



UNIVERSAL CABLE PRODUCTIONS

STANISTAN

PILOT

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Network Polish
(Clean)

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TEASER

A PACKAGE OF OREO COOKIES

That all-American treat. HANDS grip the package-- PULL BACK to reveal-- we're not in Kansas anymore....

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET, STANISTAN - DAY

The OREOS are haggled over by a TEENAGE VENDOR and a WOMAN IN A FULL BURQA. The call to prayer WAILS over their negotiation-- impossible to hear their conversation over the tumult of buying and selling-- goats bleating-- the ceaseless bustle of a South Asian market.

SUPERTITLE: DARUM, STANISTAN. SOUTH ASIA.

Finally a price is settled. Money exchanged. BURQA WOMAN takes the Oreos, places them under her shawl-- slips into the crowd as--

A YOUNG BOY follows Burqa Woman with big, watchful eyes-- he's seen the whole thing. He points out the woman to his TWENTY-SOMETHING UNCLE: bearded, intense. Uncle's eyes narrow as--

BURQA WOMAN pushes upstream through the crowd. Something-- a hunch maybe-- makes her turn her head, just in time to clock--

UNCLE-- pointing her out to a GANG OF THREE OTHER YOUNG MEN.

Burqa Woman kicks it into high gear-- the CHASE IS ON!

Racing through the market-- obstacles of every kind-- WOODEN CARTS, CYCLISTS, BEGGARS, PHONE CARD and DVD DEALERS, GOATS-- Burqa Woman has some serious moves-- bobbing and weaving like a running back as--

She rounds a corner-- entering a warren of medieval MUD STRUCTURES-- dashing past LOCAL WOMEN who go about their daily chores--

Finally bursting into the OPEN STREET to see--

THE U.S. EMBASSY

A fortress. 10-FOOT-THICK WALLS. The STARS AND STRIPES fluttering behind towering ramparts. Burqa Woman makes a run for it, flying toward--

THE MAIN GATE

Encircled by THREE RINGS OF SECURITY: the OUTER RING is manned by hired LOCAL GUARDS, cooking KEBABS on make-shift STOVES as--

Burqa Woman runs toward them-- LEAD GUARD tosses away a cigarette, SHOUTS for everyone to look alive--

LEAD GUARD yells something to Burqa Woman in the LOCAL LANGUAGE-- something close to: "STAY THE FUCK BACK!"

But Burqa Woman isn't stopping...

THE SECOND SECURITY RING takes notice: SECURITY CONTRACTORS from the Philippines, wearing paramilitary uniforms, SCREAMING into WALKIE-TALKIES as they draw their guns...

UP IN THE GUARD TOWER

The THIRD RING has now been alerted: SOUTH AFRICAN SECURITY CONTRACTORS. Macho mercenaries with lots of gear and itchy triggers. One of them-- EDDIE (buzz cut, big ears) sees what's happening, shouts to his mates--

EDDIE
We got a runner!

BURQA WOMAN now comes to an abrupt halt-- 30 paces from the Filipino guards.

DOWN THE STREET

UNCLE and his POSSE have stopped their pursuit, hanging back to watch the standoff as--

A FILIPINO GUARD screams for Burqa Woman to put her hands up. At least TWENTY GUNS are trained on her.

Eddie's locked and loaded, ready to take her out.

Tower Guards have her in their sights.

More SCREAMING for her hands to go up--

She slowly raises them. The screaming stops-- a moment of eerie silence as the standoff stretches... then...

THUMP. The OREOS fall out of her burqa, right at her feet. Eddie shouts into his radio. [*All F-words are bleeped.*]

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(into his radio)
What is that, Oreos? Is that
fuckin' Oreo Cookies?

TOWER GUARD

Roger that. Looks like fuckin'
Oreos.

Now the Burqa Woman slowly reaches one hand to her face,
pulls off her head covering to reveal--

The woman is a MAN. About 35. We'll come to know him as
PHILLIP, and he doesn't usually dress like this...

EDDIE

(radio)

It's fuckin' Phillip with fuckin'
Oreos.

With his hands in the air...

PHILLIP

... Anybody want some cookies?

CUT TO:

INT. EMBASSY COMPOUND, MARCIE'S QUARTERS - DAY

MARCIE POST steps from a closet-sized shower, wrapped in a
towel. She's 34, with a hyper-alert self-awareness that
usually keeps her five steps ahead.

That's her job. And her curse.

MARCIE

(daunted)

My clothes are everywhere.

She surveys her tiny room-- windowless, bunker-like. A
converted metal shipping container, in fact. It's a mess.

GREG

They were taken off pretty quickly.

REVEAL-- GREGORY WEIR (mid-30s) still in bed-- chiseled
features and a well defined chest.

Marcie slips into a T-shirt.

GREG (CONT'D)

Actually, that's my v-neck.

MARCIE

This is yours?

GREG

Now you're judging.

MARCIE
I'm just saying-- we're not sure
whose clothes are whose?

GREG
First of all, that says more about
your style than mine.

MARCIE
What's wrong with my style?

He holds up a T-shirt printed with the U.S. logo: "From the
American People."

GREG
It could be more stylish.

Marcie's CELL PHONE BUZZES.

MARCIE
(re: her Blackberry)
Dammit.

GREG
What?

MARCIE
Nothing.

GREG
First lie of the day. Not even on
the clock.

She snatches THONG UNDERWEAR from the floor, dangles it from
her finger--

MARCIE
Yours or mine?

GREG
Funny. Still lying.

Greg gets out of bed, starts dressing.

MARCIE
I don't lie, I spin.

GREG
Now you're spinning lying.

MARCIE
At least I'm not just a pretty face
in a flak jacket.

She tosses him his "designer" FLAK JACKET.

GREG
You really think I'm pretty?

MARCIE
Almost as much as Anderson Cooper
does.

GREG
Speaking of pretty...

He holds up a WALLET-SIZED photo-- A military portrait, a
handsome young LATINO MAN in an ARMY OFFICER'S DRESS UNIFORM.

GREG (CONT'D)
Who's this?

Marcie-- buttoning a blouse. She stops.

MARCIE
Where'd you get that?

Greg holds up a hard cover of JFK's *PROFILES IN COURAGE*.

GREG
Fell out of your book.
(re: the book)
Look how shocked I am this would be
on your night stand.

She plucks the book and photo away--

MARCIE
I'll take that.

-- heads for the bathroom.

GREG
Come on, who is he?

MARCIE
JFK was the thirty-fifth president.

GREG
Ha. Yeah. You know what Eleanor
Roosevelt said about him-- "I wish
he had less profile and more
courage."

MARCIE
Weird, cause that's exactly how I
feel about you.

GREG
You're really not gonna tell me.

MARCIE
Why can't you do tomorrow?

She shoves a toothbrush in her mouth-- she won't be answering any more questions. Greg smirks at her, takes the hint.

GREG
I'll be in Lugar. Hasami's gonna win the governor's election. And what do you have against Anderson Cooper's taste in foreign correspondents?

Marcie rinses, spits--

MARCIE
Abdullah Hasami is not going to win an election. He's a warlord. And a murderer.

GREG
Here's some news-- and I'm not exactly first to break it: everyone in this country's a murderer.

MARCIE
The U.N. Commission banned him from running-- and I'm just saying, suddenly everyone on the news has to look like they just walked off a Banana Republic shoot?

GREG
First of all, I only modeled once and it was--

GREG (CONT'D)
A favor for a friend.

MARCIE
A favor for a friend.

MARCIE
We know. America's grateful.

GREG
I'm sorry you miss the days when war correspondents looked like Andy Rooney. But you of all people should understand the importance of presenting an attractive image when delivering a message.

MARCIE
 You're not delivering a message.
 You're reporting the news.

GREG
 This from a PR hack for the State
 Department?

Okay-- MARCIE GREG
 We all do our part. You hide
 the truth. I dig it up.

MARCIE GREG
 I don't hide the-- We're two sides of the same
 coin, babe. We use each
 other.

A silent beat. A whammy for Marcie who suddenly doesn't know
 if they're talking about work or... something else.

Greg's usual float-above-it-all insouciance carries the day.

He kisses her.

GREG (CONT'D)
 Bye.

MARCIE
 I hate you.

GREG
 (at the door, winks)
 Still lying.

Off Marcie, reconsidering her life choices--

END OF TEASER

ACT ONEEXT. DARUM SLUM - DAY

A warren of MEDIEVAL MUD HOUSES. The chaotic sounds of close quarters: SHOUTING, ANIMALS BLEATING, MUSIC... A scene from another millennia perhaps...

Except for the modern T-SHIRTS worn by KIDS playing in the narrow ALLEY, chasing each other past--

A STANISTANI HOMEMAKER, beating a Persian CARPET with a stick. As she removes the rug from the line, the view suddenly OPENS UP, revealing--

TOWERING CONCRETE SLABS. Looming over the life below. The imposing OUTER WALLS of...

