

MAN WITHOUT A GUN

by
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Based on the book by
Gianni Picco

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-- FIRST DRAFT --

SUPER: *Based on a true story*

EXT. KUWAIT CITY - KUWAIT - DAY

FADE IN ON: The great Arabian desert. Endless and eternal. In the far distance, we see a WHITE CITY shimmering like the sea in the blazing sun.

Two PLUMES OF SMOKE rise above the city...

...black, billowing, silent. Hauntingly surreal.

SUPER: *December 12th, 1983 -- The American and French embassies in Kuwait are attacked by Lebanese terrorists.*

Seventeen men are captured and sentenced to life in a Kuwaiti prison. They become known as the "Dawa Seventeen".

EXT. BEIRUT - LEBANON - DAY

A BEAT-UP SEDAN pulls up next to a WESTERN JOURNALIST doing a TAPE-RECORDED interview with a Lebanese STREET MERCHANT. Four HOODED MILITANTS leap out of the sedan...

...and grab the unsuspecting WESTERN JOURNALIST. Throwing him into the backseat and quickly disappearing into the streets.

SUPER: *Beirut, Lebanon. A militant group called "Hizbollah" begins kidnapping Westerners.*

Hizbollah demands the release of the Dawa Seventeen. Despite repeated pleas from the West, Kuwait refuses.

INT. HOSTAGE CELL - BEIRUT - NIGHT

We see the WESTERN JOURNALIST bound and blind-folded in a dank cell somewhere. The muzzle of an AK-47 at his head.

SUPER: *Some hostages are killed. Some escape. Some are bartered. And some are bought.*

The remaining few are eventually abandoned by their governments and left to wait. And wait. And wait...

HOLD ON: The WESTERN JOURNALIST looking gaunt and terrified.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - DAY

FADE IN ON: A top floor office overlooking the East River in New York. FIVE MEN wait anxiously on couches and chairs. Not a word spoken among them.

SUPER: *August 8th, 1988*

Two of the men are wearing magnificent WHITE ROBES (for they are SAUDI PRINCES). Eyes on the two men sitting before them:

IRAQI AMBASSADOR ISMAT KITTANI is a Kurd. Secular. No beard, no moustache. An old man in his mid-seventies. But with fire in his eyes.

IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KAMAL SAMIR is younger. Well-coiffed with a hand-tailored American suit and the stylish beginnings of a beard around his chin.

Neither one of these men wears a tie...

...both men staring hard at one another.

The fifth man sits behind his desk. This is SECRETARY-GENERAL JAVIER PEREZ DE CUELLAR. Sixty-eight years old. He's Peruvian by passport. European by looks.

He watches the standoff between Kittani and Samir. His face the picture of calm, while his hands strangle his armchair.

CLOSE ON: GIANNI PICCO

striding into the office without knocking. Picco is Italian, though he's spent half his life working in New York, leaving him with a slight yet noticeable accent...

...he's blessed with strong, dark features and keeps himself in top shape. He's direct. Honest. And dedicated to his job, which is currently as special assistant to Perez de Cuellar.

Like his boss, Picco wears a classical dark suit and tie. He crouches beside the secretary-general, whispering privately:

PICCO

They're getting a little restless downstairs. How much longer?

PEREZ DE CUELLAR

Ninety percent of negotiation is a question of who blinks first.

The two men share a nervous smile and watch...

...a WALL CLOCK ticks over to five minutes past one. The only sound in this tension-strapped room. No movement. No talk.

A TELEPHONE RINGS, shattering the silence. One of the princes immediately answers the phone, speaking in Arabic. Then gives the phone to Kittani.

SAUDI PRINCE #1
It's Saddam Hussein.

Kittani stands at attention to receive the call...

...he listens for a moment, then hangs up without saying a word. Shooting a final glare at Samir, Kittani turns to face Perez de Cuellar.

KITTANI
The Republic of Iraq agrees to the terms of United Nations Resolution 598. All hostilities against Iran have ceased.

SAUDI PRINCE #1
Congratulations, Mr. Secretary-General. You've just ended the longest war of the twentieth century.

Perez de Cuellar glances aside at Picco and grins.

CUT TO:

INT. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S DINING SUITE - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco whispers something conspiratorially to his secretary, JUDITH KARAM, an inelegant, hard-working, middle-aged woman with no-nonsense glasses...

...she nods and turns from the doorway as Picco joins Perez de Cuellar in a private dining suite adjacent to his office overlooking Manhattan.

A Spanish waiter by the name of VICTOR serves the secretary-general a HAM SANDWICH and pours him a glass of RED WINE...

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Thank you, Victor.

VICTOR
Mr. Picco?

...but Picco shakes his head, *no thanks*.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Have some wine, Gianni.

PICCO
The Security Council is waiting,
Sir.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
They can wait another five minutes,
can't they? Besides, I'm *starving*.

The secretary-general digs into his sandwich...

...noticing Picco staring at his empty WINE GLASS.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
You know, for a civil servant,
you're remarkably *uncivilized*.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY COUNCIL CHAMBER - NEW YORK - DAY

DIPLOMATS, ASSISTANTS, INTERPRETERS and JOURNALISTS crowd the Security Council chamber. The FIFTEEN COUNCIL MEMBERS riveted to their seats at their long horseshoe table...

...a DOOR OPENS suddenly and everybody strains to get a look at Perez de Cuellar as he strides into the cavernous chamber, followed by Picco.

CAMERA FLASHES strobe-light the scene, the secretary-general taking his seat at the table while Picco takes a seat behind him with three other assistants. SILENCE FALLS when Perez de Cuellar starts his speech:

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
It's my honor to announce that the
war between Iran and Iraq is over.

As he says this, Picco gives a nod to his secretary, Judith, up in the visitor's gallery. She begins to CLAP LOUDLY before Perez de Cuellar can continue...

...people stare at her like she's insane. But it's infectious and soon others are CLAPPING. More and more now. Spreading in moments throughout the chamber.

Now the whole place bursts into THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE. Perez de Cuellar is shocked. He turns to Picco who shrugs innocently.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PICCO'S BEDROOM - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DAWN

An ALARM CLOCK blares in a darkened bedroom: "6:30am". Picco wakes promptly and kills the alarm before the second beep...

...we spot a WEDDING RING on his finger as he briskly climbs out of his DOUBLE BED. Though we notice that the other half of the bed is unoccupied.

As Picco heads into the bathroom, we see the UNITED NATIONS COMPLEX out the windows, reflecting the dawn sun across the tranquil East River.

CUT TO:

INT. GIACOMO'S BEDROOM - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DAWN

Dressed in JOGGING CLOTHES now, Picco cracks open the GUEST BEDROOM DOOR to check on his fourteen year old son, GIACOMO, who's fast asleep in bed...

...he gazes at the boy a moment, then gently shuts the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK/PARK - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DAY

Picco works up a serious sweat as he jogs through Roosevelt Island. LOCALS exchange friendly smiles and waves with him.

CUT TO:

INT. DELI - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DAY

Still sweating from his run, Picco now shops for GROCERIES at a local deli. He appears out of his element, unable to figure out what brands to buy...

...he grabs CHOCOLATE MILK, POP-TARTS, CHEERIOS, FRUIT LOOPS, PANCAKE MIX, MAPLE SYRUP, PEANUT BUTTER, JELLY, and BREAD.

As Picco checks out, the CASHIER subtly shoots him an amused look. But he's too anxious to notice. Handing her money as he checks his watch.

PICCO

Grazie.

CUT TO:

INT. PICCO'S KITCHEN - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DAY

Picco hurries inside his apartment kitchen, surprised to find that Giacomo is already awake and dressed. Picco deposits the GROCERIES on the counter.

A look between them suggests some unresolved tension...

...as they speak, we see that Picco's genuinely interested in his son. But for whatever reason, the feeling's *not* mutual.

PICCO
You're up.

GIACOMO
Got an early class.

PICCO
Oh. Which class.

GIACOMO
Just some class, dad.

PICCO
(pause)
Thought I'd make breakfast. I have
all your favorites.

GIACOMO
Yeah, like maybe when I was *ten*.

Giacomo bypasses the GROCERIES...

...and grabs a BANANA from a FRUIT BOWL.

GIACOMO
See ya in two weeks.

