldn't help but notice. But on your little list, it says you'll release two hostages.

Austin and Rogers look at each other surprised.

MILLER (CONT'D)

That true?

Aamir slowly nods back and glances up at the clock.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Well.... Who goes?

Aamir thinks and looks back at them.

AAMIR

It's up to you all to decide.

Miller looks at Bernie, then to Austin and Rogers, who nod back surely.

Bernie catches them exchanging glances.

BERNIE

Oh, hell no! Don't you dare think about sendin' my sorry ass out! I'm done, guys! I am done!

ROGERS

Oh, quit being a fucking hero, Bernie. You're going!

Austin looks at Katharia, who glances back at him indifferently.

AUSTIN

And the girl, right?

Rogers and Miller nod sagely.

Austin shoots her a friendly smile, and she shakes her head, frowning.

KATHARIA

I can stay or go. It don't matter.

Roger looks at her, surprised.

ROGERS

But you need to go, yeah? To get back to your little girl?

She stares guiltily as Rogers narrows his eyes, confused for a moment.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

Well, it's pretty liberating to know your destiny.

He fishes the cigar out of his pocket, pops it in his mouth, and takes out a lighter.

MILLER

You can't smoke that indoors!

Rogers lights the cigar, takes a long draw, and exhales.

ROGERS

In forty-five minutes, we're all going to be smoking indoors.

Miller scans around the room and freezes fixed as his jaw drops.

MILLER

Wait just a cotton-picking minute.

He points his trembling old finger at something.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Is that cake?

They all look to where he's pointing to see a glorious cheesecake resting on a table in the corner of the room.

ROGERS

Yeah, the baker dropped it off first thing. Said they couldn't make the meeting.

MILLER

And you didn't think of saying anything when I got here!

ROGERS

I wanted some of it left when everyone else arrived!

Miller scowls and licks his lips eagerly.

MILLER

(to Aamir impatiently)

Well?

Aamir looks back, confused.

MILLER (CONT'D)

He gets to smoke his stinking cigar! I want cake!

Aamir stares as Miller widens his eyes, pleading, and waves his hand.

AAMIR

Go ahead.

Miller rubs his hands together and looks to Austin.

Austin shakes his head back, his hands pressing on Bernie's wound.

AUSTIN

(to Rogers)

Could you?

Rogers takes over as Austin gets up, and Bernie groans.

ROGERS

Ah, quit your whining! You're one of the lucky ones getting out of here, ain't ya? Here.

Rogers pops the cigar in Bernie's mouth.

Austin wipes his bloody hands on his trousers and picks up the cake uneasily.

Aamir sits thinking as the cake's slowly offered toward him, Austin's hand shaking. Aamir looks up, surprised.

Austin nods toward Miller.

AUSTIN

If you want a piece, you'd best get
in there before he does.

Miller shirks the accusation as Aamir takes a piece and looks for a place to put it. Austin offers a paper plate.

Miller winces impatiently as he watches Austin cross to Katharia and offer over the cake. She cringes at his hands.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

You'll have to excuse the blood.

Katharia shakes her head, repulsed.

Austin crosses to Bernie and Rogers. Rogers shakes his head.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Bernie? You want some cake?

BERNIE

Well, I ain't dead yet, am I,
brother?

Austin carefully takes a slice and lays it by him.

Miller grins widely and licks his lips as Austin crosses over.

MILLER

Mazel Tov!

Austin goes to hand him a plate but thinks for a moment and shakes his head.

He puts the whole cake in Miller's lap and waves his hand dismissively before sitting back down by Bernie.

BERNIE

Hell, cigars and cake. The guests
at my funeral won't have it this
good.

MILLER

(stuffing face)
 You'd better not die, Bernie. I
 could have had your spot!

ROGERS
 Is that so? And what makes you
 think you'd be next?

Miller looks back incredulously, cake all over his hand.

MILLER
 I'm in a wheelchair, ain't I? I
 gotta finally get some benefit
 outta this heap of junk!

Miller elbows his wheelchair as Rogers smirks.

AUSTIN
 Well, I lost the one thing I felt
 was worth living for. I ain't
 interested in any spot.

Rogers exhales cigar smoke long and slow as he looks Aamir
 dead in the eye.

ROGERS
 And I'll gladly sit here and stare
 you in the eye until my last dying
 breath.

Aamir stares back sincerely.

AAMIR
 You think dying happy is easy? You
 don't think that, at that very last
 moment, you'll feel at least a
 little doubt?

Rogers' eyes narrow as Aamir confidentially eats cake.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT - PAST

A modest living room, well kept and tidy. Aamir sits around
 the table at night with Rasheeda and Hana, their five-year-
 old daughter.

He stuffs food into his mouth and chews feverishly before
 tearing a piece of chapati and smearing it through curry.

Aamir reaches for a beer and glances at Rasheeda. She smiles
 awkwardly back and frowns as he guzzles it down.

He scoops up potatoes and spills them all over the side of his plate.

Hana giggles as he winces guiltily.

Rasheeda shakes her head.

RASHEEDA

You're drunk, aren't you? How many have you had?

Aamir rubs his neck hazily and raises his drink.

AAMIR

I'm blending in. To drink is normal here. To be drunk is normal here.

Rasheeda stares back upset for a few moments.

RASHEEDA

(snapping)

Then why don't I make hotdogs?

He stares back, surprised, as she quickly composes herself and rubs Hana's wrist soothingly.

RASHEEDA (CONT'D)

You are losing yourself, Aamir, and I don't know why, is it me?

AAMIR

Work... stress...

RASHEEDA

Well, I don't like it. Not around our daughter. It scares me. You're not in control.

AAMIR

I'm in control.

RASHEEDA

Are you?

She looks down at his plate, and he stares at the potatoes spilled onto the table.

Rasheeda sits up straight, doing her best to appear stern.

RASHEEDA (CONT'D)

I want you to leave, walk around the block, and clear your head.

He tosses down his napkin, gets up, and kisses Hana's head.

RASHEEDA (CONT'D)

Aamir.

Rasheeda glares up at him judgmentally.

RASHEEDA (CONT'D)

Never touch her again unless it's
with a sober mind, okay?

He nods understanding and crosses to the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Aamir crosses to the fridge and opens it.

RASHEEDA (O.S.)

All the way around the block,
Aamir.

He stares into the light and pulls out another bottle.

AAMIR

I'll go around twice!

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE

Aamir exits the house and strolls in the moonlight while swigging on the beer.

Crickets chirp, and a lawn sprinkler rhythmically sputters as the shadows of trees sweep over him, the windows of modest homes glowing on either side of the street.

Music plays from inside a house, a lazy fusion of gravel-voiced blues over funky drums and electric guitar.

A COOL OLD DUDE sits in his lawn chair, his music blasting through an open window. He raises his bottle to Aamir.

Aamir smiles, raises his back, and listens to the music while nodding his head to the beat.

He closes his eyes and loses himself in the building brass chorus as he dances on the sidewalk, swinging his shoulders, clapping his hands, and stepping from side to side.

A car growls up the road, and the passengers cheer and whoop, their arms out the windows as he raises his bottle to them.

He struts a cool swagger, the music carrying with him in his head.

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

Aamir stumbles along, now on the outskirts of town, passing the tall metal fences surrounding industrial buildings.

He goes to swig on the bottle but realizes it's empty. He sighs and peers through a fence to see a large waste container in the shadows of a yard.

