

HIGH WIRE ACT

By TONY GILROY

4/27/15

BLACK SCREEN -

The sounds of a PARTY. CREDITS begin.

Cocktail chatter. THREE MEN TALKING. A refined ARAB voice.
The voice of an American DIPLOMAT. A Louisiana DRAWL.

ARAB

And how long is the Congressman with
us?

DRAWL

Just the weekend. We fly out Monday.

DIPLOMAT

It's a fact-finding mission, Nadim.

ARAB

Well, the man has obviously been
misinformed. You'll have to excuse
us, sir, but there are no "facts" in
Beirut. In the rare instance that a
fact is discovered, it is quickly
tracked down, slaughtered and
converted into half-truth.

(amused)

Seriously though, it's absurd, don't
you think, Mason? Trying to explain
a place like this in thirty-six
hours?

DIPLOMAT

We do what we can.

ARAB

And what is the current State
Department snapshot of my homeland?

DIPLOMAT

Putting me on the spot here, Nadim?

ARAB

Part of the job, is it not?

DIPLOMAT

I'd say to understand Lebanon you
should picture a boarding house
without a landlord. A house where
the only thing the tenants have in
common is their talent for betrayal.
Thirty centuries these people live
together. Thirty centuries of blood-
feuding and murder and revenge. But

(MORE)

DIPLOMAT (CONT'D)

somehow, remarkably, through all of that, the tenants still manage to share a kitchen. One night, there's a storm. There's a knock at the door. It's the Palestinians. They want a room. They've been up and down the block all night long in the rain. They've had it with sympathy and slamming doors. They're wet and cold and this is it - they want in. The house is thrown into confusion. There's no landlord. There's no one to make a decision. The tenants argue. Some are violently opposed. Some say, "Let them spend the night, they'll be gone tomorrow." Some think they've finally found an ally to fight their enemies down the hall. Some are simply afraid to close the door. It's only after the Palestinians move in, that the people in the house realize the tragedy of the situation. It's only then they realize that the new tenants want nothing more than to burn down the Israeli house next door.

CREDITS pause. PICTURE EXPLODES ONTO THE SCREEN

MASON SKILES -- THE DIPLOMAT. He is a sleek, confident, glorious 35 years old. He smiles.

MASON

Welcome to Beirut.

CUT TO:

INT. MASON'S LIVING ROOM - BEIRUT - NIGHT

NADIM, THE ARAB, a businessman in a suit. Beside him, THE CONGRESSMAN, THE DRAWL, well-fed and a long way from home.

NADIM

My apologies, Mason. You may actually send this gentleman home with more than a hangover.

MASON

Don't worry about the Congressman, Nadim. This man's from Louisiana. He knows all about politics and hangovers.

MASON, the host, dives into THE PARTY. TWENTY GUESTS spread around an elegant living room. A gorgeous little house. The decor a mix of American casual and Mid-East tribal. We are --

BEIRUT, LEBANON, OCTOBER 1972

CONVERSATION a polyglot blur of Arabic, French and English. The guests an exotic collection of DIPLOMATS, POWER TYPES, and ACADEMICS.

We wipe through a SERIES OF SHOTS:

MASON huddled with TWO LEBANESE POLITICIANS. Animated chatter. MASON making a point in perfect Arabic.

MASON laughing with a FRENCH DIPLOMAT and HIS WIFE as he freshens their drinks. Perfect French.

MASON standing with TWO OTHER CONGRESSMEN as they admire a collection of prayer rugs mounted on the wall.

CREDITS END

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - NIGHT

ALICE COVE (30) taking off her coat. American. Brassy. Cute.

MASON (OS)
Alice, Alice, all alone...

She turns. MASON standing there. A playful friendship.

ALICE
I heard you had congressmen.
(a hello kiss)
You know how that drives me wild.

MASON
Where the hell's your husband?
I need some help here.

ALICE
Oh God... Des? I don't know.
Something at the office.
(glancing in)
Everyone behaving themselves?

MASON
It's early.

THE KITCHEN -

NICOLE SKILES, Mason's wife, overseeing three ARABIC WOMEN, preparing food for the party. NICOLE is early 30s. A radiant embassy wife. Chic. Capable. A drop-dead smile. She looks up as MASON blows through --

NICOLE
How're we doing?

MASON
Christians in one corner. Muslims
in the other. Jack Daniels in
between.

NICOLE
Dinner's ready. Everyone here?

MASON
Desmond's running behind. Alice
says we shouldn't wait.

NICOLE takes a quick sip of Mason's drink.

MASON
You all right?

NICOLE
My next life?

MASON
(by rote)
You're marrying a carpenter.

He offers her what's left of his drink. She takes it.

CUT TO:

EXT. MASON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A stone cottage tucked on a small rise. High garden walls. Cars belonging to party guests angled along a narrow driveway that slopes down to the street below.

DESMOND COVE, jogging up the driveway. DESMOND is 30ish. Lean. Athletic. A man in a hurry.

CUT TO:

KITCHEN PANTRY -

MASON helping to prep a serving tray of hors d'oeuvres.
Beside him, **KAMIR**, (15) a slender, Palestinian boy.

KAMIR wears a white shirt of Mason's that is several sizes too large. He is comfortable here. He is a member of the household. They are having fun.

KAMIR
"Cold feet."

MASON
It means...reluctant. You change
your mind at the last minute, they
say you have cold feet.

KAMIR
"No-A."

MASON
C'mon, you know that. Two words.
No. Way. Impossible. Never happen.

KAMIR
"Deebschid."

MASON
"Deebschid?" What the hell is that?

KAMIR
I'm asking you.

NICOLE, passing behind them, answers on the fly.

NICOLE
Deep shit.

KAMIR
Yes -- deepshit. What is that?

MASON
Go on, Nicole, tell the man.

NICOLE
"Deebschid" is what you step in
when you walk on cold feet.

Laughing, she disappears back into the kitchen.

KAMIR
I don't get it.

MASON
Il mhar' kebir hamm. F'himt?

KAMIR
Deep shit?
(he can't believe it)
No way.

MASON looks over. KAMIR smiles.

LIVING ROOM -

DESMOND moving through the party, trying to appear casual as he searches for someone. ALICE pulls away from a conversation and crosses to him. They share a quick kiss.

ALICE
You look tense.

DESMOND
Just tired. Long day.
(still looking)
Mason floating around?

ALICE
He's here somewhere.

DESMOND finally focuses. He manufactures a smile.

ALICE
How tired are you?

Before he can answer, KAMIR appears beside them, proffering the tray of hors d'oeuvres.

ALICE
Kamir, look at you. Don't you look elegant. Don't you think so, Des?

DESMOND
Absolutely. Very elegant.

KAMIR, shy, can only smile. ALICE takes a canape.

HALLWAY ALCOVE -

DESMOND looking for MASON. Slipping past a knot of PARTY GUESTS. Familiar faces. Greetings as he goes.

MASON (OS)
There you are...

DESMOND turns. MASON bearing down on him with a big smile. These are good friends. Pals. Young turks on the come. MASON takes him by the arm. Steers them toward the bar.

MASON
I was starting to get worried.
(conspiratorial)
I had visions of babysitting these
yahoos all by myself.

DESMOND
We need to talk.

MASON
What we need is a drink. Nothing like
mingling with Congressmen to test
your faith in democracy.

DESMOND stops him. A firm hand on the shoulder.

DESMOND
We need to talk.

MASON'S STUDY -

Quiet here. Quiet and tense. MASON watching DESMOND struggle to get the words out. They are alone.

DESMOND
...Our friendship, we've managed,
both of us, somehow we've managed
to finesse our way around all the
policy shit...and...
(help me)
Am I right?

MASON
Of course.

DESMOND
We have. We've been lucky. Because
it's not always easy.

MASON
Des, I've got twenty-five people
waiting for dinner...

DESMOND
I've never come to you with anything
operational. It's always been good.

MASON
Are you in trouble?

DESMOND stands there. Torture.

DESMOND
It's Kamir. It's about Kamir.
(beat)
They want him for questioning.

MASON
Questioning? Who wants him?

DESMOND
Everybody.

MASON
What is this?

DESMOND
Did you know he has a brother?

MASON
What?

DESMOND
There's an older brother.

MASON
Bullshit.

DESMOND
You had no idea.

MASON
What are you talking about? He's
got nobody. My God, why the hell
do you think it took Nicky so long
to get his papers?

DESMOND
I wish I knew.

MASON
I don't like the way that sounds.

DESMOND
His name is Abu Rafir Salim. They
were split up in '68. Kamir came to
Beirut. The brother spent three
years in a Jordanian prison.

MASON
Where the hell is this going?

DESMOND

Two weeks ago, Abu Salim spent a day in Munich at the Olympic Village.

(Mason freezes)

Kamir's big brother helped murder a dozen Israeli wrestlers.

MASON

No.

DESMOND

It gets worse. There's a photograph. Kamir and his brother. It was taken last year. Here. In Beirut.

MASON

Where does this all come from?

DESMOND

Tel Aviv.

MASON hardening. DESMOND dreading what's to come.

DESMOND

I'm sorry, Mason. I know it's...

(he trails off)

They want him now.

MASON

Tonight?

DESMOND

There's an Agency Operations Supervisor waiting at the bottom of your driveway.

MASON

To do what? Turn him over to the Israelis?

(silence the answer)

Since when is the CIA running a delivery service? --- Is that the deal these days, MOSSAD drops a dime and you guys jump?

DESMOND

(bristling)

Your people have their hands all over this! State Department froze your security access the day before yesterday!

MASON reeling. DESMOND catches himself.

DESMOND

Look, you've got the kid brother
of Global Enemy Number One serving
canapes to United States Congressmen.
That's what they see.

MASON

What do they want to do to him?

DESMOND

You think they're gonna tell me?
We're friends. They know that.

MASON

Jesus Christ, Des, he's been here
three years! He's a member of the
family! You taught him how to play
tennis for crying out loud!
(incredulous)
What are they gonna do? Drag him
out of the house? You think Nicky's
gonna let that happen?

DESMOND

If they had a choice they'd let him
dangle. They'd stay on him. They'd
wait for the next reunion. They
can't do that now. Somebody talked.
It's not safe anymore. For anybody.

MASON

I'll personally guarantee he's at
the embassy by eight a.m.

DESMOND

It's not my call. You know that.

MASON

Tell them I'll be down in a minute.
We'll work something out. But not
like this.
(steely)
That's the best I can do.

DESMOND nods sadly. The air thick with dilemma.

MASON'S DRIVEWAY GATE -

DESMOND exiting onto the street. Half a dozen INTELLIGENCE
TYPES gathered around two cars.

KITCHEN PATIO -

MASON and KAMIR alone, outside. A GARDEN in the darkness behind them. MASON looming over KAMIR.

MASON

You listen to me very closely.
You lie to me? You hang me up?
I can't help you. Is that clear?

KAMIR nods. He's terrified and confused.

MASON

Your brother.

KAMIR blinks. Stalled there. Confirmation in his silence.

MASON

When's the last time you saw him?

KAMIR

He is dead?

MASON

Answer my question.
(bearing down)
When did you last see him?

KAMIR

I only...only maybe three times,
three times in two years, the last
was in the summer.

MASON

You know what he's been doing?
(beat)
Answer me.

KAMIR

He tells me nothing.
(pleading)
I swear to you, nothing. I ask him,
every time I ask! All the time!
(a panicked rush)
Sometime he has money, he tells me
he was working in Spain. He works
in a restaurant. Some other time
he was in Malta. I don't know.

MASON

You lied to me -- to Nicole.
(furious)
Do you have any idea what you've
done here?

KAMIR

He makes me promise not to talk
about him. That's all he wants.

(ready to cry)

I...I don't know -- I swear.

The KITCHEN DOOR flies open. NICOLE standing there.

NICOLE

What is going on out here? We're
serving dinner, I've been...

(she stops)

Mason?

MASON

I want you to both go back inside.

NICOLE

Something's happened.

MASON

I'll explain when I come back up.

NICOLE

From where? Where are you going?

MASON

Nicky, please...

(quiet and firm)

What I need right now is for both
of you to go back in the house and
stay there.

NICOLE

How can I possibly --

MASON

-- Nicole, trust me on this.

Please.

(to Kamir)

You stay inside. You hear me?

Go on.

KAMIR too frightened to move. Searching MASON for strength.

MASON

It'll be okay. Just go in now.

(pause)

I promise. Now go on.

NICOLE moves aside as KAMIR shuffles quickly into the house.
She and MASON alone now.

NICOLE
What did he do?

MASON
I don't know. Maybe nothing.

NICOLE
Is this why Des was late?

MASON
You've got to go back in.

NICOLE
This is bad, isn't it?

MASON looks at her. She loves him enough not to press.

MASON
Nothing that can't be fixed.

He starts away toward the driveway. A few steps and he turns back. She's still there.

MASON
My next life?

NICOLE
You'll be a carpenter.

He smiles. Backing away as she steps back into the house.

THE KITCHEN -

KAMIR surrounded by THE WOMEN COOKS as they scold him in ARABIC: *The food is getting cold, Where has he been?*

KAMIR turns to find NICOLE staring. He looks away.

MASON'S DRIVEWAY GATE -

MASON standing with DESMOND and "MR. JONES," (50) a cold-eyed, CIA honcho. FOUR SECURITY TYPES wait by the cars.

MASON
(nice and easy)
I'm telling you he'll be there in the morning. I'm offering you a compromise here.

MR. JONES

I'm sorry, Mr. Skiles, but I don't have the authority to negotiate with you on this.

MASON

It's a tough spot. I know that. I've been in that position myself.

MR. JONES

There's no reason why this can't run smoothly.

MASON

I just don't see that happening.
(to Desmond)
Does he know the situation?

DESMOND

I've tried.

MR. JONES

(sharply)
Mr. Cove is not here this evening in a supervisory capacity. We thought he might be able to bring the man out quietly. That hasn't happened.

MASON

"Man?" -- We're talking about a fifteen-year-old boy.

DESMOND

Mason...

MASON

The kid is harmless. He's about six credits away from an engineering scholarship in California.

MR. JONES

(ice cold)
This is not an analysis assignment.

MASON

Well, if you can't help me find a creative solution to this problem, then I suggest you get on the phone and find somebody who can.

MR. JONES

I'm afraid, Mr. Skiles, that we've lost that as an option.

MASON
 (that cuts it)
 Then maybe you better retrace your
 fucking steps and --

On that, the sound of **MACHINE GUN FIRE** from the house --

CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN -

CHAOS. Everything in motion.

TWO HOODED GUNMEN backing out the kitchen door. One holds NICOLE as a shield. The other with a firm grip on KAMIR, screaming at him in Arabic as they go --

SCREAMING GUNMAN
 -- Kamir! Yalla! Shu sarlak?
 Dwar'sal itkat! îYalla! Yalla!

A BURST OF MACHINE GUNFIRE as the FIRST GUNMAN squeezes off a warning blast over NICOLE'S HEAD. Plaster falling and glass splintering underfoot and the ARAB WOMEN SHRIEKING and scrambling for cover and it's all happening way too fast and -

THE DRIVEWAY -

MASON sprinting to the house. DESMOND right behind him, pulling a pistol. JONES and COMPANY following and --

THE KITCHEN PATIO -

A THIRD HOODED GUNMAN standing guard, rifle trained on the path that runs alongside the house and down to the driveway.

THIRD GUNMAN
 (over his shoulder)
Shu'bak! Kham'sit yafir yalla!
 Kham'sit! Yalla!

BEHIND HIM -- NICOLE and KAMIR being dragged across the patio. NICOLE struggling but she's no match. KAMIR yelling as he tries to shake free --

KAMIR
 -- Am'mi bit fa'tash? Ka'hm ni
seneh? Jhi'masik! Ka'hn seneh?

SCREAMING GUNMAN
Shimkha'r n'ivrak! Yalla!
(letting him go)
Muhkta'r fiv'ha Salim! Salim!

KAMIR suddenly stops fighting and --

THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE -

PARTY GUESTS fleeing the house. MASON and DESMOND topping the driveway with no sign of slowing.

DESMOND
Mason! Wait a minute! Mason!

But MASON's not stopping, racing for the path that runs back to the patio. DESMOND with no choice but to follow and --

THE BACK GARDEN -

The THREE HOODED GUNMEN moving quickly for a gate in the garden wall behind the KITCHEN, progress hampered by KAMIR who is arguing vehemently that they release NICOLE and --

THE KITCHEN PATHWAY -

MASON just rounding the corner when DESMOND dives -- TACKLING HIM -- the two of them falling across the patio just as --

MACHINE GUNFIRE starts ripping out of the darkness and --

WINDOWS SHATTERING along the kitchen wall and --

THE SCREAMING GUNMAN firing toward the patio and --

NICOLE breaking free of the FIRST GUNMAN, KAMIR pushing her urgently back toward the house and --

DESMOND forcing MASON down as the bullets savage the patio around them and --

MR. JONES and HIS GUYS pinned down in the pathway and --

KAMIR and TWO GUNMEN disappearing through a garden gate and --

NICOLE is trapped, to make it back to the house she'd have to pass the SCREAMING GUNMAN who is still blasting away and --

TWO SECURITY GUYS explode from the pathway, guns blazing, totally synchronized, FIRING and FIRING and FIRING and --

THE SCREAMING GUNMEN is hit -- hit badly -- still SHOOTING even as he falls and then --

MASON yelling "NICOLE!" as the gun goes silent and --

SUDDENLY IT'S OVER...