There's no kiss, no hug, just a painted smile. Picco watches his son virtually escape out the door with his SCHOOL BAG...

...the DOOR CLOSES, leaving Picco alone with his GROCERIES.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. ROOSEVELT ISLAND TRAM - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco's reading the NEWSPAPER now as he rides the crowded RED TRAM over the East River. HEADLINES SHOUT: "INAUGURATON DAY".

CUT TO:

EXT. UNITED NATIONS PLAZA - NEW YORK - DAY

An icy WINTER WIND mauls the one hundred and fifty-nine flags outside the United Nations complex on the edge of Manhattan.

SUPER: *January 20th, 1989*

INT. PICCO'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco's now at his desk in his cramped, functional top floor office. Typing a document on his computer while a TELEVISION broadcasts PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH'S 1989 INAUGURAL SPEECH...

...he's not paying much attention to it. Focusing instead on the document he's typing. We catch glimpses of various words:

"...WESTERN HOSTAGES IN LEBANON..."

"...ELEVEN AMERICAN, BRITISH, AND GERMAN..."

He pauses to stare at a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH OF GIACOMO which is sitting prominently on his desk. Then he calls out the door:

PICCO

Judith?

JUDITH

Yes, Mr. P?

PICCO

Any chance we could cancel this evening's meetings? I'd like to have dinner with Giacomo.

JUDITH

Okay, but tomorrow morning, you're gonna have a lot of nations pissed off at the U.N.

PICCO

Who's on the books?

JUDITH

The Soviet Ambassador. The Iranian Foreign Minister. The President of Cyprus. The Greeks. And the Turks.

PICCO

All right, Judith. Thank you.

She returns to her desk and he gets back to work...

...as VIRENDRA DAYAL, the Chief of Staff, storms in. Dayal is Indian. Fastidious and bureaucratic. A FOLDER in his hands.

DAYAL

This is unacceptable, Picco. You hear me? Unacceptable!

PICCO

And good morning to you, too.

DAYAL

How many flights did you make last year? In total, how many?

PICCO

Hundreds. I don't know.

DAYAL

Then why did you submit only *three* boarding tickets?

PICCO

Arab and Israeli visas can't appear on the same document. For that, I have two passports. Most trips need two tickets for the same reason --

DAYAL

Excuses! *That's* all you submit.

PICCO

Honestly, Virendra. Don't you have anything better to do?

DAYAL

I'm the Chief of Staff. This is my *job*. Just because you're cozy with the secretary-general, don't think you outrank me. *I'm* in charge here and you have to tow the line...

But Picco's not listening anymore...

...his eyes caught by the TELEVISION. As Dayal drones on, his words fade out. And the words of the new president fade in:

PRESIDENT BUSH (ON TELEVISION)

...there are, today, Americans who are held against their will in foreign lands, and Americans who are unaccounted for. Assistance can be shown here and will be long remembered.

And we can almost see the wheels turning in Picco's head.

PRESIDENT BUSH
Goodwill begets goodwill. Good
faith can be a spiral that
endlessly moves on.

Picco suddenly lunges up from his desk...

PICCO
(to Dayal)
I'll be right back.

DAYAL
Wait, I'm trying to reprimand you.

...but he's already gone. Dayal sighs with frustration. HOLD
ON: THE TELEVISION as Bush gives his promise to the world:

PRESIDENT BUSH (ON TELEVISION)
Great nations like great men must
keep their word. When America says
something, America means it.

INT. U.N. CORRIDOR - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco hurries up the corridor now. Passing a SECURITY OFFICER
at the SECURITY DESK and three hard-working SECRETARIES...

...unstopping as he heads for the secretary-general's door.

INT. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco hustles into the office to find Perez de Cuellar also
watching the speech on his TELEVISION. A look between them:

PICCO
Did you hear that?

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
I heard it.

PICCO
Goodwill begets goodwill.

The secretary-general smiles, realizing:

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
You want to get the hostages out.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMIR'S APARTMENT - NEW YORK - NIGHT

The lights are on inside an UPPER EASTSIDE apartment. We hear the SOUND OF CHILDREN laughing and running somewhere inside.

SAMIR (V.O.)
Take your plates to the kitchen!

INT. SAMIR'S DINING ROOM - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Picco's having dinner in the Manhattan home of Kamal Samir, the Iranian Foreign Minister we met in the opening scene...

...also with them is Samir's beautiful wife, RASA. Samir's three YOUNG CHILDREN are just now escaping from the dinner table, running to go play.

They routinely ignore their father, leaving their plates on the table. Samir barks at them in Persian, to no avail...

...he shares a sigh with his wife, then turns to Picco.

SAMIR
Does it get any easier when they
grow up?

PICCO
Harder.

RASA
Where's Giacomo? Why didn't you
bring him?

PICCO
He's with his mother.

SAMIR
Gianni doesn't like to include his
son on business matters.

PICCO
The less he knows, the safer he is.

RASA
Oh, don't be so paranoid. You must
learn to trust people, Gianni. And
in return, they will trust you.

Picco just smiles uncomfortably.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMIR'S KITCHEN - NEW YORK - NIGHT

The men now wash and dry the DINNER PLATES in the kitchen.

PICCO
You owe us, Kamal.

SAMIR
Gianni...

PICCO
You were *losing* that war and we saved you. You owe us one.

SAMIR
What do you think I can do for these people?

PICCO
Don't think of them as "people", think of them as men. Brothers. Fathers. Husbands. Sons.

SAMIR
You need another towel.

Picco realizes his HAND TOWEL is soaked...

...he lays it out as Samir grabs him another.

PICCO
You could talk to Hizbollah.

SAMIR
Hizbollah's a terrorist group. Iran does not deal with terrorists --

PICCO
Iran gave birth to Hizbollah. You backed them. You inspired them. We both know this.

SAMIR
Have you tried Damascus?

PICCO
No... The Syrians are occupiers. Hizbollah hates them. But Iran?
(pause)
Iran occupies Hizbollah's *heart*.

Samir smiles at the soulful pitch, but Picco's not done...

...he grabs a U.N. FILE FOLDER which sits on a nearby KITCHEN STOOL. Inside are PHOTOS of the ELEVEN WESTERN HOSTAGES.

PICCO

Terry Anderson. He's a journalist, he's been held for four years. Look at him. *Look...* He has a daughter, he's never even seen her. Thomas Sutherland. University professor in Beirut. He's also been gone four years. Terry Waite. He went in there to get them out. That was a year ago. He hasn't been seen since. Edward Tracy. Allen Steen. Jesse Turner. Joe Cicippio. Thomas Kemptner. Heinrich Struebig. Jackie Mann. John McCarthy.

(pause)

Help me, Kamal. Help these men go home to their families.

Samir studies Picco cautiously...

...pulling off his yellow DISH GLOVES.

SAMIR

You never told me why you don't drink. I cannot for my religion, but you. You're *Italian*.

PICCO

It was a decision. A choice. When I began at the secretary-general's office, I made a promise... I have to keep my wits. One mistake could have such ramifications.

Samir grins to himself, amused...

SAMIR

If Bush is serious, he will contact you. Until then, thanks for helping with the dishes.

...he pats Picco on the back and walks out. Picco despairs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - HAMPTONS - DAY

Five SECRET SERVICE AGENTS flank a magnificent summer beach house in the Hamptons. Three dark SUVs are parked outside.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE VERANDA - HAMPTONS - DAY

Another SECRET SERVICE AGENT opens the back door for Picco who walks out of the house to join Perez de Cuellar on the sunny back veranda...

...seated with him is U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT. Sixty-five. Small. Thin. Balding. Scowcroft is a legend in diplomatic circles.

While all three men wear suits, there is a more relaxed vibe here. This is the secretary-general's annual summer retreat.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Gianni, you know the National
Security Adviser.

PICCO
(shaking hands)
Yes, Sir. Hello, General.

SCOWCROFT
What's your impression of the new
president of Iran?

PICCO
I've only met him once. He struck
me as a pragmatic man. His family
is famously wealthy. In fact, it's
said they financed the revolution.

SCOWCROFT
They in the oil business?

PICCO
No, they grow pistachios.

SCOWCROFT
Pistachios?

PICCO
Fresh. Roasted. And salted.

SCOWCROFT
Are you telling me President
Rafsanjani's nuts paid for the
Islamic Revolution?

