

The Accidental Terrorist

A Limited Mini Series
(6 Episodes*)

Episode 1 - Global Earthquake

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(* Bible Available)

BLACK SCREEN. Sound of a gun being COCKED. Then another.

FADE IN:

INT. CHEAP HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A gloomy sticky room, barely illuminated by one small bedside lamp. The slightly billowing curtains are kept firmly closed by RPG launchers and assault rifles weighing against them. Fresh ammo rounds are piled up nearby. A chair is wedged tightly against the door handle.

INSERT CAPTION: **August, 2020**

Beirut, Lebanon

We see from behind SHIREEN HASSAN, 30, sweaty, bare-armed, as fit and toned as Lara Croft, sitting at a table. She calmly loads a magazine into another gun and COCKS it.

A milky BURP breaks her concentration. She puts the gun down and turns to her suckling baby, swaddled in a baby wrap. Her expression mellows from icy determination to a warm smile.

SHIREEN

There's a good girl.

She goes over to the bureau, pushes aside the two revolvers on top, and temporarily parks the baby there while she opens the top drawer. Then she gently places Soraya in her makeshift cot, tucks her in and gives her a kiss.

For a moment, she stares emotionally at her daughter, then, reluctantly, pulls herself away. She very stealthily creates a crack in the curtain and waves the cool breeze onto her face. She squints as she carefully peeks outside.

Reassured, she retrieves the revolvers and returns to the table. There is a veritable small arsenal strewn on it. She clears a space and opens up her laptop.

SHIREEN

One day, Soraya, I hope you'll understand all this... crap.

She stares at a blank screen, twisting her hair as she collects her thoughts. With a renewed steely resolve, she bends over the keyboard and starts typing.

EXT. NEW YORK - DAY

MUSIC: Barber's Adagio for Strings, or similar.

INSERT CAPTION: **September 11th 2001**

SHIREEN (V.O.)
 We were only ten when our world
 changed forever.

MONTAGE of newsreels

- First plane crashes into the World Trade Center.
- People, covered in dust, flee the scene as smoke billows behind them.
- Distraught people comforting each other.
- Second plane crashes into the other tower.
- Shots of ordinary people glued to their TVs in shock.
- The towers collapse.

END MONTAGE

INSERT CAPTION: **Cairo, Egypt**

I/E. DEAN CAR / CAIRO STREET - DAY

Blistering heat shimmers the city. A tinted-window limousine navigates Cairo's chaotic streets. Even RAMSAY DEAN, 40s, the quintessential immaculate patrician British diplomat, looks shell-shocked as he speaks on his phone.

RAMSAY
 HOW MANY planes?!

EXT. CAIRO SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

The car pulls up outside the school, located in one of the more affluent parts of the city. The chauffeur, alert eyes darting in all directions, checking for danger, slowly gets out, one hand hovering close to his concealed weapon.

Children, impeccably dressed in their school uniforms, calmly bustle out of the gates. Anxious, sombre parents, many shadowed by burly security men, cut short the usual farewells and bundle them into cars.

Ramsay notices something and taps furiously on the window, pointing towards the front of the car. The chauffeur, alarmed, turns and unceremoniously wrenches the small Union Jack flag from its pole, and stuffs it into his pocket.

CAMERON, a 10 year-old Anglo-Indian child, bounces into view, with his equally boisterous classmate, MUHAMMED. They are followed out by Muhammed's twin sister, SHIREEN, an extremely bright girl, with a self-confidence way beyond her years.

The driver hurriedly herds them all into the back of the car.

CAMERON

What's going on, dad? We were rehearsing our play when Mr Stephens told us we had to get out.

RAMSAY

What did they tell you?

CAMERON

Maintenance.

RAMSAY

That must be it, then.

Shireen looks at him dubiously.

SHIREEN

I don't think so. Probably another bomb threat. Is it Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya again?

Ramsay, a man who is not easily surprised, looks at her curiously. She looks straight back into his eyes, unflinching. She knows she's right.

As the car rushes home, sombre music drowns out the scene. Oblivious to the world, Cameron and Muhammed chat sixteen to the dozen, while Shireen quietly reads a book, twisting her hair with her finger.

Ramsay tracks the news in text messages on his phone. Outside small groups of young men are starting to form, cheering ecstatically and shouting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is Great").

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - DAY

While the kids play on one side, Ramsay works the phones, both landline and mobile, as a muted television in the background constantly repeats shots of the planes ploughing into the World Trade Center. He yanks the screen an extra few degrees just to make sure the kids can't see it.

The doorbell RINGS.

Ramsay discretely pulls out a gun from a concealed holster, checks the CCTV image, and lets in two security guards. He puts the gun away, and turns to the kids.

RAMSAY

Maria's on her way. Until then, these gentlemen are going to take care of you, okay?

(to Cameron)

I'll be back as soon as I can.

With a forced smile, he playfully ruffles Cameron's hair.

RAMSAY

Now, listen very carefully.
 Muhammed. Shireen. Your dad's on
 his way to pick you up. Until then,
 no one leaves, okay?

They all nod. He heads for the door. He stops suddenly, turns back and sees Muhammed glued to the TV in awe. He switches it off and pockets the remote control.

I/E. CAIRO STREET / DEAN CAR - NIGHT

Ramsay's car struggles to get through the growing crowds of cheering protesters. It is punched and kicked. A key can be heard SCRATCHING the side. A brick bounces off the bulletproof rear window. The Chauffeur impassively inches the car forward until it is free and speeds off.

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ramsay joins MARIA DAVIS, late 20s, Anglo-Filipina, bubbly personality, as she opens a couple of beers.

RAMSAY

How's he been?

MARIA

Fine. Don't think it really registered. He's happy to be doing a sleep-over with the Hassans. Shireen, on the other hand,-

RAMSAY

I know. Sharp as a nail, that one.

MARIA

Don't get me wrong. Cameron's a great kid, but he's ten years old now. Don't you think the nanny story's wearing a bit thin?

RAMSAY

This is perfect cover. His mother died. No one's going to give it a second thought. And this way you stay off the embassy's books.

MARIA

I'm sure people think we're having an affair.

RAMSAY

Perfect. Makes your cover even more convincing. Now, let's get to work.

Together, they move into...

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

Ramsay waits while Maria closes the door behind her. He turns and holds his face in front of a facial recognition pad hidden behind a small picture. The light turns green, and a hidden door slides open.

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - INNER SANCTUM - NIGHT

The room is an array of high-tech surveillance equipment. Ramsay's cool veneer slips ever so slightly.

RAMSAY

Now, let's see what the fuck is going on here?

Ramsay remembers Maria is there, but she is unfazed.

RAMSAY

Excuse my French.

EXT. CAIRO SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

The twins' father, AHMED, 40s, amiable, overweight, wearing a traditional white Arab thobe and small cap, pulls up outside the school. His nervousness is palpable as he scans the street while his kids and Cameron calmly head into the building. He looks in amazement at the heightened level of security at the gates.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR

As the kids make their way to class, they see guards posted strategically in every corridor.

SHIREEN

Told you. Terrorists.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT CAPTION: **2004**

EXT. BANK OF THE RIVER NILE - DAY

Cameron and Muhammed walk happily along the bank, enjoying the cooler air.

MUHAMMED

I'm telling you, one day I'm gonna play for Man United.

CAMERON

Go for it! I'd be lucky to get into St Mirren 3rd team.

MUHAMMED

Who?

CAMERON

Exactly.

A couple of teenaged boys approach. They shout at Muhammed.

TEENAGER

(in Arabic)

Hey. What are you doing with the infidel? Are you sucking his cock?

Cameron, who is taller, steps in front of Muhammed.

CAMERON

(in Arabic)

Be gone!

The teenagers burst out LAUGHING. Even Muhammed smiles, then drags Cameron away. They walk at a brisk pace until they've lost sight of the teenagers.

CAMERON

What's so funny?

MUHAMMED

You sound like an Egyptian Shakespeare. No one talks like that. The Arabic they teach in school is classical Arabic. You need some street Arabic. What you should have said was...

(in Arabic)

Hey, dog. Go and fuck your sister.

CAMERON

What does that mean?

MUHAMMED

What you said... sort of.

I/E. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ahmed looks out the window while his wife, FATIMA, mid-30s, paces up and down nervously. A highly intelligent woman, she takes great pride in her appearance, and is always immaculately dressed when indoors, but, during the course of our story, will increasingly dress down when outside.

Outside, Ramsay's car draws up. Shireen, Mohammed and Cameron (all in school uniform) tumble out, in very playful mood.

AHMED

They're back.

The kids wave their farewells as Cameron heads to his apartment.

Fatima joins Ahmed at the window. She wipes away a tear. Ahmed tries to comfort her, but she pulls away.

FATIMA

You'd better not break your promise, Ahmed. I'm not kidding.

They head to Shireen's bedroom.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Ahmed and Fatima stand by the bed as Shireen bounces in happily. Initially, she is confused. Then she spots the abaya (traditional Arabic garment covering the whole body) lying on the bed. She SHRIEKS as her knees buckle.

SHIREEN

You told him! WHY?!?

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Shireen weeps inconsolably. Fatima puts an arm around her. Shireen shrugs it off.

