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Zero Line

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ZERO LINE

Written by

Tim Kontje

Inspired by True Events

OVER BLACK:

Iraq, December 2016.

Coalition forces strike at the heart of the Islamic State, taking back territory it has held for years.

But the Caliphate is far from destroyed...

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN VILLAGE - DAY

Biblical heat bakes a cluster of low buildings scarred by battle, surrounded by jagged peaks.

MUSA, a young boy, races through the streets. He passes SHEPHERDS and their flock. They laugh as Musa nearly trips, but he keeps going with a grin.

After weaving through a tight alleyway, Musa heads for an open-top JEEP on the village outskirts.

WILL ORTEGA (30s), wearing a bulletproof vest marked "PRESS", loads bags into the jeep. He's earnest and charming.

FARRAN (20s), Will's sardonic driver, talks with a group of VILLAGERS nearby.

Musa skitters to a stop and pants to Will in ARABIC.

MUSA
[Am I too late?]

WILL
[Right on time.]

Musa's eyes go wide as SARAH (30s), Will's tough-as-nails security guard, stows an AK-47 in the jeep.

MUSA
[Where are you going? Is it safe?]

WILL
[Of course. She's just not very nice.]

Sarah makes a scary face at Musa. Will kneels and hands him a package. The boy takes it, but Will doesn't let go.

WILL (CONT'D)
[Hey. Remember what I told you?]

MUSA

[If I don't hear from you in a week, I send this.]

WILL

[No mistakes, okay? This is important.]

MUSA

[Trust me! Better than FedEx.]

Will surrenders the package and stands, tousling Musa's hair.

WILL

[Alright, alright. Get out of here.]

Musa takes off running.

INT./EXT. JEEP ON MOUNTAIN ROAD - MOVING - DAY

The jeep bounces through the rugged scenery. Dust pours in the open sides. Sarah coughs in the back seat.

SARAH

Shit, man, you couldn't have found something with a closed top?

FARRAN

Next time I'll get you an Escalade, eh?

In the passenger seat, Will checks a compass. The lid holds a picture: him with his arm around a WOMAN.

SARAH

Cute kid back there.

Will smiles, knowing what's coming.

WILL

Stow it.

SARAH

Just sayin'. You're a natural.

WILL

Jesus, you're as bad as my mom.

SARAH

Hey, how much did you drop on the ring?

WILL
Shut up.

SARAH
That bad, huh?

FARRAN
At least tell me you kept the
receipt.

Will chuckles when --

KABOOM! An EXPLOSION erupts under them -- impossibly loud.

The jeep FLIPS -- Will is thrown clear --

He hits the ground hard.

Through his hazy POV, he can make out the flipped jeep,.
Farran's body, or what's left of it, lies pinned under it.

Sarah stumbles away from the wreck, dragging an injured leg,
her shouting muffled by the BUZZING in Will's ears.

SARAH
(muted)
IED! Get clear!

BRRRDDDT! GUNFIRE tears into Sarah, instantly flattening her.

Will's ragged breathing echoes in his ears. He fixes on his
compass and crawls toward it. Will reaches out -- his fingers
close around it.

And then a pair of heavy boots appear in front of him, and
the muzzle of a RIFLE.

Will squeezes his eyes shut.

BLACKNESS.

A single SHOT rings out.

EXT. MARIN HEADLANDS - DAWN

The Golden Gate Bridge rises out of the early morning gloom.

Ignoring the view, a WOMAN runs along an empty trail. The
same woman from Will's picture.

This is JEN LASKY (mid 30s). A war reporter like Will, fiercely intelligent. Years on the job have hammered her into something rawboned and sharp.

Jen pushes herself with off-the-charts drive, almost like the pain is a welcome relief from something worse.

INT. JEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

The space looks more like a storage unit than an apartment. Almost totally utilitarian, as if the owner is rarely home.

Jen stands in the shower, thoughts far away as she lets the water pour over her. She adjusts her engagement ring. Pulls herself together, as best she can.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Rain falls on black-clad MOURNERS gathered around a new grave. Jen is one of the few without an umbrella.

She swallows, willing herself to speak.

JEN

Thank you for being here today. As many of you may know, Will loved poetry, which I tried not to hold against him.

That gets a slight chuckle. At the back of the group, CHANDRA PARK (50s) watches Jen closely through her horn-rims.

JEN (CONT'D)

But today, I remember this, by Stevenson: "Under the wide and starry sky, dig the grave and let me lie. Glad did I live and gladly die, and I laid me down with a will."

Her voice falters a little.

JEN (CONT'D)

"This be the verse you grave for me: Here he lies where he longed to be..."

Chandra's face clouds with concern, but Jen continues.

JEN (CONT'D)

"Home is the sailor, home from the sea...and the hunter, home from the hill."

Jen stays rooted to the spot, staring at the grave as everyone begins to disperse.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Mourners stand together in small clusters, talking quietly and sipping drinks.

Jen stands alone, watching the rain streak the windows. She finishes her glass of wine and swaps it for a new one off a passing WAITER'S tray.

CHANDRA (O.S.)

Bad luck to drink alone.

Jen turns to see Chandra.

JEN

Hey, Chandra. Didn't think they let you out of the office anymore.

CHANDRA

How you been holding up?

Jen gives her a look. *How the hell do you think?*

CHANDRA (CONT'D)

Figures.

JEN

When do you want me back?

CHANDRA

Look, Jen: take the time off.

JEN

Screw that. SDF is rolling on Palmyra, Mosul's probably next -- you need me back out there.

CHANDRA

You're a hell of a reporter. But I have to say no.

JEN

Is that my boss talking, or my friend?

CHANDRA

Whichever one you'll listen to.

Jen steams, knowing she isn't winning this one.

INT. JEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jen knocks back a whiskey like it's water. This isn't for relaxation -- it's an anesthetic.

She starts to pour another when the doorbell chimes.

EXT. JEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jen opens the door just in time to see a delivery truck drive off down the street. It left something: Will's package.

INT. JEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jen opens the package and takes out a USB drive. She plugs it into her laptop and a video fills the screen.

IN THE VIDEO, Will's image snaps into focus. He leans close to the camera in a dimly-lit village building.

WILL

Jen. I'm sending this to you in case I don't make it back.

He pauses as muffled voices and footsteps pass by outside.

WILL (CONT'D)

I got a call last night from a source claiming to have a full ledger of ISIS records on antiquities smuggling. Buyers, dates, shipping destinations: this could be everything we've been looking for.

Jen's eyes well as she watches.

WILL (CONT'D)

We got cut off, but he mentioned the museum in Rawa. I have to check it out.

Will smiles, almost sadly.

WILL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for the secrecy, but this ledger -- if it even exists -- could lead to artifacts worth a fortune. A lot of people will want to get their hands on it, and it could be very dangerous in the wrong ones.

He kisses his fingers and presses them to the camera.

WILL (CONT'D)

With any luck you'll never see this. I love you, Jen.

The video freezes on his image. Jen stares at it, tears streaming silently.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO POST - NEWSROOM - DAY

REPORTERS and STAFF crowd the rows of desks, talking on phones, typing on computers, hustling with arms full.

Jen strides through the chaos. She draws some stares as she heads for the second floor.

INT. CHANDRA'S OFFICE - DAY

Chandra sits at her desk, on the phone. She glances up at the sound of someone knocking to see Jen in the doorway.

CHANDRA

(into phone)

I'll call you back.

She hangs up.

CHANDRA (CONT'D)

This better be good.

Jen tosses her the USB drive.

INT. CHANDRA'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Chandra stares at the end of Will's message, brow furrowed in thought. Jen waits expectantly.

JEN

Do you know how much money ISIS made off blood antiquities in the last year alone?

CHANDRA

I have a feeling I'm about to.

JEN

Thirty million dollars.

CHANDRA

Can't be much of their annual budget.

JEN

One percent, give or take. But they're getting hammered, right? Every mile of territory they lose means fewer oil reserves and fewer people to tax, so they need new funding any way they can get it. Plus artifacts are lower risk than guns or drugs.

CHANDRA

I thought they liked blowing this stuff up.

JEN

Sure, destroying old temples makes for good TV when you're preaching idolatry, but they're a lot smarter when the cameras aren't rolling.

CHANDRA

And you're going to tell me that finding this ledger would be...what? A map to buried treasure?

Chandra shakes her head, highly skeptical.

CHANDRA (CONT'D)

We're after stories, not sensationalism. Don't tell me you want to go chasing this.

JEN

Look, most of the artifacts don't even go to buyers right away. They end up sitting in storage for a few years, in places without much regulation where they won't be noticed.

CHANDRA

Which would make them almost impossible to trace, right?

Jen leans forward.

JEN

Yeah, unless I can get into Rawa and find that ledger. But ISIS is burning everything as they retreat, so the only shot I have is if I get there fast enough.

CHANDRA

Let's assume for a minute I actually believe you. It's too dangerous -- Rawa is on the front lines.

JEN

So you should have your best reporter on this, not some stringer fresh out of undergrad who can barely type a headline.

CHANDRA

You're too close to all of this already.

Chandra stands, watching the newsroom below. She takes her glasses off and rubs her eyes.

CHANDRA (CONT'D)

Will Ortega wasn't the first I've lost on my watch. I wish I could say that made it easier, but it's not something you ever get used to.

She puts her glasses back on.

CHANDRA (CONT'D)

I don't want to see it happen to you.

JEN

It won't.

Chandra holds Jen's stare, thinking it over...

EXT. DIG SITE - DAY

Wind whips desolate ruins, competing with the heavy metal blasting from a banged-up TRUCK.

MATT BECKETT (late 30s) leans against the cab with one boot tapping in time. He wears an Iron Maiden t-shirt and a Glock in a drop-leg holster. A scarf hides his face.

TITLE OVER: Anbar Province, Iraq

Beckett watches a dozen local DIGGERS work on ancient stone walls and a few broken pillars.

They use picks and shovels with a lack of finesse that would make a trained archaeologist cringe. Crudely bulldozed excavation pits scar the surrounding area.

The lead digger, IBRAHIM, motions from a pit, waving him over and exclaiming excitedly.

IBRAHIM
[Come, look!]

Beckett switches off the music and heads over.

The Diggers cluster around as Ibrahim lifts up several cuneiform tablets. Beckett pulls down his scarf, leaning in for a closer look -- and seems disappointed.

BECKETT
[Nothing else?]

Ibrahim shakes his head.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
[Okay, Ibrahim. We'll just have to keep looking.]

Beckett pulls out a map with several circled locations. Most have been crossed off. He crosses off another, leaving just one remaining: *Rawa*.

Suddenly, a LOOKOUT runs up shouting.

LOOKOUT
[Soldiers! The soldiers are coming!]

BECKETT
Shit.
(to the Diggers)
[Come on, move!]

Ibrahim helps Beckett carry the tablets to his truck as the rest of the Diggers scatter.

Beckett loads the pieces into a storage locker and covers it with a tarp.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
[Go, go! Get out of here!]

Ibrahim splits. Beckett gets in, starts the engine, and throws it in gear.

INT./EXT. PICKUP ON DESERT ROAD - MOVING - DAY

Beckett speeds down the road. He checks his rear-view mirror. A pair of IRAQI ARMY HUMVEES come into view, gaining on him.

Another pair of HUMVEES comes over a rise a quarter mile away up ahead. They come to a halt, angled to block the road.

SOLDIERS spill out, weapons raised as they shout indistinctly for him to halt.

BECKETT

Goddammit...

He checks his rear-view again -- another few seconds and he'll be boxed in.

Beckett pulls the wheel into a rough turn, leaving the road to cut out across the desert floor.

The move takes the Soldiers by surprise, and they scramble to get back into their Humvees --

INT./EXT. PICKUP ON SABKHA FIELD - MOVING - DAY

Beckett grins, set to outpace them now. But then the truck slows. The engine whines in protest, but the steady deceleration continues.

He has driven into a *sabkha* field -- a kind of salt flat. The truck breaks through the dried crust, sticking in the soft mud underneath.

Beckett punches the dash in frustration.

Behind him, the Humvees pull to a stop at the edge of the *sabkha* patch. The Soldiers exit and advance.

CAPTAIN SARRAF (30s), sternly efficient and impassive behind his Aviators, leads them.

SARRAF

[Get out with your hands up!]

Beckett puts his hand on his pistol...but then looks back at the Soldiers closing in. *Hopelessly outnumbered.*

Beckett stows the Glock in the glove compartment. Moving slowly, he opens his door and gets out with his hands raised.

BECKETT

Easy, easy. I'm not ISIS, I'm an archaeologist. I can show you my permit --

He reaches for his breast pocket as the Soldiers surround him. They tense, cocking their weapons. Beckett smiles easily, putting his hands back up.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Or we do this your way.

Sarraaf steps forward and pulls a folded document from Beckett's pocket. He glances at it, then crumples it up.

SARRAF

My ten-year-old could make a better forgery.

Sarraaf points at the truck bed. A Soldier lifts the tarp covering the crate and smashes the lock off with his rifle.

BECKETT

Hey!

The Soldier opens the crate, revealing the tablets.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

I'm telling you, I'm an archaeologist.

SARRAF

We know who you are, Mr. Beckett. You're coming with us.

BECKETT

The people I work for are not going to be happy about this. I'll tell you what: those pieces are worth a lot. How about you just take half and let me go --

SARRAF

[Take him.]

A Soldier slaps a pair of handcuffs on Beckett and pushes him toward the Humvees.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - DAY

Jen strides through the busy terminal carrying a full pack.

She pauses as she approaches her gate, taking in the waiting 747. Jaw set, she continues.

INT. 747 - CABIN - NIGHT

The PASSENGERS are almost all asleep.

Jen sits awake in a window seat finishing a mini-bottle of whiskey. Two empties lie on her tray table.

She stares out the window. *No sleep on this flight.*

EXT. BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - TARMAC - DAY

The 747 touches down with a roar.

TITLE OVER: Baghdad

INT. BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - ARRIVALS TERMINAL - DAY

A steady stream of TRAVELERS comes through the gate.

AMMAR (30) sits on a bench eating a shawarma and straightens as he spots Jen. He wears a 49ers cap and has an air of cheerful, easygoing calm.

AMMAR
Jen! Over here.

She threads her way toward him.

JEN
Hey, Ammar.