PICCO
They're extremely good nuts.

Scowcroft stares at Picco blankly...

...the secretary-general suppresses a smile.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
President Bush wants to deliver a
message directly to Rafsanjani.

SCOWCROFT
And we want to hear his reaction.

PICCO
What's the message?

SCOWCROFT
We're ready to embark on a series
of reciprocal gestures to improve
relations. And free the hostages.

The very words Picco was hoping to hear...

...he leans forward on the edge of his seat.

PICCO
Might I suggest that we cast the
message as not having come from
President Bush directly, but from
the secretary-general instead.

SCOWCROFT
Why?

PICCO
Rafsanjani's only been in office a
month. To receive a message from
the Americans would be too much of
an embarrassment too soon. We need
to *protect* him.

Scowcroft glances at Perez de Cuellar, impressed...

...the secretary-general beams, obviously quite proud.

SCOWCROFT
(to Picco)
How soon can you go?

CUT TO:

A LIVE SATELLITE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST

We see the looming hulks of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iraq and Kuwait sandwiched between. Syria distended around miniscule Lebanon. Jordan and Egypt surrounding fractured Israel.

CAMERA PUSHES IN ON: IRAN. A vast country the size of Alaska wedged between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. We also see the capital, Tehran.

As the CAMERA PUSHES CLOSER, we begin to make out buildings and streets. Finally, we see the AIRPORT as a plane lands...

EXT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - IRAN - DAY

...it's a Lufthansa PASSENGER PLANE touching down.

SUPER: *August 24th, 1989*

INT./EXT. PASSENGER PLANE - IRAN - DAY

Picco packs up his BRIEFCASE as the plane taxis along the runway. He's sitting near the front in Business Class, his mind on his work...

...when all of a sudden, the plane abruptly stops.

Picco glances out his window and sees the PASSENGER TERMINAL in the distance. *Something's not right.* Picco looks alarmed.

 HOSTESS (ON INTERCOM)
Ladies and gentlemen, we ask you
not to leave your seats until we
reach the terminal. Thank you.

ON THE RUNWAY: A BLACK CAR

is driving out towards the stopped plane. GROUND CREWMEN push a MOBILE STAIRWAY towards the door. The car parks nearby...

...and a SECURITY GUARD climbs out from behind the wheel.

INSIDE THE PLANE: PICCO

watches the BLACK CAR and sees the SECURITY GUARD climb the MOBILE STAIRWAY. A HOSTESS greets the armed man at the open doorway and they talk quietly...

...then the HOSTESS points towards Picco. He looks around and behind, genuinely surprised when the SECURITY GUARD stops by his seat.

 SECURITY GUARD
Mr. Picco, you come with me.

Picco hesitates, glancing at the 9mm AUTOMATIC PISTOL in the guard's belt. No choice. Picco follows the him out the door.

ON THE STAIRWAY: PICCO

stares down at the waiting BLACK CAR. Something ominous about it. The SECURITY GUARD is waiting, beckoning him. Finally, he obliges.

ON THE RUNWAY: PICCO

gingerly approaches the car. The guard opens the BACK DOOR for him. Picco glances inside and grins with relief to see Samir sitting there...

SAMIR

Welcome to Iran, Gianni. It's good
that you've come.

...the two men shake hands as the BLACK CAR drives off.

Behind them, the MOBILE STAIRWAY swiftly retracts. The door closes. And the plane continues to the PASSENGER TERMINAL.

CUT TO:

INT. PICCO'S HOTEL ROOM - IRAN - DUSK

Picco unpacks his CARRY-ON SUITCASE in his well-appointed hotel room. He hangs up his DOUBLE-BREASTED BLAZER and puts away his spare clothes...

...lastly, he removes the FRAMED PHOTO OF GIACOMO and sets it on the bedside table. Curiously, Picco checks the drawer. *And finds a Koran.*

CUT TO:

EXT. TEHRAN STREETS/PARKS - IRAN - DAWN

It's seven o'clock and the sun is rising over Tehran...

...we find Picco jogging through the city streets. The hotel district. The green parks. It's a beautiful city, set at the foot of a spectacular mountain range.

Through Picco's eyes, we see CITY WORKERS painting over Anti-American graffiti. Others are repairing residential APARTMENT BLOCKS ripped apart by Iraqi Scud missiles.

There are armed SOLDIERS and POLICEMEN everywhere. Men with guns on every street corner. They eyeball Picco cautiously.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - IRAN - DAY

The same BLACK CAR now deposits Picco outside a modern grey and brown building that looks like some kind of university campus structure...

...only the entire complex is walled in -- and swarming with armed IRANIAN SOLDIERS who guard the place with their lives.

PICCO (V.O.)
Your Excellency, first please
permit me to wish you a happy
birthday.

CUT TO:

INT. RAFSANJANI'S OFFICE - IRAN - DAY

The huge presidential office sits on the second floor of the palace. An overpowering whiteness fills the room, accentuated by the afternoon light flooding in through the windows...

...the sofas are white. The walls are white. The FLOOR RUG is priceless. The room is designed to intimidate. *It succeeds.*

CLOSE ON: PRESIDENT RAFSANJANI

sitting behind a stately BOWL OF PISTACHIOS on his enormous desk. His turban is also white, as is his tunic worn beneath a light brown mantle. Of Mongol descent, Rafsanjani can only grow a light moustache, despite being a cleric.

Two ARMED BODYGUARDS hover behind Picco who sits in one of two chairs opposite the President. Samir sits in the other chair, translating.

Rafsanjani simply nods a thanks to Picco's greeting...

...with that, Picco unlocks his LEATHER BRIEFCASE. Fumbling nervously. He removes a TYPED STATEMENT and begins to read:

PICCO
President Rafsanjani...
(pause)
I would like to comment to you on
U.S.-Iran relations. I know George
Bush very well and he has spoken to
me personally on the subject of the
eleven Western hostages in Lebanon.

Picco nervously glances up at Rafsanjani...

...the president remains motionless, following closely.

PICCO

I call to your attention the words in his inaugural address: "Goodwill begets goodwill." I can assure you, your Excellency, these words were not spoken heedlessly. Taking an initiative on freeing the hostages would inevitably elicit a positive and swift response on the part of the United States. Should you find it appropriate, my discreet good offices could be utilized in this matter for the benefit of all concerned.

(pause)

Signed, Javier Perez de Cuellar,
secretary-general of the United Nations.

Picco's surprised by Rafsanjani's quick response...

...again translated by Samir while Picco takes notes.

SAMIR

(translating)

Mr. Picco, it seems you got on the wrong plane. This is Iran. And the hostages are in Lebanon. In spite of what you may think, we have no relations with the people holding the Western hostages. They are not traditional Hizbollah. And they are not easy to find. They do not have an address. It is difficult to get in touch with them. Furthermore, this is a subject of no interest to us. Iran has very little to gain by helping the Americans. And you have wasted your time coming here.

(pause)

I agreed to receive this message only out of respect for my friend, the secretary-general. Otherwise, I would not have even received it.

Picco finishes his notes, feeling the fool...

...he looks at Samir who stands. Picco dutifully packs up and bows to the president. Then he retreats out the DOUBLE DOORS.

CUT TO:

INT. PICCO'S HOTEL ROOM - IRAN - NIGHT

An URGENT KNOCKING awakens Picco in his hotel room. Startled, and not a little frightened, he fumbles for the light. Across the room. Up to the door. Peering through the PEEPHOLE...

...it's Samir. Confused, Picco promptly UNLOCKS the door.

SAMIR

Bush has to release ten percent of Iranian monetary assets. And he's got to deliver on Reagan's promise to compensate the relatives of the victims of the Iranian Airbus shot down by the Vincennes last year.

(grins)

Smile, Gianni. We're on.

Samir turns down the corridor. Picco watches him go, stunned.

CUT TO:

INT. PICCO'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Picco SLAMS the phone down in his office and begins pacing the floor in frustration. Judith appears in the doorway...

...she sees his anger and quickly shuts the door behind her.

JUDITH

The Americans said no?

PICCO

Apparently, Bush can't afford to be seen dealing with what's considered an outlaw regime.

JUDITH

Then why'd they send you?

PICCO

I don't know, Judith. I don't know.