Aamir hurls the bottle into the air, over the wall, and it smashes into the container, the shattering echoing into the darkness, causing nearby dogs to bark in response.

Aamir snaps around with his arms outstretched victoriously as he basks in fictional applause, a huge grin on his face.

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

Aamir's feet kick up dust, the town's lights glimmering in the distance as he drunkenly sings to himself under his breath.

He stops and stares at a small bar in the darkness, a neon sign flashing, a couple of cars and a pickup in the lot.

A semi roars by, buffeting him back. He steadies himself and trudges across the road.

INT. BAR

Soft rock plays inside as Karl and Katharia sit perched on stools at the bar.

She beams brightly at him and shakes her head.

KATHARIA

Oh, breed don't mean squat to me.
You show any dog love, it loves you
back. Simple as that.

Karl swigs on his beer and ponders unconvinced.

KARL

I ain't sure it's quite that
simple.

The door clicks shut, and they turn to see Aamir swaying drunk in the entrance. They turn back and shake their heads disapprovingly.

Aamir staggers across the room while peering at the staring figures sitting at tables.

He stumbles against the bar and clutches the brass railing.

The BARMAN stands tall against the glinting wall of bottles, his arms folded unimpressed.

Aamir stares back, trying to focus.

AAMIR
Beer please.

The Barman shakes his head slowly.

BARMAN
Leave. Now.

Aamir peers back, confused.

AAMIR
I just want a drink.

BARMAN
Get out. Now.

AAMIR
Why?

The barman braces against the counter and looks Aamir sternly in the eye.

BARMAN
You need to go take a good look at yourself and think about where your at.

Aamir stares back, puzzled, as the door clicks shut, and everyone looks back.

ROPER, BYRNES, and LYNCH stand shocked, their arms and faces proudly decorated with white power tattoos.

ROPER
Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no,
hell no! Just what the hell's this
throwin' a shadow across our door?

Aamir blinks hard as he stares back.

BYRNES
We got ourselves a clientele issue.
That's what it is.

They cross toward Aamir and posture challenging.

Aamir straightens up as Byrnes rests his finger on his chest.

BYRNES (CONT'D)

Now, I'm gonna politely ask you, just once, to fuck off. This is our sanctuary, okay? This is one of the few places we aren't forced to mix with the likes of you. So, I advise you call yourself a taxi and get gone, stat.

(feigning revelation)

Oh no! There's no need, right? You probably already drive one!

Roper and Byrnes burst out laughing as Aamir winces, offended.

ROPER

Either that, or he can ride home on his magic carpet!

They roar with laughter as Aamir looks around at customers for support but finds they stare back vacantly.

AAMIR

That's bullshit! You know NOTHING about me! I have every right to be in here! I'm an American!

The barman folds his arms and shakes his head as Katharia looks at Karl and frowns, upset.

ROPER

And you Muslims would just know all about givin' and takin' rights now, wouldn't you?

AAMIR

What the fuck are you talking about? You know nothing about my beliefs!

Roper squares up to him, goading.

LYNCH

We know too much about your stupid cult. That's the whole damn problem with you people!

Aamir gets in their faces and glares furiously.

AAMIR

You assume I'm Muslim because of the color of my skin! Should I assume you're Catholic because you're white?

Katharina stares at the bar and bites her lip, frustrated, as Lynch points his finger at Aamir venomously.

LYNCH

You call me a bead rattler again! I will fuck you up, boy! Do we look Italian to you?

BYRNES

Exactly! This ain't about religion. This is about who you are. Your blood. Your DNA! We feel sorry for you, but you were born inferior to us! So, just go preach your ways in your own country with all the others. See where that gets you!

ROPER

Or stay here, know your place, and fall in line led by us!

Byrnes and Lynch nod in agreement as Aamir stares back, stunned.

AAMIR

As your slave?

BYRNES

You should appreciate the opportunity to see how a real society is run!

LYNCH

A place for you and a place for us. You do your work. You stay the hell away from our women and children!

AAMIR

Segregation? When has that ever worked?

LYNCH

It's always worked damn fine for one side!

Katharina scrapes her stool back angrily and storms away while Karl shakes his head, disappointed.

BYRNES

Look what the apes did to this country once the Jews set them free. The crime! The rape!

Karl stares ahead at the bar.

KARL
 (to self)
 Masters, grant to your slaves
 justice and fairness, knowin' that
 you too have a master in heaven.

Byrnes glares at Aamir as he counts on his fingers.

BYRNES
 We got spics, spooks, chinks, and
 gooks. And now you lot.

ROPER
 The Jews may pretend they tolerate
 you, but they just ship you over so
 you'll fight with us.

AAMIR
 Well, why don't you defy them by
 refusing to?

Roper, Byrnes, and Lynch pause and wince at each other for a few moments, struggling with a comeback.

ROPER
 It ain't that simple!

BYRNES
 We're just tryin' to protect this
 great country. And our best defense
 is you takin' offense.

LYNCH
 If any more of you come over, we'll
 be forced to pack our bags and move
 to Canada!

Aamir glares back and points at them.

AAMIR
 Is that how it works? You fight to
 stop immigration while believing
 you can go wherever you please?

BYRNES
 We're white! We raise the bar! But
 you muzzies, you're savages. You
 have nothin' but contempt for us!

AAMIR
 You know nothing about me! And you
 know nothing about my culture!

Aamir locks eyes with them defiantly.

A distorted chorus of electric guitars suddenly thrashes through the speakers like nails scratching on walls.

They all snap around to see Katharia standing braced over the jukebox, staring down into the glass, seething, as a slow marching beat thumps underneath the wall of noise.

KATHARIA

Oh, I know all about what you
people call culture.

Katharia locks eyes with Aamir and glowers darkly.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

(shouting over music)

Are you here to tell me to turn the
music off?

Aamir stares back, confused, as she bobs her head back and forth to the thrash metal.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

You here to tell me I can't dance?

Aamir shakes his head slowly.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

Are you here to force me to be one
of your wives?

Aamir shakes his head dismissively and goes to leave, but Roper and Lynch stand in his way.

BYRNES

I think you'd better show some
respect! Listen to what a lady has
to say for once!

Aamir looks back as symbols crash and the onslaught of guitar melody rides up and down in pitch.

Katharia unbuttons the top buttons of her shirt.

KATHARIA

You here to tell me to cover myself
up?

She stares at Aamir with contempt, pulling her shirt open to reveal a tattoo of her chest cut open and her heart branded with Odin's cross.

Aamir's eyes widen as she unbuttons all the way down, her midriff tattooed with a rune surrounded by ivy.

The guitars cut, and a lonely bass drum pounds slowly.

Katharia's jaw hangs open as she glares back.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)
You want to hack up my cunt? YOU
MOTHERFUCKIN' SAND NIGGER!

Aamir reels, shocked, as Karl turns to him, smiling.

KARL
Looks like you done kicked the
hornets nest, boy.

The guitars kick back in and thrash relentlessly as a jagged male voice screams hateful lyrics, spitting vicious contempt with every line.

Katharia stares venomously as she lets her shirt slide off her to the floor, her arms sleeved with Odin's snarling Wolves, one grey, one black, their tails coiled down her forearms.

She strides confidently toward Aamir, her petite feminine body inked in graphic racial supremacy, two huge iron wings running down her entire back, stemming from an eagle atop of a swastika.