AMMAR
It's good to see you again.

JEN
You too.

AMMAR
Listen, about Will...I'm so sorry.

JEN
Yeah.

Clearly not going to say more, she starts walking toward the terminal exit, forcing Ammar to catch up.

EXT. GREEN ZONE - DAY

Ornate embassy buildings jockey for space with the sprawling Republican Palace.

INT./EXT. VAN IN GREEN ZONE - MOVING - DAY

Ammar steers a VAN down a tree-lined boulevard.

Jen stares out the window and absentmindedly adjusts her ring. She stops, suddenly aware of Ammar watching.

JEN

So what's the story on Rawa?

AMMAR

Unstable. Word is the Army is going in soon.

JEN

When?

Ammar shrugs as he makes a turn.

AMMAR

Tomorrow, day after. I can get us in with them.

JEN

Good.

Ammar darts another glance at her.

AMMAR

How was the flight -- you get much sleep?

JEN

Yeah.

She's lying, and he knows it.

AMMAR

All I'm saying is, take it easy, you know?

Jen nods as they pass under the Victory Arch -- massive sabers crossing 40 meters above the road, grasped by a pair of bronze fists erupting from the ground.

EXT. IRAQI NATIONAL MUSEUM - DAY

The crenellated gateway arch looks like it could have come from ancient Mesopotamia itself.

INT. IRAQI NATIONAL MUSEUM - LAB - DAY

Rows of shelves line the room, each stacked with meticulously labeled containers.

Under a high-wattage light, a pair of hands in rubber gloves clean pottery fragments.

The hands belong to PROFESSOR SAID AHMAD LATIF (early 40s) -- a soft-spoken man most comfortable like this, alone in a lab.

Said works expertly, almost lovingly, labeling each piece after he's done cleaning it. He doesn't see a young ASSISTANT enter behind him.

ASSISTANT

[Excuse me, Professor --]

Said jumps, startled. He smiles sheepishly.

SAID

[Yes?]

ASSISTANT

[I don't mean to interrupt, but there is someone here to see you.]

Said is confused for a moment, but then recognition sets in and he puts down his tools.

INT. NATIONAL MUSEUM - HALLWAY - DAY

MUSEUM GUESTS take in massive *lamassus*, winged bull sculptures with human heads.

Jen stands off to the side, paying no attention to the exhibit. Said rounds a corner at the end of the hall.

SAID

Miss Lasky, I presume? It's a pleasure to meet you in person.

He speaks English fluently, with only a slight accent.

JEN

Thank you for agreeing to see me.

SAID
Not at all. Shall we walk?

Jen falls in next to Said and they head down the hallway.

SAID (CONT'D)
What do you think of our
collection?

JEN
Very impressive. Professor --

SAID
Please, call me Said. Americans
like to be casual, yes?

They turn a corner into the next hall, lined with friezes.

JEN
Said. I know you spoke to Will.

SAID
Indeed. I was very saddened to hear
of Mr. Ortega's --

JEN
Please don't.

Said is alarmed at the brusqueness -- as is Jen herself.

JEN (CONT'D)
I just...I don't want to talk about
that.

SAID
Of course, no need to apologize.

They walk a few more paces in silence.

JEN
I'm not sure how much he told you,
but I think you can help me.

SAID
To be perfectly honest, I'm not
sure how.

JEN
Will was looking for a blood
antiquities ledger. He was headed
to the museum in Rawa, which means
I am, too -- and I could use
someone with me who knows it.

Said's face darkens as he stops walking.

SAID

You mean you want me to go with you? Into the field?

JEN

ISIS ran their smuggling operation for the whole province out of the museum in Rawa, and you were the lead archaeologist there until ISIS took over.

SAID

That was a long time ago.

Said resumes walking.

JEN

I know what I'm asking. But you might help me turn up something where I wouldn't even know to look.

SAID

The last time I was there, my family and I barely made it out alive. Not everyone else was so lucky.

He shakes his head.

SAID (CONT'D)

Besides, I am far too busy here as it is.

JEN

There are thousands of artifacts still in the wind -- you can help bring them back. You can stop terrorists and smugglers from making a profit on your country's history.

SAID

I've seen what they do to the people who stand up to them. Archaeologists get hanged from the ruins they try to protect.

Jen gets in front of Said, forcing him to stop.

JEN

If we're too afraid to act, then they've already won.

SAID

I'm sorry, Miss Lasky. I have a daughter -- I cannot help you.

Jen holds out a card.

JEN

In case you change your mind.

Said takes it but heads back down the hallway.

EXT. GREEN ZONE - THESEUS GROUP HQ - DAY

An skyward-stabbing obsidian wedge of a building. It bears the logo for THESEUS GROUP -- private military contractors.

INT. THESEUS GROUP HQ - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

KHALID (40s) half-stands in the center of the soundproofed room, hands held aloft, manacled to a chain. He has matted hair and an unkempt beard.

Two CONTRACTORS enter, followed by JOHN HALSEY (30s). With sleeve tattoos, shaggy hair, and beards, they look more like a Viking biker gang than soldiers.

Halsey opens up a bag of chips and smiles through a mouthful.

HALSEY

You're one sorry-ass looking terrorist, Khalid.

Khalid blinks, eyes unfocused from sleep deprivation, as the Contractors take up position behind him.

KHALID

Please...I did not want to go to *Daesh*. My family just needed to eat.

HALSEY

You know how many of you guys I've heard say they joined before they knew what the Caliphate really was, or that they did it for the money? It's bullshit -- you joined because you believed in it.

KHALID

I only worked as a digger.

HALSEY

Now see, that's what we need to talk about. I sent someone to check out those sites you told us about, and all he found was a bunch of uniforms waiting to arrest him.

Halsey motions to one of the Contractors. He strikes Khalid across the face, then grabs him in a chokehold.

KHALID

Please --

Khalid struggles violently but can't shake it.

HALSEY

Where is the ledger?

Halsey motions for the Contractor to release Khalid. He gasps for breath, on the verge of passing out.

HALSEY (CONT'D)

That's the last time I ask nicely.

KHALID

I have already told you everything I know. I just heard some other guys I worked with talking -- they said someone stole a bunch of files and hid them.

Halsey finishes his chips and crumples up the bag. He tosses it at Khalid and leans in close.

HALSEY

Just give me something actionable and this will all stop.

KHALID

I swear to God, I don't know.

Khalid holds Halsey's stare. Halsey pats his cheek.

HALSEY

I believe you, buddy...

Halsey heads for the door.

HALSEY (CONT'D)

...but that ain't enough to help you.

KHALID

Wait -- where are you going? What --

The Contractor puts Khalid in the chokehold again, throttling him. He thrashes wildly --

But Halsey doesn't look back as the door clangs shut.

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - THE PENTAGON - DAY

Nearly ten thousand miles away, the sun still shines off the behemoth of a building.

INT. THE PENTAGON - HEARING ROOM - DAY

GENERAL BANKS (60s), a military man to the core, and SENATOR LEUNG (40s), Ivy League smug, and four other COMMITTEE MEMBERS sit at a dais.

CATHERINE DYER (50s), elegant and unflinching, faces them at a table with a microphone.

Her LAWYER sits next to her.

GENERAL BANKS

Miss Dyer, this committee appreciates the services Theseus Group has provided over the years.

DYER

Thank you, General.

SENATOR LEUNG

However, we would be remiss not to address the allegations of misconduct that have been directed at your contractors.

Leung refers to the open binder in front of him.

SENATOR LEUNG (CONT'D)

Destruction of civilian property?
Torture? Unsanctioned
assassinations?

DYER'S LAWYER

Those allegations are completely unsubstantiated.

DYER

In fact, as I recall, none of your so-called "witnesses" ever stuck to their stories.

GENERAL BANKS
Very convenient for you.

Dyer's Lawyer covers the mic and whispers in her ear, but she swats him away.

DYER
Gentlemen, if you wish to believe the word of a few disgruntled villagers upset over a Humvee driving through a rice field or God knows what, by all means cancel my contract. But my operators have fulfilled a vital role in this conflict and will continue to do so, especially considering that the American people have no desire to send more troops into another quagmire.

SENATOR LEUNG
Let me be frank, Miss Dyer: knowing what the American people want isn't your job, it's ours.

DYER
Then let me be equally frank: if ethical oversight were your real concern, you wouldn't have hired us in the first place.

Leung simmers, knowing she's right.

DYER (CONT'D)
You know as well as I do that losing territory means almost nothing to ISIS.

SENATOR LEUNG
This is hardly --

DYER
They will find new ways to fund their attacks, and it won't be you that stops them. It will be me, and companies like mine. Now, unless you have any real concerns, I suggest you let me do the job you hired me for.

Fuming, Leung slams his binder closed. Dyer allows herself a smile as she strides out.

EXT. GREEN ZONE - AL-RASHEED HOTEL - DAY

Ammar paces by the pool, talking on his cell phone and doing his best to ignore the swimsuit-clad AMERICANS drinking beer.

Jen marches up with a scowl that looks almost as out of place as her boots.

AMMAR
(into phone)
[Thank you.]

He hangs up.

AMMAR (CONT'D)
I talked to my guy; we're all set for tomorrow. Convoy out of Asad first thing.

JEN
Good. We're gonna need our own security, too -- embeds are like a ball and chain and we need to move fast.

AMMAR
It's short notice, but I can get one of the regulars lined up.

JEN
Do it.

Something occurs to Ammar.

AMMAR
Probably not worth mentioning, but contact just told me about a guy they brought in for smuggling.

JEN
You want a security guard who's in prison?

AMMAR
All unconfirmed so far, but apparently, he was on his way to Rawa -- looking for a ledger.

Jen takes this in, the wheels turning...

INT. BAGHDAD PRISON - RECEPTION - DAY

A bored RECEPTIONIST glances up from the computer behind his window as Jen and Ammar come in.

RECEPTIONIST

[Yes?]

AMMAR

[We're here to see the warden.]

Jen holds up her press pass. The Receptionist eyes it skeptically, then picks up his desk phone.

RECEPTIONIST

[Someone here for you.]

The Receptionist hangs up and goes back to his Solitaire game, ignoring Jen. He straightens as the warden YUSUF (50s) emerges, gut straining against his uniform.

YUSUF

Ah, Miss Lasky. It's been too long.
(to the Receptionist)
[Take your break.]

Looking put-upon, the Receptionist heads off.

YUSUF (CONT'D)

So, how can we help you?

JEN

We'd like to see one of your prisoners. Matthew Beckett.

YUSUF

How did you know we were keeping him here?

JEN

You just told me.

Yusuf shakes his head, tsk-tsking theatrically.

YUSUF

I'm afraid we no longer allow visits.

JEN

Of course you don't.

She digs a wad of cash from her pocket and slips it to Yusuf.

YUSUF

Ah, I just remembered that we have
a new policy about visiting hours.
It seems you are allowed after all.

He smiles broadly.

INT. PRISON - DETENTION CELL - DAY

Flanked by a PRISON GUARD, Yusuf enters the room. Close to
FIFTY PRISONERS sit packed together, soaked with sweat.

Yusuf holds a handkerchief over his mouth and nose to block
out the stench as he barks an order.

The Guard walks through the Prisoners, kicking ones who don't
move aside fast enough, and stops in front of Beckett. He's
clearly been beaten, but he stares up defiantly.

INT. PRISON - HALLWAY - DAY

Jen and Ammar follow Yusuf down a dimly-lit hallway.

A GUARD drags a scraggly PRISONER past them down the hall. He
glares at Jen as they pass.

PRISONER

[American bitch!]

The Prisoner spits in Jen's face. The Guard strikes him.

YUSUF

[Get him out of here!]

The Prisoner stares eerily at Jen through the blood streaming
from his broken nose as the Guard hauls him off.

PRISONER

[Your time will come. You will be
raped like a whore by true servants
of God, and your blood will drown
the earth!]

Jen wipes her face clean.

JEN

Prick.

YUSUF

This...this does not bother you?

JEN

I wouldn't be a very good reporter
if it did.

Ammar isn't convinced. Yusuf points.

YUSUF

We are here.

They have arrived at the door to an interrogation room.

YUSUF (CONT'D)

I should warn you, he has not been
very cooperative.

The look in Jen's eye says she's not taking no for an answer.
Yusuf shrugs -- *your funeral* -- and opens the door.

INT. PRISON - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Beckett sits with his hands cuffed to the table, taking in
the obvious one-way mirror.

The Guard stands behind him. Yusuf sits at the table, reading
over an open file.

YUSUF

Major Matthew Beckett. You have
quite the resume; at least the
parts that aren't covered in black
ink. Two tours with the Rangers and
citations for bravery before a
dishonorable discharge for...

He makes a show of checking the file.

YUSUF (CONT'D)

Assaulting a superior officer after
losing half your squad --

BECKETT

I'll just stop you when you get one
wrong.

YUSUF

I must say, I'm somewhat
disappointed. Smuggling hardly
seems worthy of a man with your
talents.

BECKETT

Have to pay the bills somehow.

YUSUF
Indeed. And terrorists pay quite well.

BECKETT
I told you. I don't work for them.

YUSUF
Then who do you work for?

Beckett just raises a middle finger.

YUSUF (CONT'D)
What were you looking for -- smuggling records, yes? A ledger?

Beckett raises his other middle finger.

YUSUF (CONT'D)
I hope you find this facility comfortable, Mr. Beckett. You may be here for some time.

Yusuf exits. Becket eyes the one-way mirror...

INT. PRISON - OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

...that Jen is standing behind, looking over Beckett's map. Ammar gives her a glance. *Are you kidding me?*

Yusuf steps in.

YUSUF
So, what do you think?

Jen watches Beckett through the mirror.

JEN
The diggers that got picked up with him said he was after a ledger, right?

YUSUF
Yes.

AMMAR
No chance of talking to them?

YUSUF

I'm afraid that since our fellow here was the only one with the stolen items, the soldiers had to let the others go. I can make some calls, but...

JEN

No point; it could take forever to track them down. Besides, Rawa is the last place on his map that hasn't been crossed off. That has to be where he was headed next.

YUSUF

So?

JEN

So I want him out of here.

Yusuf scoffs.

YUSUF

This man is a criminal, probably a terrorist.

JEN

He's a thief, not a terrorist. True believers don't sign up for a holy war just to get a paycheck.