MASON moves forward. Trying to stand as he goes. Staring into the darkness as he makes his feet. Desmond is saying something from somewhere behind him but the words are lost.

MASON stumbles out across the garden. He drops to his knees. Paralyzed there. So many things breaking inside him at once.

NICOLE LAYS DEAD ON THE GROUND.

FADE OUT:

A BATHROOM -

Plain. Residential. MASON asleep in the bath. The shower running. Water raining into a full tub and spilling onto the floor. MASON is ten years older and looks it. We are -

BOSTON, FEBRUARY, 1982

A WOMAN, (30s), half-dressed, enters. She moves for the tub, splashing through the water on the floor.

WOMAN

Jesus Christ...

(shutting the tap)

Mason. Hey... Hey...

MASON's eyes open slowly. Focusing through a hangover.

WOMAN

You fell asleep.

(no answer)

Look, I've got to stop back home before I go to work.

(worried now)

Are you gonna be all right?

MASON shifts. Water spills out over the floor.

MASON

If you're asking whether I can swim, the answer is yes.

INT. MASON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Impersonal. An anonymous, modern apartment. A half-hearted decor only makes it more depressing. Papers, files, and disarray, the dominant images here.

THE WOMAN, dressed now, moves through the room gathering her stuff. Fussing. Lingerin.

MASON stands at the mirror knotting his tie. Starched shirt, decent suit, bloodshot eyes. He concentrates on the tie, doing his best to ignore the WOMAN's presence behind him.

WOMAN

Anyway. It was nice to run into you again.

MASON forced to glance over. She smiles.

WOMAN

This weekend...

(beat)

Friday for sure. He says he'll be back Saturday, but with him...

MASON's silence kills her smile.

WOMAN

You've still got my work number?

MASON

You don't want to be late.

She hesitates. It's suddenly very cold in here. She finds her bag. MASON listens as her heels click through the apartment. The sound of the FRONT DOOR closing behind her.

EXT. THE SOMERVILLE RAMADA INN - MORNING

Raining. Cars splashing along Mass. Ave.

INT. MASON'S CAR - SAME

Parked in the motel lot. MASON alone. Sitting with the engine off, exploring the boundaries of his hangover as the cold air leaks back into the car.

After a moment, he wrestles a small pewter FLASK from his coat pocket. He drinks deeply. He's about to cap it, when he stops. On the dashboard, a take-out coffee cup.

MASON juggles the flask as he peels back the lid, drinks it down an inch, and then makes up the difference with Scotch. As he finishes, he catches his reflection in the rearview mirror. A low moment.

INT. MOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Smoke-filled, airless and plain. A stalled labor negotiation in progress. MASON at the head of the table, briskly running down a checklist:

MASON
...Issue five: Pension/attrition
ratio. We've agreed to pull this
off the table...

ERNIE, 30, Mason's right-hand, sitting beside him.

MASON
...t/b/a...Most Favored Nation...
blah, blah, blah, we'll go with
the national formula...

LABOR on one side of the table: DENNIS the Union Leader, flanked by two, beefy BUSINESS AGENTS. Handling paperwork, a LAWYER, and a chainsmoking SECRETARY.

MASON
...Issue six: ICC indemnity bonding.
Solid compromise here. We cross-
collateralize the insurance premiums
with the safety bonuses...

MANAGEMENT on the other: JERRY the owner. JERRY JR. the son. TWO LAWYERS. A SECRETARY. An ACCOUNTANT.

MASON
...it's a self-starter. Plug in
the numbers.

ERNIE
(cheerleading)
It's a win-win situation.

JERRY
(impatient)
Okay, enough with the greatest
hits already. Let's get down to
the rock here.

MASON lowers the paper. Takes in the room. Ugly.

MASON

I thought we all deserved a little re-cap here. You get inside these things sometimes you forget how far you've come.

DENNIS

Everything you said, that takes us to last Sunday. That's six...what is it?... a week on this last thing.
(at Jerry)
Seven fucking days on Workmen's Comp.

JERRY

(heating up)
I've got a calendar in my office.

MASON

Okay...Slow down. Right now.
(staring them calm)
Thank you. So we're all itchy to close this contract and get -- let me finish, Dennis -- I think we're all about to cross into the land of diminishing returns here.

JERRY

Look, there's an offer on the table. He wants to talk, I'll be --

DENNIS

-- that's not an offer it's a death sentence!

They're off and running. MASON simply closes his file. ERNIE waiting for him to step in -- waiting in vain.

JERRY

I'll be in my offie. I'll be listening to my phone ring off the hook with guys who'd kill to work for what I paid this thief twenty years ago!

DENNIS

Is that a threat, Jerry?

ERNIE

(finally standing)
That's enough. Let's just stow it right now. Guys...Guys--

JERRY

You take it how you want.

DENNIS
I'll have a strike vote in fifteen minutes!

JERRY
Fine! Do us both a favor!

DENNIS
You locking us out?

JERRY JR.
Lock you out? We should burn you out!

That cuts it. DENNIS pushes away from the table -- pushes away hard -- the table lifting violently -- coffee, ashtrays, papers, everything sent crashing onto the MANAGEMENT side.

MASON just sitting there, as the room erupts into a full-scale SCREAMING BRAWL around him.

INT. RAMADA BAR - LATER

Few customers this early. MASON on his third vodka. ERNIE all soda.

ERNIE
If we were billing by the hour, I'd say fine, let's keep dragging the lake, but c'mon... Let's close this or walk away.

MASON
They'll cool off. They'll be back tomorrow.

ERNIE doesn't look so sure. MASON drains his glass.

MASON
Where do we stand with the thing in Providence? The supermarket.

ERNIE
(bad news)
They took a local guy. A lawyer.

MASON
When did this happen?

ERNIE
Two days ago. It seemed like you had a lot on your plate.

MASON taps his napkin. The BARTENDER nods. Refill.

MASON

So then what's the rush. It's not
as if we're backed up.

ERNIE

I've been offered another job.
(no reaction)
Bob Sparta in New York. We're
still haggling over numbers, but...

MASON

That's great, Ernie. You deserve it.

ERNIE stares. MASON clears a space for the next drink.

ERNIE

That's not why I want to wrap this
up. I think we oughta close this
thing because it is my deeply held
belief that you need a rest.

He pauses as the BARTENDER delivers Mason's drink.

ERNIE

Get some sun. Walk around.
(beat)
Maybe dry out for awhile.

MASON takes a solid pull on the vodka.

MASON

You're gonna do all right in New
York, Ernie. You'll be fine.

Silence. ERNIE hanging. Nothing left to say.

INT. CARD ROOM - NIGHT

An after-hours hideaway. Serious poker. Five guys around the table. This hand down to MASON and a BEARDED GUY of sixty. MASON dominating the game; an impressive achievement considering how drunk he is.

MASON

I'll call...and I'll raise another
seventy-five.

BEARDED GUY

You know what I do for a living?

MASON
Do I care?

BEARDED GUY
I'm a psychiatrist.

MASON
You want me to lie down?

BEARDED GUY
I'm curious. You bluff. You fold.
You press. You tip-toe. Is there a
game plan here, or are you clinically
schizophrenic?

MASON
I guess it'll cost you an extra
three hundred to find out

BEARDED GUY stares at MASON. Checks his cards. Folds.

BEARDED GUY
Maybe I'm not that curious.

MASON pulls in the pot as we --

CUT TO:

A TELEX MACHINE -

- whining out the last page of a high-speed satellite
transmission. We're in --

INT. NSC COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - DAY

WALL-to-WALL ELECTRONICS and TECHNICIANS working quietly.
The TELEX stops and an impatient HAND reaches in, tearing the
paper from the machine.

A MAN standing over the Telex, scanning the transmission.
CREDENTIALS ON HIS LAPEL identify him as: **PETER RUZAK** - NSC
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - MIDEAST AFFAIRS

He's 30's. Suit and tie. Trim. Ex-Marine. The kind of man
who will always look out of uniform. His expression sours as
he reads the news.

A HALLWAY -

RUZAK moves quickly past ARMED MARINES in full dress uniform.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL SITUATION ROOM**WASHINGTON D.C**

RUZAK turns a corner. Through a door into --

A SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM -

EIGHT MEN - five SUITS, three UNIFORMS -- huddled over a table. They look up. Impatient.

RUZAK

(bad news)

We've got confirmation. They just found the car.

SUIT

You better pack your bag, Peter.

RUZAK

It's in my office, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. RAMADA CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

MASON sitting all alone. Afraid to stay. Afraid to leave.

WOMAN (OS)

Excuse me. You're part of the contract meetings, aren't you?

MASON turns. A MOTEL MANAGER stands in the doorway.

MANAGER

You should check with your office. Someone called this morning. I'm pretty sure they released the room.

She smiles and disappears. MASON absorbing the blow.

RAMADA BAR - LATER

BARTENDER just setting up. MASON, the only customer. Smokes, coffee and the first drink of the day arranged before him.

VOICE (OS)

Mason? Mason Skiles..?

MASON turns to see a smiling, white-haired, fifty-year-old MAN, walking toward him.

MAN

You might not remember me...Ray
Sullivan?

MASON

(faking it)
Sure...

SULLY

You arbitrated a barter for us a
few years back. Fiber optics thing?
Out in Needham?

MASON

Sully. Of course.
(there now)
How are you? Sorry, I...

SULLY

Relax, happens to me ten times a
day, somebody comes at you with
their hand out. Who can keep track?

MASON smiles. Off balance. It's early to be drinking.

MASON

We went late last night. We just
broke. Buy you a drink?

SULLY

I'm all set, thanks.

MASON

We've been here all week.

SULLY

I know. I called your office.
I came out to see you.
(taking his time)
It's a little awkward, Mason. I got a
wake-up call this morning. Friends in
Washington. Old friends. Maybe you
know the type.

MASON silent. Tuning quickly to a more complex station.

SULLY

American University in Beirut, I
guess they had someone lined up to
give a lecture later this week and
the fellow cancelled on them. "Cross
Cultural Arbitration," was the topic.

(MORE)

SULLY (CONT'D)

So my friends -- your being alumni
and all -- they were hoping you might
be able to fill in.

MASON too dazed to respond. SULLY produces an ENVELOPE.

SULLY

There's a check here, an honoraria,
\$6500, and a first-class, round-trip
ticket to Beirut. There's a room in
your name at the Commodore.

(beat)

You'd be very well cared for.

MASON

I thought you were in fiber optics,
Sully.

SULLY

Old friends, Mason. Old.

MASON looks at him. Dead on.

MASON

I wouldn't go to Beirut if it were
the last place on the planet.

SULLY

The flight leaves Logan at six
forty-five tonight.

MASON

Then I guess you've got about five
hours to find somebody else.

SULLY

There is nobody else.

(wide open)

Look, I don't have a clue what this
is about. It'd be a helluva lot
easier for both of us if I did. I've
never had a call like this in my
life.

MASON

I don't have any "Old Friends,"
Sully.

SULLY

You'd be surprised.

(beat)

They know what they're asking.
They're ready to work with you on
this.

(MORE)

SULLY (CONT'D)

You get there, you're uncomfortable,
it's too much --You come home.
There's just a real shortage of time
to get things started.

(beat)

It's a cry for help.

MASON drinks now. Confusion masked by cynicism.

MASON

"Ray Sullivan, CIA Industrialist.
Provocateur...."

SULLY

I thought we got along pretty well.
That was how I remembered it.

(waiting)

Why don't you think about it?

MASON

Tell them I don't have a passport.

SULLY

It's taken care of. It's in with the
tickets.

MASON stalled out. SULLY places the envelope on the bar.

SULLY

Look, I could've come out here and
tried to dance with you all
afternoon, but what's the point?
That's all I've got. You're a quick
study. Why screw around? All I ask
is that you think it over and keep it
to yourself.

(c'est la vie)

You miss the flight, this never
happened.

CUT TO:

THE ENVELOPE -- Sitting on a coffee table.

ERNIE'S VOICE

(leaving a phone message)

It's the last time I'm calling,
Mason. I don't know if you're there.
I don't know if you're ducking me.
I don't know what the hell you're
doing.

(he's had it)

Anyway, I thought you should know,

(MORE)

ERNIE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Dennis pulled a strike this
afternoon. I'll call you next week
from New York. Sandy has my keys.

CUT TO:

MASON'S LIVING ROOM - DUSK

The message machine CLICKS off. MASON, in an armchair,
drinking purposefully.

Staring at the ENVELOPE.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT BAR - NIGHT

The evening rush of TRAVELERS and COMMUTERS relaxing before
their flights. AN AIRLINE REP, a young man, passes QUICKLY
THROUGH the bar and into --

THE LOUNGE -

MASON at a table near the window. He is alone. And
dangerously drunk. His bag, cigarettes, empty glasses spread
carelessly around him.

AIRLINE REP
Mr. Skiles? Sir, your flight is
making its final boarding prep.

MASON turns around. Glassy. Prepared for trouble.

MASON
Am I bothering you?
(the Rep hesitates)
Because I told her already, I'm just
tired. She doesn't want to serve me?
God Bless America. Twenty minutes,
I'll walk. I'll be fine. Okay?

AIRLINE REP
You're mistaken, sir, I'm here to
help you to your flight.

MASON suddenly confused. How drunk is he?

AIRLINE REP
 Why don't you let me take the bag?
 (gently)
 You can sleep on the plane.

CUT TO

INT. DC-10 FIRST CLASS CABIN - IN FLIGHT - DAY

MASON opens his eyes to bright sunlight. He is disoriented, rumped and hungover.

Beside him, an OIL BUSINESS COWBOY, a guy of fifty, jeans and boots, poring over a calculator and a yellow legal pad.

COWBOY
 (an Oklahoma twang)
 We're about an hour out.

MASON glances out the window, his eyes struggling with the light. He turns back. COWBOY still working.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - AMERICAN EMBASSY - BEIRUT - DAY

Small but well-appointed. The windows are blocked by floor-to-ceiling SAND BAGS. An American flag prominently displayed.

RUZAK is seated at a table, flipping through a DOSSIER.

U.S. EMBASSY, BEIRUT

MARSHA CROWDER, across the table, waiting. Midt-thirties, she's not unattractive, but you have the sense that if beauty were a priority she'd have no trouble getting it done. Brims with the cynical competency of a combat nurse. She is a CIA Field Officer whose cover is that of the embassy's Chief Translator.

RUZAK looks up. He's ready.

CROWDER
 (from notes)
 Mason Francis Skiles. Penn State, class of '57. Masters in Mid-East Studies, Oxford 1958. American University of Beirut, '59 through '62. Doctorate in Arabic and Business Administration. Recruited by the Foreign Service in '63.
 (MORE)

CROWDER (CONT'D)
 Internship period waived, he's
 immediately posted to the Mid-East
 Desk. Cairo. Damascus. Amman. Beirut.

AMBASSADOR CAL WHALEN sips iced tea as CROWDER continues. Mid-sixties. Patrician. Careful. A career peace-maker. Mason's bio is old news to him.

CROWDER
 ...In 1969, Skiles returns to
 Washington to assist with the State
 Department's Mid-East long-term
 policy program. He marries...he's
 published...widely quoted, etc...

DONALD GAINES, fifty, cracks his neck. Balding and poorly tailored, but the look is deceiving. He's an experienced professional. He is the Embassy's Political Officer, in other words, the CIA Station Chief.

CROWDER
 ...Kissinger throws him a working
 group at the Paris peace talks, and
 in '71 he's appointed Deputy Chief
 Of Mission to the United States
 Embassy in Lebanon. Youngest DCM
 in service history.
 (looking up)
 His wife -- I guess Don ran that
 by you on the ride in -- the
 "incident" at Skiles house in '72?

RUZAK
 I can read the file. What I need
 to know is where he stands now.

CROWDER
 No family. Lives in Boston. He
 spent three years as the senior
 trade negotiator for the New England
 Regional Merchandising Council.
 Quit that to go private. He's got
 a two-man firm, mostly labor issues.
 Small-time contract arbitration.

RUZAK
 From Kissinger to the crapper.

CROWDER
 He has a drinking problem.

RUZAK
 How bad?

CROWDER

He binges. They had to pour him
on the plane.

RUZAK

Talk to me, Don.

GAINES

Damaged goods. He's a frontrunner
who stumbled. He's manageable.

RUZAK

Cal? You knew him.

WHALEN

Don't play cards with him, Peter.

CUT TO

INT. ARRIVAL TERMINAL - BEIRUT AIRPORT - DAY

MASON coming off his flight into a chaotic mass of travelers waiting to pass customs: POOR SHIITE FAMILIES standing beside PROSPEROUS LEBANESE BUSINESSMEN. WOMEN IN CHADORS jostling with WOMEN IN PARISIAN TRAVEL SUITS.