EXT. THE US EMBASSY, STANISTAN - DAY

A GIANT COMPOUND, right next door to the slum. These two totally separate worlds... side by side. As we ESTABLISH...

Our official "POST CARD SHOT" of the MAIN GATE.

The SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES embedded in the wall-- pock-marked with BULLET HOLES.

INT. EMBASSY CAFETERIA - DAY

PHILLIP GUTHERY (32)-- our "burqa woman", now dressed in his regular business casual, more appropriate for his role as the USAID INFRASTRUCTURE DEPUTY MANAGER. He carries two coffees, smiling as he approaches--

MARCIE-- vigorously dabbing a spot on her blouse.

PHILLIP

What was it this time?

MARCIE

Fruit Loops. Is it noticeable?

PHILLIP

Might have an extra burqa if you need to change.

MARCIE

You always know just what to say.

He holds out a to-go cup for her. There's something easy and comfortable between these two...

PHILLIP

Only had dark roast. I put two
sugars.

She accepts the cup as they move from the cafeteria outside--

EXT. EMBASSY COMPOUND "HOOCHES" - CONTINUOUS

-- passing a colorful HAND-PAINTED SIGN: WELCOME TO "FLORIDA"

... along with a cluster of PLASTIC PINK FLAMINGOS, planted in the "front yard" (a tiny strip of grass) of the residential "HOOCHES" - cabins made of converted SHIPPING CONTAINERS. They're all lined in rows, sub-divided into informal "neighborhoods" named after American states.

It has the feeling of a vast, colorful trailer park. Each "hooch" has it's own yard, decorated to the unique taste of the occupant.

As Marcie and Phillip ZIG-ZAG through the maze of HOOCHES, we'll glimpse the color of this place: a Miami Dolphins flag here, a PUTTING GREEN there; a PICKET FENCE; a KIDDIE POOL.

Marcie's still fussing with her blouse stain...

MARCIE

Okay, be honest with me-- would you say I'm-- unstylish? Not just today, but like, usually?

PHILLIP

You're the most beautiful woman in Stanistan.

She looks at him. He's playing it nonchalant, but Marcie's on to this guy-- she knows he's into her. She deflects it...

MARCIE

I'm serious.

PHILLIP

So am I.

MARCIE

I was told I needed more style.

PHILLIP

I gotta ask you something.

MARCIE

You don't think that's rude?

PHILLIP

Marcie, are you leaving Stanistan?

He's got her attention. But she keeps walking-- past a shock of SUNFLOWERS and another SIGN: WELCOME TO "KANSAS".

MARCIE

Where'd you hear that?

PHILLIP

You're the press officer, supposed to know where stuff comes from.

As they approach a SECURITY DOOR, Marcie swipes it with her SECURITY LANYARD--

MARCIE

No comment.

She heads through the door. Phillip follows her into--

INT. EMBASSY CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

-- passing Embassy staff (both American and Stanistani).
This place is in a constant state of frenetic activity.

PHILLIP

Hey. Almost made it four months.
That's longer than the last guy.

MARCIE

Phillip--

PHILLIP

My job's hard enough. And I only have one boss.

MARCIE

(her "PR" voice)
State and AID are one happy family.

PHILLIP

Oh yeah? I missed that memo.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

Honestly-- I don't know how you do it. USAID has all the money. State has all the power. Neither talks to the other-- and you're supposed to work for both.

MARCIE

Stop being understanding. It's weird.

PHILLIP

I'm saying-- the only reason to
post Stanistan is to post somewhere
better. I get it.

MARCIE

Maybe that's my problem.

They've arrived at another door.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

I came for the wrong reason.

That's as much as she's ever said about why she's here.

PHILLIP

If you ever wanna talk about any--

MARCIE

Phillip. -- Nothing's official.
But if it happens... you're the
first one I tell.

As she opens the door, heads through...

STAY WITH PHILLIP-- long enough on his soulful look for us to
GET IT. This guy is head over heels for this woman...

He follows Marcie into--

INT. USAID CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The midst of the MORNING STAFF MEETING.

The UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LOGO
looms over a crowded conference room - about 20 people.
We'll be meeting some of them as we go...

But all of this is unmistakably presided over by--

CYNTHIA

-- so don't come to me with a
hundred thousand dollar project
when you've got a million in the
pipeline. Come on, people. This
is basic. Use it or lose it.

CYNTHIA STOWE, (40s, African American) DIRECTOR OF USAID,
heavy-set and formidable, a combustible mix of arrogance and
insecurity.

Marcie and Phillip's late entrance has not gone unnoticed.
Cynthia eyes them both with a laser-beam look: "don't you
come late to my meeting".

Phillip snags a seat while Marcie hovers in back, NOTEPAD in hand, ready to glean items for her press report.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Next.

Cynthia nods to her right hand NELSON KRAKOWSKI, 50s, talks a big game. Lots of hot air.

NELSON

Governor's election. Lugar Province.

CYNTHIA

Where are we?

ELECTION STAFFER

U.N.'s approved fifty-two candidates. Ballots are printed. Just waiting on donkeys.

MARCIE

(from the back)

I'm sorry. We're waiting on donkeys?

CYNTHIA

Hold on. Got a question from the late folk.

NELSON

How do you think the ballots get into the hills?

MARCIE

Apparently on donkeys.

CYNTHIA

(moving on, to Phillip)

Mr. Guthery. Let's talk about the Karez. And none of that engineer babble. Give it to me straight.

KAREZ. It's the first mention of this strange word. We don't know what it means yet. But we will...

PHILLIP

Okay. Well. What can I say? We break ground tomorrow.

Someone throws out a "HIP-HIP!" Cynthia holds up a hand. No "hoorays" yet.

CYNTHIA

I'll save the poetry for the ceremony-- but let me say this. In twenty-three years with USAID, this is the project I am most proud of.

(a look around the room)

Once upon a time we all got into this mess to help people. Believe it or not, we're about to do that. And you deserve some goddam recognition for it.

Seeing her passion, now we get why Cynthia's a leader here.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Marcie. Tell me we're all good for the ceremony.

MARCIE

Tent is up. Final press list goes out today. We're all set.

NELSON

Will there be chairs? Because last time--

CYNTHIA

Better be goddam chairs, Marcie.

MARCIE

Barioly?

Marcie gestures-- *go ahead...*

BARIOLY

On my life, ma'am. There will be chairs.

BARIOLY [BARRY-o-lie] BAHADRY (23), MARCIE'S ASSISTANT-- an earnest Stanistani national, desperate to make it to America. We'll get to know him later.

CYNTHIA

And does the State Department plan to grace us with their presence or will the Ambassador let me have the stage to myself?

MARCIE

I'll confirm with him today. Anything else for the briefing?

As Cynthia excuses Marcie with a flick of the wrist--

CYNTHIA

Moving on--

INT. EMBASSY PRESS BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

A DOODLE on a reporter's NOTEPAD. Up to reveal-- GREG at the back of a press conference room. About 20 REPORTERS from all over the world in attendance as Marcie speaks up front...

MARCIE

... then tomorrow, in an official ceremony here in the capital, USAID will break ground on the Karez rehabilitation project.

She gestures to a Powerpoint slide: a CROSS-SECTION DIAGRAM.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

The Karez-- K-A-R-E-Z, is a sixty-mile-long network of underground water tunnels. When fully restored, it will provide clean drinking and irrigation water to over three million people in--

GREG

Will Abdullah Hasami run for governor of Lugar?

She's momentarily thrown. Then doubles down.

MARCIE

The Karez is the largest public works project USAID has undertaken in country thus far--

(avoiding Greg's eyes)

-- and the Embassy stands by the U.N.'s decision not to allow a war criminal to run in the first free election in thirty years--

GREG

I've got credible sources saying otherwise.

MARCIE

And as I already told y--

(catches herself)

--all of you. Abdullah Hasami has been disqualified. Full stop.

ON Marcie. *Don't mess with me.*

Greg just smirks at her. *Okay. Peace out.*

He gets up to leave the briefing. Marcie watches him out of the corner of her eye as--

MARCIE (CONT'D)
 Fun fact: the original Karez
 tunnels are a thousand years old.

INT. EMBASSY SECURITY ENTRANCE - DAY

A DIAMOND BRACELET-- delicately laid alongside several other exquisite pieces. It would look like a case at Cartier except that it's actually--

One of those plastic gray TSA SECURITY TUBS. UP FROM THE TUB TO REVEAL...

CANDY
 ... matter of fact, my family's
 fought in every major American
 conflict since the Civil War.