FATIMA

I had to tell him. He has a right to know you're a woman now.

SHIREEN

But not school. Not that. PLEASE.

FATIMA

I'm so sorry, dear.

AHMED

Things aren't like they were. Everything's changing. I have to protect my family.

FATIMA

Let's be real, Shireen. We're just pawns in this game of... whatever it is. We have to go with the flow. You can still study from home.

Ahmed, grateful for her support, wipes away a tear.

SHIREEN

It's not the same. I don't get it. The prophet HONOURED women, took advice from them. Some were teachers. What happened?

FATIMA

MEN happened. We know it makes no sense. My guess is *most* people know that. But they're all too afraid to stick out from the crowd.

She looks at Ahmed accusingly. He fidgets uncomfortably.

Fatima puts her arm back around Shireen. This time the girl snuggles into her mother, weeping.

FATIMA

You're right, it isn't the same, but we're going to make sure you get every opportunity to continue studying. I promise you.

AHMED

That's right. We promise.

SHIREEN

I'm not going to be married off to some old goat from the mosque, am I?

Fatima shakes her head, reassuringly.

FATIMA

Definitely not. Over your father's dead body!

She stares daggers at Ahmed. Shireen looks relieved.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Early morning, before normal school begins. In the background we can hear the rhythmic CHANTS from the madrasa for the more religiously inclined pupils. A sullen Shireen, now wearing a traditional shoulder-to-toe abaya cloak, with a headscarf over her hair, clears her desk into a bag.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shireen lies on her bed, looking abjectly miserable, tears in her eyes. She sees her school books on her desk. She gets up and angrily tosses them into her waste paper basket.

I/E. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Shireen stares wistfully out of the window as all the neighbourhood kids pile into cars on their way to school.

A look of steely determination flashes across her face. Wiping a tear from her eye, she rushes to her bedroom.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Shireen rescues the books, props herself in an armchair, and starts to read, twisting her hair with her finger.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

A very bored looking Shireen goes shopping with her mother, both conservatively dressed, hair covered.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Shireen sits on the floor with computer parts all around her. She is constructing her own desktop. Cameron stands by the door, watching.

SHIREEN

What are you staring at?

CAMERON

We've missed you, you know?

SHIREEN

(sarcastically)

Aaah!

CAMERON

It's true. Now we've got to do our own homework.

She playfully throws something at him. He ducks.

CAMERON

Is there really no way-?

She raises her hand to stop the conversation, and returns to her project.

CAMERON

Got it. Need a hand?

Without waiting for a reply, he sits down next to her and inspects the parts strewn on the carpet. He consults the plans, then joins one piece to another. She looks at him with an appreciative smile. Two kids in geek heaven.

Muhammed enters, looking for Cameron.

MUHAMMED

There you are.

He sees Shireen. His expression turns to a frown.

MUHAMMED

You can't be in here, Cam. Sorry.
You gotta leave.

CAMERON
What are you talking about?

MUHAMMED
She can't be alone with you.

SHIREEN
Hey. "She" can speak for herself.

CAMERON
Come on, Mo. What's the problem?
I've been in here hundreds of
times.

Muhammed starts tugging at Cameron's sleeve.

MUHAMMED
Not anymore.

Confused, Cameron looks at Shireen for guidance. She sighs, then gestures he should leave. Cameron, yanks his sleeve away from Muhammed and storms out. The front door BANGS offscreen. Shireen gives him a look as if to say "happy now?".

EXT. GEZIRA SPORTING CLUB - DAY

Ramsay, Maria & Shireen watch an inter-school football game.

Muhammed dribbles past a couple of players before lobbing the ball to Cameron speeding forward. As he controls the ball, an opponent slide tackles him, but Cameron jumps out of the way. He hears a CRACK, and sees the boy writhing in agony. Everyone is CHEERING him on towards the vulnerable goal. Shireen looks up from her book at the commotion.

Cameron stops and kicks the ball out of play. He gestures to the bench for someone to come and attend to the boy.

BOOING can be heard from the stands. Ramsay is on his feet, watching intently as some of Cameron's own team give him grief. Muhammed is the only one to stand up for Cameron.

PLAYER 1
You Dickhead. It was an open goal.

CAMERON
He was injured.

PLAYER 2
Pillock. You blew it.

EXT. GEZIRA SPORTING CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Play has resumed. Cameron passes the ball to Muhammed. He charges forward and scores a superb goal into the corner of the net. Everyone is ecstatic.

EXT. GEZIRA SPORTING CLUB - LATER

Post-game, the players huddle around Muhammed, congratulating him as they leave the field. Cameron reaches his father.

CAMERON

Lucky Mo got that goal, or I'd be toast.

RAMSAY

You shouldn't care what others think. You did the right thing out there. That's all that matters. Couldn't be prouder.

They both feel a little uncomfortable by this unaccustomed public display of affection. Ramsay clears his throat.

RAMSAY

Right. Ice creams, I think.

He and Maria go to the stall selling ice creams, while the boys continue with their post-game analysis. Shireen moves over to a bench and pulls out a book.

Suddenly an OLD MAN, clearly a highly religious observant from his garb, shouts aggressively at Shireen.

OLD MAN

(In Arabic)

Whore! Why are you out alone?

Alarmed, Shireen gets up to leave. Ramsay and Maria rush back, checking the terrain for potential threats.

The Old Man lunges forward, grabbing Shireen's sleeve from behind. Instinctively, with pent-up frustration exploding within her, she swings round, her fist breaking his nose. Stunned, he recoils. His face goes purple with rage.

He is about to lash out when Cameron comes between them and pushes the old man away so hard he falls down.

Maria moves in to defend Shireen. Ramsay and Muhammed join Cameron, forming a human wall in front of Shireen. The old man scuttles away, CURSING under his breath.

CAMERON

(in Arabic)

Hey, dog. Go and fuck your sister.

Everyone (except Muhammed) is surprised. Shireen bursts out LAUGHING. She affectionately taps his arm.

SHIREEN

Thank you, but I had this.

CAMERON

I know. Just remind me never to get into an argument with you ever again!

RAMSAY

(To Cameron)

Where'd you learn to talk like that?

Muhammed looks sheepishly down at his shoes.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

Sweating profusely, Shireen pounds away on an exercise bike. Ahmed passes the door then doubles back, puzzled.

AHMED

What's going on?

SHIREEN

I was lucky the other day. I gotta be able to take care of myself. There are too many maniacs out there. Besides, I'm bored. I'm already two weeks ahead. It's all too easy. I can't read ALL day. I need something else to do.

AHMED

Like what?

SHIREEN

I don't know. It's not like there's much choice!

The hint of bitterness and frustration in her voice is not lost on Ahmed, who fidgets uncomfortably, then brightens up.

AHMED

I've got an idea.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT CAPTION: 2006

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - DAY

Shireen is hunched over a computer. The study now looks more like an office, with neatly organized accounting files. On one wall is a factory layout, and several data print-outs.

INT. CAIRO BARBER SHOP - DAY

Ahmed and FAROUK, 50s, nondescript, sit in the only two chairs in a small, cluttered barber shop. A young boy brings them glasses of hot tea. In the background a small TV, on mute, shows dreadful images from all the regional wars.

FAROUK

Shukran.

YOUSSEF, portly, bald, late 50s, plays with Ahmed's hair, disapprovingly, even though it is not actually that long.

YOUSSEF

It's been a while, gentlemen. I see I've got a lot of work to do.

AHMED

Be thankful we come at all, Youssef.

He points to the barber's bald head.

AHMED

You're not exactly the best advertisement for your own business.

Youssef smiles, and pulls out some black thread which he anchors in his teeth. He then starts "Fatla", or "threading" (removing facial hairs with the twisted thread). With a twist, he removes some hairs from Ahmed's ear. Ahmed recoils, swearing under his breath in arabic. Farouk LAUGHS.

FAROUK

Not the best time to antagonize your barber, my friend!

YOUSSEF

Don't be such a baby. Soon you won't feel a thing.

AHMED

Because my whole face will be numb!

YOUSSEF

That's what I said.

Youssef applies a cucumber scrub onto Ahmed's face, then wraps it with a hot towel brought by the assistant.

FAROUK

I'm glad you could make it today, Ahmed. I wanted to talk with you about something.

AHMED

Okay. Fire away.

FAROUK

My accountant is... well, I'm not sure what. I've no idea what's going on anymore.

AHMED

You don't think he's got his fingers in the till, do you?

FAROUK

I really hope not. He's my wife's niece's husband. It gets so messy when it's family.

Youssef moves on to Farouk.

YOUSSEF

Nose as well, or are you chicken like Ahmed?

FAROUK

Chicken. Totally chicken.

Youssef SCOFFS.

FAROUK

You haven't heard anything, have you, Ahmed?

AHMED

Course not. I'd tell you, if I had.

FAROUK

Yes. Yes. Of course you would. I was thinking, since you got your new accountant, you seem to be doing so much better. Do you think he could take a look at my books? What's his name again?

Ahmed jolts slightly, dislodging the towel from his face. We see the uncertainty in his face. He hesitates.

AHMED

Er... Zahir.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

Ahmed enters as Shireen switches off her computer.

AHMED

Tired?

SHIREEN

End of month closing. I've been taking another look at the factory layout.