And everywhere -- GUNS. ARMED MEN wherever you turn; in uniform, out of uniform. The visible weaponry is staggering.

MASON stops. Overwhelmed by the sounds and smells of his past.

CUSTOMS BOOTH - BEIRUT AIRPORT -

A LEBANESE IMMIGRATION OFFICER examining Mason's passport. MASON glances over to see COWBOY passing by.

COWBOY

Take it easy, pard.

MASON nods. Watches him go.

MAIN AIRPORT TERMINAL -

MASON enters to see BERNARD TEPPLER, a perspiring, Englishman of sixty fumbling toward him.

TEPPLER

Mr. Skiles! Mr. Skiles!
(extending hand)
(MORE)

TEPPLER (CONT'D)
 Bernard Teppler, American University.
 Pleasure to meet you!

Out of nowhere -- A DOZEN SYRIAN SOLDIERS come barreling through the crowd. TEPPLER quickly pulling MASON out of the way, as the piercing cry of a WOMAN SCREAMING begins to echo through the terminal.

TEPPLER
 (a stoic smile)
 Welcome to Beirut.

CUT TO

EXT. THE HIGHWAY - DAY

AN ABANDONED ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN. Half-buried atop a sandy hill. Spent shells and old tires litter the ground.

FOUR MUSLIM CHILDREN playing here as if it were the most natural thing in the world. A BOY OF SIX laughing as he hangs upside down from the rusted gun barrel.

A MERCEDES speeds past...

INSIDE THE MERCEDES -

A HEAVYSET ARAB DRIVER at the wheel. MASON, in back with TEPPLER, stares silently out the window at the passing squalor of Beirut's Southern Suburbs -

Rubble, shanties, and concrete apartment houses. Most buildings of consequence seem either half-finished or half-destroyed. Afternoon sunlight casts deep shadows through the shell-holes and charred skeletons of trees. To the east, green mountains rise sharply above the city. To the west, not far beyond the wasteland, is the Mediterranean.

MASON turns back. Chilled by the change.

TEPPLER
 Nine years away. Must be quite
 a shock.

MASON silent. A moment later, the MERCEDES begins to slow.

HEAVY DRIVER
 (accented english)
 Passports please...

TEPPLER
 (cheerfully)
 Not to worry. Quite routine. The PLO
 run an excellent checkpoint.

THE PLO CHECKPOINT --

A GROUP TEENAGE BOYS -- PLO "FEDAYEEN" -- sunbathing in beach chairs, smoking, and laughing as they listen to AMERICAN POP from a boom-box. It looks like some Lebanese version of spring break. But then we see THE WEAPONS: AK-47s, MORTARS, and HAND GRENADES scattered around like playthings.

THE MERCEDES is being passed through...

Several other cars have not been so lucky and are pulled over to one side. Trunks open. DRIVERS negotiating nervously.

One MAN, shirt covered with blood, stands in a stupor at the side of the road.

CUT TO

THE MERCEDES - MOVING -

Entering the city. War damage everywhere, but the squalor has been replaced by tree-lined avenues and better buildings.

MASON
 I thought we were going to the
 Commodore.

TEPPLER
 We are.

MASON
 We always used to take Rue Nabil.

DRIVER
 Nabil is not good today. Big car
 bomb last night. Very bad.

MASON
 Who lit the fuse?

DRIVER
 (he laughs)
 Is Beirut. Depends who you ask.
 PLO says it was the Amal Militia.
 Amal says Phalangist. Phalangists,
 they say, "Sure. So maybe it's
 Christian, but not us. Ask the
 (MORE)

DRIVER (CONT'D)
 Chamoun Militia." Chamoun says
 it was the Druze. Druze says
 Syrian Army. You listen to the
 radio from Damascus -- it's all the
 time about Israelis making these
 car bombs. Maybe they make a good
 excuse to come across the border.
 Ask Israel? -- Is always the PLO.
 (he shrugs)
 My wife says Hezbollah Shiites.

MASON
 And what do you say?

DRIVER
 I say we skip Rue Du Nabil.

CUT TO

A SIGN -- FULL FRAME -- as WE HEAR the WHISTLE OF INCOMING
 SHELLS, dramatic and close:

*"IN CASE OF SHOOTING AROUND THE HOTEL, THE MANAGEMENT
 INSISTS THAT CAMERAMEN AND PHOTOGRAPHERS DO NOT
 ATTEMPT TO TAKE PICTURES. THIS ENDANGERS NOT ONLY
 THEIR LIVES BUT THOSE OF THE GUESTS AND HOTEL STAFF.
 THOSE WHO ARE NOT PREPARED TO COOPERATE MAY CHECK OUT
 OF THIS HOTEL"*

INT. LOBBY - THE COMMODORE HOTEL - DAY

The hotel of choice for reporters, dealers, ex-pat barflies,
 and hookers. Shabby and functional. To quote Tom
 Friedman: "...an island of insanity in a sea of madness."

The WHISTLING SOUND OF SHELLS, we realize now, comes from a
 PARROT perched near the bar. MASON at the front desk --

DESK CLERK
 We have a choice of rooms, Mr.
 Skiles. Would you prefer the
 "Sea Side," or the "Shelling Side?"

The DESK CLERK looks up. Smiles. The PARROT squawks.

CUT TO

MASON'S HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

A high floor. Oddly furnished. Worn blue carpeting. French
 doors to a bedroom. Another door opens to a small balcony.

MASON stands at the center of the room. What the fuck is he doing here? He reaches for the answer in his pocket. Takes a long pull from the flask. Drains it. He sits on the bed. He is lost. He is afraid to move. One wrong next step and he could fall off the edge of the world.

THE BAR OF THE COMMODORE HOTEL - NIGHT

A menagerie of JOURNALISTS, SHEIKS, DEALERS and PROSTITUTES. A crummy DISCO BAND bangs away at some inappropriate cover tune. MASON at the far end of the bar, alone.

CROWDER (O.S.)
Mason Skiles?

He looks up as CROWDER takes the seat beside him. She smiles, offers her hand.

CROWDER
How do you do? My name is Marsha Crowder. I'm an translator at the Embassy. I understand you're over to lecture at the business school.

MASON
It's funny. I've been looking for a translator.

CROWDER
Really.

MASON
My Arabic's pretty strong. French, German, Farsi, all passable. But there is one language I can't seem to get around.

CROWDER
And what's that?

MASON
Spook.

CROWDER hesitates. Stiffly maintaining her composure.

CROWDER
I have a car outside.

CUT TO

EXT. THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, BEIRUT - NIGHT

A SEDAN pulls up a long driveway and is waved to a stop by ARMED MARINES. CHAUFFEURS stand around a group of expensive cars. MUSIC playing from inside. A formal reception in progress. MASON and CROWDER exit the SEDAN.

EMBASSY HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

CROWDER leading MASON down the corridor. Up ahead, AMBASSADOR WHALEN, wearing a tuxedo, emerges from a doorway.

WHALEN

And what do we have here?

(arms open)

Look at you.

They embrace. Old friends. Long time no see.

MASON

(pulling back)

So... "Mr. Ambassador."

WHALEN

Took 'em long enough, didn't it.

WHALEN takes his arm. Talking as they go.

WHALEN

Come on. We're just waiting for the boys to come down from the fifth floor.

WHALEN escorts MASON down the hall, CROWDER following.

WHALEN

Flight okay?

MASON

A little long. How's Margie?

WHALEN

Oh, she's great. Just fine.

As they walk, they pass a window blockaded with SANDBAGS.

WHALEN

I'll tell you, Mason, you missed one helluva civil war. They turned this place inside out like nothing I could've imagined. Just gutted it. Hundred thousand dead. City cut up like a goddamn pizza.

(MORE)

WHALEN (CONT'D)
 (turning to Crowder)
 What's Don's line? -- "Sausage on
 one side, anchovies on the other?"

CROWDER
 "And the Green Line up the middle."

WHALEN
 East Beirut? Strictly Christian
 these days. Silk suits, commando
 priests -- you know the gang. When
 they're not busy slaughtering them-
 selves or the Syrians or the Druse
 they lob something over to this side
 of town.

MASON
 PLO still running West Beirut?

WHALEN
 What's left of it. Same old shit.
 They're just dug in better. Same old
 squabbles. Same bunch of playboys
 and sociopaths running the show. Same
 refugees dying in the sun waiting for
 someone to take them home.

They turn a corner. A DOORWAY up ahead.

WHALEN
 Everybody got into it. Russians.
 Iranians. Hell, the goddamn Shiites
 have broken up into five different
 factions. And now we've got Israel
 a hundred miles down the road licking
 their chops waiting for a good excuse
 to come on up and show us what great
 weapons we bought 'em.

WHALEN stops at a doorway, ushering MASON INTO --

THE EMBASSY "QUIET ROOM" -

Spy-proof. Acoustic tiles. No windows. A small bar.

WHALEN
 But...you can still play tennis in
 the morning, ski in the afternoon and
 find yourself one helluva party at
 night. Heady times, don't you think?
 (at the BAR)
 Thirsty?

MASON
Vodka soda. A short one.

WHALEN nods. Goes to work as -- RUZAK enters, suit no tie.

RUZAK
(brisk, pleasant)
Mason Skiles. How the hell are you?
(another handshake)
Welcome to Beirut. Peter Ruzak,
National Security Council.
(to Whalen)
Don'll be down in a second.
(back to Mason)
Before we get started. I just want
you to know that we're all, all of
us, keenly aware of what you've done.

MASON
And what is that?

RUZAK
Coming out here... No notice.
No info. It's been duly noted.

MASON gets his drink. GAINES enters wearing a tuxedo.

RUZAK
I believe you know Donald Gaines,
he's the Chief Political Officer
here.

This reunion a bit frosty. No love lost.

GAINES
Mason.

MASON
It's amazing Don, even in a tux you
don't look like a spy.

RUZAK
Why don't we get started?
(to Mason)
Please, have a seat.

CROWDER closes the door. Sealing it shut. Just the five of
them around a conference table.

RUZAK
It's very important we account for
your time here tonight, Mason, so
we're gonna try and move quickly.
(MORE)

RUZAK (CONT'D)

Before we get started, I think Don has a few background questions he'd like to run by you. Standard stuff.

GAINES

Talk to anybody over here recently, Mason?

MASON

Meaning what?

GAINES

You had a lot of friends. Anybody you continue to see?

MASON

It's been nine years.

GAINES

Phone call...Christmas card...

CROWDER

We're interested in protecting your safety, Mr. Skiles.

MASON

I feel better already.
(to Whalen)
Who's in charge here?

RUZAK

I'm coordinating.

MASON

Well maybe you'd like to coordinate us away from the questions and into the answers. I'm not enjoying this.

RUZAK sits back. Gestures for CROWDER to proceed.

CROWDER

Three nights ago an American was pulled off the street in West Beirut. The following morning we received a communique from a group calling itself the Militia of Islamic Liberation. Very clean. Very simple. No rhetoric. They have this person and they want to talk.

RUZAK

They want you to broker the deal.

GAINES

They asked for you specifically.

MASON hesitates. All eyes on him.

MASON

So who the hell are they?

GAINES

That's something we'd love to know.

WHALEN

We know who they're not. They're not mainstream PLO.

RUZAK

That's a minority opinion, Cal.

WHALEN

C'mon, Peter...

(to Mason)

The PLO's pissing bricks. We've had a cease-fire hanging by a thread for the past ten months. Last thing they want is Israeli tanks coming across the border.

RUZAK

(shutting down Whalen)

At this point we're not ruling out anyone. Everything's in play.

Silence. MASON watching them. Noting the conflicts.

MASON

What is it you'd like me to do?

RUZAK

You're a negotiator. Negotiate.

MASON

Come on, you don't want a negotiator. I'm here because some maniac wrote my name on a note.

(in gear now)

Look, these people, your hostage takers, they want to make a deal. They're all business. They call right away. They're specific. You must have something they want. Call their bluff. Tell them I'm out. If they bite, you'll have your first concession. Get 'em used to it. You'll be on your way.

Dead air. Four stunned reactions.

MASON (CONT'D)
Honest to God? I'm a little
surprised. I thought I'd be seeing
Desmond here tonight.
(they're still staring)
Desmond Cove?

RUZAK
Desmond Cove is the hostage.

MASON caught short. Numb. He finds his drink.

GAINES
Spoken to him recently?

MASON
No. Not for years.

RUZAK
He's the Assistant Station Chief
here. He's Don's primary field
coordinator.

GAINES
I doubt we have to tell you how
delicate this is. Desmond's been in
the neighborhood for fifteen years.
Assets, projects, personnel... The
man's a walking encyclopedia.

MASON
You're afraid he'll talk.

GAINES
We're moving as quickly as we can. At
the moment, nothing's blown. But
Desmond's people, if this goes sour?
It's not a pleasant thought.

MASON
So nobody knows anything.

RUZAK
You just became part of a very small
loop, Mason.

A heavy pause. MASON looks around. CROWDER staring at him.

CROWDER
Do you think Desmond requested you?

MASON

Would you request me?

Dead quiet. CROWDER looks away.

BACK HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A door opens. GAINES pushes through into a dark maintenance area, MASON and CROWDER in tow. GAINES working fast. MASON unreadable.

GAINES

You don't know Ruzak. Never met him. You're gonna leave, ten minutes later he's gonna make an entrance. Might be unnecessary, we don't know. Until we do, we'll blow smoke.

MASON

This isn't my game, Don.

GAINES

Sure it is. We're playing Texas Hold 'Em. Two cards down, everything else is on the table. Be natural. Play the reality. You're in, let's say... a mid-life crisis.

(modifying that)

It's been a long winter. You get a call from the University. They need a speaker. You're ripe. Reality. I come to work, I find you on my desk. It's an unknown quantity, we get nervous. So you get into town, we bring you by. We take a look. Just doing our bit.

MASON

And what bit is that?

GAINES

Sniffing around. Letting you know we're here. You resent our interest. The way you see it, we're the same ham-handed pendejos we've always been. Reality?

MASON glances at CROWDER. Finds her staring at him.

MASON

And Ms. Crowder?

GAINES

It is a widely held belief that
dangling a skirt in front of a jet-
lagged American man of your age is a
high percentage play.

(beat)

Marsha is a very big girl. She's more
than capable of taking care of both
of you. You'll want to treat her
nicely.

MASON

You're scaring me, Don.

GAINES

No I'm not. I'm engaging you. I'm
firing up old curiosities.

They've reached the end of the corridor. A DOOR there.

GAINES

We're all rather counting on you,
Mason. Is that a mistake?

MASON

I don't know.

(beat)

Reality.

He pushes through the door. GAINES and CROWDER share a look.

EMBASSY DRIVEWAY - MINUTES LATER

MASON and CROWDER walking to her car. Awkward silence.

MASON (CONT'D)

Any chance we can swing around
through Ras Beirut?

CROWDER

Someplace in particular?

CUT TO

EXT. SHELLED-OUT BLOCK - RAS BEIRUT - NIGHT

Crowder's car parked in the street. MASON, nearby, staring
at the ruins of his old home. A devastating vision. The
whole block a wasteland of half walls and charred stone.
CROWDER behind him, letting him mourn.

MASON
(just shattered)
Jesus...

CROWDER
The PLO had a transmitter up here.
Ten months ago -- just before the
cease-fire -- the Israelis blew up
the block.

MASON
I first came to this town...I thought
I'd died and skipped right past
heaven. Fifty-nine? Sixty? There
was no better place on the
planet...it was paradise...

She waits for him to turn back. Finally he does. Shaken.

MASON
So much for memory-fucking-lane.
(he finds a smoke)
Where's Alice?

CROWDER
Mrs. Cove? She's expected tomorrow.
They have a home in Athens.

MASON
She just get the news, or were you
saving her in case I tried to back
out?

CROWDER
I wouldn't know.

MASON pulls his flask. Offers it. She declines. He drinks.

MASON
So what's your story?

CROWDER
We should head back.

MASON
Not even the short version?

CROWDER
Air force brat. Good language
skills. Nothing special. Dead end.

MASON takes a second bolt. Pockets the flask.

MASON

What about Desmond? What do you think? What are they trying to save, the man or the information?

CROWDER

That's a pretty ugly question.

MASON

And that's not an answer.

CROWDER

You haven't made up your mind yet, have you?

MASON

To do what? Let you folks blow sunshine up my ass?

(she stares back)

Let's pretend I really am here to negotiate. Who's my client? I see Cal repping State Department. Ruzak fronting for the White House. You and Gaines doing your thing. I mean, come on, you people can't even agree on parking privileges much less a real-time crisis.

CROWDER

(suddenly)

Make Desmond your client.

He focuses. This flash of impulsiveness unusual.

CROWDER

He was your friend, wasn't he?

MASON

He tried to save my life.

CROWDER

He did save your life.

MASON

Some of it.