JUDITH

(pause)

Terry Anderson's family is here.

PICCO

Send them in, please.

Judith ducks back outside as Picco gathers himself...

...a moment later, Judith leads a mother and daughter inside Picco's office. MADELEINE ANDERSON, pretty but drained, holds the little hand of beautiful five year old SALOME ANDERSON.

In a glance, we know Picco's well-familiar with them. Shaking Madeleine's hand, then crouching down to Salome and smiling.

PICCO
Hello, Madeleine.

MADELEINE ANDERSON
Gianni.

PICCO
(to Salome)
Look at you. You grow a foot bigger every time I see you.

MADELEINE ANDERSON
Salome, could you wait outside?

PICCO
Judith.

Judith's already leading Salome outside...

...leaving Madeleine and Picco alone to talk.

MADELEINE ANDERSON
Anything?

PICCO
I'm sorry, no.

MADELEINE ANDERSON
But you met with Rafsanjani, didn't you? That's what you said.

PICCO
I did. It didn't go well. We've hit an impasse. And we can't get around it. I wish I had better news.

MADELEINE ANDERSON
I see...

PICCO
How's Salome doing?

MADELEINE ANDERSON
She's fine. I...

Her voice suddenly starts to crack...

...and we see the impact this has on Picco as she speaks:

MADELEINE ANDERSON

I'm starting to forget him. I can't remember things. I just... I've run out of stories to tell her. I need new stories. I need... I need him to come home. Please. Just let him come home to us.

PICCO

We're doing everything we can.

MADELEINE ANDERSON

No. If you were doing *everything*, then Terry would be free.

Picco stares at her, unable to respond...

...and she turns and hurries out of the office. Tears in her eyes. Picco watches Madeleine gather her daughter and leave.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - NEW YORK - DAY

Several SKATEBOARDERS are competing in Riverside Park on a Sunday afternoon. PARENTS and FRIENDS clap and cheer their favorites...

...we spot Giacomo competing among them. He's quite good and performs some difficult maneuvers which the crowd APPLAUDS.

Giacomo's pleased with himself, but his smile fades when he notices his father in the bleachers. *Not watching him*. Lost in a weary gaze...

...the weight of the world upon his shoulders.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - NEW YORK - DUSK

The competition is now over, the crowd dispersing. Picco and his son walk away through the park, a heavy silence floating between them...

...though Picco seems to not understand why.

PICCO

How's your mother?

GIACOMO
Fine.

PICCO
School?

GIACOMO
(shrugs)
See me do that triple kickflip?

PICCO
Yes. Yes, you were very good.

GIACOMO
I didn't do a triple kickflip. I've never even done a *double*.

PICCO
I...I don't know all the terms.

GIACOMO
Why'd you even come?

PICCO
I wanted to see you. It's very hard for me to get away from work --

GIACOMO
Would it help if I wore a blue helmet?

PICCO
I had a bad week, Jack.

GIACOMO
What happened?

PICCO
You know I can't tell you that.

GIACOMO
It's those hostages, isn't it?

PICCO
It's not for your ears.

GIACOMO
You think you protect me by keeping your work to yourself. But one day, you're gonna have "protected" me so much that we're gonna be strangers.

Picco gazes at his son, impressed...

...he sighs reluctantly, then opens up:

PICCO

I was working on a deal to free the hostages... But it collapsed before it could begin.

GIACOMO

(pause)

Why were the hostages taken in the first place?

PICCO

A small Arab country called Kuwait has seventeen Lebanese terrorists locked up in prison. The hostages were taken by friends of these men in the hopes that the West would pressure Kuwait into letting them all go.

GIACOMO

But Kuwait won't do that.

PICCO

They haven't so far. And none of us expect they ever will.

GIACOMO

What if Bush sent some commandos or something into the prison and broke them out?

Picco laughs good-naturedly...

PICCO

Bush needs Kuwaiti oil. Nothing is more important than that. No, Jack, I'm afraid the Dawa Seventeen shall never go free...

(jokingly)

...well, short of somebody *invading* Kuwait and opening all the prisons.

...he says this with a smile, but now we --

CUT TO:

A LIVE SATELLITE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST

We again see the looming hulks of Iran and Saudi Arabia with smaller Iraq and Lilliputian Kuwait sandwiched in between...

...this time, the CAMERA PUSHES IN ON: KUWAIT. A tiny domain on the north shore of the Persian Gulf. As the CAMERA PUSHES CLOSER, we see several EXPLOSIONS in real time.

HUNDREDS OF IRAQI WARPLANES come into view now, swooping into Kuwait. Beneath them, we see THOUSANDS OF IRAQI TANKS pouring across the border...

SUPER: *August 2nd, 1990*

...now the CAMERA FINDS a prison as IRAQI SOLDIERS raid it.

INT. PRISON - KUWAIT - DAY

A row of dank prison cells. The DAWA SEVENTEEN locked inside, listening to the IRAQI TANKS thunder past. Seventeen ordinary Lebanese men...

...all of a sudden, an IRAQI SOLDIER appears in the doorway and heaves on a DOOR LEVER. All the CELL DOORS slide open.

IRAQI SOLDIER
(subtitled, Arabic)
Enemies of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein
has just liberated you. Go free!

And just like that, the IRAQI SOLDIER is gone...

...and the DAWA SEVENTEEN wander out of their cells.

EXT. PRISON - KUWAIT - DAY

Blinking in the morning sunlight, the DAWA SEVENTEEN pause for a moment to watch the IRAQI MILITARY streaming past the prison into the city...

...we hear only SPORADIC GUNFIRE and the occasional DISTANT EXPLOSION. The DAWA SEVENTEEN simply walk off into the sun.

CUT TO:

INT. GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL - NEW YORK - DAY

The iconic hall is filled with DIPLOMATS and STAFFERS in the minutes before the session begins. Everybody is talking over everybody else...

...there's a palpable fear inundating the room, fueled by the irrefutable knowledge that war is looming on the horizon. (We may notice that the IRAQI SEAT is conspicuously absent.)

Picco and Samir huddle off to the side of the hall, deep in talks. We've never seen Picco so fired up. Samir, however, is clearly distracted.

PICCO

The Dawa Seventeen are out. They're out, Kamal.

SAMIR

You have confirmation of this?

PICCO

The prisons are empty. They said so on the radio. Hizbollah has to free the hostages now.

SAMIR

The hostages cannot be helped right now, Gianni. There are other things to think about.

PICCO

Other things?

SAMIR

We're about to have another war in the Middle East. And *this* one will be waged by the Americans.

PICCO

The Americans will thrash Saddam, it's a *good* thing -- you'll never have to worry about him again.

SAMIR

It's the *Americans* we're worried about. Once they've beaten Saddam, they'll have all the justification they need to stay and meddle.

Picco stares at Samir, frustrated...

PICCO

Hizbollah's demands have been met, so the hostages no longer have any value. They could be *killed*.

(no reply)

If that happens, the world will blame Iran.

...he stares at Samir, then leaves him with this.

CUT TO:

INT. METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

A GERMAN OPERA plays at the Met to a full house of New York's finest. The voices of the singers ricocheting off the walls.

IN A BOX SEAT - PEREZ DE CUELLAR

is talking quietly with the AMBASSADOR TO EL SALVADOR. Picco sits behind, not really listening, his thoughts elsewhere...

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
...the people of El Salvador have
suffered enough. You have the power
to end the fighting...

...we see now that Picco's focusing on a FATHER and SON in the seats below him. They share a smile, enjoying the opera as it builds to a CRESCENDO.

Picco snaps out of his thoughts, listening in to his boss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco and Perez de Cuellar watch Baghdad under attack through the familiar lens of CNN. Both men appear quite distraught...

SUPER: *January 17th, 1991*

...there's a heavy pain in the secretary-general's eyes.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Some things cannot be negotiated.

Picco glances at him, then continues watching the broadcast.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DAY

Picco pushes himself during his morning jog around Roosevelt Island. His RUNNING SHOES pounding the sidewalk -- months of frustration exploding in every stride...

...finally, Picco rounds a corner and comes face to face with the United Nations complex across the river. He stares at the buildings, PANTING and SWEATING.

CUT TO:

INT. PICCO'S APARTMENT - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DAY

The phone is RINGING as Picco UNLOCKS the front door to his apartment. He hurries inside, lunging for the phone...