(MORE)

SHIREEN (CONT'D)

You know, if we move some of the machines around, I'm sure we can raise efficiency levels.

She hands him a folder. He looks at her with a mixture of amazement, pride and love. He kisses her on the head.

AHMED

Where'd you learn to talk like that? Never mind. But you shouldn't work so hard. Have some fun!

SHIREEN

I miss school. I know. I know. Just saying. This keeps me busy, and I'm still studying online. I've got to read "1984" for a test on Monday.

AHMED

Good. Ah, nearly forgot. You remember Farouk from the mosque?

She nods.

AHMED

He wants you to look over his books.

SHIREEN

He knows about me?!

AHMED

Well, yes and no. He knows I have a new accountant, but he thinks it's Zahir.

SHIREEN

Who's Zahir?

AHMED

You are. You know how these guys at the mosque are - I can't tell them a "girl" is doing it. Girls from "Good Families" don't do that sort of thing.

SHIREEN

They think women are just conveyor belts for popping out babies.

AHMED

I'm afraid so. And it's better for your "prospects" that you're not... "soiled"... by this stuff.

SHIREEN

Why are we still living in the Middle Ages? Women-

AHMED

He says he'll pay you.

SHIREEN

(laughing)

Why didn't you say so?

EXT. HASSAN FACTORY OFFICE - DAY

A young MESSENGER brings two boxes of files into Ahmed's office. He checks the delivery slip. Ahmed signs for them.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - DAY

Shireen struggles with the documents, which she has sorted into several piles. She shakes her head in disbelief.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

The papers are now neatly sorted. Shireen checks her notes while writing a report into the computer.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

Shireen pulls the report out of the printer, glances at it, and puts it into a professional-looking folder. She puts everything neatly into a holdall.

EXT. MOSQUE - DAY

A very happy Farouk greets Ahmed.

FAROUK

Ahmed, your Zahir was brilliant.
You got no idea what a relief it is
I don't have to fire Nasir - well,
not for stealing, anyway.

AHMED

Glad it worked out, my friend.

FAROUK

Say, do you think Zahir could work
for me as well?

AHMED

Sorry, Farouk. This was a one-off.
He only did it as a favour to me.

Farouk shrugs and hands Ahmed a sealed envelope.

FAROUK
Pity, but if an opening ever comes
up, let me know.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

Ahmed hands Shireen the envelope. She slits it open with a
knife. It is full of money. She flicks through the pile.

SHIREEN
I didn't expect that much.

She hands it to her dad.

AHMED
No. It's yours.

He pulls out an even bigger pile of money from his pocket.

AHMED
And this is from me.

SHIREEN
But, father-

AHMED
No. You've earned it. NEVER sell
yourself short, Shireen! I'm just
sorry it's taken me this long to do
right by you.

She hugs him, and kisses him on the cheek.

SHIREEN
What do I do with it?

AHMED
You're the financial whiz, you
decide. Let me know if you need me
to do anything for you. One day,
Inshallah, women won't need us -
what was it you called us? "old
goats"- to manage your own affairs.

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Deans, the Hassans and Maria greet each other, European
style, with handshakes and air kisses. Shireen and Fatima
remove their head scarves with a flourish.

RAMSAY
Drinks?

Ramsay and Ahmed head to the bar.

FATIMA

We're going to miss you, Cameron.
Who's going to keep Muhammed on the
straight and narrow now?

SHIREEN

Why do you have to leave? Our
school was... is... great.

CAMERON

My dad thinks I need to live in
Britain for a while. It's my
homeland, apparently, even though
I've never lived there. Who knew?

FATIMA

But your dad's staying here. Where
are you going to live?

CAMERON

Locked away in boarding school. I
think he wants to make sure I don't
flunk out.

MUHAMMED

You'll be back for holidays,
though, right?

CAMERON

Of course. I've spent half my life
here. You guys... you guys are like
family to me.

They have a group hug.

Ramsay and Ahmed bring drinks. To the kids' surprise, they
bring a small glass of beer for each of them.

AHMED

Won't hurt you this once. Just
don't tell the Thought Police.

RAMSAY

A toast. To my reprobate son, and
the next chapter in his life!

They CLINK glasses and all sip, except Muhammed, who
surreptitiously pours his drink into a plant pot.

Fatima notices Muhammed holding the empty glass. She sidles
up to him, nods in the direction of the empty glass he's
nursing, and whispers in a kindly tone.

FATIMA

Hey, Mo, slow down!

Muhammed is about to protest, but changes his mind.

MARIA

Photo!

They quickly hide their glasses. Maria then takes various combinations of photos with Cameron.

EXT. DEAN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Everyone is sitting around on sofas, the remains of dinner on the table in the background. Shireen slides in next to Cameron when Muhammed heads off to the bathroom.

SHIREEN

You're so lucky. I'd give one of Mo's kidneys to go to university. You're going to have so much fun, lots of adventures, and forget all about us.

CAMERON

I'll never forget Cairo. I'm going to miss it.

SHIREEN

Especially Mo, right? Sometimes I think YOU are his twin, not me.

CAMERON

Not just him. I'm going to miss my other twin as well. Very badly.

SHIREEN

Boy, you do talk nonsense sometimes, Cam.

CAMERON

But-

Cameron's protest is interrupted by Muhammed's return.

MUHAMMED

Quick game?

Cameron looks at Shireen. To his disappointment, she nods, albeit with a half-smile. As they leave, Shireen looks up at them. A great wave of sadness descends on her.

EXT. DEAN APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Hassans are about to leave. Ahmed shakes Cameron's hand.

AHMED

Best of luck.

Fatima kisses him on the cheek.

FATIMA
Do your father proud!

Muhammed and Cameron hug emotionally, both with tears in their eyes. No words are necessary.

Shireen approaches him with a sad smile. They hug.

CAMERON
(whispering)
I'm going to miss you - a lot.

She kisses him on the cheek, too long to be simply polite. He closes his eyes, and smells her hair, as if trying to imprint this moment on his memory forever. He feels her grab his hand and force something into it.

SHIREEN
For luck.

FATIMA
Come on, Shireen. Let the poor boy breathe.

Shireen slowly breaks free, and leaves without looking back, dabbing her eyes as she gets through the door.

Cameron looks down into his hand. She has given him a beautiful scarab. He closes his hand tightly around it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AEROPLANE - DAY

Cameron opens his hand to look at the scarab again. He hasn't touched his food, while Maria is tucking in with gusto.

MARIA
That's nice. Where'd you get it?

CAMERON
A friend gave it to me.

MARIA
Nice. Nice.

Cameron shakes himself out of his reverie.

CAMERON
I'm sorry. I never asked what you're going to do now.

MARIA
Don't worry about me. Your dad's keeping me on, so I'll still be here when you come back on holiday.

CAMERON

He likes you, you know.

MARIA

What?!

It is the first time Maria has been knocked slightly off-balance. Cameron smiles at her, enjoying the moment.

He looks back down at the scarab again. Maria is grateful for the opportunity to change the subject.

MARIA

She's a lovely girl, isn't she?

CAMERON

(embarrassed)

What?

MARIA

Shireen.

CAMERON

Shireen? Yes, I suppose she is.

Maria smiles knowingly.

MARIA

I hope they find her a good husband.

CAMERON

What?

MARIA

It can't be long till they marry her off. That's the custom. Women there have a very short shelf life. Not like in the Philippines. At least, I hope so, for my sake!

She CHUCKLES to herself. Cameron is saddened.

MARIA

We're one species, but we experience life in so many different ways.

She eyes him closely.

MARIA

Look at you kids, for example. Mo will no doubt do brilliantly at university, but then what? He'll almost certainly end up taking over the family business, just like his father did. There's not a lot else on offer.

CAMERON

He's really smart. He'll be fine.

MARIA

What about you? You're gonna be more than fine. You're gonna have a ball at school and uni, then you'll be spoilt for choice afterwards. You're a very lucky boy, Cameron. Don't you ever forget it.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - DAY

Fatima startles Shireen as she sits sadly staring at the photo of her and Cameron on his last day. She puts a comforting hand on Shireen's shoulder.

FATIMA

It could never work. The cultural and religious divide alone..
(she shrugs)
Besides, you're both still growing.

As a tear crawls down her cheek, Shireen puts the photo carefully back in the drawer, underneath everything.

FATIMA

It always hurts most at this age, but time heals all wounds. Believe me. You'll find the right man.

Shireen composes herself, and pulls out a folder.

SHIREEN

You're probably right. He's going to forget all about me when he meets all those British girls who don't carry the baggage I do.

FATIMA

That's a bit harsh on yourself.

SHIREEN

Really? I don't think so. Anyway, I need your help with something.

She hands the folder to her mother.

FATIMA

What's this?

SHIREEN

With Cameron gone, my world has shrunk even more. I need to challenge myself. What I'm doing now is way too easy.

(MORE)

SHIREEN (CONT'D)

I want to take these courses, to qualify for university entrance.

Fatima is startled - but also not a little proud.

SHIREEN

I know. I know. You don't have to say it. I know I couldn't. But I want to PROVE to myself I'm good enough to do what YOU did. I need you to convince dad.

FATIMA

Well, I don't see why he would object. Why do you need my help?