Candy HEWITT-BENNING (mid 30s). Full-figured bombshell, cotillion posture, pageant smile: a genuine "Texas belle". And as we'll discover, a PR Rep for a Halliburton-like mega-contractor.

She's being guided through security by FILIPINO SECURITY CONTRACTORS. As they wave her through an X-RAY SCANNER...

CANDY (CONT'D)
 I like to think I'm doing my part
 in this one.

She says all this to-- an AFRICAN-AMERICAN MARINE GUARD in full dress uniform, her strapping Embassy escort.

MARINE GUARD
 Which side was your family on,
 ma'am?

CANDY
 (fastening her earrings)
 ... Pardon?

MARINE GUARD
 In the Civil War.

She gives him a laconic "oh, you" look...

CANDY
 They fought for Texas, honey, and
 nothing else.

MARINE GUARD
If you'll follow me, ma'am.

INT. AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE, RECEPTION - DAY

Marcie stands in front of GRACE BELLORIZA, the Ambassador's secretary, (40s, Filipino, thick accent). Hard to tell if her obtuseness is authentic or a very clever put-on to eschew all actual responsibility. Marcie's money is on the latter.

MARCIE
Grace, I just need five minutes.

GRACE
Ambassador cannot be disturbed.
Ambassador seeing D-C.O.P. from
RAMP-UP about I.D.L.G.

Marcie eyes her...

MARCIE
We both know those aren't real
acronyms.

GRACE
I know what I know. But how do I
know what you know?

JUST THEN-- A door opens. Candy, our Texas belle, emerges from the Ambassador's office.

CANDY
(to someone O.S.)
... absolutely, Ambassador, and do
give my best to your wife.

ON Marcie-- bracing herself for...

CANDY (CONT'D)
Marcie Post. Look at you.

Marcie unconsciously covers her Fruit Loop stain. There's no love lost with this woman.

MARCIE
Hello. Candy.

CANDY
Just in for the ground-breaking.
Let's catch up while I'm here?

She flips open a platinum-plated card holder. Delicately offers a BUSINESS CARD: a LOGO embossed in gold says "KENDRICK-KLINE: Global Solutions"

CANDY (CONT'D)
 New number. That's real gold leaf.
 (with a wink)
 So don't lose it.

As Candy swishes off...

Out steps AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS, imperious, despite a lingering dishevelment. Matthews turns his unsettling gaze to Marcie--

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS
 Grace, Ms. Post and I are not to be
 disturbed. No calls, no knocks, no
 foot rubs.

ON Marcie-- choosing to ignore his substantial creep factor.

MARCIE
 Good morning, sir.

INT. AMBASSADOR MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthews drops treats to his yippy YORKSHIRE TERRIER as
 Marcie watches--

MARCIE
 Sir, Director Stowe asked if you'd
 be attending the Karez ground-
 breaking ceremony, I told her--

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS
 Abdullah Hasami will be elected
 governor of Lugar Province.

Matthews finally looks up from his dog.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS (CONT'D)
 Arrange a public meeting with him
 tomorrow. Photos. No questions.

Marcie is dumbfounded. Barely knows where to begin.

MARCIE
 I'm sorry sir, did you say--

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS
 Emphasize America's readiness to
 partner with Mr. Hasami in the
 "challenging but vital work ahead."
 You'll know what to say.

MARCIE
 Sir, the Election Commission's
 ruling was very clear--

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

The Election Commission. Has had a change of heart.

(eying her)

You could use a cleanse, I think. Something fresh?

He gestures toward a MASSIVE INDUSTRIAL JUICER.

MARCIE

That's not necessary, sir. What concerns me is--

WHIRRRRRRRRRR! Matthews fires up the juicer, drowning her out. She waits. Lots of excruciating eye contact as he grinds fruits and veggies. He clicks off the machine.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

... Given Hasami is a war criminal, and a wanted enemy of the C.I.A.--

WHIRRRRR! One more short blast.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

(waits a beat)

... wouldn't it be more prudent--

WHIRRR! Matthews smiles. That should do it.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Sir, I just told reporters from thirteen countries there was no way the United States would let a war criminal run in a free election.

He pours out the bright green liquid into a cup, then slips a beer "cozie" labeled FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, around it.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

You know what I loved about working with your father?

Marcie tries not to bristle.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

There's his style, of course. What an elegant man. But mostly. His pragmatism. That's the mark of a true diplomat.

Matthews shoves the smoothie in her hand.

ACT TWOINT. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE - DAY

Marcie stands over the desk of her assistant, Barioly-- whom we met in the staff meeting.

BARIOLY

Abdullah Hasami? The warlord?

He points to the wall where there are a dozen WANTED POSTERS. Marcie marches over, rips down a poster with HASAMI'S FACE--

MARCIE

The soon-to-be-governor-- so we've got some work to do.

Marcie stops on her way to her desk-- sees FIVE SHOVELS leaned against the wall, each PAINTED GOLD from top to bottom. She holds one up.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

What is this?

BARIOLY

For the ground-breaking. You told me: "paint with gold."

MARCIE

Yes. Just-- I said. The blade.

(pointing)

This part. Now it's like...

(regards it, sighs)

Liberace's pooper-scooper.

BARIOLY

You don't like?

MARCIE

It's fine. Just get me in touch with Hasami's people. His advance man. Or whatever the equivalent is for a warlord.

PHILLIP

I think that's called a sniper. What's up?

Phillip-- passing through the office.

MARCIE

Hasami's on the ballot.

Phillip smirks. Figures...

PHILLIP

Guess somebody should tell the donkeys.

BARIOLY

Do you know what will happen to those people in Lugar-- if they don't vote for Hasami?

MARCIE

(to Phillip)

But here's the best part. Hasami's coming for a visit. Face time with Matthews. Tomorrow.

PHILLIP

What about the ceremony? We're breaking ground on Karez.

MARCIE

I know.

BARIOLY

Hasami-- he blows up their houses.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

Sixty miles of underground water tunnels--

MARCIE

I know.

BARIOLY

Steals their daughters.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

Our biggest project yet and we're gonna get upstaged by a visit from--

MARCIE

Phillip--

BARIOLY

He's a very bad man.

MARCIE

We know.

PHILLIP

We know.

Everyone takes a breath. Marcie leans on the shovel.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

You told Cynthia?

MARCIE

(shudders)

She's gonna rip my balls off.

BARIOLY

(to Phillip, his trusted reference)

This is a phrase Americans use? Rip my balls off?

PHILLIP

Sure. If you're a trucker named Gladys.

Barioly nods knowingly.

BARIOLY

This is more popular than "bitch, please?"

PHILLIP

Depends on what part of the country.

Barioly jots this on a notepad.

BARIOLY

What about in America's greatest city?

PHILLIP

Oh yeah, definitely.

BARIOLY

That's where I will live. In Fresno.

MARCIE

Barioly. I need Hasami's people. Now.

BARIOLY

Please to remember, ma'am, using my American name.

Marcie fights the urge to throw the shovel at him.

MARCIE

I'll try to keep that in mind. Lucky Barry.

Barioly beams as he returns to his cubicle--

PHILLIP

Go easy on him, he's here for the Green Card.

MARCIE

Good for him. At least somebody in this office knows why they're here.

PHILLIP

Well, I build bridges, roads and schools so Al Qaeda can blow them up. And you tell everyone that means we're winning.

(off her stink eye)

Guess who I'm having lunch with?

She stops.

MARCIE

No.

(off his look)

You are not.

PHILLIP

I'm an idiot.

MARCIE

With Candy? -- Phillip. She tried to use you. To get privileged information. There's probably a jury somewhere that would call that espionage.

PHILLIP

I know.

MARCIE

The sex wasn't even that good, you said.

PHILLIP

I was lying.

MARCIE

You're an idiot.

PHILLIP

Come with me. Be my bodyguard.

He's cute when he's begging. Then--

CYNTHIA (O.S.)

Marcie Post?!

Marcie cringes. She was waiting for this.

MARCIE

Looks like you're on your own.

Cynthia flies in. Scary when she's mad. And she is MAD.

CYNTHIA
 (pointing at Marcie)
 You. Walk with me.

Marcie flashes Phillip a grimace as she follows Cynthia.
 Barioly reappears at Phillip's side.

BARIOLY
 Is she rip her balls off?

Phillip shrugs...

PHILLIP
 Marcie's always grow back.

EXT. EMBASSY COMPOUND "HOOCHES" - DAY

Cynthia bursts out of the USAID OFFICES, into the colorful
 maze of the HOOCH NEIGHBORHOODS. Marcie hustles to keep up.

CYNTHIA
 We had a deal, young lady.

MARCIE
 I promise. I had no idea the
 Ambassador--

CYNTHIA
Loyalty, Marcie. Other people
 wanted your job-- I went to bat for
 you-- I ever tell you that?