...picking up, answering out of breath:

PICCO
(into phone)
Hello.

SAMIR'S VOICE
Gianni?

PICCO
Kamal. Sorry, I was doing my run
and I just --

SAMIR'S VOICE
A representative of the kidnappers
shall meet with you at the Iranian
Embassy in Damascus.

Picco goes still, holding the phone.

CUT TO:

A LIVE SATELLITE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Now the CAMERA PUSHES IN ON: SYRIA. A country half the size of Iraq on the Mediterranean Sea. Turkey to the north. Iraq to the east. Jordan and Israel to the south...

...and Lebanon to the west, caught in Syria's jaws.

As the CAMERA PUSHES CLOSER, we see Syria's endless, arid plateaus. The capital city, Damascus, sits near the border with Lebanon.

Finally, the CAMERA FINDS an IRAN AIR PASSENGER PLANE hooked to a JETWAY at the international airport outside Damascus.

INT. JETWAY - SYRIA - DAY

Picco files off the plane with his CARRY-ON and BRIEFCASE in hand, his face an uneasy mix of excitement and apprehension.

SUPER: *August 7th, 1991*

Three men are standing separately in the narrow jetway...

...none of them realize they're all waiting for Picco.

COLONEL DARWISH FAWZIL is a Syrian Intelligence officer who wears off-colored civilian suits and a PISTOL on his hip. A pair of DARK SUNGLASSES hides his eyes, day and night.

STEINER BJORNSSON is an Icелander and chief administrative officer of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force headquartered in Damascus. He also wears a HANDGUN.

The third man is one we're already familiar with -- Samir, who steps up to greet Picco with an open palm and a smile.

Colonel Fawzil also approaches Picco at the same time...

...and for a moment, Picco doesn't know which hand he should shake first. Finally, Bjornsson comes to the rescue and steps past both of them.

Picco's relieved to shake his hand.

BJORNSSON
Steiner Bjornsson.

PICCO
Hello.

BJORNSSON
You know Kamal Samir.

PICCO
Yes. Kamal.

BJORNSSON
And this is Colonel Fawzil, Syrian Intelligence.

COLONEL FAWZIL
(smiles)
If I can be of any assistance to you while you are here, just ask.

Something off about the way he said that.

PICCO
Thank you, Colonel.
(to Samir)
When can I see the Ambassador?

SAMIR
He's expecting you this evening.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAMASCUS - SYRIA - DUSK

The sprawling city of Damascus soaks in the late afternoon light, dotted with the spiraling MINARETS of its mosques.

EXT. U.N. HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - DUSK

Bjornsson leads Picco out of a small house emblazoned with the familiar U.N. LOGO and guarded by several blue-helmeted U.N. SOLDIERS with automatic rifles...

...they climb into a U.N. VEHICLE parked outside. Bjornsson starts the engine and begins to drive Picco as they talk:

BJORNSSON
Ever eaten Icelandic food?

PICCO
No.

BJORNSSON
Then you must have dinner with my wife and I before you leave.

PICCO
What's Icelandic food like?

BJORNSSON
Fishy.

Picco affords a smile at Bjornsson...

...who suddenly stops the car. Picco's confused.

PICCO
Why have we stopped?

BJORNSSON
We're here.

Picco looks at the small, WALLED HOUSE before him...

...then glances back one hundred feet at the U.N. HOUSE.

PICCO
This is the Iranian Embassy?

BJORNSSON
Samir's waiting for you inside.

Picco helps himself out of Bjornsson's car...

...gazing at the Iranian Embassy skeptically.

PICCO
I could've walked.

BJORNSSON
It's better to have me waiting
outside for you. Just in case.

Bjornsson smiles reassuringly. It doesn't work.

CUT TO:

INT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - SYRIA - DUSK

The embassy is bustling with Iranian EMBASSY STAFFERS in tieless suits. Samir leads Picco up some narrow stairs.

AKHTARI (V.O.)
I am a clergyman. A mullah. There
are many like me...

CUT TO:

INT. AKHTARI'S OFFICE - SYRIA - NIGHT

A WAITER serves TEA and COOKIES in the ambassador's office, by far the largest room in the house. Portraits of Khomeini and Rafsanjani hang on the wall behind his desk...

...and a GILDED AK-47 hangs none-too-subtly above the mantle.

CLOSE ON: AMBASSADOR MOHAMMED AKHTARI

sitting in a chair opposite Picco and Samir. Akhtari is a rotund and suave bearded man. A mullah wearing traditional WHITE ROBES and a TURBAN...

...he bears a justified sense of importance -- moving slowly and speaking softly, as if refusing to be hurried by events.

AKHTARI
...some go on to be Imams. A very
few become Ayatollas. Yet there is
no respect from the world. No sense
of authority. Do you know what we
need? A Vatican. A government of
Islam. We need a Pope. Perhaps I
could be a Pope of Islam. You are
from Italy, you know the Pope? You
could introduce us one day.

PICCO

Uh...yes, Mr. Ambassador. One day.

Akhtari grins, reaching for a cookie...

...as Samir and Picco share a befuddled look.

AKHTARI

President Rafsanjani has asked me to assist you with your activities here in Damascus.

PICCO

Thank you, Sir. The secretary-general thanks you also.

AKHTARI

Unfortunately, the presence of the Syrian Intelligence colonel at the airport has caused *complications*.

PICCO

Complications?

SAMIR

You must go to Lebanon if you still wish to meet with the kidnappers.

PICCO

Where in Lebanon exactly?

AKHTARI

Beirut.

This news hits Picco like a ton of bricks...

SAMIR

The United Nations has a small headquarters there. It will be quite safe, I assure you.

PICCO

You're coming with me?

SAMIR

Don't be ridiculous. I'm not going to Beirut.

(scoffs)

That place is *treacherous*.

...and that's that. Picco just stares at Samir.

CUT TO:

A LIVE SATELLITE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST

The CAMERA PUSHES IN ON: LEBANON. A country smaller than Connecticut. Its capital, Beirut, on the Mediterranean...

...again, as the CAMERA PUSHES CLOSER, we see Beirut and the surround countryside. The city is built on a spur overlooking the sparkling blue water.

Now the CAMERA FINDS a WHITE JEEP navigating the streets.

INT./EXT. U.N. JEEP - BEIRUT - DAY

A Finnish UNITED NATIONS SOLDIER is driving Picco through the war-torn city of Beirut. Through Picco's eyes, we see BULLET-RIDDEN BUILDINGS and blackened, SKELETAL REMAINS of cars...

...the LOCAL WOMEN are clad in robes and look haunted. LOCAL CHILDREN play war with real BROKEN RIFLES and BULLET-PIERCED Israeli helmets. The LOCAL MEN are few.

SYRIAN SOLDIERS in their red berets man multiple checkpoints throughout the city. They stare at Picco suspiciously as the U.N. JEEP passes through.

EXT. U.N. HEADQUARTERS - BEIRUT - DAY

The jeep finally pulls up at the local U.N. HEADQUARTERS. A two-level house in the Christian area, overlooking the rest of the city...

...a mixture of Finnish, Danish, and Canadian U.N. SOLDIERS guard the FRONT GATE and beckon PICCO'S JEEP safely through.

INT. U.N. COMMAND CENTER - BEIRUT - DAY

CLOSE ON: MAJOR JENS NIELSEN

greeting Picco in the second floor command center inside the headquarters. Nielsen is a Dane and stays very fit. He keeps his hair short and his list of friends shorter...

...his deep, probing eyes pierce distrustfully through his glasses at Picco as the two men very formally shake hands.

NIELSEN

Major Jens Nielsen. You can call me
Major Nielsen. If you're pressed
for time, you can call me Major.

PICCO
Picco, thank you for having me.

NIELSEN
They told me you were expecting
somebody to come meet you here.

PICCO
A representative of the kidnappers.

NIELSEN
A terrorist.

PICCO
Well, let's try not to call him
that while he's here.

NIELSEN
You want to bring a *terrorist* into
my compound?

PICCO
Is that a problem?

NIELSEN
Not as long as I'm allowed to keep
my gun in his face.

PICCO
All due respect, Major, I suspect
it might be difficult to negotiate
with a gun in the room.