Byrnes watches her approaching in a trance.

BYRNES
Now, there's an angel.

Katharia approaches Aamir and stares up at him fearlessly.

KATHARIA
You here to beat me? That what you
want?

Aamir slowly shakes his head, shocked.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)
You here to rape me?

Aamir frowns, appalled.

BYRNES
Your lot hate women, don't you? You
like them kept under control?

AAMIR
Bullshit! The fucking prime
minister of Bangladesh is a woman!

ROPER

Your women should be at home with
your children! Not bein' encouraged
to act like dykes!

Karl slowly gets off his stool and stands with them.

KARL

You husbands in the same way, live
with your wives in an understandin'
way, as with someone weaker, since
she is a woman, and show her honor
as a fellow heir of the grace of
life, so that your prayers will not
be hindered.

Katharia taps the point of her boot on the floor.

KATHARIA

Amen.

She kicks Aamir hard in the crotch.

Byrnes, Roper, and Lynch wince as Aamir buckles to the floor
and clutches himself.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

Welcome to America! Thanks for
visitin'! Now get the fuck out!

Aamir swings his head around and vomits.

Katharia sniggers delighted and goes to kick him in the head,
but Byrnes grabs her and holds her back. She writhes angrily
and tries to struggle free while spitting at Aamir.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

Don't like it the other way round,
do you. You raghead fuck!

Lynch and Roper motion toward Aamir.

ROPER

Let's get you out of here, boy.

Aamir glances up concerned and staggers to his feet.

AAMIR

Stay the fuck away from me!

Aamir swings his fist drunkenly as Lynch and Roper continue
approaching, their hands out, ready to tackle him.

Katharia wriggles out of Byrnes' grasp, charges at Aamir, and SMACK! She connects with his fist and stumbles back, her eyes bulging and nose bloody.

Aamir stares, shocked, as Roper and Lynch quickly restrain him.

Katharia blinks hard, touches her nose, and studies the blood before glowering at Aamir.

Byrnes looks at Katharia deplored and squares up to Aamir vengefully.

BYRNES

You camel fuckin' jihad
motherfucker! I'm gonna kick the
Koran out of you, boy!

Lynch and Roper hold Aamir ready for a beating while Byrnes clenches his burly fists, and Katharia glares.

KATHARIA

I'll kill you, you motherfucker!

Katharia lunges at Aamir, but Byrnes grabs her and holds her back.

BYRNES

No! Woman! You got your turn!

KARL (O.S.)

ENOUGH!

Everybody freezes as Karl paces slowly up and down the bar, staring darkly at Aamir.

He points to the barman.

KARL (CONT'D)

Police.

The barman crosses quickly down the bar to the phone as Karl turns to the customers and raises his finger.

KARL (CONT'D)

Now you all saw what you saw! A
drunken man did walk into this bar,
antagonize my friends, and laid his
hand upon my daughter when she
dared to question his beliefs! And
now, as we do in this civilised
country, he shall answer to the
law!

Aamir jostles under restraint while Katharia tends to her nose, looks at the blood on her hand, and thinks.

She looks at Aamir, glances down at his blood-smeared knuckles, and a devious smile grows across her bloodied face.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

A tiny, crummy bathroom, the tiles and porcelain stained with a buzzing fluorescent tube tainting everything yellow.

Aamir stares at himself vacantly in the grubby mirror. He squeaks on the cold tap and runs water over his hands.

He inspects his scarred knuckles as water trickles over them.

INT. APARTMENT

The small, run-down apartment with nothing on the shelves or table and a box of belongings in the middle of the room.

Aamir walks solemnly out of the bathroom, crosses to the box, sits down by it, and glumly picks out his belongings. The bare minimum needed to live alone.

He pulls out a picture frame and stares down at it.

A picture of Hana smiling back.

His big brown eyes glisten, his shaking hand clutches the picture tightly, and a tear splashes onto one of his daughter's eyes before running slowly down the glass.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Miller sits glumly in his wheelchair while wiping frosting off his fingers onto the empty cake base.

He sighs deeply and glances around at the others.

MILLER

(grumbling to self)

Ah, to hell with it.

(out loud)

So, the black kid goes home and, while having supper with his mommy, says, hey mommy, at school today, me and my friends all played the penis game, and mine was the biggest by far.

(MORE)

MILLER (CONT'D)

One of the kids said it's because I'm black. Is that right?

Everyone looks at Miller awkwardly.

MILLER (CONT'D)

And she says, no, honey, it's not because you're black.

(beat)

It's because you're twenty-three.

Miller looks around, amused, his cheeky smile infectious.

Bernie grins and coughs while Austin smiles and rolls his eyes.

Rogers chuckles and nods back, amused, while Katharia remains indifferent.

Aamir looks up at Miller, deadpan, and Miller shrugs back innocently. Aamir smirks a little, and Miller sighs, satisfied.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Keeping that to myself has been killing me, I tell ya.

(thinking)

That's not racist, right?

BERNIE

If going around tellin' people all black guys got big dicks, I'm the most racist guy I know.

Austin ponders.

AUSTIN

Well, I guess that joke could be implying we stay longer in school. That we're less intelligent.

Miller frowns back, disappointed.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Or, at a stretch, that the dude's some kind of pedophile, hanging out in school yards at break time.

MILLER

(shouting incredulously)

A twenty-three-year-old black pedophile who somehow doesn't get noticed by the teachers?

(MORE)

MILLER (CONT'D)

Who waits for kids to ask him to play the penis game?

Austin shrugs.

AUSTIN

I ain't saying he's a smart pedophile.

Miller shakes his head, confused.

MILLER

So, I'm now a racist for telling that joke? Is that right? Am I racist for telling that?

ROGERS

For crying out loud!

Everyone looks to Rogers as he sits, shaking his head angrily as he smokes.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

When did we become such pussies? Telling a joke about race doesn't make someone a racist. It may mean they are being offensive, it may make them insensitive, it may show they're ignorant, but not necessarily racist. You know what makes saying a joke racist? Saying it with genuine contempt for someone's race.

He shakes his head to himself, frustrated.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

This politically correct bullshit pisses me off. It makes minorities look like they don't have a sense of humor. It dehumanizes them. Makes people fear them more. And fear's the whole reason we tell those jokes in the first place. And it's always done by holier-than-thou types who want an easy target to look down on too. They won't point their finger at the real racists because the real racists, the ones who have no shame in admitting it-

Rogers takes one long final draw on his cigar and stubs it out on a paper plate while looking sternly at Aamir.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

-They bite back.

Aamir stares solemnly at Rogers, Katharia watching back from over his shoulder.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY - PAST

Katharia and Karl sit slouched in the pickup as they cruise along the open road.

The dog moves around restlessly and whimpers as she reaches back, concerned, and tickles its head.

KATHARIA

Hey you. You okay? You okay?

KARL

You need to stop treatin' that thing like a damn baby.

Katharia frowns and continues fussing the dog.

KATHARIA

He is my baby.

KARL

Spoilt is what he is.

She shakes her head to herself as he looks at her sternly.

KARL (CONT'D)

No, you need to find yourself someone, get married, and get to makin' the real thing. And it better happen in that exact order too.

Katharia ignores him and stares at the road.

KATHARIA

I need to get a word with you about something.