YUSUF

Perhaps you're right, but he cannot simply walk out of here.

JEN

I'll post his bail. And make a donation to a dedicated public servant's retirement fund, of course.

Yusuf smiles with false humility, then eyes her.

YUSUF

I do also accept other forms of payment, you know.

JEN

Don't push your luck.

Jen pulls out more cash. Yusuf looks from her to Beckett, the wheels turning...

INT. PRISON - HALLWAY - DAY

Jen and Ammar walk back the way they came.

AMMAR

This is a bad idea, Jen. What is Chandra going to say?

JEN

Jack shit, 'cause you're not telling her.

AMMAR

But --

JEN

Just make sure everything's ready for tomorrow.

Ammar nods reluctantly.

EXT. PRISON - PARKING LOT - DAY

Jen sits on the hood of the van, watching Beckett walk down the barbed wire-lined corridor from the prison.

JEN

Looks like you could use a drink.

He stops, taking her in.

BECKETT

You paying for that, too?

Jen gets down and opens the door to the van.

JEN

Comes with a job offer.

BECKETT

Not interested.

JEN

You can always go back in there and try your luck with the warden.

Beckett looks back at the prison for a moment as if he's seriously considering it.

As Beckett heads to the van, a CAMERA SHUTTER blinks in rapid succession, freezing on him and Jen. *Someone is watching...*

INT. GREEN ZONE - BAR - NIGHT

The kind of grimy, dimly-lit place where BUSINESSMEN, JOURNALISTS, and AID WORKERS rub elbows. It's happy hour, and tinny local pop blares over the crowd.

Holding a pair of beers, Jen threads her way to a corner booth where Beckett sits. She joins him, sliding him a beer.

BECKETT

So let me get this straight: you want to go to one of the most dangerous places on earth just to find a notebook?

JEN

Oh, please. If you were half as obtuse as you pretend to be, you wouldn't already have been looking for it. I didn't pull you out of that cell for your sense of humor.

BECKETT

Then why did you -- really? You could find a dozen hired guns between this booth and the bar.

JEN

And if I wanted just another jarhead, I wouldn't be talking to you.

Jen slides his map across the table.

JEN (CONT'D)

We're already after the same thing. You weren't smuggling for the Caliphate, okay. But if somebody's trying to take over their game, I need to know who -- there's more to this story than just some dusty old artifacts. This a global network.

Beckett just chuckles and sips his beer.

BECKETT

You seen much action on this beat?

JEN

I was embedded with the Iraqi CTS for most of the last three years.

BECKETT

Counter Terrorism Service? Must know your shit -- but this is a whole different ballgame. You should get out now, before you end up bagged and tagged.

JEN

Whoever hired you knows you didn't deliver, and I'm willing to bet they aren't too happy about it.

BECKETT

What exactly are you offering?

JEN

My paper can compensate you, not to mention how grateful the National Museum might be to get their antiquities back. Whatever debt you owe your old employers, I can guarantee it's cleared.

BECKETT

And all I have to do is tell you everything I know about them, that it?

JEN

I don't leak my sources, if that's what you're worried about.

Beckett finishes his drink and stands.

BECKETT

Thanks for the offer, but I can make my own way.

He tosses a few crumpled bills on the table.

EXT. BAR - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Beckett heads out the back door. Jen follows him.

JEN

Hey, I just bailed your ass out of there --

BECKETT

And I'm grateful. Now piss off.

She catches up as he reaches the end of the alley.

A shadow detaches itself from a doorway to loom in front of them. It's a Theseus Group contractor, RODRIGUEZ. Another one, GREEN, appears behind them.

RODRIGUEZ

You wouldn't be trying to run out on us, would you?

BECKETT

Everybody gets picked up sooner or later -- this wasn't my fault.

Green advances, circling in.

JEN

Guys. We can talk about this.

BECKETT

They didn't come here to talk.

RODRIGUEZ

Who's she?

BECKETT

Not your concern.

RODRIGUEZ

She is now.

BECKETT

You should really just walk away.

JEN

I can handle myself.

BECKETT

Wasn't talking to you.

Rodriguez chuckles and throws a punch that could dent metal --

But Beckett moves in a blur, twisting aside and counterattacking with brutal strikes that send Rodriguez to the ground, out cold.

Green draws a PISTOL --

Beckett whirls and snatches it -- SLAMS it into Green's face. He's unconscious as he hits the ground.

Beckett ejects the chambered round and removes the magazine, then disassembles the slide and tosses it aside. Jen follows him as he starts down the alley again.

JEN

Didn't take them very long, did it?
How long do you think you'll last,
looking over your shoulder for
whoever's next?

Beckett turns to face Jen.

BECKETT

And if I help you -- how do I know
you'll deliver?

JEN

Same way I know you will. Just have
to trust each other.

BECKETT

I don't give you a thing until I'm
in the clear.

JEN

Agreed.

She holds out her hand. After a long moment, Beckett clasps
his hand into hers.

INT. SAID'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's a small but tidy space. Said sips tea as he reads.

His daughter NASIM (6) draws at the kitchen table. She
proudly holds up her picture of a flower.

NASIM

[Look, Papa!]

SAID

[That's beautiful, my love.]

The front door opens behind him and ALIA (early 40s). She's
dressed in nurse's scrubs.

NASIM

[Mama!]

Nasim runs and hugs her mother as she sets her bag down.

ALIA

[Hello there! Sorry I'm late -- the
hospital was busy.]

Alia picks her up and heads to the table, pausing to kiss
Said on the cheek.

He closes his book and heads to the kitchenette, setting water to boil as Alia starts drawing with Nasim.

SAID

[You know I don't like you working in that part of town. It's not safe.]

ALIA

[Not everyone is as paranoid as you, you know. Besides, the people there need the most help.]

SAID

[I'm being sensible, not paranoid.]

Alia chuckles as Said adds rice to the water.

EXT. SAID'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - NIGHT - LATER

Said sits by himself. Alia comes out to sit next to him, and for a long moment they watch the lights of the city.

SAID

[You really think I should help her? The journalist?]

ALIA

[Her work sounds important.]

SAID

[Not as important as my family. My place is here.]

ALIA

[What is it we tell Nasim all the time?]

Said looks away, somewhat embarrassed.

SAID

[We always do what's right, even when it's hard.]

Alia touches his face, turning him to face her.

ALIA

[But it is your choice. Believe me, the last thing I would ever want is for you to be in danger again.]

SAID

[Me too.]

They share a smile. Alia kisses him gently.

INT. SAID'S APARTMENT - NASIM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Said peeks in to see Nasim sleeping peacefully. He looks at her, weighing the choice...

INT. AL-RASHEED HOTEL - GYM - NIGHT

This late at night, Jen has the place to herself as she runs on a treadmill. Her phone buzzes.

She pauses the treadmill and answers the call, listening.

JEN

Thank you.

Jen hangs up. She restarts the treadmill and picks up speed.

EXT. BAGHDAD SUBURBS - NIGHT

A pair of THESEUS GROUP HUMVEES rumble along the road.

INT. HALSEY'S HUMVEE - MOVING - NIGHT

Three other CONTRACTORS are with Halsey. He rides shotgun and dials a SAT phone.

INT. DYER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A penthouse apartment with a view of the Washington Monument.

Dyer, in an evening gown, touches up her makeup in the palatial bathroom. Tickets to a fundraiser on the countertop.

She takes the call on speakerphone.

DYER

Progress report. Khalid?

HALSEY (ON PHONE)

Dead end.

DYER

And Beckett?

INT. HALSEY'S HUMVEE - MOVING - NIGHT

Halsey grits his teeth.

HALSEY

Someone got to him before us. We're working on it.

The other Contractors glance at him, glad they're not the ones making this call.

INT. DYER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dyer snaps her compact shut.

DYER

That's unacceptable, soldier.

HALSEY (ON PHONE)

We'll get it done, ma'am. Just give us some more time.

DYER

I'll be back in Baghdad in thirty-six hours. You have until then to fix this.

Dyer ends the call.

EXT. AL ASAD AIRBASE - STAGING AREA - DAY

The massive airbase buzzes with activity. IRAQI TROOPERS, US DELTA OPERATORS, and MARINES gear up and load into ARMORED VEHICLES. A loudspeaker blares orders.

Jen, Said, and Ammar walk through it all in bulletproof vests. Beckett follows, carrying a tricked-out M4.

Said turns at the sight of a BLACK HAWK taking off. Not looking where he's going, he strays into the path of an oncoming HUMVEE.

It slams on its brakes and HONKS. Jen pulls Said back. The MARINE driving gives Said the finger.

MARINE

Watch it, asshole!

The Humvee kicks up a cloud of dust as it drives off. Jen pulls her scarf up and Said coughs, embarrassed as he follows her toward a large tent.

INT. AL ASAD - BRIEFING TENT - DAY

An IRAQI GENERAL with a chest of medals stands next to Captain Sarraf, addressing his squad of elite COUNTER TERRORISM SERVICE TROOPERS.

Sarraf points out a position on a satellite map as Jen and her group step into the back of the tent.

SARRAF

[Our objective is the main square. The Americans have been hitting them all morning, so it should be clear -- but stay alert.]

Said takes this in, unsettled.

GENERAL

[The enemies we face today are not men. They are murderers and rapists who claim to do the work of Islam.]

Murmurs of assent from the Troopers.

GENERAL (CONT'D)

[We are the tip of the spear that will set the city free and strike at the heart of the enemy. Rawa has been under *Daesh* control for too long. Today we take it back!]

The Troopers CHEER, fired up.

GENERAL (CONT'D)

[Dismissed -- and God be with you.]

The Troopers exit the tent as Sarraf heads over to Jen.

JEN

Captain Sarraf, you still got a few empty seats?

Sarraf glares at Beckett.

SARRAF

What is he doing here?

JEN

He's with me.

SARRAF

A man like that cannot be trusted.

Beckett starts to respond but Jen gets between them.

JEN
I agree, but I need him.

SARRAF
And why do I need any of you?

She nods toward the General at the front of the tent.

JEN
Because I know only a certain kind
of General wears that many medals
to a basic intel briefing -- he
likes the spotlight.

SARRAF
That's his concern. Mine is my men.

JEN
Of course. But how happy do you
think he'd be if he knew you made
him miss out on a chance at getting
his name in my story? Maybe we
should ask him.

She starts forward, but Sarraf holds up an arm to stop her.
He looks from her to Beckett.

SARRAF
If he gets in the way, you're all
gone.

JEN
Fair enough.

They head out.

EXT. AL ASAD - STAGING AREA - DAY

Jen follows Sarraf and his Troopers toward an ARMORED
PERSONNEL CARRIER.

SARRAF
Where exactly is this museum of
yours, Miss Lasky?

JEN
Just across the main square.

SARRAF
Alright. We can cover you that far,
but stay clear of the zero line.

SAID
The what?

AMMAR
Where the shooting starts.

Jen sees Said tense.

JEN
If things get hot, we're out of
there.
(to Said)
Hey...thank you for coming.

Said smiles weakly as they reach the APC. Jen adjusts her kneepads and puts on her helmet. Ammar helps Said with his.

JEN (CONT'D)
Okay, you know the drill.

AMMAR
Keep your heads down...

JEN
Get the story...

AMMAR
...and don't get dead.

Beckett cracks a grin.

BECKETT
Easy enough.

He claps Said on the shoulder and pops in a stick of gum. They climb into the APC's cramped hold. The door bangs shut behind them.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The convoy of APCs and Humvees drives through the desert.

EXT. RAWA OUTSKIRTS - BRIDGE - DAY

The convoy passes through a makeshift checkpoint and rolls onto the bridge spanning the Euphrates.

It might be a picturesque spot, if not for the rising smoke and distant rattle of MACHINE GUN FIRE.

INT. APC - MOVING - DAY

Said flinches at the sound and strains to see out one of the window slits as they roll over the bridge.

EXT. RAWA OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Several of the vehicles split off at the edge of the city, taking different roads in.

INT. APC - MOVING - DAY

Sarraaf talks indistinctly into his radio, then stands up, shouting over the engine.

SARRAF

Listen up! When we get to the square, you have ten minutes to check the museum.

JEN

Bullshit, we need at least an hour!

SARRAF

Newest intel says a counterattack may be incoming. Ten minutes or nothing.

JEN

Dammit!

AMMAR

We should turn back.

JEN

We're going.

Said doesn't like the sound of this.

EXT. RAWA - STREETS - DAY

The APC rolls past buildings reduced to piles of concrete and twisted rebar. Bullet holes everywhere.

As the APC passes, a cloud of flies rises from the decaying carcass of a mule, half-buried under a collapsed roof.

INT. APC - MOVING - DAY

The APC rolls to a stop. Sarraf leans forward to confer with the Driver.

JEN
What's going on?

SARRAF
There's a roadblock ahead. From here, we go on foot.

JEN
(to Said)
Hey, just stay behind Sarraf's guys, and you'll be okay.

Said nods, but looks like he's about to throw up.

EXT. RAWA - STREETS - DAY

CTS Troopers disembark from the APC, heads on a swivel. Jen, Beckett, Said, and Ammar follow.

Beckett swings his carbine to cover the street. He pats Said's arm and indicates Sarraf and the CTS Troopers.

BECKETT
Step where they step.

Sarraf motions his Troopers forward and carefully climbs over a waist-high roadblock made from rubble.

He spots something on the other side: a tripwire, stretching across the road.

One end wraps around a twisted length of rebar jutting from a rubble pile, and the other has been secured to the pin of a grenade duct-taped to what's left of a telephone pole.

SARRAF
Look out!

Sarraf carefully steps over the wire and waves his Troopers to follow him.

BECKETT
We gonna clear this thing or what?

SARRAF
I'll flag it for EOD, let them handle it.

Ammar crosses next.

BECKETT
I can do it.

SARRAF
No.

Beckett shrugs. Said starts over the roadblock. He puts a hand out to steady himself, but the chunk of concrete he touches shifts --

Said loses his balance and pitches toward the tripwire -- and Beckett yanks him back. Everyone lets out a breath.

SAID
(to Beckett)
Thank you.

Beckett nods and turns to follow Sarraf, but then stops.

BECKETT
Screw this.

Beckett draws his knife and kneels by the wire.