SHIREEN

Because I don't just want to do the course - I want to do the exams as well. That's the real proof, that piece of paper.

Fatima looks uncomfortable. She is about to reply when Shireen preempts her.

SHIREEN

The exams are in Vienna, in person. We could go together for a few days while I do them. Just don't tell Saint Muhammed what we're up to.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fatima is talking to Ahmed while Shireen sits dutifully on a sofa, fidgeting nervously.

Ahmed hesitates for a moment, then nods to Shireen. She leaps up, beaming, and hugs her parents. Their pride shows.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT CAPTION: 2007

EXT. MOSQUE - DAY

A group of men are playing backgammon and sipping tea. Farouk introduces TAREK, 40ish, weather-beaten but handsome, with a haunted air about him. He is nearly always wearing full Arab gear, and is always accompanied by security guards with weapons secreted in their traditional dress.

TAREK

As-salamu alaykum.

ALL

Wa-Alaikum-Salaam.

FAROUK

Tarek is doing truly great work to relieve the suffering in Yemen.

They all MUTTER approvingly.

AHMED

The stories are horrible.

TAREK

You couldn't imagine the suffering I see every day. Women and children in rags, homeless, starving - and all because of the Shia terrorists tearing the country apart.

FAROUK

Tarek's charity buys food, water and shelter for the suffering.

They start to reach for their wallets. Tarek raises his hands, with a smile.

TAREK

Alhamdulillah. You are good muslims. Please donate through the bank account we're setting up. Farouk has kindly volunteered to help. He'll give you details.

They all nod positively. Farouk then beckons Ahmed to come closer. Puzzled, he separates from the group and joins them.

FAROUK

This is Ahmed, Tarek.

TAREK

We can dispense with the small talk, Ahmed. Time is precious, and Farouk has already explained my mission. Our charity is currently small, but I have great plans for it, to relieve the suffering of our Sunni brethren.

AHMED

A noble cause. Obviously, you can count on us.

TAREK

I am gratified to hear that. I've known Farouk for many years, and I trust him totally. But - and I know he won't mind me saying so - he's not the most organized.

Farouk nods in agreement. Ahmed starts to look uncomfortable.

TAREK
Farouk tells me you have an
excellent accountant.

FAROUK
(helpfully)
Zahir.

Ahmed nods, clearly straining to keep a neutral face.

TAREK
We would be grateful if he could
spare an hour or two each week to
help our modest enterprise.

AHMED
I don't know. Zahir has a very full
plate at the moment.

Tarek's expression turns serious, with a hint of menace.

TAREK
It's Allah's work (Peace be upon
Him).

AHMED
Well, I can certainly ask.

TAREK
I feel certain I can rely on you to
be persuasive, to ensure our
humanitarian efforts run as
smoothly as possible. There's so
much suffering.

AHMED
Of course, I'll-

TAREK
Thank you.

With a flourish, he turns, surveys the surroundings, and disappears back into the safe confines of the mosque, to be enveloped by his security detail once again.

AHMED
Why'd you do that?

FAROUK
What? It's a noble cause. It will
please Allah. (Peace be upon Him.)

AHMED
But, I can't force someone.

FAROUK

Just ask. A good muslim will know what to do. Oh! He's not a jew or a christian, is he?

AHMED

With a name like "Zahir"?

FAROUK

So, no problem. Just ask and let me know. Now let's have a game.

They go over to the backgammon boards and sit down to play. Ahmed's mind is clearly elsewhere.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Shireen and Fatima are seated on the sofa while Ahmed paces restlessly up and down.

FATIMA

You shouldn't have agreed.

AHMED

I DIDN'T agree.

FATIMA

What're we going to do?

AHMED

I'm thinking. I'm thinking.

FATIMA

We haven't got much choice. If you say "no", they will insist on speaking directly with Zahir - a request you could not refuse.

SHIREEN

What if Zahir had an accident, or left the country?

AHMED

Suspicious timing.

SHIREEN

Just tell them the truth, I'm a woman, and they'll forget it.

Her parents look shocked.

FATIMA

No way. You know we can't do that. You'll have to say "yes", and bring the work here, then no one will be any the wiser.

AHMED

I wish I'd never helped Farouk.

SHIREEN

It's just a small start-up charity.
What harm could it do to help until
he finds someone permanent?

EXT. MOSQUE - DAY

Ahmed is talking with Farouk. His face lights up when Ahmed tells them Zahir has agreed. They shake hands.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

Shireen looks over the books. Ahmed looks anxiously on.

SHIREEN

Nothing complicated here. Looks
very straightforward to me.

Ahmed gives a huge SIGH of relief. Shireen hands the print out reports to her father.

EXT. MOSQUE - DAY

Tarek comes up to Ahmed and pulls him aside.

TAREK

I must commend Zahir for his
excellent work. Clear. To the
point. Consistent, every month.

Ahmed struggles to hide his mixed feelings as a nauseating knot develops in the pit of his stomach.

AHMED

I'll pass that on. I'm sure it'll
be appreciated.

TAREK

I'd like to do that myself. This
has been very small scale so far,
but we're now gonna ramp up our
efforts significantly. I need to
reassure myself he is our man.

AHMED

I'm sure Zahir would be honoured,
but if the workload is to multiply
he won't have the capacity. Maybe
it would be better to find someone
who could dedicate their whole time
to such a worthy organization.

In an instant, the bonhomie vanishes from Tarek's demeanour.

TAREK

I'm sure Zahir can decide for himself what is in his own best interest. Do you have a problem with that?

AHMED

No. No. Of course not.

I/E. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fatima looks scared. Ahmed nervously faffs around aimlessly straightening cushions, moving ornaments.

AHMED

I've got a bad feeling about this.

FATIMA

So why'd you invite him HERE for lunch?

AHMED

It's the safest place. I can't take Shireen to a public, almost certainly male-only, venue. Muhammed is at school. We do this, he sees Shireen, and gives up on the whole idea.

They hear cars arriving outside. Through the window, they see nine dusty pickup trucks arrive, and split equally to three different buildings about 30 metres apart.

In a well-rehearsed drill, each grouping does the same: men with machine guns jump out of the first and last vehicles and spread out, then men from the middle vehicles surround a passenger as he alights. They conceal their faces with hoods.

FATIMA (O.S.)

What on earth's going on?

Warily scanning the skies for trouble, the heavies escort their passengers into different buildings. They menace the building guards, who immediately yield, terrified.

Ahmed recoils in shock.

FATIMA

What? What is it?

AHMED

That's him. That's Tarek.

Fatima looks at him, terrified.

FATIMA

Him?!? Why does a charity organizer
need more security than the
president?

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door bell RINGS. Fatima and Ahmed hesitate nervously.

The bell RINGS again. Fatima urges Ahmed to answer it, while she puts her headscarf on.

Ahmed gets to the door, looks back to check everything is in order, then opens the door.

Two burly security men, weapons drawn, unceremoniously push their way in and check every room. Tarek waits patiently outside, surrounded by two more goons. Ahmed notices there are more stationed on the stairway leading to their floor.

The two come back to the door and nod. Tarek turns on the charm and steps in.

TAREK

I do apologize.

AHMED

Of course, but why-?

TAREK

My dear Ahmed. Have you not been following what's going on in Yemen? Our Sunni brethren are fighting for their lives against the Houthi butchers and their Iranian masters. They will stop at nothing to prevent our aid getting through.

Ahmed gestures outside with his thumb.

AHMED

And... that?

TAREK

(momentarily puzzled)
That? Oh, the diversion. We can't be too careful. The enemy is everywhere.

Ahmed wants to believe this, but is not totally convinced.

Tarek strides into the living room, turns around, and gestures for his goons to leave.

TAREK

Wait outside. I am among friends here.

Announcing their departure over their comms, they leave.

Shireen, dressed fully wrapped, enters with a tray of tea and delicacies. At all times, she maintains her gaze downwards, never making eye contact. She feigns submissiveness, but still projects an inner strength. As if she doesn't exist, Tarek doesn't even look at her as he helps himself to a tea.

TAREK

I am grateful and humbled by your generous invitation to lunch, but, unfortunately, I must leave soon. I have another urgent appointment.

He looks around.

TAREK

When will Zahir be here?

AHMED

First, I need to explain something.

TAREK

Please, Ahmed. I am in a hurry. Where is he?

Ahmed, Fatima and Shireen look at each other nervously.

AHMED

Zahir is here.

Tarek's expression slides from benign to malign in a flash.

TAREK

Look-

AHMED

No, really. Zahir is Shireen, my daughter Shireen.

Tarek looks at the teenager in front of him incredulously.

TAREK

You are trying my patience, Hassan. I came in good faith and you are mocking me.

AHMED

No, really. My Shireen is some sort of maths prodigy. It must be from her mother's side, because it certainly isn't from me. Ask her anything about your accounts. She has a perfect memory.

Tarek can't make up his mind whether to play along or leave.

TAREK

Very well. What was the last
balance in the Bank of Alexandria?

Shireen thinks for a moment.

SHIREEN

L.E. 1,756,983.04.

TAREK

(dubiously)
Point zero four?

SHIREEN

Yes.

He unrolls one of her reports that he's been holding. He looks up at her astonished. He eyes her up and down, with new respect and perhaps a little too much interest. Ahmed and Fatima look nervously at each other.