MARCIE
 Many, many times.

CYNTHIA
 Something in my gut told me,
 that one's here to fight the
 good fight--

MARCIE
 Cynthia--

CYNTHIA
 Don't mock my gut, Marcie--

MARCIE
 Believe me, installing warlords and
 calling it Democracy is not my idea
 of nation building--

CYNTHIA
 Oh, for crying out loud-- give
 Hasami the goddam Peace Prize for
 all I care. Just don't do it on
 the same day I break ground on the
 biggest project of my career.

MARCIE

So who cares if Hasami's a genocidal maniac? Just so long as the Karez gets coverage.

CYNTHIA

(don't get smart with me)
USAID has one job here. To rebuild this godforsaken country. And make damn sure everyone knows it was the Americans who did it. How am I supposed to do my job if I'm always getting upstaged by Ambassador Colon Cleanse?

(exploding)

And where the hell is he getting fresh papaya?

MARCIE

I'm sure the Ambassador--

CYNTHIA

Oh Please. Matthews rolling out the red carpet for Hasami? That's news, Marcie. I'll be lucky if we get an intern from *Stars and Stripes*.

MARCIE

Cynthia--

CYNTHIA

You know how much the American people are gonna spend on the Karez project?

MARCIE

Let's not dwell on--

CYNTHIA

One point two billion.

MARCIE

We're talking rupees?

CYNTHIA

That's cold hard American cash borrowed fair and square from China.

MARCIE

We'll reschedule the ceremony.

CYNTHIA

And go through another month-long security review? This is exactly what you're supposed to keep from happening. -- You will fix this, Marcie.

(MORE)

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
 Because I swear to God I am tired
 of only being in the news when
 something of mine gets bombed--

Cynthia--

MARCIE

CYNTHIA

But if that's what it takes,
 so help me I will blow this
 place up myself.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
 (crazy eyes)
 And don't think I couldn't arrange
 it, Marcie. These people can make
 a bomb out of goat cheese.

MARCIE
 Cynthia. I'm on it. Trust me.
 (looking up)
 Oh my God, is this your hooch?
 (off Cynthia's look)
 You have a double hooch?

It's like seeing a Maserati in your friend's driveway...

MARCIE (CONT'D)
 Can I see inside?

CYNTHIA
 (checks her watch)
 You have work to do. And I have a
 Skype session. With a gentleman in
 Dallas.
 (off Marcie's look)
 Some fool on OKCupid. Looks like
 Damon.

MARCIE
 Like Damon, your ex-husband, Damon?

CYNTHIA
 You know what I always say...
 (bitter)
 Don't give into bitterness.

SLAM. Cynthia disappears into her "double hooch." Off
 Marcie... one more psycho to manage...

CUT TO:

ON A COMPUTER SCREEN...

A highly-produced CORPORATE BRANDING VIDEO is finishing up.
 Lots of GLOSSY PATRIOTIC B-ROLL (like a Halliburton promo)
 over which a booming ANNOUNCER intones...

ANNOUNCER

... providing for the common
defense, promoting the general
welfare, and securing the blessings
of liberty. KENDRICK-KLINE:
Challenge is opportunity.

The KENDRICK-KLINE LOGO flashes across the screen. We are--

INT. EMBASSY CAFETERIA - DAY

Candy turns from the laptop screen (where the video has just played) to Phillip. Mid lunch...

CANDY

Isn't it good? Did you see me? In
that last shot?

PHILLIP

Who knew the Founding Fathers wrote
such good copy?

CANDY

You don't like it.

PHILLIP

Could have gone more direct, I
think-- "We help people kill
people." Is more like it.

She gives him the stink eye. Folds her laptop away.

CANDY

Defense systems are just one aspect
of our global footprint. My
passion is helping the work you do.

PHILLIP

And what a relief that is.

CANDY

... Phillip... Don't be like that.
We had fun. Didn't we?

She slips her hand in his. Her charm is working o-ver-time.

CANDY (CONT'D)

And anyway... now that USAID's
moving the Karez project, we're
gonna be spending a lot more time
together so let's--

PHILLIP

Wait-- what are you...?

(off her look)

Nobody's moving anything. We break ground tomorrow, we start construction up north next week.

Candy forces a smile. Covering something...

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

Where did you hear--

CANDY

Oh. I guess...

PHILLIP

We're talking about a tunnel system that's a thousand-years-old.

CANDY

I must have just--

PHILLIP

A thousand years. There's a helluva lot of planning for a project like that--

CANDY

I must have got it wrong--

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

Plus, Candy-- come on, there's no way Kendrick was gonna get that contract in the first place.

(getting worked up)

The only reason the Karez needs to be rehab-ed is that your copper mine is polluting the aquifer.

CANDY

(can't help herself)

But honey even if that were true, don't you think that makes us the perfect partner?

(earnest)

Always helps to know what you're dealing with.

Phillip can't hold in the smirk. The chutzpah...

PHILLIP

Right... So what am I dealing with?

CANDY

(all eyelashes)

A friend.

A charged beat.

PHILLIP

How's Dubai?

CANDY

Boring. It's more fun here.
 (sly smile)
 So let's not be boring.

An electric beat. Off Phillip, trying to fight the good fight...

EXT. JOURNALIST'S COMPOUND COURTYARD - DAY

A beautiful walled oasis... Green grass, roses, lush tress, In the midst of which we find--

A CAMERAMAN, loading EQUIPMENT into a VAN as Greg steps out of a HOUSE, donning his flak jacket. His cell is ringing, he checks the ID and smiles--

GREG

Care to revise your statement about Hasami?

EXT. OUTDOOR EMBASSY CORRIDOR - DAY

Marcie talks on her cell as she makes her way through the maze of the shipping container "neighborhood". As she walks, she'll pass a WOMAN hanging BUDDHIST PRAYER FLAGS and a FAT MAN SUN BATHING on a lounge in front of his hooch...

MARCIE

When the people of Stanistan have their say at the polls--

INTERCUT AS NEEDED--

GREG

Sure sure, listen, can't talk right now, on my way to Lugar, gonna say hi to the big man himself.

MARCIE

Then save yourself a trip. Hasami's coming here.

GREG

Coming where?

MARCIE

Here. Tomorrow. I'm about to send the press release, you're getting the early edition.

GREG

Just so we're clear--

MARCIE

Yes. You were right.

She can practically hear Greg beaming on the other end.

GREG

Who says mass murderers can't make great leaders?

MARCIE

You're forgetting Mr. Hasami's also a family man: father of twelve, husband of three.

GREG

Bet he loves *Sleepless in Seattle* too.

MARCIE

He loves all Meg Ryan movies. And if you ask nicely I can get you a sit-down with Matthews.

GREG

I don't want Matthews. I want Hasami.

MARCIE

And I want to live in a place where sand doesn't get in my--

Grace passes-- they both flash fake smiles at each other.

GREG

Thought you had special powers. Or was that a lie too?

Marcie's arrived back at her CUBICLE.

MARCIE

All right. So stay in town. I'll work on it.

GREG

You want me to stay?

MARCIE

For the interview. Yes.

(beat)

I'll see what I can do.

GREG

(big smile)

I hate you too.

She smirks as she ends the call. Somehow buoyed despite the cat-and-mouse.

BARIOLY (O.S.)
Pardon me, ma'am.

Marcie looks up at Barioly. He's visibly terrified.

BARIOLY (CONT'D)
Your visitor is here.

Marcie looks up to see, ACROSS THE ROOM...

TOR SEDIQ, Hasami's advance man, dressed like a member of the Taliban. Bearded, wild-looking. He rips a WANTED poster down from the wall. Smiles proudly. It's his face.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM IN SHIPPING CONTAINER - DAY

Marcie sits across a conference table from Tor Sediq. Barioly cowers between them, acting as interpreter.

MARCIE
Would you like a danish, Mr. Sediq?

She points to an absurd assortment of muffins and pastries laid out with FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE napkins.

MARCIE (CONT'D)
Translate, please.
(annoyed)
Lucky Barry.

Before he can speak, Tor raises his nostrils, sniffs the air-- then speaks to Barioly in Stanistani. Marcie can't follow.

BARIOLY
Haji Sediq would like to know--
about your-- smell.

MARCIE
My smell?

BARIOLY
(finds the word)
Your... Fragrance.

MARCIE
What, like my perfume?

Tor sniffs the air again. It's weirdly threatening. And it's pissing her off.

MARCIE (CONT'D)
Why because it reminds him of his
"gap year" in Paris?

Addressing Tor directly, an increasingly strained smile--

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Which is the only place you can find my smell because they stopped making it twenty years ago, but if you ever do go to Europe, I hope you and your boss get to see a charming little place called The Hague, you genocidal thug, does that answer your question?