MASON glances back at the house. A burst of SNIPER FIRE chatters in the far distance. They stand there as automatic weapons spit out a conversation somewhere in the darkness.

CUT TO

INT. HALLWAY - COMMODORE HOTEL - NIGHT

A BELL BOY carries a champagne bucket. He stops at a DOOR. Knocks. The door opens. A PALESTINIAN BODYGUARD stands there. Sidearm. Jeans. As he pays the damage we go INTO --

A HOTEL SUITE -

Smoke-filled. Around the table, a card game in progress. MASON and four players: A FRENCH BUSINESSMAN, A GERMAN JOURNALIST, and TWO PALESTINIANS, one of them dominant -

He is **BAJIIS**, a heavy-set man of fifty, stylishly PLO-chic. Cowboy boots. Leather jacket. Rolex.

Across the room, a high-priced HOOKER flips lazily through a magazine. THE BODYGUARD closes the door. Brings the champagne to the table, as the GERMAN pulls in the pot.

CUT TO:

MASON'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING.

MASON in bed. In the distance, the keening sound of a MUEZZIN, broadcasted over loudspeakers -- the Mosque "crier" calling the faithful to morning prayers. A PHONE BEGINS TO RING. CONTINUING, as MASON rustles awake.

CUT TO:

INSIDE TEPPLER'S MERCEDES - DAY

West Beirut traffic. HEAVY DRIVER at the wheel. TEPPLER beside him. MASON in back, looking distracted and tired. The car pulls to a stop.

TEPPLER
Blue Renault. Just across the way.
(he turns, Mason
looks reluctant)
Cheer up, lad, it's a lovely day in
Lebanon.

MASON sucks it up. Exits. Dodging cars as he crosses to a BLUE RENAULT -

INSIDE THE BLUE RENAULT - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

CROWDER driving. MASON beside her. She pulls out into traffic. Silence, until --

CROWDER
You played cards last night.

MASON
I was told to act naturally.

CROWDER
You have any idea who you were with?
(she looks over)
The German's an arms dealer. We're
checking on the Frenchman. The two
other gentlemen were PLO.

MASON
It was poker, not politics.

CROWDER
High ranking PLO.

MASON
Dom Perignon? Caviar? Hardly a
revolutionary atmosphere.

CROWDER
It's not '72 anymore. "Liberation"
is big business these days. The man
whose room you were in last night?
His name is Bajiis Al-Rusan. He's
the Minister of Regional Commerce.

MASON
Meaning what?

CROWDER
He's a bagman. He's the guy you pay
to make sure your windows are still
there in the morning. His airline
contracts alone pull in close to a
million dollars a year?

MASON
What do you get for a million
dollars?

CROWDER
A guarantee that the PLO won't blow
your planes out of the sky.
(turning a corner)
He's got a house in Spain, a condo in
Sidon, a wife in Kuwait, and a
Belgian girlfriend he keeps in a
luxury apartment in Rue Hamra.
(she downshifts)
Sure beats the homeland.

She accelerates up an alley. Fast. MASON not ready for it.

MASON
Maybe you'd like to tell me where
we're going?

CROWDER
The kidnappers, they called at four
a.m.. They knew you were here.

MASON holding the dash as she skids out of the alley.

CROWDER
We've got a safe-house outside Beit
ed Dine. We wanted them to meet us
there but they wouldn't bite. So we
go there and wait.

MASON
Why face-to-face?

CROWDER
Why you?

MASON has no answers. CROWDER zips through a red light.

CUT TO

EXT. THE GREEN LINE - MUSEUM CROSSING - DAY

No Man's Land. A wide, exposed road, rimmed by the shattered, skeletal remains of bombed-out buildings.

THE BLUE RENAULT drives through quickly. Past SANDBAG BUNKERS...GROUPS OF SOLDIERS boiling morning coffee over a fire...OLD VEGETABLE PEDDLER stoically pushing a handcart up the street...STARVING DOGS feeding at last night's garbage.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Beirut spread out below. A CONVOY climbs through the hills: the RENAULT sandwiched between a ARMORED VAN and a TOYOTA.

EXT. THE SAFE-HOUSE - DAY

A VILLA tucked away in the mountains. Very private. Beirut spread out below. The CONVOY parked beside other VEHICLES.

INT. THE SAFE-HOUSE - SAME

MASON entering with GAINES and RUZAK. The house is furnished. A TEAM OF TECHNICIANS gathered in the living room around some kind of COMMUNICATIONS LINK-UP.

RUZAK

...We've opened a twenty-four hour channel with the FBI Kidnapping unit back home. We've got five million dollars in cash at the embassy that's available immediately. There's a Naval cruiser parked sixty miles off-shore. If need be, we've got approval to re-target observation satellites. We've got all the pieces, now we just need somebody to talk to.

GAINES

Get comfortable, Mason. It could be awhile.

MASON looks around the room. Stops. Stares. THE COWBOY (the guy from the plane) is flopped in an easy chair.

COWBOY

Howdy, pard.

MASON nods. Just realizing the scope of this.

THE SAFE HOUSE TERRACE - LATER

MASON alone, staring at the sun setting in over Beirut. He takes a deep pull on his flask. Staring. Thinking.

Remembering...

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. BEIRUT AIRPORT, 1972 - DUSK - FLASHBACK

Two days after the shooting at Mason's house. A NAVAL TRANSPORT PLANE idles on the runway.

MASON stands beside his WIFE'S CASKET, he and DESMOND watching THREE MARINES quietly prepare the gurney. MASON wears a suit and dark glasses. The MARINES begin to wheel the casket slowly toward the plane's open cargo bay.

DESMOND

You'll refuel in Dublin.

MASON motionless. Detached. Raw silence.

DESMOND

Mason, please... Talk to me. You can't just go like this.

MASON

I can't think of anything to say.

DESMOND

Tell me it's not my fault.

MASON

I've said it twenty times already.

(pause)

I'm sorry, Des. I gotta go. I've got to get out of here.

(starting away
before he breaks)

I'm sorry.

(not looking back)

Take care of yourself.

DESMOND hanging there. Just devastated.

DESMOND

I'll call you tomorrow. I can be stateside next week.

MASON

(turning back)

Don't. Don't call.

(losing it)

When I'm ready...after some time

...maybe then...I don't know...

(backing away)

I'm sorry.

MASON walks off, following the casket. DESMOND staggered.

DESMOND

Don't do this to me, Mason.

(nothing)

Mason...

MASON climbs the ramp behind the casket. Disappearing finally into the shadows of the plane...

CUT BACK TO:

THE TERRACE -

MASON, as we left him. The flask in hand.

CROWDER (OS)
You'd better put that away.

MASON comes to. Turns quickly. CROWDER behind him.

CROWDER
They just made contact. We're
getting ready to move out.

MASON caps the flask. Shaky.

CUT TO:

MOUNTAIN ROAD -

THREE SETS OF HEADLIGHTS, snaking up...

AN ABANDONED MOUNTAIN VILLAGE - NIGHT

Ancient, war-damaged stone buildings scattered around a plaza. A bonfire of old tires burns against the cold air.

THREE HOODED MEN with automatic rifles stand at the center of the plaza lit by the APPROACHING HEADLIGHTS.

THE HOODED MEN lower their weapons as the CONVOY stops. TWO ARMED ARAB BODYGUARDS exit the LEAD CAR and step forward.

INSIDE THE BLUE RENAULT -

Stopped behind the lead car. MASON, GAINES, RUZAK, and CROWDER staring at the dialogue taking place in the plaza.

THEIR POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD --

THE ARMED BODYGUARDS (ours) talk with the HOODED GUNMEN. Very tense. After a moment, **ISHAN**, our chief bodyguard, turns and starts back, heading for our car.

GAINES
What's the story, Ishan?

ISHAN
(accented English)
We send in four people. We hold four of them. This road goes beyond the town. We finish and they leave that way. We go back the way we come.

GAINES glances at RUZAK. Tough spot. All eyes to MASON.

RUZAK

We're playing by ear from here on out, Mason. You follow our lead, and we'll be fine. You understand?

MASON

Just another pretty face.

Tight smiles. Everyone takes a breath. It's showtime.

CUT TO

A LARGE OPEN ROOM -

Stone walls. Dirt floor. The night sky visible though the rotting, wooden roof. Oil lanterns spotlight a huge canning table at the center of the room.

MASON, RUZAK, GAINES and CROWDER enter. HOODED SOLDIERS stand in shadows. Guns. Radios. Grenades. A small army.

TWO MEN are seated at the table. An **OLDER ARAB**. Late-sixties. His body is frail and battered but his eyes are as hard and demanding as any we've ever seen. He chainsmokes aggressively. The second man wears a hood, glasses visible through the eye-holes. We will call him **THE ADVISOR**.

OLD ARAB

Tfaddal uk'ud...

GAINES nods, takes the center seat. RUZAK to one side. CROWDER beside him. MASON on the outside. The OLD ARAB pulls something from his lap and tosses it across the table to GAINES. It is a WALLET.

(Note: This scene will play in Arabic unless otherwise noted. Ruzak does not speak the language. Crowder will translate simultaneously. Subtitles if necessary.)

OLD ARAB

Here you have proof of our claim.

GAINES examines the wallet. The OLD ARAB watching with undisguised contempt.

GAINES

How may we be sure this man is alive?

OLD ARAB

You will trust in my word.

GAINES shows the wallet to RUZAK. They whisper a moment.

OLD ARAB
Which one of you is Skiles?

RUZAK
(English to Gaines,
re: the wallet)
Tell him this isn't much to go on.

GAINES
We are concerned that th--

OLD ARAB
(slamming the table)
My question remains unanswered!

RUZAK startled. GAINES regrouping.

MASON
I am Skiles.
(everyone turns)
I am curious -- my friends are
curious -- how is it that I can help
where others may not?

OLD ARAB
The questions here will be asked by
me! Not you -- not these others!

MASON stares back. He is calm. He is in his element.

MASON
If it is I you wish to speak with,
then this will be a dialogue or it
will be nothing.

OLD ARAB
Then we will have nothing!

The ADVISOR leans toward the OLD ARAB, trying to get his ear.
The OLD ARAB waves him off dismissively.

MASON
Demands can be thrown through the
embassy window. We've come to hear
the sound of your voice and to let
you hear the sound of ours.

OLD ARAB
(pure bile)
The sound of our voices? Perhaps
these men should speak.
(re: soldiers)
(MORE)

OLD ARAB (CONT'D)

There is a boy in this room who's mother and sister died only two weeks ago at Barjesh' Kjhelem.

(bitterly)

Do you know that sound? The sound of American bombs falling from Zionist Planes? Perhaps you should ask him what it is he needs.

Silence. MASON waits to speak, as the ADVISOR leans to the OLD ARAB's ear. The OLD ARAB tries to wave him off, but the ADVISOR is insistent, whispering something that clearly displeases the OLD ARAB. Trouble in the ranks.

OLD ARAB

Enough!

The ADVISOR stiffens. Sits back, chastised.

MASON

What is the price of our man's freedom?

OLD ARAB

Where do you think you are? The bizharri? I am to sell you a rug?

(a mocking laugh, then in lousy English)

Oh yes, Saiyid..."The market is open." The souk is now open for--

The "SNAP" of A SINGLE GUNSHOT --

-- the OLD ARAB, in mid-sentence, recoils -- his body jerking back as the SIDE OF HIS HEAD EXPLODES and --

RUZAK choking out a "My God..." as he and CROWDER are SPATTERED WITH BLOOD and --

MASON and GAINES pushing away from the table in horror and --

The ADVISOR lowering a revolver. The OLD ARAB dead in his chair. Eyes wide. Blood draining from his lifeless body.

ADVISOR

(to the Soldiers)

Move him.

(they hesitate)

Move him!

TWO SOLDIERS step forward obediently and --

CUT TO

OUTSIDE THE VILLA -

The CONVOY BODYGUARDS tense, holding their "hostages."
They've heard the gunshot. CROWDER appears in the doorway.

CROWDER
(calling across)
We're fine! It's okay! We're okay!

The BODYGUARDS begin to relax as CROWDER ducks back inside.

THE ROOM -

CROWDER takes her seat. Tense silence as the SOLDIERS drag the body of the OLD ARAB into the corner. RUZAK, his shirt dappled with blood, stares blankly. The ADVISOR watches MASON fumble with a pack of cigarettes.

ADVISOR
(English)
I do not have the memory of you
smoking, Mr. Skiles.

MASON freezes. The match hanging there as the ADVISOR pulls off his hood to reveal a Palestinian man in his mid-twenties.

ADVISOR
Have I changed so much?

GAINES
What the hell is going on here?

RUZAK
You know this guy?

MASON
Yes. His name is Kamir Salim.

Stunned expressions. GAINES staring. CROWDER buzzing at RUZAK's ear. *(This next will proceed in English)*

KAMIR
I apologize for this problem. We have
not so much time and...
(glancing at the body)
...this man perhaps does not
understand the need for clarity when
dealing with Americans.
(to Mason)
I'm sorry this is how we must meet.
(Mason silent)
You choose not to greet me?

MASON says nothing. His eyes locked on KAMIR. Paralyzed for the moment in a rush of anger, confusion and memory.

KAMIR turns away suddenly as THE SOUND OF JET PLANES begin to bleed in from the distance. He turns back quickly --

KAMIR
(to Gaines)
My brother. Abu Rafir Salim. You
know this man?

GAINES
He is known to us.

KAMIR
Good. We make this very simple. Very
American. I trade Mr. Desmond Cove
for the return of my brother.

MASON out of the flow, still staring at KAMIR.

GAINES
And where is it you believe your
brother to be?

KAMIR
Israel.

RUZAK
Israel? Why come to us?

KAMIR
Why go to the son, when the father is
so close?

A BOMB EXPLODES in the far distance. Walkie-Talkies begin
SQUAWKING IN ARABIC around the room.

KAMIR
(Arabic, to a Radioman)
Tell him we're almost done.
(English, to Mason)
You understand this offer?

GAINES
We understand.

KAMIR
(to Mason)
Do you understand?

MASON
Straight up. Desmond for your
brother.

RUZAK

(incredulous)

What are you telling us here? The Israelis just quietly picked your brother off the street? They grabbed him and kept quiet about it?

KAMIR

He was with friends. In the South, near the border. Many Israelis were nearby. Now he is missing.

THE PLANES GROWING LOUDER. KAMIR stands.

KAMIR

I have explained the terms.
(Arabic to his Men)
Take the body to the car.

CROWDER

(out of nowhere)
Describe Desmond's condition.

KAMIR

Impatient.

CROWDER

Alive and unharmed?

KAMIR

At this time, yes.

A SECOND BOMB, this time closer, now joined by the SOUND OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT popping away from the valley below.

RUZAK

How do we contact you?

KAMIR

I deal only with Mr. Skiles.

GAINES

And why is that?

KAMIR

Because he's the only one I know.
(to Mason)
If you are in Beirut we will find you. You make this happen quickly or there is nothing.

Another EXPLOSION -- and AGAIN. They're getting closer.

MASON

(taut)

What you're asking for, it sounds very difficult. You might want to start thinking about alternatives.

TWO SOLDIERS, carrying the OLD ARAB, pass behind KAMIR.

KAMIR

That...

(the corpse)

...that is the alternative.

THE VILLAGE PLAZA - MOMENTS LATER

MASON, RUZAK, GAINES, CROWDER running back toward the cars --

The SCREAMING OF LOW FLYING JETS interrupted every few seconds by the thunder of BOMBS across the mountain and --

THE CONVOY in panic -- THREE VEHICLES trying to turn at once as A HUGE EXPLOSION rips into the mountain above them and --

MASON diving into a car with RUZAK as the blast wave hits -- pitched back -- nearly thrown clear -- scrambling back as -- DEBRIS RAINS out of the sky, hammering the roof, as we --

CUT TO

INT. AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE, EMBASSY - NIGHT

RUZAK and CROWDER seated. GAINES pacing. WHALEN passing out coffee. MASON away from the group, near the window.

CROWDER

The Israelis. Do you think they'd take him alive?

(silence)

Talk to me, Don -- Is Abu Salim alive or dead?

GAINES

I don't know. Maybe they killed him. Maybe they've got him in a room somewhere with a light-socket in his ear. Maybe they don't know what they have. Maybe he ran. Maybe they drove him so deep his own brother doesn't know where he is. I just don't know.

(beat)

It's getting them to give him back.

MASON

Give? No. Sell? Always.

They turn to him. Almost forgot he was here.

RUZAK

I don't think so, Mason. Not this one. They've wanted this crazy little bastard for years. You know that better than anyone. You're talking about the most radical fragment of a Palestinian splinter group. He's too big a prize.

MASON

So add an extra zero.

(to Whalen)

Set up a talk with the Israelis for tomorrow. Cabinet level or better.

RUZAK

Wait a minute...

MASON

And if you want to screw this up, tell them why we're coming.

WHALEN

We'd have to tell them something.

MASON

Would they tell you?

RUZAK

Slow down, Mason. We'll handle this end of it and we'll do it through channels.

MASON

You don't have time for channels.