Tarek points to the armchair nearest to him.

TAREK

Come. Sit here. We should talk.

Shireen betrays no sign of any nervousness. She sits next to him, absolutely confident in her own ability.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They are still talking. Fatima clears away dirty plates.

SHIREEN

...and that'll save you 100,000
minimum per month.

Tarek leans back, and LAUGHS contentedly.

TAREK

Hah! I must admit, you blindsided
me here, Ahmed. Not often that
happens, but this could work.

Ahmed looks disappointed.

AHMED

This is a huge responsibility to
put on such a young girl. My humble
company is one thing, but
international finance?!

Tarek strokes Shireen's face with the back of his hand. He is impressed she doesn't flinch at all.

Ahmed feels nauseated. Head bowed, unable to watch, he dabs away the sweat from his forehead.

TAREK

I have a very good feeling about Shireen. I've only known her a few hours, but I have no doubt there is nothing she couldn't master if she put her mind to it.

AHMED

I thought women weren't allowed in the organization.

TAREK

They're not. That's why this is so perfect.

AHMED

We're all honoured. Naturally. But I do have concerns.

Tarek impatiently waves for Ahmed to continue.

AHMED

Firstly, this may hurt Shireen's marriage prospects if it ever got out.

Tarek is clearly annoyed by this "triviality". Ahmed is desperate to find a way out.

AHMED

But... but most of all - and I must speak frankly here - the sight of all those men with guns today... I don't want my daughter to become a target of those Shia butchers.

Tarek strokes his sparse beard.

TAREK

You are right, Ahmed, and I commend you for your paternal concern. I swear to you, here and now, that I will not tell a soul. That is the beauty of this - no one will ever suspect Zahir is a young woman. It's in BOTH our interests to keep her identity a secret.

He turns to Shireen.

TAREK

You will ONLY talk with me. Be careful. The Iranians are VERY sophisticated. I will get you a burner phone which should only be used in emergencies to talk to me. My people will replace it regularly with a new one. Do you understand?

She nods.

TAREK

We will start you on L.E. 100,000.
Per month. I hope that is
acceptable?

SUBTITLE Approx \$6,000 per month

Shireen is taken aback. Tarek turns to Ahmed.

TAREK

Our story for Farouk is that Zahir
wasn't what I was looking for. No
more. Don't embellish. Keep it
simple. Understood? Excellent. A
successful day.

AHMED

What about your other meeting?

TAREK

It was only a minister. He can
wait. I must take my leave now.
Thank you for your hospitality.

As he heads for the door, accompanied by Ahmed, he pulls out
a slim envelope from within his cloak. He hands it to Ahmed.

TAREK

For Zahir. A welcome-aboard bonus.

Ahmed is about to open the door.

TAREK

I'm serious. For your family's
safety, NO ONE - I repeat, NO ONE -
may know of this arrangement. Not
family. Not friends. Am I clear?

AHMED

(a little shaken)
Of course.

TAREK

(to Shireen)
If anyone contacts you apart from
me, cut them off immediately and
let me know. I'll take care of it.
Do you understand?

Shireen nods. Tarek turns and leaves without a word. As he
exits, he is enveloped once again by security guards.

EXT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

They watch as the three groups in sync board their pickup trucks and speed away in different directions.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

They PLONK on the sofas.

FATIMA

Well, that was surreal.

AHMED

Can't say I liked the way he was eyeing up Shireen.

FATIMA

He gives me the creeps. And why are they paying so much?

AHMED

To buy loyalty, I suppose. No excuse for corruption if you're well paid.

Fatima looks dubious. She turns to Shireen.

FATIMA

What's that he gave you?

Shireen opens the sealed envelope, and pulls out a certificate which she unfolds. She hands it to her father.

FATIMA

What is it?

AHMED

A bearer bond - for \$50,000!

FATIMA

Now it's just getting weirder.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fatima and Shireen finish clearing up. The doorbell RINGS again. They all freeze in fear. Ahmed looks through the spy hole in the door, and breathes a sigh of relief. The others relax. He opens it. Ramsay and Maria smile back.

RAMSAY

Hi, Ahmed. Just heard about all the excitement in the block today. What was that all about?

AHMED

No idea. We just got back.

RAMSAY

Pity. Story of my life - always miss the fun and games.

AHMED

Me, too.

MARIA

Never mind that. The reason we dropped by was to invite you to an Asian night on Saturday.

RAMSAY

Ah, yes. Maria's been wanting to do one of her specials for ages. No point in wasting it on just me.

FATIMA

We'd love to. Thanks.

RAMSAY

Great!

MARIA

Hi, Shireen. I was on my way to the cinema. Wanna join me?

Shireen looks longingly at her mother, who looks at Ahmed. There is a discernible hesitation and uncertainty. He looks at Ramsay's poker face.

AHMED

Of course she can.

Shireen's face lights up. In a flash, she's put on her shoes and grabbed her bag.

MARIA

Wow! That was fast. Don't you want to know what's on?

SHIREEN

Who cares?

EXT. CINEMA - NIGHT

Maria and Shireen are in the queue.

MARIA

Why were you and your mum clearing up? What happened to the maid?

Maria insists on paying.

MARIA

Two, please.

SHIREEN

She went back to her village. Not easy to find trustworthy maids these days.

MARIA

You know what, Ramsay's still got two. Why don't I ask him to lend you one till you find a new one.

SHIREEN

You'll make my mother very happy! She hates housework.

MARIA

That settles it then. Ramsay'll be only too happy to help. You guys are like family to him.

Shireen looks touched by the sentiment.

MARIA

I wonder what all the excitement was about today.

She watches Shireen very carefully. Shireen momentarily stiffens, then tries to act nonchalantly.

SHIREEN

It's a mystery. like in Shakespeare in Love.

They LAUGH, and head into the cinema.

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - DAY

Behind the net curtains, Maria watches intently as the Hassans get into their car and leave. Grabbing a bag, she heads for the door.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

ALIYA, the maid, lets Maria in. Her demeanour changes from submissive servant to confident woman in an instant.

MARIA

Hi, Aliya. How's it going?

ALIYA

Pretty quiet. I heard them on the phone with an agency, so I probably won't be here much longer.

She finishes dressing for outside, then opens the door.

ALIYA

They'll be back in about an hour. Meanwhile, I've got to go and buy groceries. Do you think my two degrees and combat training will have prepared me adequately for this perilous mission?

Maria smiles sympathetically.

MARIA

As a great man once said, we've all got to start somewhere. Just be careful in the fruit aisle - they can get real vicious there.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Maria goes straight to Shireen's room and places a bug and video camera very discretely. She does the same in the main room, kitchen, parents' bedroom, and Muhammed's room. She pauses briefly to admire the football posters on the wall.

Back in the main room, she installs a bug in the landline, before heading for...

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - DAY

She scans the room expertly for suitable spots for the bugs. She photographs the top, then carefully dismantles the desktop and installs a bug inside. Similarly, she places a device inside the wireless router. Happy she's got everything, she makes sure everything is back exactly as she found it, following the photo on her camera.

MARIA

Good. Now let's see what's here.

Camera ready, she takes down file after file. Nothing.

EXT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

The Hassans return. They are laden with shopping bags.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - DAY

Maria puts another file back.

MARIA

There must be something.

She looks around desperately. She spots a manila folder on the shelf of the bedside table. She checks out the window. She sees the car.

MARIA

Oh, shit.

She grabs the folder. It holds 5 pages of innocuous financial summaries. She quickly photographs each page, dropping one in her haste and having to start again. She puts it back carefully as she found it.

She runs to the front door and exits.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - CORRIDOR - DAY

She walks purposefully away when she hears VOICES on the stairs. She runs back to the door and RINGS the bell. She acts surprised to see them.

MARIA

Oh, hi. No one's answering. I thought Aliya was working today.

FATIMA

She's gone to the market. She'll be back soon, if you'd like to wait.

MARIA

I came to see Shireen, actually, to see if she'd like to go for a coffee. I should've called, but we live so close I thought I'd pop by on the off-chance.

Shireen looks at her mother expectantly.

FATIMA

Of course.

Shireen tries to hand her bags to her parents.

AHMED

Another two minutes won't hurt you.

He opens the door. In a flash, Shireen drops her bags on a sofa and rushes out again to join Maria.

SHIREEN

Where are we going? Never mind. It's just great to get out. It feels like jail sometimes. Sorry, that must sound awful.

Maria CHUCKLES.

MARIA

Okay, jailbird. You choose.

SHIREEN

Shouldn't you be working today.

MARIA

Day off. You're not the only one
who needs the occasional break.

With a big smile, Shireen hooks arms with Maria and they head
down the stairs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT CAPTION: **2008**

INT. HASSAN FACTORY OFFICE - DAY

Ahmed locks the door behind them, while Fatima and Shireen
lay out a lunch on his conference table. People smile as they
walk past the huge window wall. Ahmed closes the blinds.

AHMED

I knew there was a reason we never
left Shireen in the hospital when
she was born. She's a godsend.
Thanks to her, the company's been
doing better than ever.

He kisses Shireen on the head. Fatima beams.

FATIMA

I'm so proud you found your niche.
You're beating the men in their own
game.