(chomps a danish)

Know what, translate this: I would like Mr. Hasami to introduce himself to the world by agreeing to an exclusive interview with an American journalist.

She nods to Barioly-- mortified-- who turns reluctantly to Tor, speaks briefly in Stanistani.

Marcie watches for a reaction. Tor is poker-faced. Speaks a three word answer. Barioly blushes.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

What'd he say?

BARIOLY

Begging your pardon, ma'am. I know only one way to translate.

(hesitates, then)

Bitch, please.

A beat. She drops her danish.

MARCIE

We're done here.

She starts to get up when-- BOOOOOM! The room shakes. The lights flicker. An EMERGENCY SIREN BLARES!! (A soothing FEMALE VOICE repeats "PLEASE MOVE TO THE BUNKER. DUCK AND COVER" over and over.) Everyone freezes.

TOR SEDIQ

(perfect English)

I'll have that danish now.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. EMBASSY, EMERGENCY BUNKER - DAY

The bunker is a series of shipping containers buried in the ground. Real curtains hang over fake windows. Cots line the walls. A TV screen and a few computers throughout. In the B.G., embassy staffers huddle, pace, or make anxious phone calls. Tensions are high as they await the "all clear".

FIND Marcie trying to get a signal on her Blackberry. Cynthia slouches on a cot next to her, giving the evil eye to--

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS-- in another corner, dispensing juice samples to grateful staffers like an infomercial host.

CYNTHIA
 (eying Matthews)
 He's winning, Marcie. State. Is
 winning. You know how I hate that.

Cynthia eyes her: *do something.*

MARCIE
 I'm working on it.

Marcie glances over at Tor Sediq, staring impassively at a TV playing 'REAL HOUSEWIVES OF NEW JERSEY'. She eyes him. She needs to make him an ally. And she knows how to play this.

A deep breath. She approaches him...

MARCIE (CONT'D)
Loin de Tout.
 (off his cryptic stare)
 My perfume. They don't make it
 anymore, but... the first bottle I
 ever got was a gift from my father
 on my sixteenth birthday. He was
 the Ambassador to France. I guess
 it reminds me of... I don't know...
 something like home.
 (then)
 Where'd you learn English?

TOR SEDIQ
 Princeton.

ON MARCIE-- *of course.*

MARCIE
 Look, Washington likes Hasami today
 because it's convenient. Tomorrow
 might be different.
 (MORE)

MARCIE (CONT'D)

And if you don't think the American government can't change its mind, just ask the Iraqis or the South Vietnamese or the Cherokee.

(sits beside him)

What your man needs right now is to be seen as a humane leader. Not a warlord. So let him be seen doing what diplomats do.

He stares at her, unreadable. But he's listening.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

USAID is dedicating the Karez rehab project tomorrow. Hasami should be on stage. Smiles, handshakes, good will.

Tor thinks. Nods.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

But first Hasami has to do something for me.

TOR SEDIQ

Why should he help you?

MARCIE

If you're going to work with the Americans, there's something you should know. State and AID are not the same. Sometimes they're not even on speaking terms. That's why you need me. I'm your access to both.

All right. He's listening.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Hasami agrees to a twenty-minute sit-down with Greg Weir from CNN. Greg asks the tough questions, Hasami denies everything. Everybody's happy.

TOR SEDIQ

And why should you insist on this? For this one reporter?

MARCIE

Because those are my terms.

Tor considers a moment...

TOR SEDIQ
Then I also have terms.

MARCIE
I don't think you understand--

TOR SEDIQ
I want a bowling alley.

She stares at him.

MARCIE
Excuse me?

TOR SEDIQ
For my nephews. Like the kind in
America.
(off her stunned silence)
Six lanes. With a "snack bar."

A full beat. She's actually speechless. And then--

HARRY (O.S.)
Your attention!

All eyes on HARRY COONEY, an overweight, over-serious and totally incompetent MICHIGANDER in charge of Embassy security-- wearing ridiculous swat-style SECURITY GEAR.

HARRY (CONT'D)
False alarm. No bomb. Gas
explosion at the hospital.

PHILLIP
Anyone hurt?

HARRY
Just some locals.

People start to move toward the exit as--

Marcie looks back to Tor Sediq. Waiting serenely. *So what's it gonna be...?*

EXT. HOOCH COURTYARD - NIGHT

The Embassy after hours... Colorful paper lanterns adorn a WALLED COURTYARD where a dozen STAFF have gathered around a FIRE PIT. After the tension of the day, there's something soothing and relaxed about it.

Phillip's there too... strumming a GUITAR. You take your night life where you can get it...

INT. MARCIE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Marcie's wrapped in a towel, drying her hair as she walks to her door-- someone's KNOCKING. She opens to find Greg, waving off his ESCORT. He turns back... a bone to pick...

GREG

Saw the press release. So now Hasami's going to be the honored guest at the Karez ceremony? Must be your handiwork.

She lets him in, closes the door behind him. It's a little awkward. *Where do things stand?*

MARCIE

No comment.

She moves back into the bathroom...

GREG

This is the same man you referred to a whole twelve hours ago, when you said, and I quote--

(reading from a notebook)

"Abdullah Hasami is disqualified. Full stop."

MARCIE (O.S.)

(from the bathroom)

Did you eat, I'm kinda hungry?

GREG

So yesterday he was America's most wanted, tomorrow he's cutting ribbons. You want to explain this?

MARCIE (O.S.)

That's what governors do.

GREG

(helping himself to liquor)

Perfect. Hizzoner can use the same machete that wiped out those eight villages in Lugar.

MARCIE

Actually we're going with the much more tasteful solid gold shovel.

GREG

You honestly think this is good policy?

She comes back out in a bathrobe embroidered with FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

MARCIE

I think the world is a dangerous place and in a country with no power, no industry, Soviet-era infrastructure and a pre-Enlightenment worldview, sometimes order wins out over justice.

GREG

So Hasami kills thousands with his militia, but hey, at least that shows he's efficient. Guy gets stuff done.

MARCIE

It's a perspective.

GREG

Bullshit, Marcie. Don't pretend you don't give a damn.

MARCIE

I never said--

GREG

You don't wanna tell me why being here's so personal for you? Fine. But we both know you didn't come for the danger pay.

He's hit a nerve. And sees it. Backs down.

GREG (CONT'D)

Babe. Hasami's the devil.

She drops her bathrobe. Just a bra and panties.

MARCIE

So tell him yourself.

A moment between them.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

You've got your exclusive.

She's standing there. With an offer on the table. And in the flesh. Greg mulls the *quid pro quo* as she steps closer.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

I scratch your back...

And suddenly they're all over each other-- crashing onto the bed as we--

CUT TO:

INT. AMBASSADOR MATTHEW'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Matthews opens his office door to reveal--

CYNTHIA. A look between them. No love lost.

Matthews gestures for her to enter, which she does. He closes the door behind him.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

Can I make you something? From the juicer?

(off her deadpan)

It was given to me by the Sultan of Brunei's third concubine.

(naturally)

We're both from Omaha.

CYNTHIA

You wanted to talk? Let's talk.

They share a look. Matthews points up with his finger-- *eavesdropping in progress...* He gestures for her to follow him through a door into--

INT. SCIF (SOUNDPROOF ANTE-ROOM OFF AMB. OFFICE) - CONTINUOUS

A small space-- a couple chairs and a table. Matthews closes the door behind him. A sigh of relief...

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

No need for Washington to hear everything...

He goes to the table, picks up a bottle of whiskey.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

In here, it's just as the Chinese say: "Heaven is high. And the Emperor. Is far away."

(her drink)

Ice?

She shakes her head. *Get on with it.* He reads her, smiles.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

Hasami will win the election in Lugar. Nothing we can do.

CYNTHIA

Says the man who made it happen.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

Washington believes we can work with him. So do I.

(hands her a whiskey)

You and I have had our differences. But in the end. We're here for the same reasons. -- You've got your eye on a corner office in Washington. Let me help you get there.

Her guard is up. But she's listening.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

It's very simple. We let Hasami play governor. He protects our people and all those infrastructure projects you're so proud of.

CYNTHIA

I'm waiting for the catch.

A moment. Matthews plays this delicately...

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

Hasami knows of our intent to rehab the Karez tunnels in the north. He simply wants that work to begin in his province.

CYNTHIA

And you told him he doesn't get to bribe the United States government. Only white men in Washington get to do that.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

Cynthia--

CYNTHIA

It was not an arbitrary decision, Balthazar-- where to cite the Karez project.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

I can assure, you--

CYNTHIA

They need that water in the north. To grow something other than opium. This was going to transform that region so don't you tell me--

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS

Cynthia.

She stares at him. Nostrils flared.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS (CONT'D)
 I spoke with the Chief of Staff
 this morning. USAID will move the
 Karez contract to Hamami's
 province. Immediately.