NIELSEN
That's *your* problem, Mr. Picco --
keeping my men alive, that's *mine*.

The two men stare at each, neither one backing down.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEIRUT - LEBANON - DUSK

The sun sinks over the sea, casting Beirut in a golden hue...

...everywhere, Muslims stop to face Mecca and pray. Shops are
closed. Carts are stowed. People withdraw from the streets.

EXT. U.N. GARDEN - BEIRUT - DUSK

Picco walks out into the garden at the U.N. HEADQUARTERS...

...from here, Picco has a magnificent view of the city. It's a beautiful sight. And sadly tragic, too. Picco just gazes.

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. CAFETERIA - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco goes over his notes at a table in the ground floor cafeteria as he eats some dinner. He checks the time on his watch, obviously frustrated...

...he doesn't notice Nielsen approaching from a side door.

NIELSEN

Still no word?

(Picco shakes his head)

Don't fret, Sir. All the *important* business in Beirut gets done after ten o'clock.

PICCO

I just want something to happen.

NIELSEN

They're vicious bastards, you know.

PICCO

Excuse me?

NIELSEN

Hizbollah. I've been here a long time, I've seen it. You know how they kill you? They put you in a car. Take you for a drive out of the city. You stop in some field someplace. Then they tell you to take off all your clothes. And as you're doing that, they shoot you in the back of the head.

Picco's clearly unsettled by this description...

...he's saved from replying by the appearance of a STAFFER who hands Nielsen a note. Nielsen reads it. Cracks a grin.

NIELSEN

They just released a hostage.

PICCO

What? Who?

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. COMMAND CENTER - BEIRUT - NIGHT

BBC NEWS VIDEO FOOTAGE: Showing the release of JOHN MCCARTHY, the longest held British hostage. He looks weak but happy...

...we PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Picco watching him on a TELEVISION inside the U.N. Headquarters. Nielsen is with him. As well as several U.N. SOLDIERS. Smiles all around.

NIELSEN
(to Picco)
Word is they're going to release a
hostage every hour. One by one.

Picco is quietly thrilled, *could it really be this easy?*

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERNATIONAL AID OFFICE - BEIRUT - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: JEROME LEYRAUD

leaving an AID OFFICE in downtown Beirut. Leyraud is French, twenty-six, and still very idealistic. He waves goodnight to fellow AID WORKERS and begins to walk off...

...almost immediately, a WHITE CAR swoops up next to him. TWO MASKED MEN leap out and grab him while a third remains behind the wheel.

Leyraud quickly cottons on and puts up a fight. Two other AID WORKERS rush out of the office to help him. Wrestling the two MASKED MEN as best they can.

One of the AID WORKERS is a woman...

...she receives a HARD PUNCH in the face.

And Leyraud stops struggling. The MASKED MEN throw him into the trunk. And the car SCREECHES away into the dark night.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEIRUT - VARIOUS - DAY

The next day, the whole city is on alert. SYRIAN PATROLS roar through the streets. SYRIAN SOLDIERS checking IDs. Long lines of cars extend in both directions from various CHECKPOINTS...

...at the U.N. HEADQUARTERS, we observe a flurry of movement.

INT. U.N. COMMAND CENTER - BEIRUT - DAY

PHONES ARE RINGING inside. U.N. STAFFERS and SOLDIERS racing about delivering messages while the TELEVISION shows Leyraud on the screen...

...we find Picco on the phone, yelling at someone:

PICCO

Jerome Leyraud. He's a French aid worker. It's the first kidnapping in two years.

Nielsen taps Picco on the shoulder...

...and Picco turns to see AMIR ZAMANIA standing next to the major. He wears a suit with no tie. Picco quickly hangs up.

PICCO

(into phone)

Get back to me as soon as you can.

NIELSEN

Mr. Picco, I believe you know Amir Zamania, Iran's ambassador here in Lebanon.

PICCO

Yes, of course... You were in New York before Kamal Samir, right?

ZAMANIA

I wish I was back there now.

PICCO

That makes two of us.

ZAMANIA

We have no idea who took the Frenchman. Or why. It jeopardizes everything we're trying to achieve.

PICCO

Who's in charge?

ZAMANIA

What...?

PICCO

Who's in charge? And I don't mean on some high political level. Who's in charge out there on the ground?

ZAMANIA

We're trying to work that out.

PICCO

I'll tell you something: Whoever *is* in charge is *weak*. To let something like this happen within a few hours of McCarthy being released? They're weak! And I want you to tell them I said that! Will you tell them?

(Zamania nods)

And I want to meet the kidnappers. Not some representative. I want to meet these people face to face.

ZAMANIA

You'd have to go where *they* want, Mr. Picco. In the way *they* demand.

PICCO

Where.

ZAMANIA

The Iranian Embassy.

PICCO

I've just *come* from the Iranian Embassy!

ZAMANIA

The embassy here. In Beirut.

Picco hesitates, glancing at Nielsen...

...the major shakes his head: *Don't do it*.

PICCO

They asked me to go to Damascus. I went to Damascus. They asked me to go to Beirut. I went to Beirut...

(pause)

...I'll go wherever they ask me to.

ZAMANIA

I will contact you.

Zamania turns to leave, but Picco calls out:

PICCO

Today, Mr. Zamania... This *must* be handled today.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEIRUT - LEBANON - NIGHT

Night has fallen on Beirut and the streets are eerily quiet.

NIELSEN (V.O.)
Let me come with you.

PICCO (V.O.)
They said I have to go alone.

INT. U.N. COMMAND CENTER - BEIRUT - NIGHT

We find Picco anxiously emptying his pockets, placing his WALLET and WEDDING RING in a small box held by Nielsen...

...the major stares at Picco with real dread in his eyes.

NIELSEN
Nobody goes out alone at night in
Beirut. Will you take my gun?

PICCO
(shakes his head)
I wouldn't even know how to use it.

NIELSEN
How about a radio?

PICCO
No.

NIELSEN
You're aware of what happened to
the last man who tried this.

PICCO
Terry Waite was a British citizen,
he had value. I am from the U.N. I
have no value.

He says this more to convince himself...

...a CAR HONKS below. Picco steels his nerves.

PICCO
If I'm not back before dawn, call
the secretary-general. This is his
home number.

Picco gives Nielsen a PIECE OF PAPER with a number. Then, he
opens his CARRY-ON and gathers the FRAMED PHOTO OF GIACOMO...

...he can't part with it. So he removes the PHOTO from its frame and tucks it into his LEATHER FOLDER. He's ready now and he gives Nielsen a reassuring nod.

Nielsen brushes a PIECE OF FLUFF off Picco's DOUBLE-BREASTED BLAZER. Straightens his tie. Like a parent sending their son off for the first day of school.

PICCO
I'm going to be late, mother.

Nielsen shoots him a look. Picco smiles nervously.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.N. HEADQUARTERS - BEIRUT - NIGHT

An ARMORED MERCEDES with tinted glass windows is sitting out front. Picco approaches it cautiously. Nielsen watching...

...two ARMED GUARDS are waiting. One of them opens the door.

Picco glances back at Nielsen, then climbs into the car. The guards shut the door and the car drives away, down the hill.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. ARMORED MERCEDES - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Through Picco's eyes, we get our first encounter with Beirut at night. He glimpses scattered MILITIAS roaming the streets and back alleys, rifles in hand...

...the car is traveling dangerously fast. Speeding through CHECKPOINTS whose gates always seem to miraculously open at the very last moment.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - BEIRUT - NIGHT

The ARMORED MERCEDES barely slows down as it reaches a walled compound in the middle of Beirut. A former house converted to a government workspace...

...the IRON GATES swing open just in time and the Mercedes grounds to a sudden halt in the courtyard. Picco gets out, eyes flitting about.

CUT TO:

INT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - BEIRUT - NIGHT

An Iranian EMBASSY STAFFER escorts Picco through the corridor on the second floor. The lights are low. People gaze at Picco around doorways and down halls.

CUT TO:

INT. EMBASSY SITTING ROOM - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco waits alone in a sparsely-decorated sitting room. An untouched plate of FRUIT and COOKIES in front of him. Picco checks his watch...

...all of a sudden, Zamania strides into the room.

ZAMANIA

They're ready to meet with you.

PICCO

I'm here, where are they?

ZAMANIA

There will be a few *inconveniences* for which I apologize in advance.