SARRAF
Hey! Hey, I said no!

Beckett cuts the wire free from the rebar. Sarraf and the others tense, but it doesn't explode.

Beckett walks the wire back to the grenade and unhooks it, then slices through the tape. He tucks the grenade in his vest and tosses the wire at Sarraf.

JEN
Hey, I brought you out here to --

BECKETT
You brought me out here to do a job. Let me do it.

He steps past her and keeps walking. Sarraf fumes.

EXT. RAWA - SQUARE - DAY

The group moves across a debris-strewn square. They pass the burnt-out shell of an ABRAMS TANK. Smoke still coils from the gaping hole where missile fire killed it.

Just across the square is the MUSEUM, a modest two-story building. The roof has partially caved in.

SAID

That's it.

Jen raises her camera and snaps a picture.

SARRAF

Wait here.

Jen and her crew hang back behind the tank. Sarraf barks out a string of orders and most of his Troopers spread out to secure the square.

SARRAF (CONT'D)

We will check for more traps.

Sarraf and two of his Troopers head into the museum.

Jen jigs her leg impatiently. Said stiffens as he sees several dead ISIS FIGHTERS nearby.

BECKETT

That's a good sign.

SAID

What?

JEN

If they were committed to this position, probably means there was something here worth protecting.

Sarraf emerges from the museum and waves to Jen.

SARRAF

Okay, you can come.

She's already moving.

INT. RAWA - MUSEUM - DAY

Jen and the others step inside. Display cases have been shattered and graffiti covers the walls.

SARRAF

Your ten minutes start now.

JEN

Said, where's our best bet?

He's distracted by the damage to his old museum.

SAID
 (almost to himself)
 I did not think I would be back
 here.

JEN
 Said!

SAID
 Sorry.

JEN
 Think. Where would they keep their
 files?

Said considers a moment.

SAID
 The main office. Second floor.

Jen heads for the staircase.

INT. MUSEUM - STAIRCASE - DAY

Beckett leads Jen, Said, and Ammar up the stairs. One of the Troopers comes with them.

INT. MUSEUM - OFFICE - DAY

Jen takes in the smashed-up furniture and other detritus littering the floor.

JEN
 Looks like they had to leave in a
 hurry.

BECKETT
 Careful what you touch in here.

JEN
 Alright, let's start looking.

Said points to a doorway.

SAID
 There is another office through
 there.

JEN
 Ammar, that's you. Said, you're
 with me.

Ammar and Beckett head into the next room. Jen examines a battered oil drum. It's full of ash and burnt paper.

JEN (CONT'D)

Shit...

She turns to the only intact desk. Most of the drawers have been pulled out. Jen and Said carefully look through what's left. Nothing...

SAID

Wait -- there is another drawer.

He points to the desk's underside. Jen kneels to look. Sure enough, there's a compartment nearly hidden from view.

JEN

Good memory, Professor.
(to the Trooper)
[You checked the desk, yes?]

TROOPER

[It's clear.]

Said still holds his breath as Jen gingerly tugs on the drawer. It starts to open, then sticks. He can just make out something through the gap -- *paper*.

SAID

Jen! There is something here, I think.

Jen sees it too. They share a charged glance.

She pulls out a pocketknife and slides the blade into the crack, trying to jimmy it open as Ammar and Beckett come in.

AMMAR

There's a couple computers in there, but the hard drives are stripped. You find anything?

JEN

Maybe...

Suddenly, the Trooper's radio squawks.

SARRAF (ON RADIO)

Jen, do you copy? We just got a report of movement headed out way -- you have to get out of there, over.

Tension ripples through the group. Beckett and Ammar exchange a taut glance.

TROOPER
 (into radio)
 [Solid copy, over.]
 (to Jen)
 We must go!

Jen keeps working the knife blade.

JEN
 Go on, get out of here -- I just
 need a minute.

In the distance, the flat POP-POP-POP of gunshots pierces the air. Said looks up in alarm.

BECKETT
 We're all going. Right now.

AMMAR
 Jen, he's right.

JEN
 Just go! Get Said out of here. I'm
 right behind you.

Ammar hesitates, then motions to Said.

AMMAR
 Come on!

They take off.

BECKETT
 This is bullshit, Jen! Move!

The drawer starts to open --

JEN
 Come on, come on, come on --

BECKETT
 Leave it!

Beckett grabs her by the arm but Jen twists away --

BECKETT (CONT'D)
 Jesus Christ --

She races back to the desk and wrenches the drawer open --
 grabs a few loose papers --

JEN
 Got it!

BECKETT
Now, goddammit!

Jen stuffs the papers into her bag.

EXT. RAWA - SQUARE - DAY

Said and Ammar cross the square with the CTS Troopers. Jen and Beckett come out of the museum behind them.

AMMAR
Come on!

Beckett and Jen haul ass across the square. Suddenly --

BOOM! -- MORTAR FIRE strikes the museum! Dust and rubble erupt as Jen and Said run full-tilt.

Said and the CTS Troopers race for cover as mortar rounds impact around them.

A BLAST hits the Trooper in front of Said. He stares in horror, frozen --

AMMAR (CONT'D)
[Move!]

Ammar tackles him down next to the remaining Troopers.

A CLOSE HIT throws Jen to the ground. Beckett doesn't see and keeps going.

Coughing, Jen picks herself up. She starts forward --

BRRRDDDT! The buzzsaw rattle of gunfire slices the air around her -- Jen throws herself into cover behind the wrecked tank.

Beckett sprints the last few feet across the square and dives into cover by the others.

SARRAF
(into radio)
[Taking heavy fire! Need air support, urgent --]

AMMAR
Where's Jen?

Behind them in the square, Jen presses herself to the ground as bullets SLAM into the tank.

Beckett and the CTS Troopers return fire.

AMMAR (CONT'D)
Beckett! We have to help her!

SARRAF
(into radio)
[Request dynamic precision strike
at our mark -- fire for immediate
effect, danger close!]

BECKETT
Abort, Jen is still out there!

Sarraaf's eyes widen in horror --

SARRAF
(into radio)
[Abort strike! Say again, abort
strike!]

But the radio just blurts static in response.

Jen peeks around the corner of the tank. ISIS FIGHTERS appear through the smouldering remains of the museum behind her -- she jerks her head back gunfire WHINES past.

Beckett loads a fresh mag and tosses a pair of smoke grenades toward the tank.

BECKETT
Popping smoke!

Red smoke billows through the square.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
Cover my ass!

SARRAF
Wait, what are you --

Beckett breaks from cover at a sprint, heading for Jen and firing as he goes.

SARRAF (CONT'D)
[Covering fire!]

The CTS Soldiers open fire with renewed intensity.

The Fighters advance, almost on top of Jen. Beckett emerges from the smoke behind her.

BECKETT
Jen! You good?

JEN

Yeah!

BAM-BAM-BAM! Beckett takes down a Fighter coming around the tank. Suddenly, something bigger moves in the smoke.

Jen's eyes widen as a PICKUP rumbles into view with a mounted .50 cal machine gun spraying thumb-sized rounds.

BECKETT

Shit!

Jen and Beckett press themselves to the ground as the GUNNER strafes the square, BLASTING holes in the concrete.

Two of Sarraf's Troopers go down. A rooster tail of red-hot shell casings cascades into the truck bed.

Beckett pulls the grenade from the booby trap off his vest. He yanks the pin and hurls it at the truck --

BOOM! The blast sends the Gunner flying.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Smoke's clearing -- we gotta move!

Jen gets up into a low crouch.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Go, go, go!

Jen and Beckett race back toward Sarraf and his men.

Behind them, another FIGHTER hops onto the truck and trains the .50 cal on Jen and Beckett. Bullets strike around them --

Suddenly, a ROAR cuts through the air.

KABOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM! TOWERING EXPLOSIONS pound down the street behind the ISIS Fighters.

The airstrike ERUPTS across the square, obliterating the Fighters. The pickup takes a direct hit.

Jen and Beckett dive into cover. She goes fetal, covering her head as debris showers the area.

And then it's over, as quickly as it began. Smoke and dust fill the square.

Something stirs: a FIGHTER, missing most of his legs. He drags himself forward -- CRACK! A shot takes him in the head.

Beckett lowers his carbine, then casually unwraps a stick of gum and starts chewing. Sarraf stares at him like he's nuts.

EXT. RAWA OUTSKIRTS - BRIDGE - DAY

The area has been transformed into a field hospital, bustling with MEDICS and other STAFF.

Sarraf and his Troopers unload their wounded from the APC. Nearby, Said kneels on the ground and vomits. Ammar puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

Jen approaches a DELTA OPERATOR lighting a smoke.

JEN

You got another one of those?

DELTA

Take 'em all -- trying to quit.

He holds out the pack with a grin. Jen nods her thanks and heads behind a row of trucks.

Out of sight and shaking like a leaf, Jen manages to light one and inhales deeply. She sinks back against a truck, squeezing her eyes shut.

They snap open as Beckett rounds the corner.

BECKETT

What the hell was that back there?

JEN

Look, if I had known it was going to be like that --

BECKETT

You would have gone anyway.

He gets in Jen's face.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

The next time you feel like trying to get your ass dunced, you do it when I'm not around. Your goddamn story isn't worth it.

JEN

Then why did you come back for me?

BECKETT

You die and I don't get paid, right?

JEN
Jesus -- you'll get your money.

BECKETT
Too damn right I will.

Some of the fury leaves him.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
I know how much you want this. But
you keep taking risks like that,
and all you're going to do is get
yourself killed, too.

Beckett walks off, leaving Jen to digest this.

INT. THESEUS GROUP HQ - HALLWAY - DAY

Dyer strides down the hall, passing busy STAFF. Halsey keeps pace with her.

DYER
Still no word on Beckett?

HALSEY
Nothing except this.

He holds up a tablet and swipes through a series of photos of Jen with Beckett outside the prison.

DYER
Who is she?

HALSEY
Jenna Lasky, a reporter. Our guys
who caught up with Beckett
confirmed she was with him.

DYER
They must be going after the ledger
together.

HALSEY
You think?

DYER
Either way, Beckett knows too much.
If he talks to her, this will all
come down around us.

They turn a corner for a pair of automated doors.

INT. THESEUS GROUP HQ - OPS CENTER - DAY

The doors swoosh open and Dyer steps in with Halsey.

It looks like a menacing air traffic control tower.
TECHNICIANS in wireless headsets sit behind monitor banks.

DYER

Alright people, listen up. New target: Jenna Lasky. I want the full sweep: e-mail, phones, messages, anyone she ever slept with or smiled at on the street. Track her.

HALSEY

That's all you want to do?

DYER

Stay hands-off for now. With any luck, they'll lead us right to the ledger.

Keyboards clatter as the Techs get to work.

EXT. RAWA - HOTEL - NIGHT

The hotel has become party central as SOLDIERS, CONTRACTORS, JOURNALISTS, and CIVILIANS celebrate the town's liberation.

They fill the courtyard, drinking and getting stoned. Two Americans snap selfies with a black ISIS flag.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The thin walls barely muffle the noise of the party and hum of portable generators powering the hotel.

Jen sits nursing a beer in front of her laptop, watching Will's video on repeat. Tears stain her cheeks as she lets herself grieve in a way she'd never let anyone see.

There's a knock at the door. She wipes her face clean and shuts her laptop -- within seconds, her armor is back on.

JEN

Yeah?

Said steps in.

SAID

Do you think I could borrow your
SAT phone? I can't get a signal.

Jen pulls the phone from her bag, then pauses.

JEN

Calling home?

SAID

I told Alia I would whenever I
could.

JEN

You know...might be times you
can't. If she expects it every day,
you're just gonna make her worry
more. I learned that the hard way
on this job.

Said reluctantly nods.

JEN (CONT'D)

You should go down to the party,
you earned a break.

SAID

I tried, but...I just couldn't. It
doesn't make sense -- we could have
been killed out there today.

JEN

The guys down there figure it's
easier to get stoned off their
asses than to think about it.

Said sits down on the couch.

SAID

When we left this place a few years
ago, there was shelling on the road
out. I had read somewhere that when
you get shot at, you don't feel
scared -- you feel angry. But all I
could think was how frightened I
was. I couldn't even move...just
like today.

JEN

It was my fault for bringing you.

Said shakes his head, rubbing his eyes.

SAID

At least the soldiers can protect themselves. But...you do not even carry a weapon.

JEN

Enough people want to kill journalists as it is. Usually the one thing stopping them is knowing we can't shoot back.

SAID

You never want to?

Jen thinks about how to answer that. Decides not to.

JEN

Hey. Just keep your head down, get the story, and...

SAID

...don't get dead.

JEN

All there is to it.

Said tries to smile, absorbing this.

INT. HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Jen, Said, Beckett, and Ammar sit around the table looking at the papers she grabbed from the desk.

BECKETT

I'm guessing this ain't the ledger?

AMMAR

No, just digging permits.

SAID

Permits?

JEN

ISIS runs smuggling like a business: taxes, forms, everything. It's not called a state for nothing.

AMMAR

Hey -- there is something here...

He points to a few lines of Arabic text.

AMMAR (CONT'D)
 (reading)
 "Allawi...archaeologist, 2016." And
 a signature.

Said absorbs this.

SAID
 Allawi? Massoud Allawi?

BECKETT
 You know him?

SAID
 At the University of Mosul. He was
 my friend -- my mentor, really. But
 I thought he was killed two years
 ago, when ISIS took over the city.

JEN
 You think he was working with them?

SAID
 I cannot believe Allawi would help
 the Caliphate.

Jen searches the name on her laptop and lands on University
 of Mosul faculty page for MASSOUD ALLAWI (60s).

AMMAR
 Could he have been Will's source?

JEN
 Could be -- in any case, we need to
 find him.
 (to Said)
 You've come a lot farther than you
 had to already. You want out, no
 one here will say anything.

SAID
 If Massoud is working for them, I
 want to know why. And I think I
 know where to start.

Said stares at the picture of Allawi...

EXT. BASRA - DAY

A dusty port city.

TITLE OVER: Basra

EXT. ALLAWI HOUSE - DAY

It's modest house in a middle-class suburb, set back from the street behind a wall with a small garden in the courtyard.

Down the street, Jen gets out of the van with Ammar and Said.

JEN
Ammar, you good to interpret?