She raises her fist in solidarity.

SHIREEN

What're you going to do with the
surplus cash, father? There really
isn't much scope left to invest
profitably in the factory here.

AHMED

I don't know. It's risky having so
much cash around. Putting it in the
banks isn't much safer - if someone
sees a large balance it draws
attention - either the taxman or
extortionists. I've bought a few
gold bars, but any more and I
wouldn't know where to hide them.

SHIREEN

Diversify. Other businesses, other
industries, other countries. We
shouldn't be betting everything on
one horse. You can use shell
companies to hide from prying eyes.

FATIMA

What do you know about shell companies?

SHIREEN

Tarek told me to gen up on them.

AHMED

Won't that draw attention? I mean, since 9/11, everything's just got so much more complicated.

SHIREEN

Not a problem. Trust me.

AHMED

What should we invest in?

SHIREEN

Something safe and low key. Let me work on it.

Ahmed dips some bread into tahini and takes a bite.

AHMED

Okay. Now, what about a husband? You're seventeen, and we'd like to see our grandchildren grow up.

FATIMA

(angrily)

Ahmed. You promised. When she's ready, she'll let us know.

A chastened Ahmed bites down again on his bread. A relieved Shireen glances at her mother gratefully.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Graduation. The Hassans, Ramsay and Maria applaud loudly as Muhammed gets academic and sports prizes. Shireen glows with pride. He looks very dapper and handsome in his smart suit. He has a far more serious and mature air about him now. In his hand, entwined around his fingers, are prayer beads. From now on, we never see him without them.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

Ahmed is signing lots of papers.

AHMED

Where are the British Virgin Islands?

SHIREEN

The Caribbean.

AHMED

The Caribbean!? Is that safe?

SHIREEN

Safer than here. Don't worry. I'll send these by courier tomorrow.

AHMED

I hope you're keeping track of all this. You've lost me. Where do you find all these investments?

SHIREEN

Hours on the internet.

AHMED

But this one? A specialist chicken breeding company, with plants in Egypt, Jordan,
(looks at the document)
Lebanon, and Syria. I don't know anything about this stuff. I don't even know how to cook a chicken!

SHIREEN

I get it. It's different. But it's a rapidly growing company that needs cash to expand. There will ALWAYS be a demand for quality breeding chickens.

AHMED

Gold and textiles, I understand. But shareholdings in stuff I've never heard of? Isn't that a bit risky? We're in the middle of a global financial crisis.

SHIREEN

That's the point. Diversification. Besides, history shows that it always bounces back eventually.

FATIMA

Do stop worrying, Ahmed. She knows what she's doing.

SHIREEN

If anything happens, we're so widely invested now, only another asteroid hitting the planet could wipe us out.

AHMED

But Egypt's stable and safe. Why don't we stick with what we know?

SHIREEN

History, father. History. It's all
an illusion.

CUT TO:

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - INNER SANCTUM - NIGHT

Ramsay enters and moves around behind Maria as she studies
the CCTV images of the Hassan family in their study.

RAMSAY

Anything?

MARIA

Nothing. Been like this for months.
Just business, nothing else. Tax
evasion, of course.

RAMSAY

Of course, but not our problem.
She's a smarty, got to give her
that.

MARIA

How long are we gonna keep doing
this?

Ramsay stares thoughtfully at the screen.

RAMSAY

There's got to be a reason why Abu
Ayyub al-Masri came to the
apartment. He doesn't make social
calls.

MARIA

There's been no further contact as
far as I can see. When I casually
dropped his name in conversation,
no reaction.

RAMSAY

Proves nothing. They change names
like we change shirts. What about
this charity they're helping?

MARIA

Seems to have been set up by some
Saudis. Innocent enough on the
surface, but who knows? Spends its
money in Yemen, Syria and Iraq. All
pretty innocuous so far.

RAMSAY

But, why are the Hassans involved?

MARIA

I think she's just the bookkeeper.
She's very good at it. Thanks to
her, her dad's rolling in money.

RAMSAY

Something's not right. Keep going
until we find out what.

EXT. MOSQUE - DAY

The men are washing themselves before going into the mosque. Tarek startles Ahmed from behind, and quietly pulls him aside, expertly surveilling the surroundings as he does so. He is more gaunt. He is careful to keep his face as concealed as possible within his keffiyeh (traditional Arab headgear).

Ahmed gestures for Muhammed to go in without him. He and Tarek disappear into a nook.

TAREK

Was that your son?

Ahmed nods, a chill running down his spine.

AHMED

Good... good to see you again, Tarek.
Terrible news from Yemen, just
horrible.

TAREK

What? Oh, yes. Horrible. Look, I
got your message.

AHMED

So sorry to bother you with this,
but, er, Zahir is finding the sheer
workload overwhelming. I'd help if
I could, but I haven't a clue.

Tarek raises his hand to hush him.

TAREK

I anticipated this. I have a
Jordanian, Waleed Salah, who can
take over all the routine
accounting. He will act as the
public face of finance.

AHMED

Does that mean you don't need...
Zahir... any more?

TAREK

Absolutely not. Since Zahir took
charge, our "losses" have all but
disappeared.

Ahmed is puzzled.

AHMED

But how can this work? He'll never accept a woman as his boss.

TAREK

Zahir will be my treasurer, handling all the money. Waleed will manage the day-to-day accounts.

AHMED

They will have to talk/communicate.

TAREK

Messages will be digital. Any voice messages can be masked. Someone will come to your house tomorrow to check your air conditioning. He will show you what to do.

Ahmed is unable to suppress a chuckle.

TAREK

I know. But he must think he's instructing YOU. I will tell him that your daughter MAY be there, and that's okay because you have a vision problem. He won't even notice her.

AHMED

It's a bit cloak and dagger, isn't it?

TAREK

I told you - we must stay one step ahead of our enemies. They have tentacles everywhere. They are more dangerous than the infidels.

AHMED

Definitely.

TAREK

Now, let us pray. I will go first. You follow in a couple of minutes.

With that, he drops his head and, sticking closely to the walls around the courtyard, walks purposefully into the mosque. Ahmed fidgets about, checking his watch.

On the other side of the courtyard, a man languishes about with a sports bag. He repeatedly presses the handle. A camera CLICKS.

EXT. CAIRO UNIVERSITY - DAY

Muhammed (17), now wearing traditional muslim garb, sits with like-minded students, all male, well distanced from the female students, in a lecture hall. They sit sternly and attentively during the lecture, in contrast to their more playful western-dressed contemporaries.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - DAY

Ahmed sits next to Tarek's TECHNICIAN, a young, earnest, bearded man, while Shireen watches closely from behind. As Tarek predicted, the technician doesn't even notice her.

TECHNICIAN

First of all, you'll need a VPN to hide your IP address. I'll install three, plus a modification of our own. With these, no one will ever be able to track you back to this computer. Even better, you can project onto anyone else's IP address. That can be a lot of fun, if you get bored.

Ahmed, mystified, looks up at Shireen. She just nods and smiles back reassuringly.

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - INNER SANCTUM - DAY

Ramsay and Maria stare at the screen.

RAMSAY

What's going on? Why's he speaking so quietly? I can barely make out a word he's saying.

MARIA

I think they're having their connection fixed. It happens all the... oh, wait a minute!

She pushes the headphones even closer to her head.

MARIA

Did you hear that? "VPN"!

RAMSAY

Now we're talking. Why would a textile company or a charity need a VPN? Can't be a coincidence, one day after Ahmed meets that shadowy guy at the mosque.

MARIA

Was it al-Masri?

RAMSAY

Not sure. He knew exactly what he was doing to avoid identification.

MARIA

But what's going on? The Hassans aren't radical nutters. And why do they keep talking about Iranians? What Iranians?

Ramsay paces up and down.

MARIA

Should we tell London?

RAMSAY

Tell them what exactly? Nothing's happened yet. You know something? I'm not even sure the Hassans know what they've got themselves mixed up in here. Keep up the surveillance, but low profile. We'll wait until we've got something concrete. Okay?

MARIA

You're the boss.

Ramsay puts a grateful hand on her shoulder as he leaves.

EXT. MOSQUE 2 - DAY

Muhammed washes himself before prayers. All the worshippers in this mosque are considerably more serious than in Ahmed's. Every single man is dressed in the traditional thobe, a loose fitting one-piece, from shoulders to feet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT CAPTION: 2009

EXT. GIZA - DAY

Shireen and Maria saunter along, admiring the sphinx, with the pyramids in the background, and watching the tourists have their pictures taken on or with camels.

MARIA

Thanks for joining me here. I know you've seen this a zillion times, but I never get tired of it.

SHIREEN

You don't have to ask twice. It's getting harder and harder these days to get out.

(MORE)

SHIREEN (CONT'D)

The friends I had at school have mostly left the country or are already breeding - some for the second time. Their families don't understand why I'm still a spinster.

MARIA

Jesus, if you're a spinster, what the hell does that make me?

SHIREEN

I miss how things were.

Maria shrugs helplessly.

SHIREEN

A pity Ramsay went to the UK for Christmas.

(trying to be nonchalant)

I mean, Cameron was a good influence on Mo, distracted him from all that religious mumbo-jumbo. It would have been nice to see him again.