The realization settles on her. She can't win this one.

A moment as she composes herself. And as she starts for the door--

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS (CONT'D)
 Of course you'll need a new
 contractor. To oversee the Karez
 work in Lugar.

Cynthia stops. Dead in her tracks.

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS (CONT'D)
 But there's time enough for all
 that.

We see the epiphany on Cynthia's face. She finally knows
 what this is all about. And we will too... all in due time.

Cynthia lets herself out. Leaving the Ambassador alone. A
 self-satisfied smile.

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - DAY

Establishing. The STARS AND STRIPES over the compound.

EXT. OUTDOOR EMBASSY CORRIDOR - DAY

Phillip knocks on the door of Marcie's quarters. Holding a
 TO-GO CONTAINER with TWO COFFEES and a GIFT WRAPPED BOX, a
 smile on his face as the door opens and--

GREG
 ... Hey. Phillip. Right?

Phillip's smile vanishes. Greg in the doorway. Shirtless.
 A moment-- as Phillip tries to hide the sting, seeing this
 guy in Marcie's bedroom.

PHILLIP
 ... Yeah, hi. Is she here?

GREG
 Just missed her.
 (the gift)
 Whatcha got there?

PHILLIP
... Nothing.

A beat. These two men. Greg eyes Phillip...

GREG
Hey, lemme ask you something. You
know her pretty well, right?

Greg disappears for a second, comes back holding up the
WALLET SIZED PHOTO of the YOUNG ARMY OFFICER.

GREG (CONT'D)
You know anything about this guy?
She's real cagey about him.

Phillip looks up from the photo.

PHILLIP
Never seen him.

GREG
Quite a mystery. Isn't she?

It's all buddy-buddy. But underneath... it's strained.

PHILLIP
Yeah.

And Phillip walks off... STAY WITH GREG... realizing for the
first time that Phillip is sweet on Marcie.

INT. USAID CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Already full for the daily MORNING BRIEFING-- as Marcie
enters... finding a place to stand in the back.

She makes eye contact with Phillip-- already seated at the
table. She smiles at him, expecting their usual camaraderie
except...

His smile feels different. The residue of his encounter with
Greg. She can't put her finger on it, but she senses
something, just as--

CYNTHIA
Good morning. This'll be a short
one.

All eyes on Cynthia.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

After two years of planning. This afternoon we break ground on the Karez rehab project.

CHEERS and APPLAUSE. They've earned this. But Cynthia puts up a hand. *Not so fast.*

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

The ceremony will proceed as planned. However...

(beat)

The American people-- in their infinite wisdom-- have made a change. Nelson-- go.

The air goes out of the room as Nelson takes the floor.

NELSON

Karez work will no longer commence in the north. All resources will be redirected to the south-- in Lugar Province.

CYNTHIA

Effective immediately.

Marcie immediately locks eyes with Phillip. They both know that's Hasami's province...

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

I want new proposals on my desk in the next thirty-six hours. Spend whatever you have to.

(we're done)

God Bless America.

Cynthia rises from the table and leaves the room. Off the stunned silence--

INT. USAID OFFICE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Marcie catches up to Cynthia in the corridor--

MARCIE

So this is the *quid pro quo* for Hasami's cooperation?

CYNTHIA

Don't shout Latin at me, Marcie, I went to public schools.

MARCIE

I'm the one who has to sell this.

CYNTHIA
Then sell it.

MARCIE
Not until someone tells me why
we're appeasing a war criminal.

Cynthia-- halts, glares--

CYNTHIA
All those Ivy League degrees. And
you still can't put two and two
together. This isn't about Hasami,
Marcie. Use your head.

It takes Marcie about two seconds to do the math. The puzzle
piece we've been waiting for...

MARCIE
... Kendrick-Kline. This is about
the Karez contract.

The penny drops...

CYNTHIA
So. The girl can add after all.

Cynthia starts down the hall again. Marcie follows, putting
things together as she goes...

MARCIE
Kendrick lost the Karez bid...

CYNTHIA
Never count out the good 'ole boys
in Washington, Marcie.

MARCIE
So they found a way to get back the
contract. By moving the project to
Lugar. And buying off a warlord.

CYNTHIA
It's a billion-dollar game, Marcie.
Hasami's just a pawn.

Marcie's reeling. It's so obvious. And so fucked-up.

MARCIE
I think I know how he feels.

She stops. Cynthia keeps going.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Cynthia.

(finally verbalizing it)

What you're telling me... this is
what we're here for?

For a moment, as Cynthia steps closer, we think she's about to soften, offer some maternal sympathy. Then--

CYNTHIA

I'm not telling anybody anything,
sweetheart. That's your job.

(close, like a stabbing)

This is how the sausage gets made.
And if that makes you queasy, all
you have to do is pick up the
phone, call Daddy, and go stamp
goddam visas in goddam Paris.

And Cynthia's gone. Off Marcie, rocked...

INT. MARCIE'S QUARTERS (HOOCH) - DAY

The photo of the handsome Latino US Army officer. We can clearly read the NAME TAG on his uniform: D. OCHOA.

GREG (O.S.)

... yeah, need you to run a name
for me.

REVEAL GREG-- putting the photo back on Marcie's shelf as he talks on his cell. (He's been hanging out in Marcie's hooch all morning.)

GREG (CONT'D)

D. Ochoa. Looks like Second
Lieutenant. U.S. Army. See what
you can do. Any background you can
find. Family contacts. Anything.

Greg zips up his bag and bounds out the hooch...

INT. USAID OFFICES, PHILLIP'S CUBICLE - DAY

PHILLIP-- at his cubicle, packing a BACK PACK.

He looks up to see Marcie approaching his cubicle. They share the same look... *Everything's fucked.*

MARCIE

You remember what it was like... to
believe that things would turn out
okay?

(MORE)

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Because you knew all those people who actually ran the world... that at least they had their shit together?

He gives her a sad smile. Something deeply earnest about this woman, buried deep down. *It's what he loves about her.*

She takes a seat across from his desk. Then...

MARCIE (CONT'D)

I need you to build me a bowling alley. With a snack bar.

PHILLIP

I love it when you talk dirty.

MARCIE

We're calling it a... "Monument to American Friendship."

PHILLIP

But really we're talking about--

MARCIE

A bribe. A huge. Fat. Bribe.

ON Phillip... This is the paradox they operate in. *Despising the system. And working it at the same time.*

PHILLIP

Hate the game. Not the play-a.

She surveys his cubicle walls, covered in MAPS, BLUEPRINTS.

MARCIE

... Why are you here?

PHILLIP

Well I had this dream. To build bowling alleys for horrible people.

MARCIE

Coulda stayed in Jersey for that.

He picks up the GIFT WRAPPED PRESENT. Hands it to her.

She looks at him... *What's this?*

PHILLIP

You officially made it four months. Wish it could have been longer, but... Congratulations.

She opens it... The PACKAGE OF OREOS...

MARCIE
I've been looking everywhere for--
How did you--?

PHILLIP
I have my ways.

MARCIE
Help me eat 'em. I'm buying lunch.

PHILLIP
(slings his backpack)
Site visit.

MARCIE
Tomorrow then.

PHILLIP
Yeah. Tomorrow.

It feels like they should hug or something. They don't.

As Phillip leaves... linger with Marcie, touched, and a tad conflicted about her feelings for Phillip-- but she doesn't have time for this. Back to work...

EXT. EMBASSY PARKING LOT - DAY

Phillip crosses the EMBASSY PARKING LOT, passing the remains of a dozen BOMBED embassy vehicles-- marooned like carcasses.

Foreboding reminders of the dangers outside these walls...

Phillip unlocks the door of his ARMORED PICK-UP, drapes a BLACK/WHITE SCARF around his neck and hops in.

Once his door is closed he opens his backpack and withdraws a FAT WAD OF AMERICAN \$100 BILLS.

He shoves it in his shirt pocket, pulls on a BULLETPROOF VEST, zips up his sweatshirt, and throws on his shades.

What the hell is he doing...?

He starts the pick-up and heads for the EMBASSY GATE.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUREXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Crowded and chaotic. A thicket of cars, donkeys and people.

FIND-- Phillip moving up the street with purpose. The CALL TO PRAYER wails in the B.G. He climbs up a flight of rickety wooden stairs hanging off the side of a concrete building.

At the top of the stairs, he ducks inside--

INT. TEA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rugs and cushions. Walls lined with dented copper tea pots. Men sitting on prayer beds, conversing. Or watching the shitty TV playing - again - 'REAL HOUSEWIVES OF NEW JERSEY'.

Phillip scans the space. In the corner he sees--

A LOCAL MAN, sitting on a rug, a face weathered less by time than adversity. This is SHER. He gives Phillip a smile-- revealing a mouth dotted with gold teeth-- stands to greet him-- the customary tight hug and kisses on the cheek.