AMMAR
Sure.

SAID
(to Jen)
I thought you spoke Arabic?

JEN
Some, but if people think they know more than you, they get relaxed. Maybe they say more than they should.

She starts for the house, but shakes her head at Beckett.

JEN (CONT'D)
We need to make a good impression, and machine guns don't tend to help with that.

Beckett hesitates, then puts his M4 back in the van.

JEN (CONT'D)
All of them.

He unbuckles his drop-leg holster.

JEN (CONT'D)
Alright, come on.

Putting on a hijab, Jen heads for the house. Beckett stows the holster...but tucks the pistol into his waistband.

INT. ALLAWI HOUSE - DAY

Said, Ammar, and Jen sit in the spotless living room facing TALA (70s) and RABIA (50s). Both mother and daughter have the same proud demeanor.

Beckett waits a respectful distance further back.

SAID

[I don't know if you remember, but we met before once in Mosul, at the university. Together with Massoud.]

RABIA

[Yes, I remember.]

SAID

[We have some news about him.]

Rabia tenses for a split second as this registers. She and Tala inadvertently share a glance. Jen catches it.

SAID (CONT'D)

[He may still be alive, but we think he was working with ISIS.]

Rabia shakes her head.

RABIA

[What do you mean? Massoud has been dead for years.]

Jen pulls photocopies of the Rawa documents from her bag and holds them out.

JEN

That's his name and signature on documents less than a year old.

TALA

[No...How can you say this? My son is gone.]

JEN

He was helping them smuggle artifacts.

Tala lowers her head. She lets out a low, keening wail full of anguish. Rabia hugs her comfortingly.

SAID

[I'm sorry.]

TALA

[Where did I fail that led him to this?]

RABIA

[Shh, it's all right.]

AMMAR

[It is not your fault.]

Said exchanges an uneasy look with Ammar.

SAID
We should go.

Jen ignores him.

JEN
I need to know where he is.

Ammar hesitates to interpret. Jen skewers him with a glare, then switches to Arabic.

JEN (CONT'D)
[Where can I find him?]

RABIA
[Will you not leave her in peace?
Look what you have done! She
doesn't know anything -- neither of
us do.]

JEN
(under her breath)
Bullshit.

AMMAR
Jen, come on --

JEN
[WHERE?]

The sharpness in Jen's voice startles even her. Everyone stares at her.

JEN (CONT'D)
[I didn't mean to...I lost someone
because of all this. Someone very
close to me.]

Jen takes a breath, pulling herself back together. Beckett watches, surprised by the raw emotion in her voice.

JEN (CONT'D)
[If Allawi is alive, I believe he's
in great danger. I want to help
him, but I can't do that unless you
help me first.]

Jen rises and heads for the door, letting that sink in.

EXT. ALLAWI HOUSE - DAY

Jen sits on the curb smoking. Said paces next to her.

SAID

Maybe they do not actually know anything.

JEN

Do enough interviews and you can recognize a bad liar. They're hiding something.

SAID

Even if you're right, I think you went too far.

Rabia opens the gate behind them. She hesitates a moment, then sits down next to Jen and Said.

Jen takes a last drag and stubs out her smoke. Rabia watches, as if weighing telling her something. She makes up her mind, then speaks in English.

RABIA

We heard from Massoud a few weeks ago. He said he was in great danger, and he was going to hide.

SAID

You didn't tell anyone?

RABIA

He told us not to! And we didn't know who to trust. It seemed the fewer people who knew, the safer he would be.

JEN

Then why tell us?

RABIA

What you said back there...I believe you're honest. Perhaps you really can help him.

JEN

I'll do my best.

RABIA

Please. Bring him home.

Jen takes this in and nods.

EXT. ALLAWI HOUSE - STREET - DAY

Jen points out a location on a map spread out on the van's hood. Beckett, Said, and Ammar lean in for a closer look.

BECKETT

A refugee camp?

JEN

Just across the Syrian border.
Actually makes a lot of sense if
he's lying low.

AMMAR

They'd probably let him in without
papers if he was posing as a
refugee. Might not even have to use
his real name.

JEN

We can make the camp tomorrow if we
drive through the night. Rest up
for a bit, then we go.

She folds up the map, game face back on.

EXT. PARK - DAY

As the sun sinks toward the horizon, Beckett, Said, and Ammar dig in to plates of falafel at a picnic table.

Jen sits apart from them, facing the Shatt al-Arab river. Beckett watches her, then stands and picks up a plate.

AMMAR

Probably best to leave her alone.

Beckett ignores this and sits next to Jen, holding out the plate. She takes it but doesn't eat.

BECKETT

It ain't bad. Or maybe I've just
been out here too long.

JEN

They don't have falafel in Alaska?
(off his look)
I read your file.

He chuckles.

BECKETT

Least not the part where I grew up.
How about you?

JEN

My parents worked in the State
Department. Moved around a lot.

BECKETT

Sounds like fun.

JEN

Not really. I hated not having a
real hometown like other kids.

BECKETT

Well, you weren't missing much. All
I wanted was to get out of mine.

JEN

You ever go back?

BECKETT

Not for a long time. Only thing I
still got back there's an ex-wife
that hates my guts.

JEN

Can't imagine why.

BECKETT

Ouch.

He cracks a sarcastic grin. Jen smiles, but her eyes go
distant as she toys with her ring.

JEN

You know, I used to wear a fake one
of these.

BECKETT

Stop guys like me from hitting on
you?

JEN

Training courses tell you that if
you get kidnapped, being married
might make you more sympathetic.

BECKETT

I'll keep that in mind the next
time I get kidnapped.

Jen laughs despite herself. Beckett nudges her plate.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
You should eat something.

JEN
Listen, back there at the house...

BECKETT
It's okay. Ammar told me about Ortega.

Jen picks at her food.

JEN
I keep thinking, if I had been out there instead of him, maybe things would be different. Maybe I could have saved him. But I was already back home, 'cause one of us needed to pick a cake. That's pretty messed up, isn't it?

Beckett watches the river, his eyes distant.

BECKETT
You can't bring him back, you know. And feeding that guilt...it'll just take away anything you have left.

There are tears in Jen's eyes, but she manages a nod.

INT./EXT. VAN ON DESERT HIGHWAY - MOVING - NIGHT

Ammar sleeps in the back next to Jen while Beckett drives. Her eyes are closed. Said rides shotgun.

In the distance, flashes of light wink in and out. Seconds later, the delayed BOOMS of far-away explosions come through. Said watches, saddened.

SAID
The Sumerians invented writing in Iraq. Early democracy was here, too, long before the Greeks. They call this land the cradle of civilization, but now it is sold off one stone at a time.

He levels a pointed look at Beckett.

BECKETT
Hey, I'm not the one blowing this shit up. At least whatever I've taken is still in one piece.

SAID

And where then does it go -- the British Museum? Some private collection? It belongs here.

BECKETT

Seems like this place has bigger problems right now than some stolen rocks.

JEN

Those "stolen rocks" are paying for the problems.

Beckett looks back at Jen -- thought she was asleep.

SAID

The Caliphate can't kill everyone. But kill a culture, a history, and it will be as if the people it belongs to never existed at all.

(almost to himself)

When this war ends, what will the point have been if nothing is left of the world we were fighting to protect?

They drive on in silence toward the smoldering horizon.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - PARKING AREA - DAY

The van pulls to a stop and Jen and the others get out. A sea of white tents spreads out in front of them.

Beckett joins Jen as she clicks a picture.

BECKETT

You really think he's in there?

JEN

He's here.

She starts walking. Beckett shakes his head -- can't help but admire the confidence.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - ENTRY POINT - DAY

ARMY RANGERS and SYRIAN DEFENSE FORCE SOLDIERS check REFUGEES. Mostly women, children, and old men. A CAPTAIN shouts orders while an INTERPRETER relays.

RANGER CAPTAIN
Iraqis go here. Syrians, here.

Rangers walk among the Refugees, asking questions, taking photos, and handing out lanyards.

RANGER CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
If you have IDs, display them
clearly around your necks.

A group of MALE REFUGEES has their hands cuffed. A Ranger watches them from a Humvee turret as SDF Soldiers walk down the line with a SNIFFER DOG.

YASMIN, a camp administrator, leads Jen, Beckett, Said, and Ammar past all of it toward the camp entrance.

YASMIN
You must understand: we do our best
to check identities, but many of
them come to us with just the
clothes on their backs.

Jen slows, taking in the line of male Refugees.

JEN
Those guys are all suspected ISIS,
yeah?

YASMIN
Yes.

They watch as a struggle breaks out between SDF Soldiers and one of the hostile Refugees. A Soldier slams his rifle into the man's gut, dropping him to his knees.

RANGER CAPTAIN
Hey! Hey, that's enough -- just get
him with the others.

The Rangers zip tie Refugee's hands behind his back and drag him off. Said looks disturbed.

SAID
They're being held like this
without trial?

AMMAR
This is the land of judgment, not
presumed innocence.
(to Beckett)
And who do you think we learned it
from?

JEN
 If anyone here worked with Allawi,
 that's where they'll be. Can we
 talk to them?

YASMIN
 Maybe...

Yasmin approaches the Captain. Jen follows, holding up her
 press pass.

YASMIN (CONT'D)
 Can she speak to some of the
 detainees?

RANGER CAPTAIN
 No go.

JEN
 Five minutes.

RANGER CAPTAIN
 Sorry, ma'am. We got our orders.

JEN
 Shit.
 (to the group)
 We start in the camp, then.

She heads for the camp entrance.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

An ELDERLY MAN cooks on a propane stove. WOMEN, some of them
 in black abayas and niqabs, sort clothes. A TEENAGE GIRL
 tries to separate two wrestling BOYS.

Jen and the others take it all in.

YASMIN
 You can look through our records
 database, but it will take time.

JEN
 Ammar, that's you.

AMMAR
 Thought you'd never ask.

JEN
 Beckett, Said, you stick with me.

YASMIN

Good luck.

Yasmin and Ammar head off into the camp.

SAID

What do we do?

JEN

(with a shrug)

Start talking to people.

BECKETT

You're gonna interview the whole camp? That'll take weeks.

JEN

You got a better idea?

He doesn't.

SAID

Looks like someone's interested already.

Several REFUGEES approach them.

YOUNG WOMAN

[I'm looking for my brother, can you help? He's only thirteen --]

MAN ON CRUTCHES

[We just want to get back home, but they don't tell us anything. Will you talk to the administrators?]

ELDERLY WOMAN

[No one knows where my son is --]

More Refugees gather around Jen and the others, talking over each other. She motions for calm.

JEN

[Please. Please, I will do what I can, but I need your help first.]

Jen pulls out her phone and holds up a picture of Allawi.

JEN (CONT'D)

[It's very important that I find this man. Has anyone seen him here?]

A few of the Refugees lose interest and leave. A TEENAGE BOY shakes his head.

TEENAGE BOY
[I'm sorry, no.]

MAN ON CRUTCHES
[Who is he?]

JEN
[His name is Massoud Allawi. He might be going by something different, though.]

MAN ON CRUTCHES
[I haven't seen him.]

Jen shows the picture to a WOMAN in an abaya. Another head shake in response.

INT. REFUGEE CAMP - TRAILER - DAY

Camp HQ. Harried ADMINISTRATORS and AID WORKERS in cubicles grind away at computers and talk into phones.

In the back, Yasmin boots up a laptop.

YASMIN
I'm afraid our system has been having all sorts of problems so a direct search is impossible. You'll have to go through page by page.

She brings up the photo database: rows of mugshots laid out yearbook style.

AMMAR
How many pages are there?

YASMIN
Almost four hundred.

Ammar whistles -- this is going to take a while.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

The crowd around Jen disperses. She lights a smoke in frustration as she rejoins Beckett and Said.

JEN
You guys get anything?

SAID

Not yet.

BECKETT

This is going nowhere.

Then Jen hears LAUGHTER and SHOUTING -- a group of KIDS playing soccer nearby. Beckett follows her gaze, confused.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

What is it?

JEN

Kids go everywhere in a place like this.

She flicks her cigarette away and heads for the game. Said and Beckett follow her.

JEN (CONT'D)

[Hey there.]

The Kids ignore her. Jen takes out a candy bar.

JEN (CONT'D)

[Guess I just have to eat this myself...]

This gets attention. The Kids mob her as she hands out more.

JEN (CONT'D)

[I wonder, can any of you help me with something?]

LITTLE BOY

[What is it?]

JEN

[We're looking for a friend of ours. Have any of you seen him?]

Jen shows the picture of Allawi. Beckett watches, skeptical, and mutters to himself.

BECKETT

Jesus Christ, maybe they've seen Elvis, too. You really don't know when to quit, do you?

JEN

That a compliment?
(to the Kids)
[Anyone?]

LITTLE GIRL
[Come on, let's go. This is boring!]

LITTLE BOY
[Yeah!]

The Kids scamper off laughing. One LITTLE GIRL hangs back, eyeing Jen cautiously. Jen kneels down.

JEN
[Hi there, I'm Jen. What's your name?]

ZAHRA
[Zahra.]

Said kneels next to Jen.

SAID
[Tell me, Zahra, have you seen our friend?]

Zahra nods as she inches forward, staring at Jen's camera. Jen holds it up and snaps a picture. Zahra giggles.

JEN
[He's a tall man, right?]
(re. Said)
[Bigger than him?]

Zahra nods again, staring at a pen in Jen's shirt pocket.

JEN (CONT'D)
[And he has green eyes?]

Zahra shakes her head, looking away from the pen for the first time.

ZAHRA
[They were brown.]

Beckett watches with sudden interest. Said double checks the picture -- brown eyes.

JEN
[You know, I have something here extra special that I brought to give my friend when we find him.]

Jen pulls out the pen. Zahra's face lights up. She reaches for it, but Jen pulls it back.

JEN (CONT'D)

[Ah-ah-ah. It's not for you. But maybe if you can show us where he is...]

(to Said)

[I don't know, do you think we could give it to her instead?]

Said strokes his chin thoughtfully, playing along.

SAID

[Hmm. I don't think she knows where he is.]

ZAHRA

[Yes I do! I'll show you!]

Zahra takes off at a run.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - SHANTIES - DAY

Jen, Beckett and Said follow Zahra through a run-down section of the camp. Rows of shanties. Overflowing garbage. Zahra comes to a stop behind a fence.