Maria smiles knowingly.

MARIA

He's got an offer from Cambridge. Now he needs to get the grades. A lot of pressure on him this year. Why don't you study abroad? You're certainly bright enough.

SHIREEN

I'd love to, believe me, but no way my parents would let me go alone, and my mother will never leave my father here by himself.

MARIA

But she went to uni, didn't she?

SHIREEN

Yes. But she studied HERE. They were different times. You're so lucky. You're free to do what you want, go where you want, be with whoever you want. I would swap places with you in a heartbeat.

MARIA

It's not all a bed of roses.

SHIREEN

Life never is. But YOU get to choose. Never take it for granted.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Hassan family are having dinner in front of the TV, watching Barack Obama's inauguration. They are almost in a state of disbelief.

FATIMA

Amazing. Never expected to see that in my lifetime.

AHMED

As likely as a Jew getting elected president of Egypt.

SHIREEN

Shows the world CAN change.

Shireen pointedly looks at her parents.

MUHAMMED

You shouldn't get involved in such matters. Politics is not for women. You should be married by now. Producing muslim babies.

SHIREEN

WHAT?! Back off! It's none of your business who or when I get married.

MUHAMMED

If I were the head of this house, you would be.

AHMED

Quiet! Both of you! I am the head of this family and don't you forget it. When the right man comes along, I will decide who she marries and when, not you. Got that?

MUHAMMED

Why's she working? That's not the proper role for a good muslim woman.

AHMED

Because I want her to. And her working is paying for your education, young man, so I'd shut it if I were you.

Angrily, he leaps to his feet and storms out.

FATIMA

What's the matter with you?

MUHAMMED

Society is rotting from the inside,
mother. We are neglecting Allah
(Peace be upon Him). Women should
know their place.

SHIREEN

Cut the crap, you sanctimonious
prick.

Shireen throws her napkin at him, and leaves in disgust.
Fatima looks at him, enraged. He continues to eat, unfazed.

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is largely packed up. Cameron brings boxes from his room to the living room. He almost drops them when he sees Maria letting Shireen in. She sashays in and, with one graceful flick of her hand, removes her headscarf. Cameron is transfixed. She is so beautiful and grown up. Maria smiles to herself and discretely withdraws.

CAMERON

Wow!

SHIREEN

That's it? That's all you've got to
say after all this time?

He smiles and goes to give her a hug, but stops at the last moment, not sure what to do. She grabs him and gives him a warm embrace.

SHIREEN

Come here, you idiot.

CAMERON

I never thought my dad would ever
leave this place. You should come
and visit us in the UK.

SHIREEN

As if. You know the damn rules.
But, you'll always be welcome here.

CAMERON

Would you like that?

SHIREEN

Of course. You're my goofy twin
brother, remember? And now you're
going to do Middle Eastern Studies
- in Cambridge, no less. Who knew
you were that smart?

CAMERON

Ouch! Actually, if I'm honest, I just took the path of least resistance. It's not as if the Arabic was a stretch.

She LAUGHS.

SHIREEN

Even with your dodgy "vocabulary"? Have you seen Mo yet?

CAMERON

I've tried, but he's always busy.

SHIREEN

Probably in the mosque. He's become real God Squad. What a pain!

There is an awkward pause.

SHIREEN

We're going to miss you.

CAMERON

Ditto. You know, I-

Cameron looks embarrassed for a moment.

SHIREEN

What?

Cameron pulls out the scarab she gave him all those years ago. She beams with delight when she sees it and gives him such a beautiful smile. She is clearly touched.

CAMERON

My lucky charm.

SHIREEN

So THAT'S how you got into Cambridge. I did wonder how you pulled it off.

CAMERON

Must have been!

SHIREEN

I'm going to go to university as well.

CAMERON

Great! But... I thought you couldn't.

SHIREEN

Not here. In Europe. My folks don't know yet, so... shhhh! I'm working on it.

CAMERON
My lips are sealed. Where?

SHIREEN
I don't know yet. Was thinking of
Cambridge. Recent evidence suggests
it's not that hard to get into.

CAMERON
True.

Maria comes in with a tray of lemonades.

MARIA
Drinks?

Maria distributes the glasses.

SHIREEN
(to Maria)
What are you going to do now?

MARIA
Now that I've finally got rid of
Ramsay, I get to keep the
apartment... well, at least until his
replacement arrives.

SHIREEN
That's great! So we can still-

MARIA
I'm banking on it.

Shireen hugs her.

SHIREEN
I'm so glad. You're my only real
friend from the outside world.

MARIA
Happy to be of service.

SHIREEN
No. I didn't mean it that way.

MARIA
I know. Cameron, your dad's waiting
for you at the embassy. The car's
downstairs.

CAMERON
(disappointed)
Oh.

SHIREEN
No problem. I just came to say hi
and goodbye.

She gives him a really tight, long hug, burying her head into his chest. They both savour the moment. She starts to break away, then plants a kiss on his cheek, almost on his mouth. He looks startled. They hug each other again, eyes closed. Finally, she breaks away and swings her head scarf back on.

SHIREEN

Make sure you write. I want to know everything!

Fighting the emotion, she leaves, without looking back.

INT. MOSQUE - DAY

Tarek signals for Ahmed to join him away from the throng. They speak in a barely audible whisper.

TAREK

I knew I was right about Zahir. He's done an excellent job with the overseas accounts. And, I have to say, the contrast with our other money managers couldn't be more stark. We are dealing with some of them as we speak.

Ahmed reels from the menace in that throw-away line.

TAREK

You have a very honest... accountant, Ahmed. I am raising his pay.

AHMED

That's very generous.

TAREK

(impatiently)

Yes, yes. I'm going to put Zahir in charge of more of our finances. I want him to do the same, stop the haemorrhaging. Is that clear?

AHMED

Yes. What about Waleed?

TAREK

We'll be in touch.

With a perfunctory wave of his hand, he ignores the question, and strides out of the mosque before the first prayers are even finished.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

Shireen takes the last page from the printer and rubs her eyes. Her dad brings her a cocoa.

SHIREEN

Thank you, father.

AHMED

What's wrong? You look worried.

SHIREEN

I'm not sure. Something doesn't add up. The amount of money flowing through these... companies... is growing at a huge rate, but I can't see where it's coming from, what it's for, or where it goes. There's just no proper paper trail.

AHMED

Is it any surprise? My books were a total mess until you fixed them.

SHIREEN

But nothing like this. And the numbers are huge. We're talking millions of dollars. Tens of millions. Something doesn't smell right.

AHMED

Everyone cheats the taxman - it's a national sport.

SHIREEN

I know that. No, this is different.
(tearfully)
I really don't like the look of this.

Alarm wipes the colour from Ahmed's face, as Shireen's obvious distress strikes him like daggers in his soul.

CUT TO:

INT. DEAN APARTMENT - INNER SANCTUM - NIGHT

Maria takes off the headphones. Trying to suppress emotion, she stares at the monitor as Ahmed comforts Shireen.

She opens a drawer full of mobile phones. She takes one and puts it in a special cradle. After a few seconds, the words "Encryption enabled" appear on the screen.

She writes a message:

"Zahir starting to suspect our friend. Absolutely convinced our marks have no idea what they've got themselves into. Await instructions."

She is about to put the phone away, when she adds:
 "BTW, FYI, FWIW, Zahir looks
 terrified."

EXT. MOSQUE - DAY

Ahmed and Tarek are in a nook, out of sight.

TAREK
 (annoyed)
 What's the emergency? This had
 better be important.

AHMED
 I'm sorry, but my... Zahir is finding
 it all a bit too much. He wants to
 stop, get married, have babies. So,
 if you could arrange for Waleed to..

Tarek's voice drips with menace.

TAREK
 I decide who leaves or stays. Do I
 make myself clear? I don't trust
 anyone else. She STAYS.

AHMED
 But...

Tarek glares at him. Ahmed goes white, fear writ large over
 his face. With a scowl, Tarek slinks off into the shadows.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

The family is dining glumly in silence.

MUHAMMED
 What's going on?

No one answers.

MUHAMMED
 Well, I have some great news. I'm
 going on the hajj to Mecca.

AHMED
 (exploding)
 What!? Why? It's just a money-
 making scam by the Saudis. You're
 not going, and that's final.

Muhammed is taken aback.

MUHAMMED
 I thought you'd be happy for me.

With a wan smile, Fatima touches his arm tenderly.

FATIMA

Your father's under a lot of stress
at the moment. He didn't mean it.

Ahmed is about to rebut, but stops himself and wearily
departs. Muhammed looks quizzically at Shireen. She shrugs.

INT. CAMBRIDGE PUB - NIGHT

Surrounded by cheering freshers, Cameron tries his hand at a
yard of ale. What a mess!

INT. CAMBRIDGE COLLEGE ROOM - DAY

This is a beautiful, centuries-old college room. Ramsay pours
coffee for a hungover Cameron. GILL, a pretty 19 year old,
finishes dressing as she enters from the bedroom. Without
missing a beat, she grabs a mug.

GILL

Oh, hi. May I? I'm Gill.

Ramsay smiles, pours her some coffee. She blows on the top,
takes a couple of sips.

GILL

Sorry. Must dash. Got to hand in a
paper by lunchtime. Nice to meet
you... er...