Karl looks back, interested, as she continues staring ahead.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

That run-in we had with that Muzzie the other day, it got me thinking.

KARL

About what exactly?

She stares ahead coldly, the scenery sweeping by.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

The phone receiver hangs by its cord as Aamir snatches it up, perches on the table, and takes out the notes.

He punches buttons on the calculator and dials the phone.

AAMIR
(into phone)
Police.

Aamir sweeps his eyes across the vets and Bernie, pausing on Katharia as she stares back coldly.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
Despite your refusal to meet my demands and choose these civilians' lives over money, I am now sweetening the deal. In ten minutes, two hostages shall be released, and the total sum reduced to two hundred thousand dollars. I await your reply.

He places the receiver down, glances at the clock, and sighs.

AUSTIN
Well, that's the two saved. At least that's some compassion, I guess.

Rogers smirks and shakes his head, unimpressed.

ROGERS
Delay tactics. The more he shows he's willing to negotiate, the longer they're going to hold back, try and reason with him, cut a deal. Then boom.

Austin nods, understanding, and turns glum.

Miller shakes his head dourly.

Rogers stares at Aamir, disgusted.

ROGERS (CONT'D)
You're sick. I hope you know that.

Aamir avoids eye contact with Rogers and looks at Katharia.

She stares back, smiles, and shakes her head disapprovingly.

INT BUS - DAY - PAST

A diesel engine purrs through gears as PASSENGERS jostle and seats squeak on the bus.

Aamir sits alone, his work gear on and a bandaid on his neck. He studies a small circled job advert in the paper.

He gazes idly out the window at the shops passing by.

The bus eases to a halt, the brakes squeaking.

Aamir continues to stare as the bus pulls away again.

Karl crosses down the centre of the bus, a cap hiding his face, and the black bag in his gloved hand. He slumps down by Aamir and shuffles right against him.

Aamir realizes it's Karl and goes to give him a piece of his mind, but Karl nods down between them and pushes a pistol against him.

KARL

Now you listen to me, boy. You're gonna do exactly as I command.

He takes the paper out of Aamir's hands.

KARL (CONT'D)

For starters, you ain't gonna need that. You're gonna be the big story of the day.

He heaves the bag over to Aamir's lap.

KARL (CONT'D)

Now that ain't a bag of bibles. What's in there could blow you and this bus all the way back to Islamabad.

Aamir glances at the bag and looks back at Karl pensively.

Karl plucks out the notes from his pocket.

KARL (CONT'D)

Now, here's your script.

Karl hands over the notes.

KARL (CONT'D)
And here's your motivation.

CLICK. Aamir looks down to see the handcuffs on his wrist.
Karl clicks them onto the handle of the bag.

KARL (CONT'D)
Now this...

Karl drops the calculator into Aamir's jacket pocket.

KARL (CONT'D)
Will make sense later. Trust me.

Karl checks around to see the passengers minding their own business, looking ahead, listening to music, reading books.

He sneaks out a pistol and offers it to Aamir.

Aamir looks down at it fixed, and his hand instinctively falls open.

Karl places it in his grasp.

KARL (CONT'D)
I already popped one in the chamber for you. You can just squeeze and go with that thing.

Aamir holds the pistol pointed at Karl.

Karl looks at it and sighs.

KARL (CONT'D)
The safety. I forgot the darn safety.

Karl eases Aamir's thumb and guides it so it flicks off the safety and clicks back the hammer.

KARL (CONT'D)
Can't have you going in looking like a damn amateur.

Aamir's finger creeps over the trigger, and he stares conflicted as Karl smiles back, unfazed.

KARL (CONT'D)
I strongly advise you don't pull that trigger. We still got a little surprise for you up our sleeve.

The bus engine drones down the gears, and Karl stands up as the brakes hiss.

He stares down at Aamir coldly and tucks the paper under his arm

KARL (CONT'D)

Give my regards to Beelzebub when you see him.

Aamir stares up wide-eyed, frozen with shock, as Karl crosses down the bus and exits.

The engine roars as scenery sweeps by outside.

Aamir flinches back into reality, quickly fumbles the pistol into his pocket, looks at the handcuffs, and gazes ahead in complete disbelief.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Aamir stares up at the clock and points at Bernie.

AAMIR

Get him ready to go.

He points at Katharia and swallows regretfully.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

You. You help him walk.

Rogers and Austin ease Bernie to his feet as Katharia crosses over to help.

BERNIE

No, wait. I need to say my goodbyes.

Bernie looks over to Miller and reaches out his hand. Miller smiles and struggles over toward Bernie. Their hands embrace tightly.

Aamir and Katharia lock eyes for a moment. He glares as she looks back indifferently.

MILLER

See you on the other side.

BERNIE

Just to let you know, I'll pass on the penis game joke. You know, in your honor,

MILLER

I think we all know why you really
want to share that one, Bernie.

Bernie smirks as they ease him over to Katharia. She takes
his bulky weight on one shoulder, struggling to support him.

He offers out his hand to Rogers, who shakes it firmly, a
proud smile on his face.

ROGERS

You're going to be okay, Bernie.

BERNIE

I wish you guys were comin' too.

ROGERS

We are. Just not in person.

Bernie nods, understanding, and offers his hand to Austin,
who goes to shake it, pauses, and puts an arm around him
while patting him on the back.

AUSTIN

Take it easy, brother.

BERNIE

Ain't no other way.

They release, and Austin wipes away a tear.

Bernie points at Aamir.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

And you.

Aamir stares back guilty as Bernie firmly gives him the
finger.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Can go fuck yourself.

Aamir looks away as Katharia goes to limp Bernie away.

AAMIR

No, wait!

They all look back pensively as Aamir nods to the clock.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

Three more minutes.

Rogers sighs and shakes his head dourly.

ROGERS

Gotta make sure the cameras are ready to roll, right?

Rogers, Austin, Miller, and Bernie look down at Aamir and shake their heads disgusted.

Katharia steadies herself against Bernie, gazes up at the clock, and smiles to herself smugly.

INT. BAR - DAY - PAST

KARL

And that, gentlemen, is the plan of plans.

Karl rubs Katharia's back proudly while Roper, Byrnes, and Lynch stare back, shocked, from the other side of a table in the bar.

ROPER

Well, this ain't kickin' a few heads to the curb. This is big league stuff. We should take this higher up. Raise our profile. The Resistance, no the Defense League, no... the Klan.

KARL

You want to give this up to the very groups who rejected us? Those who deemed us too extremist?

Katharia shakes her head pitifully and jabs the table.

KATHARIA

Klan really isn't so tough, especially now. So, time everybody witnessed America's REALLY terrifyin' supremacists. Carry out OUR lynchin's.

They stare back, surprised at her ambition, and sip their beers.

LYNCH

But they won't know it's us. It's devious is what it is. I ain't actin' like no Jew. We should stamp our name all over this. Get people listenin' to what we have to say.

KATHARIA

But that's the point. This is about fear. About people bein' scared of them, not us. We pass this round the other tribes to do their own? The public will be workin' on our behalf. They just won't know it.

BYRNES

We ain't limited by who we make it look like either; Black Liberation Army. Jewish Defense League. Hell, we could make it look like a Mexican drug cartel if we wanted to.

Katharia firmly nods in agreement.

ROPER

There's one thing I got a real problem with here. We made it a rule never to harm our own kind. And vets too? It makes me feel sick just thinkin' about it.