Sher says something in STANISTANI to Phillip. Phillip nods, seems to understand him.

Sher gestures to the prayer bed. *Sit, sit.*

INT. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE, MARCIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

MARCIE-- drafting a speech at her desk. Focused.

CANDY (O.S.)
Knock-knock.

She looks up to see...

Candy-- beaming. Now that Marcie knows what she knows... It takes all her restraint not to punch Candy in the face.

CANDY (CONT'D)
About the ground-breaking-- I've got two more V.P.s in from Houston, and you've got space on the platform.

MARCIE
What I've got is three of your people up there already.

CANDY
How 'bout a bigger stage?

MARCIE

One of them even gets to hold a shovel. And I promise that's gonna be more conspicuous than you think.

CANDY

You know how far Houston is?

MARCIE

(playing dumb)

Candy, all you guys are doing on this project is selling us cement. At ten times the market price.

She flashes her "sweet-thing" smile.

CANDY

It's good cement.

(confidential)

And I don't know if you heard, but now that funding's been moved to Lugar-- there's a pretty good chance Kendrick's gonna take on a much larger role here.

Marcie fantasizes about killing her with the stapler.

MARCIE

Congratulations. Is someone escorting you?

The venom in Marcie's look is unmistakable. But Candy's unphased. She's got a gold plated olive branch to extend.

CANDY

Speaking of larger roles...

MARCIE

Candy.

CANDY

I don't think you heard me last time.

MARCIE

I did hear you. And I already have a career-- the same one I've wanted since I was five-years-old.

CANDY

Then maybe it's time to stop thinking like a child.

(too harsh, she softens)

(MORE)

CANDY (CONT'D)

The real world is the real world,
Marcie. Why spin your wheels stuck
in dysfunction when you could be
making a real investment? Honey, I
don't care who your daddy is,
you're climbing a ladder that's
leaned against the wrong wall.

(then)

I'm talking about four times what
you're making now. Kendrick has
operations on five continents-- the
good continents-- name your
location, it's yours.

(tough love)

Honey. You've paid your dues in
this hellhole.

Marcie sits back in her chair. Has Candy gotten through...?

MARCIE

(then)

Your people can stand in the back.
That's the best I can do.

Candy looks at Marcie. With a kind of genuine pity.

CANDY

Whatever you think you're doing
here. It's not worth it.

Candy gives her a commiserating smile. And she's gone.

Off Marcie... trying hard not to believe her...

INT. TEA HOUSE - DAY

A LONG LENS STILL PHOTO-- the kind in spy shows-- shot from a
distance. A HAND flips through the shots of various
STANISTANI MEN.

ANGLE ON SHER, staring at the photos. Both Sher and Phillip
will switch back and forth between English and the local
language (*italicized*).

SHER

*Most of these are dead. Or in the
North for now. Hasami's keeping
things quiet in Lugar. At least
until the election.*

PHILLIP

*And after the election? What will
Hasami do then?*

Sher flips to another photo.

SHER

Now this one. This one I have seen.

He holds up the photo for Phillip. It's GREG WEIR.

SHER (CONT'D)

The reporter. Yes. I've seen him in Lugar. Asking around.

(sliding photo back)

He wants to know about Hasami as much as you do.

(then, dangerous)

Neither of you know who you're dealing with.

Sher flashes a wild-eyed smile. This might just be a crazy motherfucker. Phillip pretends not to be unnerved...

PHILLIP

So tell me what I'm dealing with.

Sher stalls for effect. Glances at the TV in the b.g.-- the "Real Housewives" -- being catty bitches...

SHER

(re: the housewives)

When will Caroline learn not to compete with Teresa?

(we could learn from them)

The one you think is a friend. Is not always so.

Sher turns his attention back to Phillip. A look. *You want answers? Time to pay.*

Phillip reads it loud and clear, thumbs out bills from his stash of cash. Slips them across the prayer bed, covered discreetly by his scarf.

SHER (CONT'D)

Your State Department-- they underestimate Hasami. He has no interest in being a pawn of the Americans. Not even a well paid one. He has plans of his own.

Suddenly, a few "tables" over-- a loud SHOUTING MATCH breaks out. Heads turn but nobody REACTS. Phillip turns back--

PHILLIP
 What plans? What's Hasami
 plotting?

The fight in the B.G. grows louder.

SHER
*This is the same question your
 reporter friend has been asking. A
 dangerous question.*

Someone SMASHES a tea cup. It's about to come to blows.

SHER (CONT'D)
You should go.
 (then, English)
 This neighborhood. It's not what
 it used to be.

INT. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE, MARCIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Marcie-- moving out of her cubicle--

MARCIE
 ... and six copies of the latest
 draft.

She's yelling toward Barioly, who rushes to her--

BARIOLY
 Yes, ma'am.

Then rushes away--

MARCIE
 And Barioly.
 (off his look)
 ... Lucky Barry.

BARIOLY
 Yes, ma'am.

MARCIE
 I don't want that woman at my desk
 anymore.

BARIOLY
 That woman? Miss Candy?
 (fondly)
 She is full of bubbles, isn't she?

MARCIE
 That's one way to put it.

Barioly motions to the wall of "WANTED" POSTERS.

BARIOLY

I will put her face with the
evildoers.

MARCIE

Just-- keep her out of my way.

BARIOLY

One question I'm having,
ma'am--

MARCIE

You know what, better make it
ten copies.

BARIOLY

What is a hellhole?

Marcie stops.

MARCIE

Were you listening to that whole
conversation?

Barioly just stares at her.

BARIOLY

She means this... about my country?

For all Marcie's effort to seem impenetrable, these are the
moments we see right through her.

Barioly musters a sober dignity...

BARIOLY (CONT'D)

I know it is broken. But it was
not always so.

Their eyes meet. And for a moment they are not employer-
employee, American and Stanistani. They are compatriots.

MARCIE

(we're in this together)
Ten copies.

EXT. EVENT TENT, ELSEWHERE IN THE CAPITAL - DAY

A huge white tent. Armed security out front: GI JOES in Ray
Bans.

INT. EVENT TENT, BACKSTAGE - DAY

A backstage area. USAID staff moving in and out like
stagehands before curtain. There's an AUDIBLE RUMBLE from a
large crowd assembling behind a tent wall.

As Marcie enters-- Barioly puts final touches on a huge SWAG TABLE bursting with USAID gift items: hats, T-shirts, mugs, etc: all stamped with 'FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE'.

MARCIE
Everything set?

Marcie enters, her head covered in a scarf.

BARIOLY
Needing a place for these, ma'am.

Holds up a BOBBLE HEAD STATUE OF LIBERTY. Marcie's CELL RINGS. As she checks her phone, it's GREG CALLING--

MARCIE
Why don't we skip those?
(answers her phone)
I'm not your seat-saver, where are you?

GREG (PHONE)
I need to ask you something.

MARCIE
We're ten minutes from kickoff--

GREG (PHONE)
Daniel Ochoa was your brother.
Wasn't he?

MARCIE-- like she's been punched in the stomach.

GREG (PHONE) (CONT'D)
(then)
Half-brother, actually-- I got a hold of his mom in Mexico. Guess he was an unexpected souvenir from your father's posting... That's why nobody knows you were related.
(then)
Did you know him well? Before it happened?
(then)
Must have been a sensitive mission-- The report was pretty lean on details. All I can put together is that he managed to save two of his guys. You must be proud of him.

She's still speechless. A swirl of emotions. What does she feel? *Angry? Violated? Loved?*

GREG (PHONE) (CONT'D)
 Four months after he was killed...
 you requested Stanistan.
 (then)
 You came here for him. Didn't you?
 -- That part. I get.
 (then)
 What I don't get. Is you working
 with Hasami. Marcie, that guy
 could have killed your brother.

Her silence just turned to anger.

GREG (CONT'D)
 Listen, I promise. It's safe with
 me.
 (sad smile)
 You hide it. I dig it up.

Just then, Cynthia flies in-- wrapped head-to-toe in a, VERY
 loud African print--

GREG (CONT'D)
 ... Say something?

MARCIE
 (into phone)
 I have to go.

She hangs up. Trying to shake off Greg's words as--

CYNTHIA
 I look fantastic. Tell me.

MARCIE
 (she punts)
 No chance of being upstaged.
 (hands it over)
 Here's the changes to your speech--
 paragraphs three, four and six are--

CYNTHIA
 (looking past Marcie)
 Ohmigod there he is.

ABDULLAH HASAMI (40s), immaculate in a tailored suit and
 neatly trimmed beard. Not what we expected. Surrounded by a
 small entourage, including Tor Sediq, also in a suit.

Tor Sediq whispers something to Hasami who halts. He looks
 Marcie's direction.