ZAHRA

[Come see.]

Jen looks out at more tents and shacks. There are Refugees around, but none of them are Allawi.

BECKETT

Don't see him.

ZAHRA

(pointing)

[That's his tent, just there.]

Said shakes his head in disappointment...but then Beckett clocks a MAN approaching the tent, carrying a ration bag.

He looks grayer and careworn compared to Jen's photo, but it's ALLAWI.

BECKETT

I'll be...

ZAHRA

[See? I told you.]

JEN

[Yes, you did.]

Jen hands her the pen. Zahra grins, reverently taking it like it's a treasure. Which, in a place like this, it is.

JEN (CONT'D)
[You earned this. Now go on, okay?]

Zahra runs off. For a moment, a Jen gets a faraway look in her eyes as she watches the girl disappear into the camp.

SAID
You were good with her.

JEN
You too.

Jen rises, then starts toward Allawi's tent. She notices Beckett standing still.

JEN (CONT'D)
Coming?

BECKETT
"You need to make a good
impression, and machine guns don't
tend to help," right?

Jen nods in acknowledgment -- the ghost of a smile -- then heads for the tent.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - OVERLOOK - DAY

A RED CRESCENT LAND ROVER rolls to a stop next to the group's van. The passenger's side window opens to reveal Halsey, wearing a doctor's vest and pass.

Rodriguez drives. Green and another contractor, KELLY, ride in the back. She has a laptop open. They're all dressed as doctors like Halsey.

KELLY
That's their van.

HALSEY
You still tracking their phones?

KELLY
Goes in and out.

HALSEY
Keeping trying, but get this on
there just in case.

Halsey tosses her a quarter-sized black disc.

INT. ALLAWI'S TENT - DAY

Allawi fiddles with a small propane stove. He looks up as Jen and Said step into the tent.

ALLAWI
[Said...?]

Allawi stands and embraces Said.

ALLAWI (CONT'D)
[It's so good to see you! But what
are you doing here? It's not safe.]
(re. Jen)
[And who is she?]

SAID
[It's a long story.]

Allawi looks from him to Jen uncertainly.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - ENTRY POINT - DAY

The Red Crescent Land Rover pulls to a stop at the checkpoint. The Ranger Captain on duty approaches.

RANGER CAPTAIN
Papers?

Halsey holds out a clipboard of paperwork for approval.

HALSEY
Afternoon.

After briefly glancing over the papers, the Captain waves them through.

INT./EXT. LAND ROVER IN REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

The Land Rover cruises down a muddy stretch of road. Rodriguez pulls behind a row of prefab buildings.

KELLY
Last position should be around
here.

HALSEY
Alright, I don't feel like wading
through this maze of shit any
longer than I have to. Let's get
our eye in the sky up.

KELLY

Roger that.

She pulls out a black hardcase and opens it to reveal a SURVEILLANCE DRONE.

INT. ALLAWI'S TENT - DAY

Jen and Said sit opposite Allawi.

SAID

Massoud, please. I have to know.
Did you really work for them?

ALLAWI

I did what I needed to.

SAID

Do you have any idea how much
history you helped them destroy?

ALLAWI

Don't sound so self-righteous --
you could have stayed behind like I
did.

SAID

I was trying to protect my family.

ALLAWI

And I was not? When I tried to get
out, it was too late -- they said
they would kill me if I didn't help
them. They could have found my
sister. My mother. So don't judge
me for making a choice you never
had to.

Said's eyes flash, suddenly defiant.

SAID

You think there was no risk in
leaving? We were always close to
death. You don't know what it was
like to see that fear in my
daughter's eyes.

Allawi starts to rise as Jen steps in between them.

JEN

We're not here to do this.

The tension simmers down a few degrees. Jen turns to Allawi.

JEN (CONT'D)

The ledger -- you wrote it?

ALLAWI

Yes. I wasn't proud of working for them, believe me. But I copied files. I wrote down everything I could, hoping that someday it might be a way to recover what I helped them steal.

JEN

Where is it?

ALLAWI

And why should I trust you? I tried talking to a reporter before. He said he would help, but he never did.

JEN

He's dead.

Jen stares at Allawi with cold rage, letting that sink in.

ALLAWI

I am sorry -- I did not know.

He waits for Jen to respond. She doesn't. After a painful silence, Allawi continues, rattled.

ALLAWI (CONT'D)

The...the fighters I was with moved me from Rawa to a dig site. I managed to escape when they got pushed out, but I had to leave the ledger behind.

SAID

So it is still there?

Allawi forces a nod.

JEN

Will you take us?

ALLAWI

There is someone else hunting it. Hunting me. You can't protect me -- no one can.

JEN

I have contacts in the Army. We can get you to a base in a few hours.

ALLAWI

I have made it this far on my own.

SAID

We spoke with your sister.

Allawi looks at Said in surprise, clearly affected.

SAID (CONT'D)

Your family wants you to come home.

JEN

If you want to make it back to
them, coming with us is the best
chance you've got.

Allawi thinks this over...

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

The DRONE buzzes overhead through the camp.

INT./EXT. LAND ROVER IN REFUGEE CAMP - MOVING - DAY

Halsey scans passing Refugees.

HALSEY

Still nothing?

Kelly shakes her head as she watches the drone's live feed on her laptop.

EXT. ALLAWI'S TENT - DAY

Beckett keeps a careful eye on the surroundings.

A WHINE cuts through the noise of the camp -- he looks up to see the drone come into view.

INT. ALLAWI'S TENT - DAY

Jen pulls out her phone.

JEN

I'm gonna let Sarraf know we're
coming --

Beckett enters.

BECKETT
We have to move.

Allawi startles. Jen motions for calm.

JEN
He's with me.
(to Beckett)
What is it?

BECKETT
There's no time, just go!

They head for the door.

INT. LAND ROVER - MOVING - DAY

Kelly looks up from her laptop.

KELLY
Boss? Think I got something.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - ALLEY - DAY

Jen and the others haul ass down a trash-strewn alley .
They've almost made it to the end when Allawi halts dead in
his tracks.

ALLAWI
No, wait!

Beckett motions the others into cover. As Said catches his
breath, Jen checks around the corner to see:

The Land Rover cruising through the camp.

JEN
What is it?

ALLAWI
Mercenaries -- the ones hunting me.

BECKETT
Theseus Group.

JEN
You know them?

BECKETT
Look, you can interview me all you
want, but we gotta get out of here
first. Trust me.

Not much choice. Jen nods.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
Just give it a minute until they
pass...

Suddenly, the drone appears over the alley behind them.
Beckett whirls, raising his carbine to fire --

JEN
Wait!

She pushes the weapon down.

JEN (CONT'D)
You start shooting and the whole
goddamn camp's gonna know where we
are.

Jen snatches up a bottle. The drone swoops low --

INT. LAND ROVER - MOVING - DAY

Kelly watches the camera's live feed as Jen hurls the bottle
at the drone -- the camera lens CRACKS as the bottle hits it.

The drone wobbles, then nosedives to the ground. The laptop
screen bursts into a blizzard of STATIC.

KELLY
Shit! Lost the UAV.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - MARKET AREA - DAY

AID WORKERS, VENDORS, and REFUGEES in line watch in confusion
as Jen and the others run past.

Allawi looks back -- and barrels into a food cart. The
furious Vendor SHOUTS at him -- Refugees CLAMOR --

CAMP SECURITY GUARDS notice the confusion.

BECKETT
Come on!

Jen pulls Allawi to his feet and gets him moving.

INT./EXT. LAND ROVER IN MARKET AREA - MOVING - DAY

Halsey spots the commotion. Beckett and Said break into view,
followed by Jen and Allawi.

HALSEY

There!

Rodriguez tries to follow them, but the Crowd is too dense.

RODRIGUEZ

There's too many people!

Halsey swings his door open as Rodriguez parks the Rover.

HALSEY

Rodriguez, stay in the vehicle, see
if you can get around. Kelly,
Green, keep after them -- I'll
circle around.

GREEN

Copy that.

Halsey exits, breaking into a run as Kelly and Green head deeper into the camp after Jen and the others.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - TENTS - DAY

Jen, Allawi, Beckett, and Said cut a straight path through a quiet section of tents devoid of any Refugees.

BECKETT

We're almost out of this --

Suddenly, Halsey appears around a tent twenty yards away. Jen and the others drop into cover behind a dumpster.

SAID

(hushed)

Did he see us?

Halsey draws a pistol and screws on a suppressor.

Said trembles, barely breathing. Halsey gets closer -- he's only a few yards away.

Beckett moves quietly, motioning the others to follow him toward a half-collapsed tent nearby. They edge around the dumpster, keeping it between them and Halsey as he passes.

Jen lets out a breath in relief...and then her phone BUZZES.

She immediately shuts it off, but Halsey stops. He turns and approaches the tent. Behind it, Beckett silently slides his knife free of its sheath.

Halsey is almost to the tent -- but the sound of Kelly and Green approaching at a jog brings him up short.

HALSEY
You got eyes on 'em?

GREEN
No, sir.

HALSEY
Shit...

Halsey looks back at the tent. He raises his pistol and whips around the corner. No one there.

Halsey kicks the tent in frustration.

HALSEY (CONT'D)
(into radio)
Rodriguez? Get to the south
entrance, we're coming to you.

Halsey and the Contractors head off.

Jen, Beckett, Said, and Allawi watch from their hiding place behind a different nearby tent.

INT. REFUGEE CAMP - TRAILER - DAY

Ammar answers his ringing phone.

AMMAR
Jen! Allawi is in the camp; I found
his picture. I just tried to call --

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

Jen keeps her voice low.

JEN
Yeah, no shit. Listen, get out of
here and meet us back at the base.
Contact Sarraf, tell him to get
hold of Said's family. Allawi's
too.

AMMAR (ON PHONE)
What's going on?

JEN
I don't have time to explain, just
do it. And move your ass.

She crushes the phone with the heel of her boot.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - SOUTHERN ENTRY POINT - DAY

Rodriguez meets Halsey and the others at the Land Rover.

HALSEY

Got anything?

RODRIGUEZ

They must have ditched their phones, but we got movement on the tracker. North entrance.

HALSEY

Show me.

Rodriguez opens Kelly's laptop, displaying a map with a blinking dot on the move away from the camp.

INT./EXT. VAN ON DESERT HIGHWAY - MOVING - DAY

Jen drives with Beckett riding shotgun. Said sits with Allawi in the back. They have their bulletproof vests on.

JEN

Alright, who the hell were those guys?

BECKETT

One of Uncle Sam's biggest contracts out here, but they try to keep a low profile. A lot of ex-Deltas, Dev. Group -- real black bag, boogeyman shit.

JEN

And now they're...what? Trying to take over the blood antiquities trade?

BECKETT

More or less -- the Caliphate's losing ground every day, so if there's ever a time to muscle in on their business it's now.

(he shrugs)

Now you know who hired me.

JEN

And who now wants to kill all of us. You should have told me.

BECKETT

Don't play innocent, you knew
people were after me -- you just
didn't give a shit.

She glowers out the window, knowing he's right.

Said nervously watches as a MOTORCYCLE approaches and slows,
but it whines past.

He takes out a creased photograph of him with Alia and Nasim.
Allawi puts a hand on his friend's shoulder.

ALLAWI

[You will see them again soon. I
promise.]

Said does his best to return Allawi's encouraging smile.

INT. THESEUS GROUP HQ - OPS CENTER - DAY

Dyer paces.

DYER

Tell me you have their location.

TECH

Passing into Haqlaniyah now.

DYER

On-screen.

The Tech hits a few keys. A DRONE'S AERIAL VIEW of the van
winks into place on the room's central screen.

DYER (CONT'D)

Assets in place?

TECH

Waiting on your go, ma'am.

Dyer touches her earpiece.

DYER

Halsey? You're green -- bring her
in alive if you can.

ON THE SCREEN, the van has crossed into a small town.

INT./EXT. VAN IN MARKETPLACE - MOVING - DAY

The van turns a corner into a crowded, colorful market.

Traffic slows to a crawl -- a TRUCK has broken down ahead. The DRIVER stands over the smoking hood, waving at oncoming cars to move around him.

Jen looks for an opening to get over from the blocked lane. Beckett watches the marketplace around them.

JEN

You see something?

Beckett shakes his head without looking at her.

BECKETT

If something's gonna go down, this is a good spot for it.

Jen eyes the bustling market and hands Allawi her helmet.

JEN

Put this on.

Allawi's fingers shake as he tightens the chinstrap. Beckett rolls his window down and thumbs his M4's safety off.

The van inches forward, getting closer to the stopped truck. The Driver waves them on, still hunched over his open hood.

The last car in front of the van merges, leaving open road between them and the truck. Jen begins to merge when --

The Driver lifts a concealed AK-47 from underneath the truck's open hood and advances on the van!

BECKETT

Get down, get down --

BRRRDDDT! The Driver opens fire on full auto -- the van's front windshield spiderwebs.

Said and Allawi drop to the floor as Beckett FIRES through his open window, dropping the Driver.

Shoppers and Vendors scatter in panic SCREAMING.

Cars CRUNCH fenders as they try to get away, causing more of a pile-up. Some Drivers abandon their vehicles and run.

Jen risks a glance up and spots motion to the right -- THREE MASKED CONTRACTORS.

JEN

Three o'clock!

Jen hunches down as the Contractors OPEN UP. Shattered glass showers her, SLICING her forehead open.

Beckett adjusts his aim and hits one of the Contractors, sending the others ducking for cover -- when more GUNFIRE erupts from behind.

A shot SLAMS into Jen's stomach. Her vest catches it, but it hits like a sledgehammer, knocking her to the floor. She cries out in pain.

SAID

Jen!

Beckett whirls to see TWO MORE CONTRACTORS approaching.

BECKETT

Shit!

Swinging around, Beckett squeezes off a few more rounds.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

We gotta move, now!

The GUNFIRE is deafening as the remaining Contractors close in on the van. Beckett drops one of them --

Gasping for breath, Jen gets back up into the driver's seat. She puts the gearshift into reverse.

The tires SQUEAL as she tries to go left around the stopped truck, but CRUNCHES to a halt against an abandoned car blocking the way.

The engine STALLS.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Back up, back up, back up!