Roper looks to Karl for support, and Karl nods sagely back.

KARL

And I, too, was pained with conflict at first. But Kathy here pointed me to enlightenment.

(preaching)

Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offerin' on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.

(nodding)

In my mind, those men are heroes, there's no doubt. But they have given their lives to this country only to serve in a zionist war, and that is truly wrong. We will aim to make those men martyrs and leave it to the Lord to intervene.

Roper and Lynch nod, satisfied.

ROPER

So, who goes inside?

KATHARIA

I do.

ROPER

Woah! I ain't too sure about that.

KATHARIA

You sayin' I can't handle it?

ROPER

I'm sayin' it ain't a woman's place to be in that situation.

KATHARIA

But look at you guys.

Roper, Lynch, and Byrnes look at each other, their faces plastered conspicuously in racist tattoos.

LYNCH

Well, she's got a point.

ROPER

But you're inked up too.

KATHARIA

They'd have to search me to see, and who am I? I'm a nobody. Whoever suspects the hostages? When I'm in there, I'll make it so everyone else thinks they're callin' the shots. And once the place is blown to bits, they won't have anythin' on me.

BYRNES

She's right. They'll be too busy lookin' the other way.

Roper and Lynch look at Katharia, not so convinced.

KATHARIA

Look, this is just tellin' lies and battin' eyes, and when it comes to that.

(beat)

It takes a woman's touch.

She guzzles back her beer and smiles innocently.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Katharia smirks to herself as she watches the clock, Bernie resting against her shoulder.

The minute hand ticks forward.

Aamir thinks, his pupils darting around conflicted.

AAMIR

Okay... go.

Katharia limps Bernie toward the door as the vets proudly watch her struggle away.

AUSTIN

You get back to that little girl now.

Aamir watches her with contempt as she glances across at him and winks slyly.

She eases Bernie through the door into the foyer as he winces in pain, barely conscious, struggling to keep moving as they creep along.

The vets settle down and begin to accept their fate.

Rogers looks at Aamir, who's staring bleakly at the table.

ROGERS

What you said earlier about having any doubt before you die.

Aamir looks up gravely.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

You telling me that, given all this, you don't have any? Because, from where I'm sitting, it sure looks to me like you do.

Aamir looks away, pulls out Katharia's cell phone, and stares at it.

Miller winces and adjusts himself.

MILLER

I need to take a piss.

Austin looks back at him, nods at his wheelchair.

AUSTIN

Well, what are you waiting for?

Aamir stares longingly at the picture of Hana.

MILLER

You saying I should just sit here on my tuches and wet my pants? Is that any way for a man to go?

AUSTIN
Does it matter?

MILLER
Yeah, it matters! I always thought
I'd die with some dignity. Not
sitting in my own piss!

Aamir strokes the photo with his thumb.

ROGERS
Look! The best most of us can hope
for is to go sitting in our piss!

Miller sits up in his wheelchair scornfully.

MILLER
It's the principle! I don't want
people to know that's how I went
out! Two heroic Vets and man who
forgot adult diaper die in bomb
blast!

Aamir stares pained at the photo.

ROGERS
What do you wanna do? Make a pact
we all piss ourselves. Just so you
aren't the only one?

AUSTIN
You really think, when they find
three-quarters of a cheesecake and
some piss smeared up the walls,
they'll somehow be able to trace
that back to your sorry ass?

Aamir suddenly snaps up and realizes something. He looks at
the phone on the desk, and his pupils dart around.

Aamir screeches his chair back and the vets jolt surprised.

He stands up and stares at them, ashen-faced and trembling.

AAMIR
(to Rogers)
You are right.

Rogers frowns, confused, as Aamir crosses purposefully toward
the door and raises the pistol ready.

The vets look at each other concerned.

AUSTIN
Just what the hell did you say?

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Katharia limps Bernie along the foyer, past the the *WELCOME VETERANS* table, toward the entrance doors, through which the sunlight glows brightly.

Aamir sweeps out behind them, pistol raised, and face deadly.

AAMIR
Stop.

She stops pensively, Bernie's towering bulk leaning on her.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
How do I know you'll keep up your
end of the deal?

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

The vets look at each other, confused, while they listen intently.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Katharia's pupils dart around, and she shuffles to leave.

AAMIR
I said stop! How can I be sure
she's going to be okay?

She slowly turns back and glares at him, his pistol aimed right at her, his hand trembling and eyes filled with terror.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Rogers looks at Austin and Miller and nods to the door to investigate.

Miller nods back to go ahead, and Austin and Rogers crawl slowly toward it.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Aamir stares down the barrel of the shaking pistol.

AAMIR

There's no way for me to be sure,
is there?

(beat)

I can't let you go. I have to know
she's going to be safe.

Katharia stares vacantly at Aamir, grits her teeth, and suddenly grabs her pistol from her back.

Aamir's eyes bulge.

She ducks around the front of Bernie, using him as a human shield, and sweeps the pistol around ready as she emerges from the other side, her mean eyes staring down the sights.

BANG! Aamir flinches back, drops his pistol, and falls to the floor in pain.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Austin and Rogers freeze and look at each other concerned.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Katharia lowers the smoking gun, crosses over to Aamir, and stares down remorselessly, Bernie collapsed on the floor behind her.

Blood weeps fast from Aamir's gut and pools around him as he lies twitching. He clutches at himself, wheezing.

She takes a knee and leans in darkly, her eyes intense.

KATHARIA

(under breath)

Now this is what's gonna happen.
I'm gonna trot my sweet ass out
there, squealin' like a scared
little girl about how I just saw
you in a shootout with the security
guard, and how I had to run for my
life.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Austin and Rogers struggle to listen. They exchange nods, lie prone, and slither toward the door.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Bernie lies, listening, barely hanging on.

KATHARIA

And I'll tell them how you have a bomb strapped to you, so it's not safe for them to intervene.

Aamir grimaces woefully.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

And, in twenty minutes, you're gonna blow yourself and those polak servin' fucks to smithereens.

She leans in closer.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

And as for your daughter?

She looks him in the eye with a vengeful smile

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

I guess you'll just have to feel that little bit of doubt right before the end.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Miller watches Austin and Rogers slithering across the floor toward the door, their weathered old hands struggling and their feet scrabbling.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Katharia reaches into Aamir's coat and pulls out Bernie's pistol.

KATHARIA

Oh, and when I tell them about the shootout-

She cocks the slide and shoves the pistol against his wound.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

The coon was winning.

She grits her teeth and pulls the trigger.

BANG. Blood fires over the welcome table. Aamir screams, and Bernie winces. She exhales satisfied.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Austin and Rogers lie fixed on the floor, staring at the blood sprayed over the welcome table.

They glance at each other warily and carry on, working their way to the door.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Katharia opens her eyes, looks at Aamir's pistol on the floor, and looks at Bernie.

A coy smile grows across her face. She scoops the pistol up from the floor.

KATHARIA

Well, he was anyway.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Austin and Rogers slither to the doorway, tentatively peer out, and their eyes bulge horrified.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Katharia puts the pistol to the back of Bernie's head while staring down at him vengefully, her smile sardonic.

Aamir reaches out.

Bernie clenches his eyes shut, ready for the end.

Austin and Rogers wince.

Aamir grabs at her weakly, and she bats him away with her free hand, but--

CLICK. Katharia freezes, and her jaw drops.