PICCO

Are you staying?

ZAMANIA

No. I don't know these people. This is between you and them.

(pause)

It's been an honor to know you.

And with that, Zamania walks back out the door...

...leaving Picco alone once more. He resumes his seat.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMBASSY SITTING ROOM - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco is standing now. Inspecting a rug hanging on a wall. He seems to have been waiting for some time. Halfway into one of the BANANAS from the plate...

...a SIDE DOOR opens. And Picco whirls around. But it's only the same EMBASSY STAFFER we saw before. He doesn't see Picco at first, busy retrieving the plate of food.

He freezes when he sees Picco by the wall...

EMBASSY STAFFER
You still here? Go. Go now.

PICCO
But --

EMBASSY STAFFER
Nothing more for you to do here.

PICCO
Mr. Zamania asked me to wait. Can I
speak to Mr. Zamania?

EMBASSY STAFFER
You finished here. Go. Go.

...he takes the HALF-EATEN BANANA right out of Picco's hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco returns to the courtyard. Stopping in his tracks when
he sees that the ARMORED MERCEDES is gone. He looks back...

...the EMBASSY STAFFER is watching him from the doorway.

EMBASSY STAFFER
Go! Finished here! Finish! Finish!

He closes the door. Picco hears it lock...

...then looks towards the IRON GATES. An ARMED GUARD opens
one of the gates. Beckoning him. Picco reluctantly obliges.

AT THE IRON GATES: PICCO

stops by the guard, peering out into the dark streets. The
guard smiles to himself. Picco sets his face and walks out
the gate...

...and the dark night swallows him whole.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco wanders the murky streets of Beirut, carrying only his
LEATHER FOLDER. In the glow of the occasional STREETLIGHT...

...finally, Picco spots a SHADOWY FIGURE standing on a street corner in the distance. The figure doesn't move. And seems to be staring at Picco.

Picco takes a nervous breath...

...then begins to walk towards the man.

Almost immediately, the SHADOWY FIGURE turns and walks away from him. Picco stops. Watching. The SHADOWY FIGURE pauses.

Picco decides to follow. And the SHADOWY FIGURE leads on.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco is now trailing the SHADOWY FIGURE through the dark, deserted streets. About fifty yards behind. Picco sees the man disappear around a street corner...

...but when Picco gets there, the SHADOWY FIGURE is gone.

And now Picco's all alone. Completely lost. Somewhere in the southern Shiite quarter of Beirut. He looks around anxiously but sees nobody.

We hear the SOUND OF HIS BREATH...

...panting harder as his fear swells.

All of a sudden, a DARK BLUE SEDAN screeches around a corner and barrels towards Picco. Blinding him in its HEADLIGHTS...

...it stops just a few yards away. Picco can see nothing. He hears a CAR DOOR open. And he instinctively turns his back so as not to see any faces.

Two MASKED MEN snatch Picco roughly...

...hurling him into the backseat of the car.

Shoving his face down onto the floor. Picco glimpses two sets of RADIO EQUIPMENT on either side of the car. Hi-tech panels.

He also notices two more MASKED MEN sitting in the front of the car. And a fifth MASKED MAN in the back seat with a gun.

MASKED MAN #1
Don't look! Don't look!

The DRIVER kills the HEADLIGHTS and spirits them all away.

INT./EXT. DARK BLUE SEDAN - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco lays on the floor of the back seat, his head under one of the MASKED MEN's shoes. All he can see is the worn carpet beneath him. *He is petrified...*

...the car slows down and speeds up alternatively. Passing through SYRIAN CHECKPOINTS. The MASKED MEN keep Picco down.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEYWAY - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Finally, the DARK BLUE SEDAN pulls up in a quiet alley next to a WHITE STATION WAGON. Both BACK DOORS are flung open and Picco's ushered from one to the other...

MASKED MAN #1

Head down!

...he does as he's told, his hands trembling. As soon as he hits the floor of the WHITE STATION WAGON, it hurtles away.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. WHITE STATION WAGON - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco suffers another wild ride through town. The old wagon swerving around corners while brutally BRAKING and SPEEDING down the barren streets...

...he's getting increasingly disoriented and a little woozy, but then all of a sudden, the WHITE STATION WAGON deadhalts.

Before releasing him, one of the MASKED MEN abruptly covers Picco's head with a BLACK COTTON HOOD. Picco can see nothing now which only adds to his terror.

EXT. APARTMENT - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Six MASKED MEN are waiting outside a seemingly abandoned three story apartment. They grab Picco and haul him out of the car like a sack of beans...

...one of the men seizes Picco's hand and places it firmly on the shoulder of another MASKED MAN so that he can follow as they lead him toward the apartment.

Picco stumbles a little as they pass through a large ditch.

INT. APARTMENT - BEIRUT - NIGHT

INSIDE THE HOOD: PICCO

is virtually blind. Fiercely shuffled about by the six MASKED MEN inside the apartment. He can only catch glimpses of their shoes through the bottom of his hood...

MASKED MAN #1 (O.S.)

Stairs.

...and now Picco's climbing three flights of stairs. Trying not to fall over. At the top of the stairs, he hears a DOOR OPEN. And then he's pushed inside.

INT. WHITE ROOM - BEIRUT - NIGHT

We're still inside the hood with Picco as the six MASKED MEN sit him down on a WOODEN CHAIR. One of them removes the hood and Picco gets his first look at...

...the "white room" -- an L-shaped kitchen/living room. The windows and walls of this room are draped in anonymous WHITE SHEETS. No recognizable features of any kind.

Picco's on a chair facing a couch which is also covered in WHITE SHEETS. A COFFEE TABLE offers a small BOWL OF FRUIT.

He can hear several WHISPERING VOICES and the HANDLING OF GUNS behind him. And about every five seconds, he hears a BEEP. Presumably, some type of SCANNING DEVICE.

MASKED MAN #1

Don't turn around. If you turn around, you'll be killed.

(Picco nods)

Now we have to search you.

Two MASKED MEN inspect Picco's SHOES and BLAZER and WATCH while two more look through his LEATHER FOLDER and examine his BALLPOINT PEN. Another two frisk him...

...finally, everything's returned and Picco redresses. Still not daring to look behind him. Waiting quietly on the chair.

A SIDE DOOR OPENS SUDDENLY.

TWO MEN WEARING SKI MASKS ENTER.

One of them sits on the couch opposite Picco. The other one stands next to him. Like a bodyguard. Carrying an AK-47...

...for several moments, nobody speaks. Picco examines what he can of the man on the couch. The sharp, shrewd eyes. The full lips. The clipped fingernails.

We shall come to know this man as ABDULLAH.

ABDULLAH

Who sends you? Is it the secretary-general? Or the Security Council?

PICCO

The secretary-general.

ABDULLAH

This meeting is only taking place because the secretary-general is a man of honor. We accept you as his emissary because you have proven in the past that you understand us.

Picco frantically scribbles notes as Abdullah talks...

...after this last sentence, he writes five QUESTION MARKS.

ABDULLAH

The kidnapping of the Frenchman had nothing to do with us. The ones who took him were a splinter group...

(pause)

...they will be punished.

PICCO

It's my wish that nobody be harmed during these proceedings.

ABDULLAH

(pause)

We were ready to release a second hostage to you. But now that will have to be delayed.

PICCO

Why?

ABDULLAH

They might kill the Frenchman.

PICCO

If what you say is true, then all of Hizbollah is being blackmailed by a few renegades.

Abdullah doesn't like the sound of that...

...but Picco doesn't let up, going for the jugular.

PICCO

Do you realize what that says about you? It says you're weak. It says you have no control over anything.

ABDULLAH

Do not patronize me, Mr. Picco.

PICCO

Your credibility is *my* credibility, you understand? I must leave with a hostage tonight.

Abdullah just stares right through him.

ABDULLAH

Hundreds of our Lebanese brothers are living and dying illegally in Israeli prisons every day.

PICCO

No... I'm not bringing Israel into this. This is *not* about them, this is about the Dawa Seventeen.

ABDULLAH

Now it's about *this*. If the Western governments want any more hostages, they must make Israel release every Lebanese prisoner from their filthy jails.

PICCO

But the Americans can't tell the Israelis what to do anymore than they could the Kuwaitis.