Her heart stops as he turns and approaches her-- the
 entourage moving with him.

He stands before her. Face to face.

HASAMI
You are Marcie Post.

And Hasami extends his own hand. Offering. Marcie stares at it. A murderer's hand.

A huge beat... She accepts it.

HASAMI (CONT'D)
I understand, Ms. Post, it is to you we owe our gratitude for making these arrangements.

Marcie is momentarily speechless. Then finds her voice.

MARCIE
Not at all, sir. I think they're waiting for you on stage--

HASAMI
(still holding her handshake)
I have many friends, Ms. Post. In many places.

Tor hands over a wrapped gift. Hasami offers it to Marcie.

HASAMI (CONT'D)
It is good to have friends. Especially in Stanistan.

She stares at the beautifully wrapped box for a second.

HASAMI (CONT'D)
Perhaps we might be friends.

She reaches for it, on auto-pilot-- still speechless as--

The entourage moves on with Cynthia. A STAFFER pulls back a TENT CURTAIN FLAP and Hasami and company walk on stage.

THROUGH THE OPENED CURTAIN WE GLIMPSE:

A HUGE TENT full of LOCAL OFFICIALS and PRESS. Matthews and other DIGNITARIES (including Candy) already ON STAGE.

Matthews embraces Hasami. Then, stepping to the podium, he addresses the crowd--

AMBASSADOR MATTHEWS
Salam al walekum.

As the APPLAUSE goes up... the curtain flap falls back, sealing us out, along with...

MARCIE-- standing in the now-deserted backstage area. She stares at the gift in her hands, opens the box and draws out--

A beautiful BOTTLE OF PERFUME. LOIN DE TOUT.

BARIOLY (O.S.)
Your smell.

Barioly stares at her. Still by her side. The way he looks at her-- it makes her ashamed. She puts it out of sight.

MARCIE
You have the final press list?

He hands over a clipboard-- Marcie scans it. Frowns.

MARCIE (CONT'D)
Why's Greg not on the list?

BARIOLY
Mr. Weir, he never confirm with me.

A realization comes over Marcie as-- O.S. "The Star Spangled Banner" strikes up.

INT. EMBASSY CORRIDOR - DUSK

Phillip makes his way through the maze of shipping containers. He stops at a door labeled "AIR CONDITIONING SERVICE". Makes sure the coast is clear, then pulls out keys and unlocks the door, stepping inside--

INT. "AIR CONDITIONING SERVICE CLOSET" - CONTINUOUS

An empty quilt-padded room about the size of a walk-in closet. There's no AC UNIT to service. In fact, except for a desk with an old TELEX machine (that's right, we're talking twenty-five-year-old technology), it's totally empty.

Phillip sets his backpack down, sits down at the desk and pulls open a desk drawer... drawing out--

A MARIJUANA JOINT. Whatever he's doing here, there's something deeply solitary about it. Lonely.

What the hell is he up to? All answers in due time...

He strikes a match, and as he LIGHTS THE JOINT we--

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. ROAD TO THE EMBASSY - DUSK

The sun sets over the capital as the caravan of armored S.U.V.s returns to the embassy from the ceremony.

The reflection of the sunset off the DARK TINTED WINDOWS.

INT. "AIR CONDITIONING SERVICE CLOSET" - INTERCUT

Phillip, setting his joint down. It's taken the edge off. He fires up the TELEX machine. Ready to work...

EXT. EMBASSY GATES - INTERCUT

A GIANT CONCRETE SECURITY BERM is lowered into the ground, allowing vehicles to pass. SECURITY GUARDS-- machine guns poised-- oversee as--

THE CONVOY enters the Embassy compound, passing through IMMENSE GATES. The lords returning to the castle.

INT. "AIR CONDITIONING SERVICE CLOSET" - INTERCUT

Phillip is typing fast. We see snatches of text...

"CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY: REPORT" -- "Person of Interest: Abdullah Hasami. Believed to be concealing information, plotting against American interests..."

And now we understand. Nice guy Phillip... is a CIA spy.

EXT. EMBASSY PARKING LOT - INTERCUT

The convoy rolls into the parking area. Even before the vehicles come to a complete stop, Marcie steps out from one of the SUVs--

Giving one of the GUARDS a scare-- she holds up her LANYARD BADGE-- *it's just me*-- but keeps on marching...

INT. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE - DAY

Marcie charges back down the shipping container corridor, her suspicions now rising as she returns to the office, where other STAFFERS are also watching--

THE WALL-MOUNTED TV SCREEN:

There's Greg, reporting from Lugar Province after all.

GREG (TV)

This is the province Abdullah Hasami now wants to lead as the duly elected Governor.

(MORE)

GREG (TV) (CONT'D)
 The same region he and his militia
 have ruled through torture and
 killing for the last decade.

*Footage of desolated villages, burned out structures,
 smoldering vehicles, blood splattered town squares.*

GREG (TV) (CONT'D)
 Mr. Hasami has claimed that his
 rogue actions were essential to
 providing stability. But this at
 the cost of thousands of lives.

Marcie watches, stone-faced as FOOTAGE flashes: *wailing
 mothers and fathers. Bodies rushed on make-shift stretchers
 or carried high on shoulders.*

Marcie's already got a phone to her ear, waiting for Greg to
 pick up as his report continues--

GREG (TV) (CONT'D)
 This is the man the State
 Department now says is the surest
 hope for peace and stability in a
 country that is slowly bleeding to
 death. As one senior American
 Embassy official noted, "sometimes
 order wins out over justice". For
 CNN, this is Greg Weir in Lugar
 Province, Stanistan.

Her call goes to GREG'S VOICE MAIL--

MARCIE
 (into phone)
 So much for scratching backs. At
 least now I know where we stand--

But she stops cold... because the screen shows a FREEZE-FRAME
 of GREG with a caption below:

GREG WEIR 1979 - 2014

HOLD ON Marcie-- as the NEWS ANCHOR'S VOICE plays over--

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)
 Shortly after filing that report,
 Greg Weir and his cameraman,
 Michael Doherty, were reported
 killed by a roadside bomb on their
 way out of Lugar. This is an
 incredible loss for all of us here
 at CNN...

As the SOUND BLEEDS OUT - stay with Marcie-- the force of the shock numbing her senses, sealing her off.

She looks around. Others are REACTING to the news. But Marcie is in another world...

She turns, walks back toward the exit, and on her way--

Drops the GIFT BOX OF PERFUME into a trash can--

Disappearing out the door.

CUT TO:

NEWS FOOTAGE OF THE HASAMI RIBBON CUTTING

Ambassador Matthews, Cynthia and Hasami (all three wearing From the American People ballcaps), smiling together as they each scoop ceremonial dirt with gleaming GOLD SHOVELS. Candy stands nearby, clapping, looking radiant, victorious.

PAN AWAY from the TV screen-- we're in--

INT. DUCK AND COVER CANTEEN - NIGHT

The Embassy/USAID employee bar. A full-blown TIKI THEME: PALM FROND CANOPIES, BAMBOO BAR, grimacing TIKI MASKS.

Marcie sits alone on a stool-- bathed in the festive glow of COCONUT LANTERNS. She's nursing a whiskey, watching her handiwork on the screen.

But she's not drunk enough. The half-eaten package of OREO COOKIES sits in front of her.

Phillip saddles the stool next to her.

A moment in silence. Side by side.

PHILLIP

I heard.

Marcie stares straight ahead. Gazing at something far away. The moment stretches... She takes another cookie.

MARCIE

You know that rumor? About me leaving?

Phillip nods. Marcie sets down an empty glass.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

I'm the one who started it.

A moment between them.

PHILLIP

I know.

He pours her another drink.

PHILLIP (CONT'D)

So is it true?

Marcie holds up her glass.

Phillip joins her toast.

MARCIE

It's a damn lie.

Clink. Down the hatch.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE STANISTANI DESERT - NIGHT

A handful of Taliban-looking MILITIA FIGHTERS-- gathered around what looks like a well-- with a ladder sticking out the top.

Slinging AK-47s and PACKS OF MUNITIONS over their shoulders, they hop onto the ladder and start to descend...

Down the ladder... Into the well...

Deeper and deeper... until we find ourselves inside--

INT. THE KAREZ TUNNELS - NIGHT

Finally arriving in a narrow TUNNEL--

Water, trickling down the walls, shines in the shifting flashes of HEADLAMPS and FLASHLIGHTS, it's a nightmarish, claustrophobic place-- a corridor in hell.

We PAN ACROSS... to a DARK CORNER...

... where a figure is slumped against the wall, ignored for the moment by the fighters--

PUSHING IN TO THE DARKNESS to reveal--

Gagged and bound, bleeding, but alive...

...is GREG WEIR.

END OF EPISODE