Bernie opens his eyes slowly while Austin and Rogers stare from the doorway.

She turns and stares at Aamir's bloody hand gripping her wrist.

He slowly releases, revealing Bernie's gleaming handcuffs clipped tightly to her and the handle of the bag.

Katharia looks at Aamir deplored. He struggles a wry smile back.

KATHARIA

You, fuck!

She gets up and yanks at the cuffs, which snatch against the sturdy handle.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

You fuckin' raghead fuck!

She kicks him in the face over and over, causing Austin and Rogers to reel shocked

Katharia stares down at him seething.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

You just signed your daughter's death warrant! Happy now?

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Miller's eyes bulge as he listens alone.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Katharia spits in Aamir's face. She pulls out her knife from her boot, hacks at the bag handle, and pauses as she spots Austin and Rogers staring at her deplored.

Aamir reaches out, grabs her foot, takes a deep breath, and pulls hard.

It slips easily on the pool of blood, and she flips right back, her feet coming off the ground as she falls while reaching out, her hair whipping back and eyes wide.

CRACK. She hits her head on the table hard, thuds to the floor in a heap, and gazes around, dazed.

Aamir clutches his bleeding gut and looks back at the door to the hall. Austin and Rogers peer back, shocked, and shake their heads in disbelief.

Aamir struggles an innocent smile.

Katharia lies on her side, wincing and blinking, staring at the knife on the floor. Her eyes roll back, and she passes out.

EXT. FORREST - NIGHT - PAST

A labyrinth of birch trees stands desaturated in the darkness.

A feminine hand creeps over an aging trunk and boots stir through dry grass while a chorus of crickets rhythmically beat.

Katharia gazes around as she ducks branches, her pale skin, blonde hair, and bright eyes reflecting the moonlight.

She glances to one side to see a light flickering in the distance.

Fire crackles and spits in an old, rusted-out bucket while glowing embers tumble out of the holes.

Karl sits over it, the flames illuminating his somber expression as he toys with a half-empty liquor bottle.

The grass rustles as Lynch and Roper cross over to Karl with the dog on a leash.

Karl squints up at them drunk.

KARL

Where's my little girl at?

Lynch and Roper glance at each other, hiding something.

LYNCH

She said somethin' about last minute preparations.

Karl nods to himself, understanding.

KARL

Byrnes?

ROPER

On his way.

The dog snatches on his leash and barks down the hill toward the woodland, his jagged teeth bright white.

Lynch yanks him back, fighting against his strong pull.

LYNCH

Cut it out, mutt!

Katharia looks around furtively and pauses for a moment. She continues creeping, searching around cat-like, with a devious smile on her face.

CRACK. She snaps around to see Byrnes freezing in the shadows.

She stares back, fixed, and shushes him. He grins back. She smiles slyly, the barking echoing in the distance.

LYNCH (CONT'D)
Quiet boy! Quiet!

The dog barks and snarls.

KARL
SILENCE!

The dog goes quiet and whimpers as Karl stares at it angrily for a few moments before wiping drool from his mouth.

He turns to the fire and stares through the smoke into the darkness.

KARL (CONT'D)
When you approach a city to fight
against it, you shall offer it
terms of peace.

He looks up at Lynch and Roper sternly. They nod back. Karl raises his finger.

KARL (CONT'D)
If it agrees to make peace with you
and opens to you, then all the
people who are found in it shall
become YOUR FORCED LABOR AND SHALL
SERVE YOU.

ROPER
Amen.

LYNCH
Yes sir.

Katharia's feet crunch through bracken as she smiles back at Byrnes mischievously and leads him along.

KARL
However, if it does not make peace
with you, but makes WAR against
you, THEN YOU SHALL BESIEGE IT.

Katharia pauses in a grass clearing. Byrnes crosses to her, and she gazes up, pouting as his arms slip around her waist.

Karl picks up a length of wood wrapped with cloth and lights the end before studying it burning.

KARL (CONT'D)

When the LORD YOUR GOD gives it
into your hand, you shall STRIKE
ALL THE MEN IN IT WITH THE EDGE OF
THE SWORD.

Karl swipes the torch through the air like a sword.

Katharia kisses Byrnes passionately as their hands run over
each other bodies, and they drop to the ground embraced.

Karl's piercing eyes reflect the flames.

KARL (CONT'D)

Only the WOMEN and the CHILDREN and
the ANIMALS and ALL THAT IS IN THE
CITY, ALL ITS SPOIL, you shall take
as BOOTY FOR YOURSELF, and you
shall USE the spoil of your enemies
which THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS GIVEN
YOU.

Katharia writhes as Byrnes tugs off her jeans. He unzips his
fly and slips between her legs as they stare intensely.

Karl struggles to his feet drunk and sways with the burning
torch in his outstretched hand.

KARL (CONT'D)

Thus you shall do to all the cities
that are VERY FAR FROM YOU, which
are not of the cities of these
nations nearby.

Karl staggers over the dirt, his feet stirring up dust.

Katharia gasps, her chest heaving as she clutches at Byrne's
thrusting hips. He runs a groping hand over her chest.

Karl pauses by a thick piece of timber impaled in the ground,
wrapped in sodden white cloth.

Katharia and Burns fuck hard in the dirt. She pants as he
grits his teeth. She watches their crotches grind together
and runs her hand to hers as she winces with pleasure.

Karl crouches down and stares at the ground intensely.

KARL (CONT'D)

Only in the cities of THESE PEOPLES
that the lord YOUR GOD is givin'
YOU as an inheritance, YOU SHALL
NOT LEAVE ALIVE ANYTHIN' THAT
BREATHES!

Karl touches the torch against the timber, and a blue flame soars directly upward before punching out left and right. WOOSH! A huge, towering cross bursts into yellow flames.

Katharia moans as she cums, staring up at Byrnes as they thrust together, her eyes narrow and her jaw dropped.

Lynch and Roper gaze upward and wince into the roaring fire's bright light.

Karl stares up vengefully at the lit cross, the flames churning and the whole clearing illuminated.

KARL (CONT'D)

But you shall UTTERLY DESTROY THEM!
The HITTITE and the AMORITE, the
CANAANITE and the PERIZZITE, the
HIVITE and the JEBUSITE! As the
LORD YOUR GOD HAS COMMANDED YOU so
that they may not teach you to do
accordin' to all their DETESTABLE
THINGS WHICH THEY HAVE DONE FOR
THEIR GODS! So that you would sin
against the LORD YOUR GOD!

Karl glowers ahead vengefully, his chest heaving.

Byrne nuzzles Katharia's neck as she strokes his hair, tilts her head back, and stares at the upside-down cross, the flames dripping into the darkness. She laughs, amused.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER FOYER

Katharia's eyes creep open as she lies on her back, confused.

She tilts her head back and stares down the foyer to see the upside-down silhouettes of Rogers limping Bernie to the entrance while Austin pushes Miller out the door.

A shuffling noise. Her hair sweeps back.

She gazes at a pistol on the floor and reaches out to it, her hand groping in smeared blood, not quite able to reach it.

The shuffling again. Katharia looks around to find Aamir heaving along the floor, dragging her through the hall doorway, the bag handcuffed between them.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Aamir clutches at the floor determined as they enter the hall, leaving a bloody trail behind them.

Katharia comes to her senses, grits her teeth, and tries to push back, her feet slipping hopelessly in the blood as Aamir continues heaving toward a table.