(around the room)

What's Desmond worth on the open market? How long do you think Kamir can hold that bunch together? How long before one of them gets ambitious?

(beat)

There's nine thousand ways this thing can blow-up in your face. You don't have time to be careful.

RUZAK

You're into policy areas now.

MASON
I'm representing my client.

GAINES
It's not a grain deal, Mason.

MASON
It's always a grain deal.
(beat)
Unless you've got a better idea, I'd
set up the meeting.

Silence. CROWDER staring at MASON with something bordering
on respect.

CUT TO

INT. MASON'S ROOM - COMMODORE HOTEL - NIGHT

MASON at the door with a BELLBOY. The BELLBOY holds a BOTTLE
OF VODKA. MASON peels off four twenty-dollar bills and tucks
them in the BELLBOY's pocket. A RADIO playing ARABIC NEWS.

MASON
We keep this quiet, eh?

The BELLBOY smiles. Backs out. MASON closes the door. He's
alone. He moves to a DESK near the window.

THE DESK -

A LAMP on it's side. A patch of felt pulled away from the
base. Inside: a small, high-tech TRANSMITTING MICROPHONE.

The room is bugged and MASON knows it.

THE BATHROOM -

MASON running the shower to cover the sound as he pours the
vodka into the tub. Halfway done, he stops.

He stares at what's left. Hand shaking. He catches his
reflection in the mirror. He takes a quick, final slug.

And then on with it. Emptying the vodka. Refilling it with
bottled water.

THE DESK -

MASON standing. Pouring himself a "stiff" drink for the benefit of the microphone. He drains it quickly.

THE BATHROOM -

Another "drink" in hand -- in hand for a moment anyway -- because he drops it, deliberately, onto the floor.

The SOUND OF GLASS SHATTERING.

CUT TO:

AERIAL ESTABLISHING SHOT - TEL AVIV

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

MASON and RUZAK seated across from **RONI NIV**, 40, a deeply tanned, rock-solid MOSSAD Deputy. NIV looks sour.

NIV
(empty handed)
I'm very sorry, but this...this
could've been handled over the phone.

MASON
Great. We can all relax.

NIV
The question for me is why?

MASON
Rather a moot point, I'd say.

NIV
Peter?

RUZAK stiffly quiet. MASON noting the relationship.

MASON
You know what I'm wondering?
Hypothetically -- I mean, we've come
all the way down here, and it's clear
we've wasted your time. Just so the
trip's not a complete washout, what
I'm wondering is, let's say you did
have him.

(MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)
 (a fantasy)
 What would it take? How much?

NIV
 (icing Mason)
 This is very weak, Peter.

MASON
 Come on. For fun. "Pie in the sky."
If you had Abu Salim. If. What would
 it take? What's on your wish list?

NIV
 I think we're finished here.
 (standing)
 I'm sorry, Peter. If you'd given me a
 little notice we might've been able
 to have lunch.
 (bone dry)
 Have a safe trip home, Mr. Skiles.

CUT TO

INSIDE A LIMOUSINE - MOVING

Driving through Tel Aviv. MASON and RUZAK in back. Cold
 silence. MASON loose. RUZAK roiling mad.

MASON
 You didn't tell me you knew this guy.

RUZAK
 You didn't tell me you were going to
 burn the building down.

MASON
 Relax. They're coming back to us.

RUZAK
 (snapping)
It didn't play. You blew us off the
 map!

MASON
 They'll call before we're off the
 ground.

RUZAK
Are you drunk or delusional?

MASON
I'm trying to make sure you're ready
when that phone rings.
 (MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)

(pause)

Right now, the curiosity is driving your friend crazy. And when he can't take it any more, we have to be ready to give him a choice that's worse than keeping his mouth shut.

RUZAK

What the hell are you talking about?

MASON

The next meeting? When they throw me out? You're gonna stick around and close the deal.

RUZAK

You are. You're delusional.

MASON

All right, Peter, you're a man of the world -- let's make book on it. Put up or shut up.

(enjoying this)

They don't call? I'm wrong? I'm off your back.

(beat)

I'm right? We try it my way.

Suddenly, the CAR PHONE RINGS. Silencing all else. It RINGS again. RUZAK finally picks it up.

RUZAK

Yes... Yes, Ronnie...

He listens as we GO TIGHT ON MASON turning away -- turning away so that Ruzak won't see how incredibly relieved and surprised he is.

CUT TO

INT. ISRAELI CABINET MINISTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Photographs of Begin and Sharon. MASON and RUZAK facing **AARON HERZBERG**, 75, a rumpled old man with the clear, hard gaze of a young surgeon. RONNIE NIV beside him. A MOSSAD AIDE at the table laying out PHOTOGRAPHS.

HERZBERG

(incredulous)

Do you know what kind of man you are talking about here? Do you actually know the work of Abu Salim?

ONE OF THE PHOTOS. A PALESTINIAN FACE. Abu Salim at thirty.
Standing at an Egyptian phone booth.

HERZBERG
Munich Olympics... A busload of
Israeli Tourists in Spain...

ANOTHER PICTURE. A BUS MASSACRE. Graphic. Brutal.

HERZBERG
A synagogue in Istanbul...

ANOTHER. A Rome airport bombing.

HERZBERG
El Al flight 305. Forty-six dead.

MASON
(cutting in)
We know what we're asking. What we
don't know is the price.
(silence)
How much, Mr. Herzberg?

HERZBERG's eyes narrow. Cold, grim distaste.

HERZBERG
If we had him we would never let him
go.

MASON
That's a start.

HERZBERG
(to Ruzak)
Is this man listening to me?

RUZAK
I think we're off the track here...

NIV
Why, Peter?

MASON
The question is -- How much?

RUZAK
Give it a rest, Mason.

NIV
(to Mason)
We've never said we have him.

MASON
Then what the hell are we doing here?

HERZBERG
No. What the hell are you doing
here?

MASON hesitates. Turns to RUZAK for support.

RUZAK
(freeze out)
Why don't you go on ahead.

MASON burned. He stands. Walks across the room and out the door. He's gone. Silence. All eyes on RUZAK.

CUT TO

INT. MILITARY HELICOPTER - DAY

MASON looks up to see RUZAK climbing aboard. RUZAK, out of breath, takes the seat beside him. The HELICOPTER CREW quickly prepare for take-off.

MASON
So how was the fishing?

RUZAK
They made an offer.

MASON careful here. Watching RUZAK like a hawk.

MASON
They have him?

RUZAK
They won't come out and say it.
They're gonna take another look. He
might be "lost" in the system.
(smug)
They have him.

MASON
What do they want?

RUZAK
Other than making sure you're not
involved?
(Mason waiting)
Syria has rocket bunkers all over the
Bekaa valley. Anti-aircraft
missiles.

(MORE)

RUZAK (CONT'D)
Some are operational, some are
decoys. They want better pictures.

MASON
Pictures. That's it?

RUZAK laughs. Condescending. This is his field.

RUZAK
Take my word for it, it's a major
piece of strategic intelligence.

RUZAK snaps on his seatbelt. Chopper rotors REVVING now.

MASON
You told them it was Desmond. Or did
they know already?

RUZAK
(stung by this)
Who do you think you're dealing with?
Did you honestly think they were
going to make a blind deal?

MASON
It's a simple question.

RUZAK
Of course I told them. I've got news
for you, Mason, this is not the New
England Chamber of Commerce. You've
got us in there playing "Good Cop/Bad
Cop" with the people who practically
invented the game!
(he settles)
We got lucky today. But that's the
end of the flim-flam. From here on
out you're our spokesman to Kamir,
that's it. Are we clear on that?

MASON nods. Sucking it up. As the CHOPPER LIFTS away.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTE ROOM - U.S. EMBASSY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - DAY

State of the art 1982 commo gear. An impromptu meeting:
WHALEN dressed in tennis whites, still sweating. GAINES and
RUZAK watching him pace. MASON seated quietly near the door.

WHALEN

"Syrian Bunkers," my ass! They're Russian installations and everyone in this room knows it!

WHALEN's eyes fall on MASON. He stops suddenly.

GAINES

(taking the cue)

Mason, I'm gonna have to ask you to step outside for a few minutes.

MASON

Look, you boys can play "Jack Be Nimble" all night long if you want, but I need an answer before I walk out that door.

(he stands)

Ruzak's got an offer. Are we starting a deal or not?

WHALEN

You know what those pictures mean?

GAINES

Cal...

WHALEN

(waving him off)

Those pictures mean the difference between life and death for about two hundred Israeli Air Force pilots. That potential loss is the only practical issue standing in the way of an Israeli occupation of Lebanon.

RUZAK

That's a little dramatic, Cal.

WHALEN

Horsehit. You give Israel that kind of detail, we might as well start handing the PLO their life preservers tonight!

(bearing in)

But you like this idea, don't you, Peter? Two birds -- one stone. Hell, you been trying to push this through for months.

RUZAK

You might want to check with your boss, Cal.

(a threat)

(MORE)

RUZAK (CONT'D)
I'm not the Christmas help around
here.

WHALEN
(to Mason)
Don't expect an overnight answer.
(to Gaines)
I sure hope Cove is worth all this.

CUT TO

INT. EMBASSY CAR POOL AREA - NIGHT

CROWDER escorting MASON to a VW BUS.

CROWDER
...She got in this morning. She went
nuts on Gaines. She knows the
basics. He had to tell her. She's
camped out in Desmond's apartment.

CROWDER stops at the VW. ISHAN, behind the wheel, pops open
the door. CROWDER obviously not going.

MASON
What do you want me to do?

CROWDER
The neighborhood's been shelled twice
in the past month. It's not safe.
We've got a house in Cyprus that's
empty and ready. She'll talk to you.

MASON
In other words, get rid of her.

CROWDER
She's slowing us down.

MASON watches her flip the keys to ISHAN. Searching for
something behind the toughness.

CUT TO

EXT. RUE RACHMAL - WEST BEIRUT - NIGHT

Imagine a winding side-street in Paris. Now imagine it after
six years of random shelling, grenade explosions and sniper
battles. This is Rue Rachmal.

The VW pulls to a stop before a row of old, luxury apartment
buildings. MASON steps out.

INT. STAIRWELL - APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

MASON climbing. Old marble splendor gone to seed. Debris -- picked-over furnishings, ruined appliances -- littered here and there. Abandoned apartments have been taken over by SHIITE SQUATTERS.

FRONT DOOR - DESMOND'S APARTMENT -

COWBOY stands aside. Letting MASON enter.

DESMOND'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

A grand, Beaux Arts living room stripped for battle. Chandeliers lowered. Taped windows. Furniture covered.

ALICE is deep into a bottle of white wine. MASON seated across from her. They are alone. An uncomfortable reunion.

ALICE
(offering wine)
You're sure?

MASON
I'm fine, thanks.

ALICE
Gaines said you were an alcoholic.

MASON
That's what they pay him for.
(pause)
The girls must be worried about you.

ALICE
The "girls" have grown up.
(cool to him)
They're in school. In London. We just bought a house there, Des and I. We were finally all going to be together. Ironic, isn't it?
(he looks confused)
They told you he was retiring.

MASON
No.

ALICE
Two months to go.

MASON
Why?

ALICE
New crowd at the White House.
Different crowd.

MASON
Anything in particular?

ALICE
They've been opening the books to the
Israelis. Lots of "joint ventures."
Desmond felt he'd earned the right to
an opinion.
(quietly)
I know you were down there today.
What's the prognosis?

MASON
Ruzak thinks it's going good.

ALICE
Ruzak is a well-known creep.

MASON
He thinks he has a deal.

ALICE
But you don't.
(he hesitates)
Talk to me goddammit.

She's about to break. MASON leans forward. Quiet now.

MASON
We flew down there, I was afraid
they'd just stonewall us. We'd say
"Abu Salim." They'd say "Sorry,
wrong number." We'd be nowhere. Do
they have him or not? We'd never
know. It's pretty tough proving a
negative. I figured the only way to
flush them out was to get them to say
yes. Take a longshot.

ALICE
They said yes.

MASON
I didn't like the way they said it.

ALICE
What are you trying to do?

MASON
I guess I'm trying to save him.

ALICE

Well you've proven you can crush him.
Bringing him back to life may be a
little harder.

MASON blindsided. ALICE downs her wine.

ALICE

This town, staying here...

(bitterly)

We could've gone anywhere. The hell
that man's been through, they
would've posted him anywhere he
wanted. But he always came back. And
every time he did, I'd ask myself,
was he stuck here waiting for you to
come and tell him it was okay to go
home?

(she drinks)

You think you're the only victim of
what happened to Nicole? The way you
treated him...

(dead on)

I've hated you for a very long time.

MASON

I'll get him out, Alice.

ALICE

Really?

(she laughs)

Look at you. You're a tourist. You
don't stand a chance.

MASON not sure if he can breathe. She finds her bag.

ALICE

I'm leaving tonight. There's nothing
for me to do except get in the way.

(rooting in her bag)

You owe me a favor. When you left,
you may not remember, I packed up the
house for you. Dishes, papers,
Nicole's clothes...everything.

(drops a SET OF

KEYS on the table)

Desmond doesn't make it back? You
pack this place up for me.

(beat)

I think that's fair, don't you?

MASON takes the keys. He is numb.

CUT TO

EXT. RUE RACHMAL - MINUTES LATER

LEBANESE MEN outside sipping coffee, arguing as they smoke tobacco from tarnished, communal water pipes. MASON suddenly walking past them, up the street.

He looks ashen. Striding away quickly. Aimless. Fleeing. Without looking back, he disappears around a corner --

BACK NEAR THE CAFE, ISHAN looks around. Where's Mason? He's lost him.

CUT TO:

A STREET IN WEST BEIRUT - LATER

MASON wandering lost through this war-ravaged, old quarter of town. The place has a ghostly feel: dark street lights, blown-out buildings, SHADOWS huddled around bonfires.

MASON steps back as a PICK-UP TRUCK speeds past, ARMED MEN hanging from the back as it careens around a corner and disappears up ahead. MASON rounds a corner into --

A SMALL PLAZA -

The intersection of three streets. A CHECK-POINT. The PICK-UP TRUCK pulled to a stop. ARMED MEN standing around a CAR.

AN ARGUMENT -- raised ARABIC VOICES. A LEBANESE MAN is pulled from the car. YELLING and PLEADING as the ARMED MEN throw him up against his car and begin beating him.

MASON, in the shadows. Watching. The MAN'S PLEAS are silenced by the butt of a rifle. MASON, startled suddenly as -

A GROUP OF CHILDREN burst from the darkness of a vacant building. A game of "War" -- a dozen of them holding sticks and rocks, LAUGHING and YELLING as they race past MASON, into the street, oblivious to both him, and the drama at the checkpoint twenty yards away. MASON stands there, watching.

ONE BOY, ten at the most, wearing an adult-sized flak-jacket and carrying a "gun" fashioned from scrap-wood, trips and falls almost at MASON's feet. MASON kneels to help him up --

MASON

(Arabic)

Are you all right? Are you hurt?

BOY
 (poor English)
 You are Skiles?
 (Mason recoils)
You are Skiles?

MASON
 Yes...

BOY
 Kamir. Send me. A blue truck comes
 down this street. You ride in this
 truck. To meet Kamir. You make
 understand?

MASON nods. The BOY points his "gun" at MASON and "shoots" before he races off after his friends. MASON stands there, watching him go. The moment interrupted by a BURST OF AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE from the checkpoint. MASON turns as --

A BLUE PANEL TRUCK rumbles around the corner. Slowing as it nears. A side door swinging open as it stops.

PALESTINIAN DRIVER
 (beckoning, impatient)
 Yalla -- Yalla!

MASON steps forward. Disappearing into the truck. Doors slamming shut as it speeds away.

INSIDE THE BLUE PANEL TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

MASON seated on a wooden box. THREE HOODED GUNMEN staring at him as the TRUCK BOUNCES around like mad. Tight quarters.

GUNMAN #1
 (calling to the driver)
 Dir balak! Kammil!

The TRUCK turns sharply. MASON almost losing his seat. The GUNMEN bracing themselves -- submachine guns moving dangerously here and there. Tension.

THE SECOND GUNMAN pulls off his hood. It's KAMIR.

KAMIR
 You went to Israel. What did they
 say?

MASON
 They said maybe they have your
 brother.

KAMIR
(flaring)
Maybe? It's not good enough!

MASON
That's what I told them.

The truck SLAMS THROUGH A SERIES OF POTHOLES.

MASON
I need to see Desmond.

KAMIR
Impossible.

MASON
I want to see him and I want to speak
with him.

KAMIR
You find my brother. That happens
first.

MASON
If I had your brother I'd let you
talk to him.

KAMIR
I said is impossible.

MASON
It's only impossible if he's dead.
(pause)
I trusted you once. It didn't work
out.

KAMIR
(to the Driver)
Wakkif dauwir!

The truck SKIDS TO A STOP. KAMIR angrily kicks open the door.

KAMIR
You never trusted me. Is that your
trust? To make someone choose between
their brother and everything else?

MASON
I'm not sticking my neck out any
farther on this until I talk to
Desmond.