JEN

I'm trying -- it's stuck!

She tries the keys again, but the engine won't catch --

One of the Contractors reaches the van and smashes a window. He reaches in and wrenches the door open -- seizes Said's legs, trying to drag him out.

Said clutches at the door frame and hangs on with desperate strength -- Beckett's carbine CLICKS empty. He drops it and draws his pistol --

BAM-BAM-BAM! He fires point-blank until the Contractor goes limp and lets go of Said.

Jen turns the key again -- and the engine ROARS back to life! She throws the van into reverse and stomps on the pedal --

Wrenching the wheel into a turn, she aims for a gap between two stalls at the mouth of a side street. The van SMASHES the stalls aside as it plows through --

INT./EXT. VAN ON SIDE STREETS - MOVING - DAY

Jen pulls a rough 180 and speeds deeper into the warren of alleyways. She rubs her eyes free of blood from the cut on her forehead.

Without warning, a fresh BLAST of GUNFIRE shatters the van's back window!

A HUMVEE tears into view behind them, a CONTRACTOR firing from the turret --

JEN

Behind us!

BECKETT

Don't stop, don't stop!

Jen hammers the accelerator to the floor.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Said!

Beckett slides his pistol to Said. Panicked, Said hesitates as Beckett pulls a new magazine from his vest.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Shoot 'em, goddammit!

Said reaches for the pistol, but another BURST of gunfire makes him flinch. The pistol clatters out into the road.

Beckett slams the mag home and moves back for a better angle.

Jen clocks an intersecting street approaching and yanks on her seatbelt --

JEN

Hang on!

The van's tires scream in protest as Jen makes the turn. Her side-view mirror SMASHES off on the corner.

The Humvee ROARS through the turn after them, gaining speed --

INT./EXT. HUMVEE ON PARALLEL STREET - MOVING - DAY

Halsey accelerates in another Humvee. He catches a glimpse of the van before it disappears into the next block.

Halsey puts his foot down, keeping pace --

INT./EXT. VAN ON SIDE STREETS - MOVING - DAY

Behind the van, the Contractor in the turret fires again -- and HITS Allawi through the throat.

SAID

No!

Pumped with adrenaline as she struggles to keep the wheel straight, Jen looks back.

JEN

You have to stop the bleeding!

SAID

How?!

JEN

Use this -- put pressure on it!

Jen pulls off her scarf and tosses it back. Said presses it against the wound.

Allawi's eyes are wide with shock as he coughs raggedly, choking on his own blood.

Beckett takes careful aim and FIRES. He takes out the front tires on the Humvee -- then shoots through the window and hits the Driver.

The Humvee skids wildly, losing control -- and CRASHES into a wall, coming to a dead halt.

BECKETT

They're down!

Jen keeps her foot down.

SAID

It's not working!

Beckett takes the scarf from Said, doing what he can to stop Allawi's bleeding.

BECKETT

Come on, come on, stay with me.

Fingers trembling, Allawi seizes Said's arm.

ALLAWI

[Rabia...and my mother. You keep them safe.]

SAID

[I will.]

A moment of understanding between them.

ALLAWI

[Sama Valley. Lockbox...in the pit. The code...]

Allawi pulls Said close -- WHISPERS something in his ear. This registers with Beckett.

Allawi's breath comes in rapid gasps...then stops altogether.

Jen glances back as they shoot through an intersection.

And then, out of nowhere -- Halsey's Humvee SMASHES into them from the side!

The T-bone collision CRUSHES the van against a telephone pole -- metal CRUMPLES like tissue paper.

Whiplash THROWS Jen against the side of the car, CRACKING her head into the doorframe.

INT. THESEUS GROUP HQ - OPS CENTER - DAY

Dyer takes in the drone's impersonal God's-eye view of the crash with tight-lipped satisfaction.

INT./EXT. VAN - DAY

The world goes BLURRY for Jen as her breathing echoes in her RINGING EARS. She can just make out Halsey approaching.

Jen struggles to move, but slumps back. Halsey looms over her as her eyes slip shut into...

BLACKNESS.

Indistinct VOICES give orders. A heavy door CLANGS shut.

The darkness lessens as a BAG is pulled off Jen's head.

Blindingly harsh FLOODLIGHTS snap on.

Jen's eyes crack open and she tries to get oriented, blinking the crusted blood from her eyes as the space around her comes into focus. She's in:

INT. THESEUS GROUP HQ - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Jen slumps, halfway on her feet, her hands cuffed to a chain on a pulley rig. Her bare feet are secured to the floor.

Jen shivers. Her jacket and shirt have been stripped away, leaving her in a tank-top.

Dyer emerges from the shadows.

DYER

So: Jenna Lasky, the reporter.

Jen's voice comes out in a hoarse croak.

JEN

No one...calls me "Jenna"...bitch.

Dyer smiles faintly.

DYER

I've read your work. It's quite good.

JEN

Where are they?

Dyer ignores that and starts to circle Jen.

DYER

I don't know what you may have heard about me or this company, but I'd hoped that you of all people could appreciate what we're doing here.

JEN

Me of all people?

DYER

You've been on the ground. Face to face with the enemy. You know better than most: ISIS isn't defeated, far from it. I won't apologize for refusing to fight terror with one hand tied behind my back.

JEN

And making a fortune off stealing antiquities is just your proper compensation, that it?

DYER

My soldiers bled for their country, to keep people like you safe, and barely got a thank-you in return. They deserve better -- they deserve what's in that ledger.

Dyer motions to someone. Jen cranes her neck around to see Halsey, holding a remote. She flinches as Dyer steps closer.

DYER (CONT'D)

So where is it?

JEN

I don't know what you're talking about.

DYER

I thought journalists lied better.

Halsey hits a button on the remote. The chain pulley snaps taught, YANKING Jen fully upright.

With her feet held in place, her arms are forced to stretch higher. She grunts at the pain, jaw clenched shut as she struggles to keep her feet on the ground.

DYER (CONT'D)

The longer this takes, the more it will hurt. Where is it?

JEN

Fuck off.

Halsey lowers Jen with a chuckle. She gasps for breath.

HALSEY

You're getting the same look your boyfriend did.

Jen's head snaps up.

JEN

What...do you mean?

(to Dyer)

What the hell does he mean?!

Halsey hits the remote again. Jen cries out as the chain JERKS her off the ground, higher than before.

Halsey tosses something to the ground in front of her: Will's COMPASS, singed and dented.

Jen tries to process this -- she SCREAMS, pure pain and rage.

Halsey lowers her again. Jen sinks to her knees as she gets her breath back.

Dyer kneels -- only inches between them. She wipes the blood off Jen's cheek.

DYER

Ortega didn't even realize it, but he was getting close.

JEN

And you couldn't have him telling the world all your dirty little secrets.

DYER

Believe me, I took no pleasure in it. But I had no choice.

Dyer stands.

DYER (CONT'D)

I'm going to ask one last time: where is it?

Jen looks away, jaw set. She's not talking.

DYER (CONT'D)

Let's hope your friends are more cooperative.

More floodlights switch on, illuminating Said and Beckett strapped to chairs, gagged, and hands cuffed. A masked CONTRACTOR rips off their gags.

DYER (CONT'D)

This is going to be very simple.

The Contractor presses the muzzle of a pistol against the base of Said's skull.

JEN

No --!

Halsey pulls the chain taught, cutting her off.

Said trembles. But beneath his terror, there's the desperate courage that comes from knowing death is unavoidable.

The Contractor's finger tightens on the trigger...

BECKETT

Stop!

Everyone looks at him.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

I know where it is -- I can take you right to it.

DYER

And in return?

BECKETT

You and I are square -- same deal as before. I walk.

Dyer thinks it over...

INT. THESEUS GROUP HQ - OPS CENTER - DAY

Halsey and Rodriguez shove Jen and Said through the door. Dyer enters after them with Beckett, hands uncuffed.

DYER

Well?

Beckett hesitates for a moment. And then:

BECKETT

Sama Valley. A dig site in the hills.

A Tech brings up a satellite still of mountain terrain. TRUCKS and HUMAN FIGURES are also clearly visible.

DYER

This is still occupied territory.

BECKETT

Nothing your guys and I can't handle.

DYER

And the ledger?

Beckett points.

BECKETT

In a lockbox, here in the caves. Said knows the combination.

DYER

He didn't seem to mind having a gun
to his head. I need a guarantee
he'll deliver.

BECKETT

Bring Lasky, and he will.

Jen glares at Beckett, furious at this betrayal.

JEN

You goddamn bastard!

He doesn't meet her eye.

DYER

For your sake, Beckett, you better
know what you're doing.
(to Halsey)
Prep the helos.

Halsey nods with a grin.

EXT. AIRSTRIP - NIGHT

Rodriguez, Green, and a dozen more CONTRACTORS load up near a pair of hulking BLACK HAWK HELICOPTERS.

Halsey and Beckett, in full battle-rattle, approach the helos with Jen and Said.

The Contractors herd them to the Black Hawks. Jen pauses a moment at the door, knowing there's no coming back from this...then climbs on board.

Rotor wash THRUMS, kicking up a blizzard of sand as the helos rise into the night.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

The Black Hawks fly fast and low.

INT. BLACK HAWK - MOVING - NIGHT

The cabin is deafening without a headset. The only light comes from instruments.

Across from Said and Jen, Beckett double-checks his gear and looks up, feeling her stare. He remains impassive -- impossible to read.

HALSEY (OVER HEADSET)
Get set -- five mikes to doors
open.

Thumbs up through the cabin.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

The terrain has become more rugged. The Black Hawks pass overhead, low enough to kick up flurries of snow.

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - GUARD POST - NIGHT

The moon's glow illuminates jagged, snow-dusted rocks.

A pair of pacing SENTRIES blow into their hands to keep warm. One pauses at the distant THUMP-THUMP-THUMP of rotors echoing off the mountains in the darkness.

The other Sentry picks up on the sound, but it fades after a few moments. They exchange a glance -- *just the wind?*

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - LANDING AREA - NIGHT

The Black Hawks touch down. Contractors exit like the pros they are, moving in silent coordination.

Jen is next with Said.

JEN
Head down!

He nods and ducks low as they follow the Contractors.

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - GUARD POST - NIGHT

Both Sentries peer out into the night for what seems like an eternity. Fingers white-knuckle their rifles, ready to fire.

And then nothing.

The Sentries relax. They shoulder their weapons and resume their rounds.

THWACK! THWACK! Suppressed gunshots drop both men. Halsey melts out of the blackness.

Through his THERMAL OPTICS goggles, the bodies of the men he just killed glow spectrally, like a negative photograph.

He puts a safety round in each body as the others appear. Halsey motions Green and another Contractor to take up a position where the Sentries were.

Beckett takes point as the rest of the group heads deeper up into the valley.

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - TRAIL - NIGHT

Beckett advances along a trail through a maze of rock formations and boulders. His goggles paint the scenery in eerie grayscale phosphorescence.

Halsey and the others follow, moving tactically with their weapons ready. A pair of Contractors bring up the rear with Jen and Said.

Beckett rounds a corner and finds himself on the edge of a SHEER DROP, well over a hundred feet.

Halting mid-stride, he knocks a few loose pebbles over the edge. They plummet down to a RIVER far below.

BECKETT

Goddamn...

Beckett keeps moving as the trail hugs the cliff wall. The others follow. Said does his best not to look down.

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - CAVE - NIGHT

Back among the rocks away from the drop-off, Beckett comes to a halt. He can see a cave opening up ahead.

Another SENTRY stationed outside, AK-47 slung over his shoulder, back turned to warm his hands over an oil drum.

Beckett holds up a fist. He hands his M4 to the man behind him, then slides his knife free.

Beckett crosses to the Sentry in a silent crouch and rises behind him. In one fluid motion, Beckett clamps a hand over his mouth and punches the knife blade into his throat.

Halsey and the Contractors head after Beckett. The two watching Jen and Said remain outside with them.

The cave's pitch-black maw swallows Beckett and the others whole as they enter.

Breath steaming in the cold, Jen stares at the cave. The seconds tick by...

Suddenly, the sound of MUFFLED GUNSHOTS echo from the cave.

A SCREAM -- SHOUTING. *Their presence is no longer a secret.*

BRRRDDDT! Someone opens up on full auto, amplified by the acoustics of the tunnel to sound like an evil drum.

It cuts off abruptly. The silence resumes.

The Contractors train their weapons on the cave. The tension is unbearable...and then Halsey comes in over the radio:

HALSEY (ON RADIO)
All clear. Bring 'em in.

One of the Contractors behind Jen prods her in the back, and they head into the cave.

INT. CAVE - TUNNEL - NIGHT

Even with the Contractors' weapon-mounted flashlights, it's still hard to see, and Said stumbles. He looks down in horror to see a dead FIGHTER, pooling blood.

JEN
Come on.

Ahead, the tunnel gets wider. Low-wattage bulbs hang from the ceiling and the walls show signs of digging.

INT. CAVE - CENTRAL CHAMBER - NIGHT

The tunnel opens up into a large, well-lit chamber with stacks of crates and equipment.

Antechambers and side passages branch off from the main chamber. One short passage ends abruptly in a DEEP PIT the size of a well shaft.

The Contractors drag dead ISIS FIGHTERS into a corner as Jen and Said enter. Halsey looks at Beckett expectantly.

HALSEY
Well?

Beckett points at the pit -- no bottom in sight. He cracks a few glow sticks and tosses them down. They're barely visible by the time they hit the floor.

HALSEY (CONT'D)
Jesus...I'm not risking any of my
guys on this.
(MORE)

HALSEY (CONT'D)

(to Jen)

Hope you're not claustrophobic.

She glowers at him...

INT. CAVE - CENTRAL CHAMBER - NIGHT - LATER

The Contractors have rigged a line descending into the pit. Beckett finishes securing Jen in a climbing harness.

He clips a collapsible shovel to the harness and winks. Jen notes this, uncertain...

HALSEY

Move it!

Beckett steps back to belay her. With all eyes on her, Jen eases over the edge of the pit and lowers into the darkness.

She pushes off the walls as she goes. One foot finds a small ledge, but as she puts her weight on it, it SNAPS off!

Jen drops a few feet before the rope CATCHES her. It's agonizing against her bruised stomach.