She rolls on her front, her jeans, hoodie, and hair soaked red, and slithers around, unable to find any grip.

Aamir gasps, barely any energy left, but continues pulling.

They reach the table, and Aamir props himself upright against it, panting, his nose and mouth bleeding.

He licks his lips, swallows deeply, and looks up at the clock to see just fifteen minutes left.

Katharia continues to struggle. He watches her slipping and sliding as she slowly weakens.

She screams, pounds the floor, and glares out of the door, where she can see the three pistols and the knife lying scattered.

Katharia snaps around to face Ammir, her venomous eyes and snarling teeth bright white against her blood-smearred face.

KATHARIA

What are you doin'?

Aamir winces.

AAMIR

I have to make sure she's okay.

KATHARIA

You let the others go?

He nods unapologetically as she glares, seething.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

That wasn't in the plan! You know the rules?

AAMIR

Does it look like I'm playing by your rules anymore?

Katharia looks at his gut, blood pouring fast between his clutching fingers.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

New plan; you stick around with me. We see if you managed to wire this thing up right.

She stares back, confused.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

Do you understand? Or do you need
you need some notes?

Katharia glares at the floor, thinks, and looks back
hopefully.

KATHARIA

Why don't we just walk out
together?

AAMIR

Do you know how to defuse this
thing?

She frowns.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

Do you think they will? In only ten
minutes?

Katharia looks out to the foyer at the knife in a pool of
blood.

KATHARIA

The knife! We can cut ourselves
free! Come on!

She pulls against him, but he winces in pain and pulls back.

AAMIR

Even if I get out, there's no way
I'm going to make it.

Katharia fakes a friendly smile and nods encouragingly.

KATHARIA

You can! Come on! Quick!

She strains against him, and he snatches back.

AAMIR

You really think I stand a chance
once I step out that door?

She stares into his eyes, doing her best to appear sincere.

KATHARIA

I'll come clean! Tell them
everythin'!

Aamir shakes his head, amused.

AAMIR

You think they'll believe it? Now they think I'm the monster you've made me out to be? I'm not leaving this room alive, and I'm not leaving this body with any doubt.

She stares at him, seething, screams, and lunges at him. He holds her back as they wrestle, exhausted.

Katharia claws at Aamir's face and scratches his cheeks. He grabs her arm and twists it down.

KATHARIA

Let me go! Let me go!

She tries to release her arm and looks desperately back to the foyer.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

Help me! Please! Somebody help me!

She wriggles free, slithers to the extent of the cuffs, and lies panting before looking back innocently and batting her eyes.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

Look, I was never going to hurt your daughter, okay? If you cut us free, I'll make sure they don't shoot you. I'll tell them everything. You can get to a doctor. See her again?

He looks at her unconvinced, and she glares, frustrated.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

It's those other guys! They put me up to this. Honestly I'm just as trapped as you are!

She stares, pleading, as he narrows his eyes suspiciously.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - PAST

Katharia paces back and forth outside the community centre pensively, hiding in a shadowy corner from the morning sun.

A buzz. She pulls out her phone.

The photo of Hana pops up. She stares at it emotionless.

AUSTIN (O.S.)
 Quit your yapping. The only thing
 you should be sitting in is a damn
 stroller.

Katharia backs into the shadows and watches Austin push
 Miller right by, her cold eyes remorseless.

Her phone buzzes and she checks it to see a new message from
 Byrnes; *Stay safe I love you x.*

Katharia sighs and taps a message back; *I'll be fine.*

She shakes her head frustrated, claps the phone closed,
 sweeps her hands through her hair, and takes a deep breath.

Katharia takes her pistol from behind her back, cocks the
 slide, and smiles meanly.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Aamir adjusts himself against the table.

AAMIR
 How were you going to let your
 friends know you were okay?

She lies staring at the knife in the foyer.

KATHARIA
 A phone call.

AAMIR
 And then they'd release my
 daughter?

She looks at him and nods. He ponders for a few moments.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
 Make the call and you shall be
 freed.

Her eyes bulge.

KATHARIA
 Seriously?

Aamir nods surely.

She shuffles upright and reaches out her hand.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)
 I need my cell.

AAMIR
It's broken. Use this.

He tugs the phone off the table by the cord and hands it over.

She pulls up her blood-soaked sleeve, studies a number hidden within her tattoos, and looks back at him warily.

KATHARIA
I do this, and I'm released?

He nods sincerely.

AAMIR
I promise.

She dials carefully.

EXT. STREET

Katharia's truck parked on an empty backstreet.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK

Karl sits in the back pensively with Lynch by his side. Roper waits in the front with Hana sitting against him, the dog in the bed.

The news plays loud on the radio, reporting on the hostage scene. Karl listens intently, worry in his eyes.

He peers out the windshield as Byrnes hangs up a pay phone in the distance and crosses back toward the truck.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Katharia hangs up the phone and stares at the floor, worried.

KATHARIA
It's done. Now let me go.

AAMIR
Wait.

She glares back, angry.

KATHARIA
What for? She's safe now! But it could be hours before she's turned into the Police!

He glances up at the clock.

AAMIR
Well, we've got ten minutes.

He smiles back at her smugly.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
What's the big hurry?

He rests his head against the table as she waits anxiously.

INT./EXT. PICKUP TRUCK

Byrnes reaches the truck and leans in.

BYRNES
It's done.

Karl sighs with relief and draws a cross over his chest.

KARL
Sweet Jesus. The Zog ain't saying
she's out on the damn radio?

BYRNES
She says it's a mess.

ROPER
No shit it is.

Karl nods understanding.

KARL
Alright, take the kid and drop her
in town. Somewhere crowded where
you won't be noticed. Maybe she'll
do us a favor and wander into heavy
traffic.

Byrnes picks up Hana and walks away as Karl, Roper, and Lynch watch him making his way up the street.

LYNCH
Well, job well done, I say. This is
huge.

ROPER
Bullshit! You heard what they're
sayin'. The hostages got out. She
fucked it up. That's what happens
when you send a woman to do a man's
job.

Karl stares at Lynch, unimpressed.

KARL

My girl done good. We don't know
want went down in there.

Lynch shakes his head angrily as they watch Byrnes disappear around a corner.

Sirens draw in. They sit up and exchange concerned glances.

ROPER

Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no! Please,
God, don't let it be so.

The sirens get louder and louder. Their eyes bulge.

Tires screech. They adjust their positions and draw pistols.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

You in the pickup! Drop your
weapons and come out with your
hands over your heads!

Karl and Lynch cower behind the front seats, pistols ready.
Roper ducks behind the dashboard and cocks his firearm.

LYNCH

How'd they find us?

ROPER

She's turned us in!

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

Come out now, or you will be fired
upon!

Karl glances out from behind the front seats.

KARL

No! Somethin' ain't right! She's
been compromised!

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

This is your final warning!

Roper searches around anxiously for a way out while the dog barks and the news report bellows from the radio.

BANG! A shot fires, and a tire on the truck blows out.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

GET OUT OF THE VEHICLE NOW!

Karl looks at Lynch, worried.

KARL

What they done with my little girl?

Lynch shakes his head sincerely.

LYNCH

Roper's right. She ain't as pure
and innocent as you think, Karl!

Karl stares back, stunned, as Roper grits his teeth, lunges
up, and aims out the window.