KAMIR stares. MASON not giving an inch here.

KAMIR

Maybe. But somebody comes with you?
Someone tries to follow?
(he draws a finger
across his throat)
We see how long your neck is.

KAMIR nods. The GUNMAN kicks MASON sending him backward out the door and sprawling in the street.

MASON

When?

KAMIR

Soon.
(to the driver)
Heyriz yalla!

MASON stands slowly as the BLUE PANEL TRUCK speeds away.

CUT TO

EXT. SEAPORT DEPOT - JOUNIEH - NIGHT

A CHURCH TOWER and CROSS prominent, establishing that we are in East Beirut, Christian territory. Jounieh to be exact.

RUZAK and RONI NIV stand alone. Behind them a military supply area. A HELICOPTER, unmarked, idles in a large plaza.

RUZAK

What are you telling me, Roni?

NIV

I'm sorry. We don't have him.

RUZAK

(incredulous)
I've started the wheels in motion!

NIV

We should lose sleep over this? You lied to us, Peter. You wait three days to break the news? You should've called us the moment it happened. Now we have agents in danger as well.

RUZAK

Why didn't you tell me that this morning?

NIV

Because you were making us nervous.

RUZAK

I don't believe this...

NIV

We should worry about Desmond Cove?
He's been slowing us down for the
past year. He's not our problem.

RUZAK

And what the hell am I supposed to do
now?

NIV

I don't know. But you'll have to
find Abu Salim somewhere else.

RUZAK silent. Dying. NIV watching him.

NIV

There's another choice. But it's
entirely unofficial.

RUZAK

Talk.

NIV

Let's say, for the sake of
discussion, Desmond does not come
back. These animals, they take him,
it's tragic. Another example -- the
final example -- of how unmanageable
Lebanon has become.

(beat)

An Israeli police action? Something
limited? Perhaps this is not such a
bad idea.

RUZAK

(carefully)

What do you mean by "unofficial?"

NIV

Peter, please...it's a personal
suggestion. Israel is a democracy.
The only one around. Some Israelis
would be outraged. Others would
agree. I think most would rather not
know about the choices made on their
behalf.

(a cold pause)

An open door? A little luck? We
could be clearing out the Syrians,
Russians and PLO within a month.

RUZAK

What about Desmond's network over here? You think the Agency's going to just throw that all away?

NIV

They don't get Cove back soon they won't have a choice. We started pulling our people out this morning.
(in for the kill)
They were replacing Cove anyway. We hear there were many problems.

RUZAK stares. He's in way over his head.

RUZAK

What are you saying, Roni? Burn Desmond? Break out the handkerchiefs and give Sharon the keys to the city?

NIV

What's the expression? "God gives you lemons, you make the lemonade."

RUZAK

What do we do with Skiles?

NIV

It's always nice to have someone to blame.

CUT TO

SOMEONE'S POV -- THROUGH A CAR WINDSHIELD -

THE COMMODORE HOTEL ENTRANCE. MASON coming up the street and entering the hotel.

REVEAL CROWDER in her car. She checks her watch. Pissed.

CUT TO:

INT. EMBASSY QUIET ROOM - LATER

GAINES AND RUZAK alone. The smell of bad news in the air.

GAINES

So what do we do now?

RUZAK

Whatever it is, we better do it fast.
(pause)
(MORE)

RUZAK (CONT'D)
I hate to say it, but you left
Desmond here just a little too long.
He lost his balance.
(twisting the knife)
I've heard there were some problems.

GAINES turns. RUZAK waiting. Reassuring.

RUZAK
Look, Don... pretty soon we're all
gonna have to ask ourselves how much
Desmond is worth.

A heavy pause. Silent communion.

GAINES
We better make it look damn good.

CUT TO:

A BROWN LEATHER BELT with a square, pewter buckle. It's
dropped onto a table. We are --

AN OFFICE - THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

Morning light through a window. GAINES, RUZAK and CROWDER and
a CIA TECHNICIAN watching MASON as he reaches for the belt.

TECHNICIAN
The transmitter is in the buckle.
We've sacrificed range for size.
It'll push out a signal up to two
miles, give or take.

MASON examines the belt. Looks skeptically at GAINES.

MASON
I thought we were going to finalize
our deal. What the hell is this?

CROWDER
We lost track of you last night.

MASON
I took a walk.

GAINES
We can't afford to have it happen
again.

RUZAK
It's for your own protection.

MASON

(to Ruzak)

I'd like to know where we stand with these satellite photos.

RUZAK

We're waiting to hear back from Washington. It's on the front burner.

MASON

(re: the belt)

No. I'm on the front burner.

CUT TO:

BERNARD TEPPLER'S SMILING FACE --

TEPPLER

Yes. Yes. The blue shirt...

(beckoning)

No. In the back. Don't be shy. Blue shirt. Yes. Please go ahead...

INT. LECTURE HALL - AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN BEIRUT - DAY

MASON at the podium, standing before a room full of BUSINESS STUDENTS. Sunlight streaming through large windows that run the length of one wall. TEPPLER, the moderator, on stage.

A STUDENT, blue shirt, standing. ISHAN several rows back, watching carefully.

STUDENT

You worked on the Paris Peace talks, you were quite young. Was that your first negotiation?

MASON

My first? God no...

(amused)

No. I was raised in a small house by two people who hated each other enough to stay together. I think I started negotiating pre-natally.

(laughter, he waits--)

Let's put it this way. One night my father came home from a girlfriend and my mother served him half a dozen of his best racing pigeons for dinner.

(pausing again)

(MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)

About fifteen years later, I first heard the term, "Mutually Assured Destruction." I knew exactly what it meant --

AN EXPLOSION -- some distance away -- heads turning toward the sound -- a pregnant moment, but only a moment, before --

THE WINDOWS ALONG THE WALL SHATTER as the blast wave hits.

GLASS RAINING everywhere --

SCREAMS and CRIES overwhelmed by the SOUND OF SPLINTERING DEBRIS falling across the room --

MASON. Behind the podium. Safe there. Staring out over the room in horror and --

THE AUDIENCE. Chaos. Totally random consequences. Some people are horribly injured. Others, beside them, untouched. Glass still SPLINTERING to the ground.

TEPPLER. Unhurt, rushing past MASON toward a phone at the side of the stage.

ISHAN. On the ground -- hurt badly.

DOORS fly open as STUDENTS and TEACHERS from other rooms race in to help. SIRENS begin wailing in the distance.

MASON. Clambering down off the stage. Confusion all around him. Just trying to thread his way through the chaos, when suddenly he is pulled back beside the door.

MASON, suddenly face-to-face with a YOUNG ARAB COED.

ARAB COED

(whispering urgently)

The Pharmacy Junblatt. Near the Druze cemetery.

(tighter still)

Pharmacy Junblatt. You leave now.
You tell no one. You cannot wait.

The COED pulls away as fast as she came. Lost almost instantly in the crush. MASON already moving for the door.

CUT TO:

A DELIVERY VAN -

parked on the UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. Sirens WAILING in the BG.

INSIDE THE VAN -

JASSIM, Lebanese CIA, behind the wheel. In back, TWO CIA TECHNICIANS frantically working a high-tech communications unit. CROWDER on a radio phone --

CROWDER
 (crisis management)
No -- The coins are on the floor.
 (pause as she listens)
 We are -- we're changing currency
 as fast as we can --

CUT TO:

EMBASSY COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - SAME

GAINES hanging up a RADIO PHONE. RUZAK standing beside him. All around, TECHNICIANS hunched over equipment. Emergency.

GAINES
 They've lost visual. We're trying
 to lock the transmitter.

RUZAK
What?

GAINES
 Skiles. He's gone.

RUZAK
Gone or taken?

GAINES shakes his head. No fucking idea. RUZAK turns to the TECHNICIAN closest to him.

RUZAK
 Put me through to Breadbox.

CUT TO

EXT. FLIGHT DECK. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - DAY

Mediterranean. RADIO CHATTER BLISTERING over the airwaves as SIX NAVY SEALS scramble toward a HELICOPTER.

CUT TO

EXT. RUE DUNANT - WEST BEIRUT - DAY

Little more than a debris-strewn pathway surrounded by wasteland. A TAXI eases INTO FRAME. Slows. Stops.

INSIDE THE TAXI -

MASON and a SCRAWNY DRIVER.

SCRAWNY DRIVER

(Arabic)

It's not so good for you here.
Not very safe for you, I think.

MASON, counting out the fare, nods. Too tight to talk.

RUE DUNANT - A MINUTE LATER

The TAXI SPEEDING AWAY. MASON on foot.

Nobody on the street. Eerie desolation. MASON looks wildly out of place -- An American in slacks and sport coat striding through a war zone. Suddenly, he stops.

Up ahead a block of bombed-out buildings. A rusted, pitted SIGN hangs over the abandoned storefront. In French and Arabic: "JUNBLATT PHARMACIE"

INT. JUNBLATT PHARMACY - MOMENTS LATER

Dark. A burned-out shell. Stripped bare. MASON enters, willing himself to move forward. Fighting back fear. Eyes trying to adjust to the darkness. Listening. And then --

VOICE

Khift inni ma blakik'.

MASON stops cold. From the darkness, something is thrown toward him -- landing quietly at his feet.

VOICE

Ajjil khallis.

MASON leans down, picks up a BLACK WOOLEN SACK. He lifts it slowly above his head. Hesitates. No turning back now. He pulls the sack down over his head and --

CUT TO

EMBASSY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER -

RUZAK and GAINES as we left them. TECHNICIANS focused on their consoles.

TECHNICIAN
 (listening on a headset)
 ...moving Southwest...into Dar el
 Fatwa...still clear...slowing...
 (pause)
 Stabilizing...signal is freezing...
 ...We've got lock.

CUT TO

INSIDE A GARAGE -

Dark. Isolated. FOUR ARMED PALESTINIANS stand at the trunk of an old Ford Cortina. A beat-up Peugeot parked alongside.

The PALESTINIANS throw open the Cortina's trunk and quickly pull MASON -- still wearing the hood -- out onto his feet.

MASON unsteady. One PALESTINIAN, a bearded man we'll call **FAHMY**, clearly the boss here, jerking him upright.

FAHMY
 Shallahuh tishlin. Kull'shi.

Two other PALESTINIANS drop their guns and jump into action, strip-searching MASON -- Quickly pulling off his clothes, shoes, everything. Passing anything of interest to FAHMY who looks ready to give it all a thorough going over.

CUT TO

A GARAGE BATHROOM -

A tiny shithole toilet. THE SCRAWNY DRIVER spits. Flushes. Straightening his shirt as he pushes open the door and --

VOICE (OS)
Freeze!

SCRAWNY doesn't know what hit him -- WHAM! -- FROM ALL SIDES --
 - NAVY SEALS and LEBANESE SCOUTS everywhere --

SCRAWNY DRIVER
 Shu`am--

He is thrown back into the wall -- the NAVY SEALS moving in tandem like a high-speed machine -- into the TOILET -- and then, just as suddenly as it started -- it's over.

Silence.

SCRAWNY, eyes wide, pinned against the wall. Weapons covering every corner. All dressed up and no one to shoot.

SEAL CAPT.
(in the toilet)
Talk to me, Kyle.

SEAL LT.
(at the door)
Clear here, sir.

COWBOY steps forward, pushing past THE LEBANESE SCOUTS to get to the TAXI. He throws open the back door, reaches in, and pulls out MASON'S BELT.

COWBOY
Sonofabitch...

CUT TO

EXT. SOUTH BEIRUT - A REFUGEE SETTLEMENT - DAY

THE PLO PEUGEOT raising dust as it whips through the streets.

CUT TO

A TUNNEL -

Wood beams. Earthwork. Electric lights strung from hanging wires. TWO PALESTINIANS lead MASON -- still blindfolded -- quickly through the maze.

CUT TO

DARKNESS. The sound of a LOCK BEING UNDONE. And then a stab of BRIGHT LIGHT. WE ARE IN -

A SMALL ROOM -

Ten by twelve. Cold concrete walls. No windows. No air.

DESMOND, blindfolded, sits slumped against the far wall. He wears torn slacks and a dirty T-shirt flecked with blood. A steel chain runs from his legs to a pipe bolted to the floor.

MASON in the doorway, facing into the room. KAMIR, behind him, pulls the hood from MASON's head. TWO GUNMEN outside.

KAMIR

One minute. No more.

(to Desmond)

Kashir'jhi marhfli!

DESMOND's hands reach up and pull down his blindfold. He stares -- eyes adjusting to the light -- focusing with incomprehension. MASON steps forward.

DESMOND

Mason..?

MASON

You're not hallucinating. It's me.

(quick and firm)

I'm here to help you. We have to go very quickly. Very little time.

Are you okay?

DESMOND

How...? How did you--

MASON

(cutting him off)

They asked for me. To make a deal.

(crouching)

Listen to me closely. Are you okay?

DESMOND

I'm okay.

(focusing)

I haven't been seriously questioned.

MASON

We're trying to make a trade.

DESMOND

His brother, right?

As Mason talks, he begins to lean on certain words. Subtly drawing Desmond into a form of code.

MASON

Yes. Kamir's brother. We were sent to Israel.

DESMOND

You're making a deal?

MASON

We're trying. You know how wild things can get. How hard it is to goose the process along. We're chasing it down as fast as we can.

(bearing down)

Your friends, at the embassy, they feel good about it. Kamir has been assured.

DESMOND hesitates. MASON on him like a laser.

DESMOND

(he gets it)

I don't have as many friends as I used to.

KAMIR

(impatient)

You can see he is all well.

MASON

We all need friends. I need one very badly. Someone to trust.

(turning to Kamir)

Don't you think it's true? How trust can be based simply on people having something to gain.

KAMIR confused. Irritable with that. Stepping forward.

MASON

(back to Desmond)

What do you think? Those gains, can they be trusted?

DESMOND

No. I wish I could trust in that theory of Gaines, but I can't. I feel very alone right now. I'd feel much safer in a crowd.

MASON

In a crowd.

DESMOND

Yes. More of a crowd.

KAMIR

(pushing in now)

Okay. Is enough.

DESMOND
(quickly)
Have you seen Alice?

KAMIR
This time is to be over.

DESMOND
She should show you the pictures
of the girls. The photo album.
You must ask her.

MASON
I'll do that.

KAMIR
(kicking at Mason)
Come --

DESMOND
(rushing now)
-- Abu Salim? --

KAMIR
-- I said we go! --

MASON
-- That's all they want --

DESMOND
-- I have a message for Alice --

KAMIR
-- No more! Yalla! --

DESMOND
-- Tell her I pray that she loves
me only.

MASON confused, hesitates -- KAMIR snaps -- MASON jerked
violently back against the door jamb --

DESMOND
-- I pray that she loves me only! --

-- MASON stunned by the blow -- sagging as he's kicked back
out the doorway. THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT. Darkness.

CUT TO

A GARAGE -

Dark. Quiet. MASON, hooded, shackled, is led by FAHMY to the open trunk of a FIAT. KAMIR pulls the hood. MASON comes out gasping for fresh air. A cut bleeding above one eye.

KAMIR

(he's scared)

I have no more time. I give everything you ask. Now there is no more time. I give you nine hours to bring my brother. The Fadya Crossing. Two thirty a.m.

(beat)

After that, we have nothing.

MASON

Nine hours? Kamir... I can't possibly...

KAMIR's hand -- like a shot -- hard across MASON's mouth --

KAMIR

Repeat what I just tell you!

MASON

(tasting blood)

The Fadya Crossing. Two thirty.

KAMIR pulls the hood down across MASON's face.

CUT TO

DESMOND'S APARTMENT -

Dark. The door opening slowly. MASON entering. Pocketing the keys as he closes the door. Turning on a light. Standing there. Listening.

CUT TO

A BLUR OF ACTIVITY -

MASON searching for the photo album. Tearing the place apart with mounting frenzy --

Bookshelves. Desk drawers. A bedroom night table. Spilling over a cardboard box. A closet, digging, things falling.

Into the kitchen, into the cupboards, throwing them open. Cans of things -- pots and pans -- liquor bottles and then --

Stopping

A PHOTO ALBUM, sandwiched between cookbooks --

Mason places it on the counter. Begins flipping pages. Faster. Faster. Nothing. And then he stops.

A PHOTOGRAPH -

Black and white. A supper club glossy. Mason, Nicole, Desmond and Alice out for dinner, smiling for the camera. Frozen in their youth. Happy. Alive. Lifelong friends.

WE HOLD THIS SHOT, and HEAR OVER IT, the sound of GLASS MEETING GLASS -- an unsteady hand pouring a stiff shot of brandy into a highball glass.

MASON, downing the brandy. Pouring another. Drinking that. Sagging against the counter to catch his breath. He's beat. It's too much. He's not up to it. So much easier to have another drink. He grabs the bottle, taking it with him out of the kitchen and into --

THE LIVING ROOM -

Darker here. MASON on his way, when --

WHAM!