RAMSAY

Ramsay.

GILL

Right. Ramsay. Ciao.

She puts the mug down, and rushes out.

RAMSAY

She seems nice. What does she do?

CAMERON

Not sure. We met last night.

Cameron looks embarrassed. Ramsay smiles benignly.

RAMSAY

Apart from the obvious, how's it
going?

CAMERON

Fine, I suppose. It's all so hectic, non-stop this, that, and the other. There aren't enough hours in the day.

RAMSAY

You poor thing! Life can be so tough, right?

CAMERON

I knew you'd understand.

He absent-mindedly picks up the scarab Shireen gave him and plays with it. He turns serious for a moment.

CAMERON

What's really spooked me is how focussed so many people here are. They've already got their whole lives mapped out. Makes me feel like I'm just... drifting. When did you know?

RAMSAY

Me? I still don't know what I want to do when I grow up.

CAMERON

No, really. It's amazing how many guys here, brains the size of planets, want pen-pushing jobs in the civil service. They already talk about stability and a safe pension. They're not even twenty!

RAMSAY

You think I'm a pen-pusher?

CAMERON

Okay. Keyboard clicker. Happy? I'm not even sure what a Commercial Attaché does.

Ramsay smiles and raises an eyebrow.

RAMSAY

If I told you, I'd have to kill you.

Cameron CHUCKLES at the absurdity.

RAMSAY

Look. No one's saying you should do what I do.

(MORE)

RAMSAY (CONT'D)

I honestly don't care whether you're CEO of some huge corporation, or an artist living in a squalid hut on a remote Scottish island, so long as you're happy. You'll figure it out.

CAMERON

Yea, I suppose you're right.

RAMSAY

Aren't I always? Just a thought: have you considered the Officer Training Corps? I did it. Lot of fun.

CAMERON

Fun?! I don't want to join the army.

RAMSAY

You don't have to, but if you ever decide you want to, the OTC'd give you a head start. They train you in all sorts of useful skills. You get to play with some REALLY cool, expensive toys. Best of all, you'll make some true lifelong friendships, forged in mutual suffering.

CAMERON

You really know how to sell it.

RAMSAY

Oh, and they pay you to play. Just a thought. Right. Where are we going for lunch?

Cameron holds his head and GROANS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT CAPTION: 2010

EXT. WELSH HILLSIDE - DAY

Cameron, focussed and determined, in full camouflage, crawls along the snow-covered ground. He FIRES a couple of shots.

INT. WELSH PUB - NIGHT

The very fit OTC group celebrate their day. The camaraderie is palpable.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

As Shireen swings her headscarf over her head, Fatima opens the front door to leave.

SHIREEN

Mum?

She nods towards the cabinet by the door. Fatima stops, frustrated, and grabs her headscarf.

FATIMA

Ugh! I still can't get used to wearing this the whole time.

EXT. CAIRO PARK - DAY

As they walk through the park, Shireen nervously keeps checking her watch.

SHIREEN

I'm telling you, mum, Mo's changed. Since he's been at university, he's become more... closed.

FATIMA

"Extreme"'s the word I'd use.

SHIREEN

Exactly. He's joined some new "movement" that he says will bring about sweeping changes.

FATIMA

That never ends well in this country. Your dad says it's a phase, and he'll grow out of it soon enough. I hope he's right.

SHIREEN

Are you sure? Since he went on the hajj, he's become even more insufferable. He's so holier-than-thou and judgmental. Ugh!

FATIMA

Forget him for a moment. What about you? You can't stay locked in your room forever.

SHIREEN

I don't know what I want. Nearly all my classmates have moved on with families of their own now. I've got nothing in common with them anymore. They think I'm odd.

FATIMA
W-e-l-l...?

Shireen smiles and playfully punches her mother's arm.

SHIREEN
Ah! There's the cafe.
(checking her watch)
Just in time.

FATIMA
Told you. You worry too much.

INT. CAFE FIORELLA - DAY

They sit at a table and survey the clientele. Fatima cannot hide her disappointment as, in contrast with earlier, now most of the women in the cafe are wearing headscarves over their hair. She beckons to a waiter.

FATIMA
Two teas please. And make sure
they're hot this time, all right?

Shireen heads for the bathroom.

INT. CAFE FIORELLA - PASSAGE - DAY

In the passage leading to the bathrooms is one of Tarek's men. He checks no one is following her, pulls a lever, and a wall panel opens up. He pushes her in and closes the panel behind her.

INT. CAFE FIORELLA - SECRET ROOM - DAY

Tarek sits at a table, one dim light bulb illuminating the dingy room.

SHIREEN
You wanted to speak with me.

TAREK
Yes. We're expecting some major
donations from overseas benefactors
in the next few days and weeks. The
Iranians will be tracking
everything they can. I need you to
spread it around, and hide it. Make
sure, if any of it's intercepted,
it's only peanuts.

SHIREEN
(puzzled)
That's what I've been doing.

TAREK

No. We're talking serious money now. I want you to hide it in a mix of assets, from real estate, art, to more liquid assets, like gold and platinum. Not silver - it's too bulky.

SHIREEN

Okay. I'll look into options. Shall I send you a list for approval?

TAREK

No need. Just do it. Let me know afterwards, the next time we meet. No messages, no emails, no calls. I'm being tracked, 24/7.

SHIREEN

How about putting some into Bitcoin? It's a new thing, a cryptocurrency.

TAREK

A what?

SHIREEN

It's hard to explain, but some people in the States are getting very excited about it.

She sees that Tarek has no idea what she's talking about.

SHIREEN

The key thing is it's absolutely anonymous and totally secure.

TAREK

Anonymous and secure? Okay, but not too much. The money will arrive in a couple of weeks. \$100m, plus or minus.

Shireen is taken aback.

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - NIGHT

We see Shireen's screen as it switches between banks, brokerages, commodity traders, auction houses, real estate agents. On a notepad, she keeps track of how much she is spending.

Finally, the screen shows a Bitcoin website. In the purchase box she enters 100,000 @ US\$ 0.39 each. Enter.

Rubbing her eyes, she takes the page from her notepad and burns it.

She stretches and is about to switch the machine off when she decides to go back to the Bitcoin page.

She enters in a new order: 10,000 @ US\$ 0.39. Enter.

SHIREEN

What the hell. Why not?

EXT. CAIRO STREET - DAY

Shireen and Ahmed walk along the river bank. She is much more cagey, and keeps scouring her surroundings.

AHMED

You've probably lost that money,
but it's yours to lose.

Shireen puts her hand over her mouth as she speaks.

SHIREEN

Maybe. What I really wanted to talk
about...

AHMED

Why are you doing that? With your
hand?

SHIREEN

I'm being careful. I'm sure we're
being watched.

AHMED

Now?

Ahmed instinctively looks around for signs of anything out of order.

SHIREEN

(rolling her eyes)

I don't know. But there are a lot
of strange men hanging around near
home recently.

Ahmed looks alarmed.

SHIREEN

Try to act naturally. Something
about this charity is really fishy.
For one thing, I'm sure I'm not the
only one doing this job.

AHMED

So? You're the one always telling
me not to put all my eggs in one
basket. Makes sense, doesn't it?

(MORE)

AHMED (CONT'D)

If there's one thing we know about Tarek, he's paranoid about anyone getting hold of the money. Besides, this is good news, isn't it? Should make it easier to get you out eventually.

SHIREEN

Maybe. But the numbers are getting ridiculous. I know the Gulf States have money coming out of their ears, but why would they give so much to this one Egyptian charity? They could have BOUGHT Yemen with all this money.

AHMED

Maybe they've grown a conscience?

SHIREEN

Yea, right. But more and more of it is going to places which have nothing to do with us. Europe, America and, last week, I had to send some money to a woman in Russia. Why is a Sunni Egyptian charity sending money to Russia?

AHMED

Sometimes, my dear, it's better not to know.

SHIREEN

You're probably right, but I don't get it.

AHMED

Look, he could just be skimming some off the top for himself. Would that really shock you?

Shireen momentarily feels reassured.

AHMED

Whatever it is, word of advice: never get between a powerful man and his wallet - especially this man!

INT. SHIREEN'S APARTMENT - STUDY - DAWN

INSERT CAPTION: March 29th, 2010

The TV news shows scenes of the bombing of the Moscow Metro. As she watches, Shireen's expression transitions from mild curiosity to a penny dropping. She powers up her desktop.

As the sun rises, she suddenly jolts back from the screen. She shakes with fear. Her father brings her a tea.

AHMED
What's wrong?

She points to the news item on the Moscow bombing.

SHIREEN
(whispering very quietly)
I think I paid for that.

AHMED
(confused)
What?

SHIREEN
(whispering)
I think I'm working for...

Her hand shaking, she scrawls on her notepad:

"Al-Qaeda"

The blood drains from his face. He staggers and steadies himself on the wall, before slumping into the chair next to her. He holds her hand lovingly and apologetically.

AHMED
What have I done? What have I done?

Tears well up in his eyes. He hugs her.

They sit, ashen-faced, in stunned silence. In the background, a muted news channel shows ISIS rolling into a town, greeted by a cheering crowd, guns firing indiscriminately into the air.

FADE OUT.