ROPER

You motherfuckers!

BANG! BANG! BANG! He fires out the window haphazardly.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! Shots fire back

Karl winces as he continues staring at Lynch, confused.

KARL

What you sayin'?

LYNCH

Look she gave her puddin' to Byrnes
a while back! And well, he's been
goin' back for seconds and takin'
two spoons ever since!

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! Gunfire echoes in Karl's ears as his
face sinks. He stares down at Lynch, dumbfounded.

LYNCH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Karl, but she told us to
keep it to ourselves.

Karl continues his stunned stare.

LYNCH (CONT'D)

Look, who left with the girl just
before the cops showed? Byrnes!

Karl thinks and shakes his head in disbelief.

LYNCH (CONT'D)

They've cut a deal, Karl! She said
it herself, tellin' lies and
battin' eyes. That's what she's
good at, even with you!

Lynch stares at Karl and shakes his head sympathetically.

LYNCH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, but your sweet little girl, she's fucked us all over.

Shots ping against the bodywork. BANG! A round punches through Roper's throat, and blood splatters across Karl and Lynch's stunned faces.

The dog continues to bark loudly as Karl wipes blood from his face, his eyes filled with panic.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

GET OUT OF THE VEHICLE!

Roper clutches his throat as he gargles his last terrified breaths.

Lynch and Karl stare, shocked.

LYNCH

Fuck!

Lynch readies his pistol. Karl glances around and reaches for the door handle.

LYNCH (CONT'D)

Where you goin'?

Karl looks back, petrified, as Lynch glares, furious.

LYNCH (CONT'D)

We fight together!

BANG! Lynch's chest explodes, and blood sprays up the back window.

Karl jolts, throws the door open, and fumbles out frantically, cowering behind it.

BANG! BANG BANG! Shots reign in. He takes a hit in the arm and flinches, the pistol flying out of his grasp as he spins around and stumbles down.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

STAY DOWN!

Karl winces in pain, clutches his arm, and peers down the empty street away from the police.

He grits his teeth, struggles up, and hobbles down it.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

FREEZE!

Karl's legs pump as he stares ahead defiantly.

BANG! He freezes and drops to his knees, grimacing. He stares ahead, pained with worry and betrayal.

His face sinks, and he slumps to the asphalt facedown, blood weeping into the back of his shirt.

The dog watches over him silently from the bed of the truck.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER HALL

Aamir and Katharia sit staring at one another. The phone rings, and Aamir snatches up the receiver.

AAMIR
(into phone)
Yes?

He stares at her as he listens. She looks back, confused.

Aamir sighs deeply with relief and his whole body relaxes.

AAMIR (CONT'D)
Thank you.

He hangs up, slumps back, and winces as he clutches his gut.

KATHARIA
What did they say?

He stares ahead, smiling, his eyes glistening with tears.

AAMIR
They've found my daughter. She's
safe.

Katharia's pupils dart around, worried.

KATHARIA
How'd they find her so fast?

He shrugs, looks at the phone, and looks at her. It dawns on her that they must have traced the landline.

Her mouth drops. She glares at him and shakes her handcuffed hand in his face.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)
Release me! Now!

Aamir stares at her matter of fact and shakes his head.

AAMIR

Oh, I don't have the keys for those.

Katharia scowls at him as he looks back innocently. She shakes her head and winces, upset, panic setting in.

KATHARIA

We had a deal! You said you'd release me!

He smiles at her smugly.

AAMIR

Don't you believe that's exactly what I've just helped you do?

She gets the double meaning, glares furiously, and glances at the clock, just a few minutes to eleven.

Katharia pulls desperately at the bag handle, trying to tear it off as she grunts, determined.

She shrieks, leans into the bag, and gnaws at it.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

That'll teach you to buy American.

Katharia whips her head back, eyes perilous as blood weeps from her gums.

She winces, takes a deep breath, and throws herself forward, lurching across the floor, trying to drag him with her.

Aamir pulls against her and easily holds her back as she slithers frantically on the blood, her whole body writhing.

Katharia grits her teeth as her nails dig into the floor and scratch the surface as she heaves.

She gasps, gives in, and lies exhausted as she laughs with disbelief.

KATHARIA

Don't pretend you know anythin' about the afterlife. I don't need your help. I know exactly where I'm goin'

Katharia stares up at the ceiling, blood smeared across the floor around her, the bag handles stretched between them.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

You probably think this means
you're going to get your seventy-
two virgins or whatever it is.
You're so wrong. So fuckin' wrong.

He looks up at the ceiling, wondering.

AAMIR

Maybe I will, but that's not what I
believe will happen.

Her pupils dart around, confused, as he gazes upward.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

I don't believe in an afterlife. I
believe we all come back as what we
deserve to be, and we get another
chance to better ourselves.

She rolls her head to one side sullenly.

KATHARIA

Then I hope you come back as a
nigger or a spic.

He looks back at her frankly.

AAMIR

And would that be my punishment or
reward?

Katharia rolls her eyes and shakes her head as he clutches
his wounds in agony for a moment.

KATHARIA (O.S.)

(whispering to self)

Heavenly Father, please bless
Trooper, who brought so much joy
into my life.

Aamir looks at her, confused, as she lies with her eyes
closed, her tiny, bloodied hands clasped together tightly.

KATHARIA (CONT'D)

(cont...)

By the power of your love, enable
him to live accordin' to your plan.
Amen.

AAMIR

Who are you praying for?

She chews her lip, embarrassed.

KATHARIA

My dog.

AAMIR

You can find it in you to love a different species, but not another human because of their race?

She ignores him as they both stare up at the ceiling.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

You know your religion says animals don't have an afterlife? So, by your own beliefs, you'll never see your dog again.

She glares at him spitefully.

KATHARIA

Does it hurt knowin' you'll never see your daughter?

He nods sagely as blood weeps between his grasping fingers.

AAMIR

Right now, my heart hurts more than anything. But what matters is I know she's okay.

She swallows nervously and thinks for a few moments before smiling contently.

KATHARIA

Well, at least I'll have taken one of you Muzzies out with me.

He winces awkwardly and looks at her frankly.

AAMIR

Would now be a bad time to tell you I'm not actually a Muslim?

Katharia bites her lip and shakes her head, crestfallen.

KATHARIA

Please tell me you're just sayin' that to mess with me.

He smiles to himself, amused.

AAMIR

I guess you'll just have to feel that little bit of doubt, right before the end.

Katharia winces and thinks as he carefully unzips the bag and looks at the counter to see there's less than one minute remaining, the numbers flickering down fast.

He waits peacefully. She sighs, gulps, and blinks back tears.

KATHARIA

I WILL see my dog again, and I'll see my daddy too.

AAMIR

I'm not questioning your beliefs, and if you're correct, there's no doubt you'll see your father again.

(beat)

I only question WHERE you'll meet him.

Katharia gazes wide-eyed as he stares back sincerely.

AAMIR (CONT'D)

So, for your own sake, I sincerely hope you're wrong.

She looks down at the floor for a moment, thinking, and looks back up at him woefully as a tear trickles down her cheek and drips into the blood on the floor.

Aamir smiles warmly, reaches his handcuffed hand out to hers, and clutches it tightly, the timer counting down the final seconds under them.

Katharia looks back regretfully, fear in her eyes as the seconds on the counter race to zero, and a detonator sparks.

THE END