MASON slammed off his feet -- into a wall -- a small table SPLINTERING beneath him and --

IT'S CROWDER

Alone, coming out of the shadows, gun in hand.

CROWDER

Stand up.

CROWDER is seething. On the brink of mayhem. Her eyes and gun never leaving MASON as she pulls a radio.

CROWDER

(into the radio)

Bring the car around.

She pockets the radio. Steps closer to MASON.

CROWDER

Who the hell are you working for?

MASON standing slowly. Brandy bottle shattered beside him.

MASON

You should've trusted me, Marsha.
I might have been able to help you.

CROWDER

You took the fucking belt off.
(gun focused)
We had everything in place!

MASON

To do what? Kill us both?
(angry now)
That was the first thing they did.
They took every stitch I had on and
picked over it. We would've been
massacred and whoever set this up
knew it!

CROWDER

What are you saying?

MASON

I saw him. Desmond. They took me
to him. I've seen him.

CROWDER

He's alive?

MASON pauses. He's in control now. His game.

MASON

Ruzak is easy. He's an ambitious
little ideologue. You don't want
to get between Ruzak and his map.
Desmond's a strategic impediment.
But what about Gaines? What's
between him and Desmond?

CROWDER

Is he alive?

MASON

Let's deal, Marsha. I'll tell you
about Desmond if you tell me why it
seems like everyone's trying to get
rid of him.
(she's rattled)
He is alive. He told me I couldn't
trust Gaines. Why?

CROWDER

I don't believe you.

MASON

He told me to look in a photo album.
But I don't know what I'm looking
for.

(reading her)

Or maybe somebody cleaned it up.

CROWDER lowers her gun. Way off balance. Not used to it.

CROWDER

They did have a problem. Don was
skimming money from the station
budget. Desmond found out. He
wrote a letter, a grievance. It
was in that photo album. It was
never sent. I took it out.

MASON

Gaines is a thief? Desmond knows it?
(incredulous)
You don't see the significance of
that. You don't tell me that?

CROWDER

I don't care about the money! I'm
trying to save Desmond -- I can't
afford to have Gaines as an enemy!

MASON

Why didn't you tell me Desmond
was retiring?

CROWDER

It wasn't definite.

MASON

That's not what Alice said.
(pressing)
You know what I think? I think maybe
you were having an affair with
Desmond.
(she's not ready for this)
Maybe you're so in love you'd
rather see him in a box than back
with his wife?

She lashes out, slaps him hard --

MASON

Is that a yes?

CROWDER

I haven't slept an hour since this
started. None of us have! The whole
(MORE)

CROWDER (CONT'D)
 station -- Gaines included -- we've
 been going round the clock on this!
 You have no right to--

MASON
 Answer my question!

CROWDER
Yes! We had an affair! Yes, he was
 leaving. Yes, I was hurt.
 (spent now)
 He's an amazing man -- you probably
 don't know that. You couldn't.

MASON
 Does Gaines know about this? About
 you and Des?

CROWDER
 Nobody does.
 (beat)
 But what you're saying is absurd.
 They need him back.

Her RADIO comes alive. Calling for her. She's ignoring it.

MASON
 He's expendable, Marsha. They're
 gonna burn him. And they're not
 gonna have to wait long to do it.
 Kamir gave me until two thirty a.m.
 Six hours to bring out his brother.

CROWDER
 You're wrong. We'll go right back.
 (pumping up)
 If you've got a deadline, they'll
 pull out all the stops. Ruzak,
 The Ambassador -- they'll get the
 White House in --
 (grabbing straws)
 Israel can budge. It can happen.

MASON
 They can budge all they want.
 (beat)
 "Pray...Love...Only..."

CROWDER
 What the hell does that mean?

MASON
 Something Desmond said. Forget
 about the Israelis.
 (MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)

(beat)

The PLO have Abu Salim.

CROWDER staring at MASON. Finally reaching for her radio.

CROWDER

(answering the call)

We'll be right out.

CUT TO

INSIDE A RANGE ROVER - MOVING -

Speeding through Beirut. JASSIM driving. CROWDER up front. MASON in back, talking fast -- pleading with CROWDER --

MASON

...Think about it, Marsha. You're Arafat. You're the PLO. You're going crazy trying to keep this cease-fire together. One more bomb, one more assassination and the Israelis won't ask for permission, they'll have what they want. They'll be up here in a week blowing you into the Mediterranean. Abu Salim? His little splinter group? It's a problem. He's uncontrollable. He thinks you're soft. He's ready to light a match to the whole fucking thing. What would you do?

CROWDER, listening impassively until now, turns back.

MASON

You'd take him off the street. You'd have to. One way or another you'd try to put Abu Salim on ice.

CROWDER

Okay. Maybe you're right. But there's no way in hell the Agency writes off Desmond. No way.

MASON

It's not the Agency. It's Gaines and Ruzak.

CROWDER
I'm sorry, I have to take this in.
(she turns away)
I don't have a choice.

CUT TO

EMBASSY OFFICE -

The ANTE-ROOM just off the Communications Center. CROWDER standing silently before RUZAK and GAINES.

GAINES
There's been a change in plans,
Marsha. I want you to prioritize
Desmond's contacts and agents and
pull them in immediately. I want
relocation budgets for the people
that qualify. Let's see if we can
do this without a riot.

CROWDER stands there. Dead quiet.

GAINES
You have a problem with that?

CROWDER
It's a death sentence.

RUZAK
(jumping in fast)
Jesus, Marsha -- this is no time
for dramatics. It's precautionary.
We had a shot today and we blew it.
(sympathetic)
No one's quitting on Desmond. But
right now we've got a lot of ass to
cover.

CROWDER nods. Trying to accept it.

GAINES
Look, I know how you feel. That could
be any one of us out there.

CROWDER
You're right.

A pause. RUZAK shoots a look at GAINES. Damage control.

RUZAK

There's a secondary issue here and that's Skiles. I think we need to wrap him up as quickly as possible.

CROWDER

Well, that's no problem. We picked him up about a half hour ago.

Big news. GAINES and RUZAK surprised.

GAINES

Where?

CROWDER

He was in the bar at the Napoli Hotel. They're gonna bring him over as soon as they sober him up.

GAINES

That sonofabitch...

RUZAK

Don't sober him up. Keep him drunk. Keep him bombed. Get him to sign a security release and pour him onto a transport tonight.

CROWDER glances to GAINES for confirmation.

GAINES

I'm counting on you, Marsha.

CROWDER nods. Begins backing out.

RUZAK

Marsha...

(she stops)

You've done one helluva job on this. I hope you know that. It hasn't gone unnoticed.

CROWDER

Thank you.

CROWDER exits. RUZAK and GAINES share a look.

CUT TO

EXT. THE BEACH AT RAMLET EL BAIDA - NIGHT

West Beirut. Waves breaking below on a rocky stretch of beachfront. A broken-down ferris wheel in the distance.

MASON and JASSIM standing near a VW bus. JASSIM checks his watch. MASON grabs a look. It's getting late. Then --

HEADLIGHTS coming fast. THE RANGE ROVER whipping up the ramp. Pulling in beside the Volkswagen. CROWDER jumping out. TWO ARMED LEBANESE MEN behind her. MASON trying to read her as she comes toward him.

MASON
(sensing trouble)
So what is this? You're taking me
back?

CROWDER
Might be a problem.

MASON
Why is that?

CROWDER
Because in about an hour and a half
the Embassy Duty Officer is going to
discover that four million dollars is
missing from the fifth floor safe.
(brightly)
I thought we'd try and make a deal.

Dead air. MASON taken by surprise.

CROWDER
You were right. We're on our own.

MASON
What do you mean, "on our own?"

CROWDER
This is Raffik and Zayid...

THEY nod. Two wary, experienced fighters.

CROWDER
They're coming with us.

MASON
You must be kidding.

CROWDER
What did you have in mind?

MASON
What about Whalen? We go to Cal,
get a back-channel to Washington...

CROWDER
 You said two-thirty. That's five
 hours. You kick this back to
 Washington you'll wait five days.

AN EXPLOSION rumbles in from the city.

MASON
 What do you want to do? Shake
 down the PLO?

CROWDER
 (a smile)
 Why not? I bet you're pretty
 handy with four million bucks.

CUT TO

AN APARTMENT ENTRYWAY -

Key TURNING in the lock. BAJIIS (host of the Commodore card
 game) entering, closing the door. He looks well-fed, loose.

BAJIIS
 Sondrine? Sondrine...

No answer, he reaches for a switch and LIGHTS UP, revealing --
 ZAYID, behind him, pistol pressed against BAJIIS' temple.

ZAYID
 (Arabic)
 Not a fucking whisper.

BAJIIS nods. ZAYID eases him forward and INTO --

THE APARTMENT LIVING ROOM -

Mirror and chrome. Garish. RAFFIK, bracing a submachine
 gun, covers ZAYID as they pass.

Deeper inside, JASSIM holds an automatic to the head of
SONDRINE, a terrified, half-clad beauty. She's seated, mouth
 and hands bound with electrical tape, paralyzed with fear.

CROWDER
 (standing there)
 Listen closely, my friend. You're
 going to tell us very quickly,
immediately, what we want to know,
 or this room is going to be the
 last thing you see. F'himt?

BAJIIS
 I know you...
 (flushed and angry)
 What the hell is this?

CROWDER
 Abu Salim. Where is he?
 (no response)
 I said quick and I meant it.
 (silence)
 Last chance, Bajiis. Abu Salim.

BAJIIS looks away. Fuck you.

CROWDER
 (to Jassim)
 Kill the girl.

SONDRINE freaks. Squirming and struggling with limited success as JASSIM muscles her easily to her feet. He hesitates, looking back at CROWDER. No pleasure in this.

CROWDER
Do it.

BAJIIS's stoic front begins to erode as SONDRINE'S GAGGED CRIES play against the silence of the room.

JASSIM
 (to Crowder)
 The gun. It makes too loud here...

CROWDER
 (impatiently)
 Take her in the bedroom. Go.

SONDRINE's hysteria mounting as JASSIM drags her out of the living room. Around a hallway corner. Out of sight.

Silence.

BAJIIS stands there, eyes darting nervously back and forth between CROWDER and RAFFIK.

Suddenly -- the sound of THREE MUFFLED GUNSHOTS from the other room. BAJIIS pales, disbelief turning to fear as --

JASSIM, looking grim, returns alone into the living room.

BAJIIS
 (losing his cool)
 No... No... Ya sattar...

CROWDER
We're out of options, Bajiis.
(ready to roll)
Where the hell is Abu Salim?

THE BEDROOM - SAME TIME

SONDRINE, on the bed, pillow over her mouth and a gun to her head --

MASON holding both. She's alive. It's a scam.

CUT TO

SONDRINE'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A STACK OF MONEY -- Five hundred, crisp \$100 bills piled neatly on a table.

BAJIIS at the table, firing back Scotch. MASON, CROWDER and JASSIM standing over him.

BAJIIS
One hundred thousand. Just for me.

MASON
A finders fee. Fifty to ask.
Fifty for delivery.

BAJIIS glances nervously past them into -

THE LIVING ROOM - RAFFIK sitting with SONDRINE. Offering her a cigarette. Trying to get her to stop crying.

BAJIIS pours himself another Scotch.

BAJIIS
And two million for Abu Salim.

MASON
In one piece. In one hour.

CROWDER
The corner market at Rue Mamoun.

BAJIIS
It's not so easy maybe.

MASON
That's why we're asking so nicely.

BAJIIS
And if the Old Man says no?

MASON
We send all this money home.
(beat)
And a different team will come.
And they'll bring the walls down
around you.
(beat)
L'ha'iis mak'fhar'di. F'himt?

BAJIIS pale. He downs the drink.

CUT TO

EMBASSY HALLWAY - NIGHT

RUZAK and GAINES rushing angrily alongside COWBOY. Crisis.

COWBOY
-- The Duty Officer, he just called
it in, Crowder, he says she signed
the log. Apparently she forged the
code. He thought it was petty cash.

GAINES
The whole four million?

COWBOY
Radio gear...a vehicle...weapons
from the lock-box...

RUZAK
Jesus Fucking Christ...

RUZAK starts running. GAINES right behind him.

CUT TO

EXT. RUE MAMOUN - NIGHT

An abandoned PRODUCE MARKET. A small intersection of ruined
road rimmed with flattened food stalls.

THE VW BUS rolling through slowly. The RANGE ROVER, tucked
in the shadows a dozen yards behind.

INSIDE THE VW BUS -

CROWDER driving. MASON shotgun. Eyes out over the market. Nothing promising.

CROWDER
He's gonna ditch us, isn't he?

MASO
For fifty-thousand? No. If he tries to rip us off it'll be for the whole package.
(glancing back)
Raffik? Zayid? You trust these guys.

CROWDER
They're Desmond's contacts. He doesn't come back, they're blown. They're fighting for their lives.

THE RANGE ROVER -

Slowing. ZAYID stepping out. Crouching in the darkness as he slips into the shadows. Running through the stalls for cover as the RANGE ROVER continues on.

INSIDE THE VW BUS -

CROWDER parking. Cutting the engine. And now they sit. Waiting to see if it happens.

CROWDER
So, what's it like to throw your whole career away in one night?

MASON
You won't forget it.

She looks over. Smiles in spite of herself.

CROWDER
I don't surprise easily.

MASON
It's one of your more attractive qualities.

CROWDER
You surprised me right from the start.

MASON
I'll take that as a compliment.

Suddenly, THE RADIO comes alive --

RAFFIK'S VOICE
"Three cars... South East."

Instant edge. It's showtime.

RUE MAMOUN - ABANDONED MARKETPLACE - MOMENTS LATER

MASON standing over TWO METAL SUITCASES. CROWDER beside him. Across from them, BAJIIS and a PLO OFFICER. The OFFICER is mid-forties. Stern. Battle-tested. The man in charge.

PLO OFFICER
(the King's English)
Two million is not enough.

MASON
You can buy a lot of guns with two million dollars.

PLO OFFICER
"A lot." "Enough." "Too much." The Terminology of Value is a fascinating subject, don't you think?

MASON hesitates.

MASON
It was the topic of my Doctoral Thesis at AUB.

PLO OFFICER
Yes. It's in the Library. I've read it.
(beat)
The answer to two million is no.

MASON
That's a reaction not a position.
(he turns to Crowder)
You're sure that's Abu Salim?

She nods. MASON turns back. PLO OFFICER waiting.

MASON
May we speak privately?

The PLO OFFICER gestures for BAJIIS to step away. MASON looks at CROWDER. She backs off reluctantly.

MASON

(now they're alone)

We told Bajiis two million. You brought Abu Salim out here. Let's close this quickly.

(the suitcases)

I have only this. I'm topped out.

PLO OFFICER

You wouldn't open with your best offer if your life depended on it.

MASON

Did Bajiis tell you he's taking a commission?

PLO OFFICER

It's to be expected.

MASON

Two million two hundred and fifty thousand.

PLO OFFICER

Five million.

MASON

Three.

PLO OFFICER

Four and a half is my floor.

(beat)

Going once.

MASON

Point blank. I have three million, nine-hundred thousand exactly. We gave Bajiis fifty thousand as half-payment to be our broker.

PLO OFFICER

Going twice.

MASON

Why should Bajiis be the only one to profit?

(digging in)

If you take the three-nine and make it fast, I swear I'll tell Bajiis we settled on three-five. You can go back to Arafat with your head held high and four-hundred thousand dollars in your pocket.

A long pause. And then the PLO OFFICER smiles.

PLO OFFICER
Deal. Get the rest of the money.

MASON
(the suitcases)
This *is* the rest of the money.
I had a feeling we'd work it out.
(his turn to smile)
But you know what scares me about
this? You haven't once asked me what
I'm gonna do with him.

PLO OFFICER
(off-balance)
At these prices...

MASON, without explanation, holds up his hand -- his open
palm facing the PLO OFFICER.

MASON
Look at my hand.

MASON'S OPEN PALM. A bright red dot there.

MASON
It's a laser sight. For a gun.
There's a man just a few dozen yards
behind you. He's got this pistol,
I've never seen anything like it.

THE PLO OFFICER stares as MASON passes his open palm slowly
across the horizon. Suddenly, the spot is gone.

MASON
That dot is now on the back of
your head.

PLO OFFICER
I thought you came in good faith.

MASON
I did. Now I want to leave in one
piece.
(stepping back)
You don't move until we go, you'll
actually live to spend that money.
Tell your fida'iyyin to bring Abu
Salim to our car.

CUT TO

THE EMBASSY FRONT DRIVE -

The Ambassador's car speeding to a stop. WHALEN jumping out before they've even parked. TWO MARINE GUARDS rushing to keep up.

CUT TO

RUE MAMOUN - ABANDONED MARKETPLACE -

THE PLO OFFICER still standing there. Suitcases at his feet. His men loitering around their cars as the RANGE ROVER and VW BUS speed out of the market.

CUT TO

ABU SALIM -- His face. Badly beaten. One eye swollen shut. A gag and handcuffs only intensify a grim, deadly expression. Bouncing around in pain because we are in --

THE VW BUS -

Racing away from the market. CROWDER at the wheel. MASON beside her. JASSIM and ZAYID in back guarding the prisoner.