SAID

Jen! Are you okay?

She steadies herself.

JEN

Yeah...

(under her breath)

Could've brought a goddamn ladder.

Jen continues her descent. She switches on a high-powered flashlight and sweeps the beam through the pit.

There are no side passages at the bottom, just sandy, rocky ground. A few more feet...and she's reached the bottom.

JEN (CONT'D)

I'm at the end!

Jen snaps the shovel together and starts to dig.

JEN (CONT'D)

Come on, Allawi...give me something..

The shovel chews through the ground until -- CLANK!

That was metal.

Jen resumes digging, faster and faster. Gradually, a rectangular shape emerges through the sand: the top of a heavy-duty LOCKBOX.

JEN (CONT'D)
 (wryly, to herself)
 Buried treasure...

INT. CAVE - CENTRAL CHAMBER - NIGHT - LATER

Back up top, Jen unclips from her harness as everyone gathers around the lockbox. Halsey motions Said forward.

HALSEY
 You're up.

Said hesitates. Beckett pulls Jen close and puts his pistol at her temple. Reluctant, Said kneels and enters a six-digit combination on the lock. It BEEPS affirmatively...and opens.

Said lifts out a thick, leather-bound NOTEBOOK. Haley takes it and flips through the pages.

They're full of detailed handwritten notes, sketches of artifacts, maps, and printed files. *This is the LEDGER.* Halsey stuffs it in his pack.

HALSEY (CONT'D)
 Much obliged. 'Course, I'm afraid that means you just outlived your usefulness.

Halsey reaches for his pistol --

And Beckett SMASHES an elbow into Rodriguez's face! He locks the contractor in a chokehold, using him as a human shield.

The Contractors snap up their weapons. Halsey trains his pistol on Jen.

BECKETT
 Everybody calm down.

Rodriguez struggles in vain against the iron grip. Beckett's free hand comes into view holding a GRENADE.

HALSEY
 That's a pretty stupid play for a smart guy, Beckett.
 (to his men)
 Waste this asshole -- he's bluffing.

Beckett pulls out the grenade's pin, keeping his thumb over the spoon.

BECKETT
Wouldn't count on it. Weapons on the deck, now! Or I'll bring this whole place down.

The Contractors hesitate, unsure what to do.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
Weapons down.

Nobody moves. And then Halsey motions the Contractors to lay their weapons down and re-holsters his pistol.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
Jen -- you and Said get behind me.

Said starts to move. Jen remains in place.

JEN
Give me the ledger.

BECKETT
Jen, what the hell are you --

JEN
Do it!

Seething, Halsey unclips his pack and takes a step forward --

JEN (CONT'D)
Throw me the pack.

Halsey reluctantly tosses it.

HALSEY
You know you can't run from this.

Jen pulls it on as she follows Said into the tunnel behind Beckett. He backs up after them, dragging Rodriguez.

BECKETT
Nice and easy now, boys.

They're almost clear...and Halsey's eyes harden. Rodriguez sees it --

HALSEY
Sorry, bud.

RODRIGUEZ
No, don't -- !

Halsey quick-draws and SHOOTs Rodriguez through the head.

Beckett stumbles as the Contractors seize their weapons. He hurls the grenade -- Halsey dives for cover --

BOOM! The explosion is deafening in the confined space and rips through several Contractors.

Bullets SMASH into the walls around them as Jen, Beckett, and Said sprint back into the --

INT. CAVE - TUNNEL - DAY

Beckett FIRES back.

BECKETT

Go, go, go!

Shouts and the sounds of stomping boots follow them. Up ahead, early morning sunlight brightens the tunnel.

JEN

SAT phone!

Beckett pulls the SAT phone from his vest and tosses it to Jen. She dials as they run.

INT. AL ASAD - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ammar paces the room. Captain Sarraf stares out the window. Behind them, Alia sits at the table with Nasim. Tala and Rabia wait nearby.

Ammar's phone RINGS. He snaps it open.

AMMAR

Jen?!

JEN (ON PHONE)

Ammar! We're in the Sama Valley and we need an extraction ASAP! Get Sarraf, send whatever you can --

A HAIL OF GUNFIRE cuts her off.

Alia hugs Nasim reassuringly, but shares a frightened look with Sarraf and Ammar.

INT. CAVE - TUNNEL - DAY

Jen glances back -- two Contractors behind them, Halsey in the lead. One side of his face is torn up and bloody from the grenade blast.

GUNFIRE makes Jen duck -- she drops the SAT phone as she jags into cover behind Beckett. A round hits the phone.

SAID
Did you get through?

JEN
I don't know.

BECKETT
Goddammit!

Beckett drops one of the Contractors, then fires off a few more shots to keep their heads down.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
Keep moving!

They round a corner at a dead sprint, chased by more gunfire.

SAID
Look!

There up ahead: the cave entrance.

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - CAVE - DAY

They burst out of the cave.

Suddenly, Beckett sways. He touches his side -- and his fingers come away slick with blood. *He's been hit.*

JEN
No!

She drags him into cover. He sinks down, threatening to pull her over with him. His carbine clatters to the ground.

JEN (CONT'D)
Come on!

SAID
How bad is it?

Jen meet's Said's eye -- it's not good.

BECKETT

You have to go...

JEN

I'm getting you out of here. All the way back to Alaska and that ex-wife, come on.

Despite breathing in labored gasps, he forces a smile.

BECKETT

You never...do...know when to quit, do you?

Tears well in her eyes. GUNFIRE whines overhead, but she doesn't seem to register it. Beckett scoops up his carbine.

SAID

We must go!

BECKETT

Just get me up.

Jen hesitates.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Do it!

With an effort, Jen pulls Beckett to his feet as he roars through gritted teeth.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Dammit!

Beckett blind-fires a few shots back at the cave. He pushes a flare into Jen's hands.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Get out of here. Don't look back.

SAID

Jen, please!

BECKETT

Go. It's okay.

Jen's gaze doesn't leave Beckett for a long moment -- but then she follows Said away back down the trail.

Locking down the pain, Beckett ejects his carbine's spent mag and slides in a fresh one.

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - TRAIL - DAY

Jen and Said hurry along the trail --

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - CAVE - DAY

Halsey and his remaining four Contractors exit the cave. He directs his men with hand signals.

They split up, each pair taking a flank into the rocky maze. Halsey heads up the middle.

HALSEY
(into radio)
Green? Move up the valley. We're
pushing them right to you.

Halsey ups his speed.

EXT. SAMA VALLEY - DAY

Beckett circles around an outcropping and spots one pair of Contractors working their way through the rocks.

CRACK! One of them collapses.

The other drops into cover, FIRING toward the sound of the report -- but Beckett is gone.

Halsey notes the direction of the gunshot's echo and adjusts his path with predatory efficiency.

LOWER VALLEY

Jen and Said move along the trail, back the way they came. Suddenly, she tenses -- Green and his partner are ahead, moving to intercept them.

She and Said hurry out of sight. They move through a narrow passageway between two rock formations...

...and don't see the Contractor come into view behind them. He takes aim for an easy kill --

CRACK! A headshot drops him, dead before he hits the ground.

Jen and Said look back -- realizing how close they came.

UPPER VALLEY

Beckett moves deeper into the rocks. Already in search of his next target...

UPPER VALLEY - ELSEWHERE

Halsey pauses for a moment at the sound of GUNFIRE. *More of his men are dead.*

UPPER VALLEY

Beckett checks his last mag -- empty.

He drops the spent carbine and draws his pistol. His steps are coming more slowly now, blood leaking down his leg...

DROP-OFF

Green moves along the trail. The Contractor next to him darts a glance down the drop to the river below.

In a blur, Beckett appears around a rock formation -- BAM! BAM! He double-taps the Contractor.

Green opens up but Beckett is in too close -- he knocks Green's rifle aside --

They trade desperate blows, Beckett hampered by his wound. His pistol goes flying over the edge. Green works the advantage, bloodying his knuckles as he HAMMERS punches into Beckett's side.

He grunts in pain but whips his knife out -- stabs through Green's vest. Beckett pounds a fist on the hilt, PUNCHING the blade into Green's heart.

Green flops over the drop-off to the river below. Beckett sways, drained by the effort. Something catches his peripheral vision --

Halsey -- without hesitation, he pumps two rounds into Beckett's chest. His vest catches the bullets, but the force KICKS him backwards --

Beckett topples over the cliff. He FALLS for what seems like forever...then SMASHES into the river far below.

LOWER VALLEY

Jen watches in horror. The water irons out the ripples...then nothing. The surface of the river remains unbroken.

She pulls herself away and keeps moving with Said.

DROP-OFF

Halsey can see them up ahead --

LOWER VALLEY

Jen and Said pass the dead Sentries.

BAM! A chunk of rock SHATTERS inches from Jen's head.

Disoriented and stung by the shattered rocks, she drops to the ground. Said looks back --

SAID

Jen!

Halsey emerges behind them. He FIRES -- hits Said in the arm. Halsey adjusts his aim, but his rifle is out.

Gasping in pain, Said scrambles backwards away from Halsey. He stops short as he hits a rock wall.

HALSEY

End of the line.

Halsey tosses his rifle aside and draws his pistol with a chuckle. Said closes his eyes -- and out of nowhere, Jen CHARGES into Halsey!

He drops the pistol -- but unloads a punishing series of BODY BLOWS and SEIZES Jen by the throat.

HALSEY (CONT'D)

Goddamn bitch!

Groggy, Said sees the dead Sentries...and their weapons.

Jen KNEES Halsey's crotch. He lets go, falling to the ground. Halsey rises -- then stops, staring into his own pistol.

Jen trembles with pain and rage but somehow keeps the pistol steady. Her finger brushes the trigger...

And then she realizes what she's doing. Jen's eyes clear. Her breath steadies. She lowers the pistol...then SMASHES it into Halsey's temple. He drops, apparently unconscious.

Jen tosses the pistol aside and turns away.

Halsey's eyes flick open. He slides a hidden KNIFE from his boot and rushes Jen --

A stab of GUNFIRE cuts him down.

Halsey falls...revealing Said, holding a Sentry's smoking rifle. He and Jen share a moment of somber acknowledgement.

JEN
Are you okay?

Said smiles raggedly as she helps him stand.

SAID
Just keep your head down, get the story...

JEN
...and don't get dead.

SAID
All there is to it.

Jen smiles back.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

Jen and Said, makeshift bandage on his arm, sit overlooking the mountains below. They share the silence. Bloody, battered and exhausted, but still alive.

And then in the distance -- three Iraqi Army Mi-17 HELICOPTERS come into view.

Jen hauls herself to her feet and ignites the flare. Red smoke billows skyward as the helos swoop in toward them.

EXT. AL ASAD - TARMAC - DAY

The choppers touch town. SOLDIERS, MEDICS, and other BASE PERSONNEL are there to meet them.

Off to the side, Alia holds Nasim next to Tala and Rabia. They turn their heads at the dust whipped up by the rotors.

The helo doors slide open. Ammar emerges with Captain Sarraf. Alia and Nasim strain for a glimpse past the personnel swarming forward -- and then they see Said.

Tala and Rabia look for Allawi...and realize he's not coming. They hold each other close.

Alia rushes through the crowd with Nasim, pushing her to Said. She wraps him in a tight embrace.

Jen watches from a nearby gurney as Alia assists the Medics with Said's wound. Satisfied that he'll be alright, Jen lets herself sink back and closes her eyes.

BLACKNESS.

A crack of light splits the darkness. It widens, illuminating the insides of a SHIPPING CONTAINER.

TURKISH POLICE OFFICERS pry open the doors with crowbars.

They're in:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Vast towers of shipping containers rise around them, stacked like giant Legos.

Jen stands behind the Officers snapping pictures. Said is with her, arm in a sling.

TITLE OVER: Mersin, Turkey

The Officers step inside the shipping container, flashlights casting beams over stacks of crates.

An Officer opens one to reveal: it's full of ARTIFACTS: stone tablets, jewelled daggers, beautifully carved sculptures, golden diadems, and more.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO POST - NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Well after midnight. Jen sits in her cubicle, typing:

"...targeted shipments of artifacts that were recently recovered..."

INT. NATIONAL MUSEUM - LAB - DAY

MUSEUM WORKERS unpack crates, unloading reclaimed artifacts. Others are hard at work cataloging and cleaning the pieces.

Said moves among the Workers, directing their efforts. Jen takes more pictures and smiles, amused at Said's fussiness.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO POST - NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Chandra leaves her office, pulling her coat on. She notices the only light still on at Jen's cubicle.

Jen keeps writing:

"...contractors responsible for the killing of journalist William Ortega..."

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - THESEUS GROUP OFFICES - DAY

REPORTERS mob Dyer as she heads to her waiting car. She pushes past them, but pauses as she spots Jen watching from across the street.

Dyer looks away, her face a mask of bitter resignation, and gets into her car.

Jen walks away. She fishes out a cigarette and starts to light it...then stops. She tosses it into a trash can along with the pack.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO POST - NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Jen, still writing:

"...announced her resignation today as charges continue to mount..."

INT. IRAQI NATIONAL MUSEUM - DAY

A large CROWD fills the gallery, taking in an exhibit displaying the recovered antiquities. Nasim darts around, her eyes wide with wonder.

Said and Alia smile next to Tala and Rabia. They look happy watching Nasim.

Nearby, Jen raises her camera...but then thinks better of it, letting them have their moment to themselves.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO POST - NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Jen types the byline: "By William Ortega and Jenna Lasky."

All finished, she closes her laptop and looks up to see Chandra watching.

CHANDRA

So what now?

JEN

That ledger's just the start.
There's a lot more out there.

CHANDRA

You still need that vacation, you know.

JEN

Thought I just had one.

Chandra smiles.

CHANDRA

It's late, Jen. You should get some sleep.

She starts to go, then pauses, remembering.

CHANDRA (CONT'D)

Almost forgot -- this came for you.
No return address.

Chandra hands Jen a package and heads off.

Jen looks over the package, confused. She opens it...and Will's compass slides out onto her desk. Jen snaps it open to see Will smiling from the picture inside. Her eyes grow distant, welling with emotion.

Jen examines the envelope again. Something else slips out. A blank postcard of a snowy landscape: "Greetings from Alaska!"

Jen absorbs this. *Beckett*. She can't help but smile.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END