CROWDER
(checking her watch)
We've got two minutes to make a
ten minute drive.

CUT TO

THE FADYA CROSSING - THE GREEN LINE -

No Man's Land. A wide-open PLAZA covered with the rubble and detritus of it's former life. An urban, battle-weary, lunar landscape; brick, dirt and debris piled into hills and cliffs, jagged craters scattered randomly between them.

The only structures left standing are carcasses, blown-out facades sloping down into rubble. A FLASH OF LIGHT. Beat. And then an EXPLOSION as a shell lands in the near distance.

THE FAR EDGE OF THE PLAZA -

A BURNED-OUT TRANSPORT TRUCK. Left here long ago. KAMIR and FAHMY waiting in the darkness near an old MERCEDES. KAMIR checks his watch. FAHMY anxious to leave. Very anxious.

FAHMY
(Arabic)
Forget it. You'll have us all
killed. It's too long already!

KAMIR shaking him off. ANOTHER EXPLOSION -- this one closer.

CUT TO

A STREET IN WEST BEIRUT -

THE RANGE ROVER whips past and right behind it, THE VW BUS.

INSIDE THE VW BUS -

CROWDER driving. MASON riding shotgun. JASSIM and ZAYID in back with ABU SALIM. All of them thrown to one side as the bus careens around a corner.

Suddenly, THE RADIO comes alive -- CROWDER grabbing for it --

THE RANGE ROVER -

RAFFIK alone at the wheel, radio in one hand. Eyes staring ahead -- something bad.

RAFFIK
(into RADIO)
Up ahead! -- Two hundred meters!

AN AMAL MILITIA CHECKPOINT - A WOODEN BARRICADE -

A few rusty, military vehicles casually angled around a trash can fire. HALF A DOZEN SHIITE MILITIA MEN stuck out here on night duty. A SOCCER GAME broadcasting loudly over a RADIO.

THE VW BUS -

Still coming fast. MASON and CROWDER peering ahead. .

CROWDER
(into RADIO)
Swing back! Take the alley!
You hear me? -- Raffik!

THE RANGE ROVER -

RAFFIK accelerating. Eyes riveted straight ahead.

RAFFIK
(into RADIO)
We go through! We can make it!

CROWDER'S VOICE
"Raffik! Turn --"

RAFFIK kills the RADIO. Still accelerating.

QUICK CUTS:

THE AMAL MILITIA MEN just turning as they hear the sound of

THE RANGE ROVER bearing down on them and --

MASON bracing himself against the dashboard and --

THE RANGE ROVER doing at least sixty and --

THE VW BUS twenty yards behind it and --

MILITIA MEN startled -- scrambling for weapons and --

CROWDER frozen at the wheel and --

JASSIM pushing ABU SALIM down into the backseat and --

RAFFIK closing his eyes as --

THE RANGE ROVER CRASHES through a wooden barricade and --

MILITIA MEN starting to fire -- chaotic SHOOTING -- still not sure what's happening and --

THE VW BUS still flying -- RATTLING over the debris - squirting through the opening that Raffik has cleared and --

MASON ducked down in his seat as GUNFIRE SHATTERS THE PASSENGER WINDOW -- but they're still going and --

THE RANGE ROVER -- almost clear -- raked with GUNFIRE -- losing control -- tires gone -- jerking spasmodically away from the road -- CRASHING INTO A WALL and --

THE VW BUS making it! -- threading the needle -- barely hanging onto the road -- GUNFIRE growing useless as the BUS screams around a corner and --

CUT TO

EMBASSY COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - SAME

GAINES and RUZAK sweating blood, transmitting their panic to COWBOY and a roomful of TECHNICIANS -- everyone listening to -

CROWDER'S VOICE
(a radio intercept)
"Raffik! Shit... Raffik!"
"Talk to me goddamn it!"

No answer. STATIC. The RADIO goes dead.

GAINES
Can you triangulate the source?

TECHNICIAN #1
If they come back on. I need a signal.

TECHNICIAN #2
(from across the room)
Mr. Gaines?
(Gaines turns)
The Ambassador -- they just called.
He's on his way up.

RUZAK looks over at GAINES. They're in a world of shit.

CUT TO

THE FADYA CROSSING -

AN EXPLOSION -- a shell landing several hundred yards away from the old Mercedes.

INSIDE THE OLD MERCEDES -

FAHMY rushing to start the engine. KAMIR, beside him, leaving reluctantly. He stares angrily through the windshield as FAHMY throws the car into gear.

KAMIR
(suddenly)
Wakkif! Wakkif, shu m'aal!

FAHMY hesitates. KAMIR quickly turning off the engine --

FAHMY
Am bta'mil?

KAMIR
(listening)
Tsamma...

The faint sound of a CAR HORN BRAYING in the distance.

CUT TO

THE VW BUS -

CROWDER leaning on the HORN. MASON staring out across the plaza. The HORN stops.

MASON
(turning)
What are you doing?

CROWDER
We missed them... It's blown.

MASON reaches over -- his hand to the HORN.

JASSIM
Look!

MASON stops with the HORN. THEY ALL peer ahead.

CUT TO

THE FADYA CROSSING -

A hundred and fifty yards away, at the far end of the plaza, the moving shadow of the OLD MERCEDES. It stops. A FLASH OF HEADLIGHTS. Then darkness.

CUT TO

THE VW BUS -

It's happening. CROWDER in motion.

CROWDER
(to Jassim)
I'll need the radio...

JASSIM shaking it loose. CROWDER checking the perimeter.

MASON
What are you doing?

CROWDER
I'm getting ready to go out there.

MASON
No. That's my walk.

She stops. Looks at him. Surprised again.

CROWDER
This could be anything. We've been
leaving breadcrumbs behind us all
night long. That could be anybody
out there. Anybody.

MASON
No. It's him.
(wide open)
Please. I need to do this.

CUT TO

EMBASSY COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - HALLWAY

WHALEN, GAINES, and RUZAK locking horns. A raw argument.

WHALEN
-- You bet your ass I'm putting
this through! --

GAINES
-- you're out of your area here! --

RUZAK
-- It's an Intel operation, Cal --

WHALEN
-- It's a goddamned Rodeo is what
it is! --

IN THE COMMUNICATIONS AREA, some yards away, TECHNICIANS
huddled over the radio intercept console. Suddenly, the
RADIO SPEAKER comes alive. A burst of STATIC, and then --

CROWDER'S VOICE
"He's walking out. You see him?"

TECHNICIAN's hands flying across a computer keyboard as he
tries to lock in the signal.

TECHNICIAN
(calling out)
They're back on line!

RUZAK and GAINES pushing into the room. WHALEN behind them.

MASON'S VOICE
"It looks like Kamir..."

GAINES
Where are they?

TECHNICIAN
One more minute...

RUZAK
Get the back-up team ready to roll.

CUT TO

THE FADYA CROSSING -

MASON and KAMIR face-to-face at the center of the plaza. Two men with radios in the middle of nowhere.

KAMIR
(into his radio)
Ujhib'li mhujar ah ta.
(to Mason)
Okay. They will bring Cove up.
And then what?

MASON
Desmond comes out first. Then your brother.

KAMIR
Do I seem stupid to you?

MASON
You'll have me. For insurance.
I'll go last.

KAMIR looks at him. Looks around. A nervous pause.

MASON
I've got your brother. If you've got Desmond then we're wasting time.

KAMIR stares. This is how it is.

KAMIR
Okay. We make this go. But no more radio.

MASON
(into his radio)
We are proceeding as discussed.
I'm dumping the radio from here on
out. You hear me?

CROWDER'S VOICE
"Good luck, Mason."

MASON drops the radio. He and KAMIR begin to walk across the
plaza. Silent now. Solemn.

KAMIR
I have many times I think of you.
Of Nicole.
(this is hard)
You were not the only one who loved
her very much.

MASON
Was I so wrong about you?

KAMIR looks over. MASON angry in spite of himself.

MASON
When they came that night, were they
right or wrong?

KAMIR
Was I a "terrorist?"
(amused)
No. Not that night.
(beat)
But the next morning? Yes.

MASON silent now. Just walking. Almost there.

CUT TO

DESMOND, standing beside the OLD MERCEDES.

He is gaunt. His legs unsteady. FAHMY cutting away at the
tape binding his hands. TWO YOUNG PALESTINIAN MEN, standing
guard, move aside as MASON and KAMIR join them.

MASON
What do you say, Des?

DESMOND
Welcome to the Green Line.

A DULL EXPLOSION rumbles from the distance.

MASON
Can you walk?

DESMOND
You can help me.

MASON
You're gonna go alone. I'll
come back when it's over.

FAHMY finishes. Stands back. DESMOND staring at MASON.

DESMOND
I don't know how the hell you did
it, but thanks. I mean that.

MASON
They're paying me by the hour.

DESMOND
Awful long way to go for a reunion.

MASON
That's for sure.

DESMOND
I guess it was worth waiting for.

MASON nods. DESMOND manages a smile. Still friends.

KAMIR
We go now.

DESMOND
I'll see you on the other side.

MASON
You bet.

DESMOND starts walking.

CUT TO

ABU SALIM, standing beside the VW BUS.

JASSIM pulls the gag from his mouth. ZAYID, submachine gun in
hand, standing guard. CROWDER watching DESMOND get closer --

CROWDER
(calling out)
Desmond!

DESMOND
(still coming)
Yeah... Marsha? It's me.

CROWDER turns to JASSIM. Nods for him to release ABU SALIM.

CROWDER
It's your lucky day. May it be
your last.

ABU SALIM stares at her. Spits. Starts walking.

CUT TO

THE FLOOR OF A DARK ROOM -

Someplace we've never been. A flashlight beam lighting the way as A PAIR OF EXPERIENCED HANDS begin to quickly assemble a compact SNIPER'S RIFLE.

CUT TO

THE FADYA CROSSING -

MASON waiting behind KAMIR. FAHMY and PALESTINIAN #2 guarding. All eyes across the plaza.

DESMOND and ABU SALIM. Limping past each other in the dark.

KAMIR edging forward.

KAMIR
Nabil! -- Nabil!

ABU SALIM. Fifty yards to go.

ABU SALIM
`Ala rasi! Kamir?

KAMIR starting to jog out onto the plaza. MASON still being held by FAHMY.

MASON
Kamir!
(Kamir turns back)
Can I go now?

KAMIR
(to Fahmy)
Khallih y'fut.

FAHMY pushes MASON forward. He starts walking.

DESMOND arriving. CROWDER and ZAYID helping him to the VW.

KAMIR reaching ABU SALIM. Embracing his brother. A deeply felt reunion. ABU SALIM breaking it off quickly. Reaching down, pulling a gun from KAMIR's holster.

ABU SALIM
Jh'ard mh'kiil'qua.
(glancing ahead to Mason)
Jh'ardi lhal'akfrawri. Jhis'hal!

KAMIR caught short. Elation instantly into concern.

KAMIR
N'haf'til. Jh'eriz ma'mal.

CROWDER AND DESMOND staring across the plaza. Worried.

DESMOND
What's he doing?

CROWDER
(to Jassim)
Start the car.

ABU SALIM charging angrily toward MASON, gun in hand.

KAMIR trying to slow him down -- trying to calm him --

ABU SALIM
(shaking him off)
Nh'ardil! Sahk'lhiis!

MASON slowing, unsure. One way out. ABU SALIM in his way.

MASON
(to Kamir)
What the hell is this?

ABU SALIM
(calling to Fahmy)
Nh'ardil! Khi'qu'ajiis!

MASON
(to Kamir)
No... No...

CUT TO

THE SNIPER RIFLE -

Almost there. THE HANDS racing. Scope tightened. Clip hammered home and --

CUT TO

ABU SALIM, holding the gun on MASON. Ordering him back. KAMIR pleading with him not to do it.

MASON
(to Kamir)
-- I got you what you wanted --

ABU SALIM
(to Mason)
-- move now or die! --

KAMIR grabs his brother. Pinning down the gun.

KAMIR
(to Mason)
Go! Leave! Yalla!

The two brothers struggling -- ABU SALIM wild with anger -- KAMIR almost strong enough --

MASON just starting to run when --

A GUNSHOT ECHOES ACROSS THE PLAZA --

ABU SALIM, as a bullet SLAMS INTO HIS BACK and --

KAMIR suddenly holding dead weight. Uncomprehending for a moment and --

MASON in shock. A SECOND GUNSHOT gets him running and --

CROWDER at the wheel of the VW BUS.

CROWDER
What the hell is...?

CUT TO

BERNARD TEPPLER -

Crouched at the window of a burned-out building at the edge of the plaza. FIRING ONE LAST SHOT from the sniper rifle and -

BACK TO

ABU SALIM, dead on the ground.

KAMIR, covered with blood, standing over him and --

FAHMY and THE GUARDS crouching for cover -- starting to SHOOT LIKE MAD toward the source of the gunshots and --

MASON running as a BLOOD-CURDLING CRY rises behind him and --

KAMIR, gun in hand, out of his mind with rage and --

CROWDER throwing the VW into gear and --

KAMIR chasing MASON -- FIRING and FIRING and --

MASON stumbling -- SHOTS LANDING all around him and --

KAMIR still coming -- SCREAMING INSANELY -- SHOT after SHOT after SHOT and --

MASON hit -- his wrist shattering -- falling now and --

THE VW BUS speeding toward them and --

KAMIR taking aim -- both hands on the gun and --

JASSIM at the window of the VW -- SPRAYING MACHINE GUN FIRE ACROSS THE PLAZA and --

KAMIR JUST WIPED OUT --

MASON rolling over to SEE --

THE VW BUS skidding to a stop beside him. DESMOND already scrambling out to help him up and then --

IT'S OVER.

CUT TO

EXT. THE SEAPORT DEPOT - JOUNIEH - DAWN

AN UNMARKED ISRAELI HELICOPTER sits idling at the center of the square. THREE PEOPLE emerge from a building. Walking quickly toward the helicopter.

RONI NIV leading TEPPLER and SONDRINE. Comrades in arms. On their way home.

FADE OUT

INT. INFIRMARY - DAY

Small. Clean. A NURSE writing charts. A MARINE GUARD at the door. AMBASSADOR WHALEN on the phone in a cubicle, nodding and mumbling, listening carefully to a superior. The sound of a HELICOPTER ENGINE STARTING in the near distance.

CUT TO

INFIRMARY OPERATING ROOM - SAME

Just down the hall. MASON sitting on a doctor's table. His wrist is bandaged. His arm in a complicated sling. He is in some pain. CROWDER, across the room, flopped in a chair. Both of them wiped out. Just sitting there until --

WHALEN appears in the doorway. A guarded smile.

WHALEN

That was the Secretary.

(he steps in)

You're comfortable? Those pills
kick in yet?

MASON

(in no mood)

Talk to me, Cal.

WHALEN nods. Enough dancing.

WHALEN

We've got a clinic in Cyprus.
Desmond's there already. They've
got a hand specialist, he'll fix you
up. You'll give a deposition. You
can go home.

MASON

When's the hearing?

WHALEN

Depends.

MASON

Where's Ruzak?

WHALEN

Packing. He's rushing home.
(a message)
He's not without friends.

CROWDER

Who's running the Station?

WHALEN hesitates. Hedging slightly.

WHALEN

Well, it's still Don's Bureau,
isn't it? It's his job to lose.

(testing)

We did come in on budget.

(going for it)

I would say that that there's a
general satisfaction with the
results here. Sometimes it's
worth just counting your blessings.

MASON

Is that what you're doing?

WHALEN

Things happened in haste...

(including Crowder)

Things that might be subject to a
variety of legitimate interpretation.

(bottom line)

Look, everyone got what they wanted.
It's a rare thing. Might as well
enjoy it.

A MARINE GUARD appears in the doorway.

MARINE

Mr. Ambassador? They're ready, sir.

WHALEN nods. He'll be right there.

WHALEN

So what do you say, Mason?

MASON

(bone dry)

Good luck over here, Cal.

WHALEN

Godspeed.

WHALEN walks. MASON watching him go. Incredulous.

MASON

He's asking us to forget about this.

CROWDER

That's what he's asking.

MASON

Just forget it ever happened.

A long pause. CROWDER watching him.

CROWDER
Maybe you should try it.

MASON
What?

CROWDER
If I were you I'd kiss this place
goodbye once and for all.

MASON looks at her. She looks away. He stands down from the table. His hand hurts. He moves toward her.

She looks up as he comes closer. Not moving. Right there.

They kiss. A little more than goodbye.

He stands back. They look at each other.

MASON
Must be the painkillers.

CROWDER
Must be.
(pause)
Does this mean I can't check up on
you?

MASON
I wish you would.

CROWDER
Will I like what I find?

MASON
I'll try and surprise you.

He turns. He walks. CROWDER watching him go.

The sound of the helicopter growing LOUDER as he moves slowly down the hallway, disappearing through the infirmary doors into the daylight of a blinding sun.

FADE OUT