ABDULLAH

America arms Israel and supports it financially. So for us, America and Israel are the same Great Satan.

(pause)

Coke?

PICCO

Excuse me?

ABDULLAH

Would you like a can of Coke?

Picco stares at him, then nods gratefully...

...immediately, another MASKED MEN delivers a CAN OF COKE.

ABDULLAH

In a show of our goodwill, we will now bring out a hostage for you to see.

PICCO

I have no interest in seeing any hostage unless he can go with me.

ABDULLAH

That will not be possible.

PICCO

Then I'd have to be able to promise him that he'll be free by tomorrow.

ABDULLAH

I told you, a release would risk the life of the Frenchman.

PICCO

In that case, I don't want to see him at all.

Abdullah considers this carefully and stands...

...vanishing behind Picco to talk with his comrades. Finally, Abdullah returns and resumes his seat on the covered couch.

ABDULLAH

We have agreed to release a hostage tomorrow. Would you like to see him now?

PICCO

Please.

Abdullah gives a nod to his BODYGUARD...

...who opens the SIDE DOOR and beckons someone.

Two more MASKED MEN usher in a HOSTAGE wearing a light blue TRACKSUIT with a white stripe across it. His face is like a zombie. His white hair fraying.

Picco recognizes the HOSTAGE and shakes his hand, smiling.

PICCO

Mr. Tracy, I'm Gianni Picco of the United Nations. I'm so glad to see you. You will soon be free.

The HOSTAGE stares at Picco, confused...

HOSTAGE
I'm not Mr. Tracy.

...for a moment, Picco doesn't know what to say. Then, CALLS OF ALARM begin to ring out amongst the flustered kidnappers.

MASKED MAN #1
This is a trick!

PICCO
Wait, no --

MASKED MAN #1
Picco's tricked us! He tricked us!

PICCO
No, this man is Tracy! I swear it!

HOSTAGE
I am not Mr. Tracy. My name is...

The HOSTAGE babbles something incoherent...

...while Abdullah urgently questions his men. Picco realizes this bizarre situation is spiralling rapidly out of control.

PICCO
Look, trust me. I've seen his picture. This *is* Edward Tracy.
(to the HOSTAGE)
You're going to be freed.

HOSTAGE
You mean, I have to leave here?

PICCO
Don't you want to?

HOSTAGE
Do you know what cordon bleu is?

PICCO
Yes, Mr. Tracy. I do.

HOSTAGE
They give me three cordon bleu meals a day here.
(whispers)
And I don't even pay for them.

Everyone stares at the HOSTAGE, bewildered...

...the HOSTAGE starts to cry, sinking to his knees. Picco catches him as he falls. Holding him as the HOSTAGE sobs.

Abdullah gives his men a nod and they pull the HOSTAGE off Picco and escort him back out of the room. Picco's visibly affected, watching him go.

PICCO
You'll be released tomorrow, Mr.
Tracy. I'll see you then.

The two MASKED MEN lead the hostage, EDWARD TRACY, back out the SIDE DOOR. And Picco sighs with overwhelming relief...

...now Abdullah approaches him with the BLACK COTTON HOOD.

ABDULLAH
Do not ask us to trust you. We are
not fools.

PICCO
Thank you, Mr...

ABDULLAH
You may refer to me as Abdullah.

Picco nods, he's ready. And Abdullah slips on the hood.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - BEIRUT - NIGHT

The BLACKNESS lifts as the hood is removed...

...and Picco finds himself back outside the IRON GATES of the Iranian Embassy. Behind him, the DARK BLUE SEDAN speeds away.

Picco is quite shocked to be here. Holding his LEATHER FOLDER in his shivering hands. Alive and unharmed. A bewildered grin plays across his weary face.

Zamania hurries through the IRON GATES as they open for him.

PICCO
You said they'd meet me at the
Iranian embassy.

ZAMANIA
(smiles)
All of Beirut is Iran's embassy.

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. CAFETERIA - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Major Nielsen pours Picco a SODA at the bar in the cafeteria of the U.N. HEADQUARTERS. The glass quivers in Picco's hands and Nielsen offers him a BOTTLE OF SCOTCH...

...but Picco just shakes his head, *no thanks*. Nielsen returns the bottle, noticing some U.N. SOLDIERS peering in at Picco.

He shoos them away with a look while Picco opens his LEATHER FOLDER, going over his notes. Only now does he remember the PHOTO OF GIACOMO tucked in the folds...

...but to his horror, *it's gone*.

Picco stares in shock. Searching the LEATHER FOLDER. Almost ripping it to pieces. Frantic. Desperate. Nielsen watches.

NIELSEN
What's wrong?

PICCO
My son... They took the photo of my
son... They *took* it... Oh, God...
(pause)
They know what Giacomo looks like.

Nielsen feels the panic in Picco's heart...

...and Picco just stands there, utterly frozen.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED HOTEL - BEIRUT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: THE PHOTO OF GIACOMO

in Abdullah's hand. Though we don't see Abdullah's face, we realize he's standing in an old HOTEL BATHROOM somewhere...

...a MASKED GUNMAN approaches and gives him a nod.

Abdullah pockets the PHOTO OF GIACOMO in his jacket and draws a 9mm PISTOL. He then follows the MASKED GUNMEN out the door, down some corridors and stairways.

ANGLE ON: FIVE MASKED GUNMEN

waiting for him outside a door...

...he nods and they SMASH through it.

INT. HOTEL GUEST ROOM - BEIRUT - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: THREE YOUNG LEBANESE MEN

eating dinner at a table in the abandoned hotel room. Their masks are off. Their guns by their sides. *One of them is no older than Giacomo...*

...they are taken by complete surprise as ABDULLAH'S GUNMEN stream inside, pinning them in a line up against the wall.

ANGLE ON: ABDULLAH

climbing through the BROKEN DOOR. He stares solemnly at each of the three scared YOUNG LEBANESE MEN, then he turns to the body writhing on the floor nearby...

...it's Jerome Leyraud. BOUND and GAGGED. Terrified.

Abdullah returns to the three YOUNG LEBANESE MEN struggling in vain against the wall. He sighs at them disappointedly...

...then quickly draws his PISTOL. BANG! BANG! BANG!

ANGLE ON: JEROME LEYRAUD

watching the three bodies fall, eyes wide...

...now Abdullah crouches beside Leyraud. Gazing into those frightened eyes. He draws a knife. Holding it menacingly.

Then he swiftly SLASHES Leyraud's bindings...

...and Leyraud removes his gag, gasping for air.

ABDULLAH
(subtitled, French)
Go, mister. Get out of here now.

Leyraud looks up at Abdullah and the others...

...then he scrambles to his feet and darts outside.

EXT. ABANDONED HOTEL - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Leyraud stumbles as he runs away from the abandoned hotel in the growing light of dawn. Faster and faster. Unstopping...

...until the FIRST RAYS OF THE NEW SUN finally envelope him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PASSENGER PLANE - SKIES - DAY

A Lufthansa PASSENGER PLANE graces the Middle Eastern skies.

INT. PASSENGER PLANE - SKIES - DAY

Picco's in Business Class. Surrounded by work papers. Making a call with his CREDIT CARD from the AIR PHONE in his seat...

...the call goes through and Picco waits for it to pick up.

GIACOMO'S VOICE

Hi, dad...

PICCO

How'd you know it was me?

GIACOMO'S VOICE

Who else is gonna call me at five o'clock in the morning?

PICCO

Sorry, did I wake you? I wanted to catch you before school.

GIACOMO'S VOICE

It's Saturday.

PICCO

Sorry, I'm flying from Frankfurt --

GIACOMO'S VOICE

What're you doing in Frankfurt?

PICCO

There's no direct flights between Syria and Israel. I had to...

(stops himself)

Look, Giacomo. If you see anyone or anything unusual... Anything out of the ordinary, I... Just be careful.

GIACOMO'S VOICE

Dad? I'm going back to sleep.

PICCO

All right. All right. I love you.

He hears Giacomo mutter something and then HANG UP.

CUT TO:

A LIVE SATELLITE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST

As the CAMERA PUSHES IN ON: ISRAEL. A rectangular piece of land smaller than New Jersey with a huge shark bite out of its side...

SUPER: *August 21st, 1991*

...as the CAMERA PUSHES CLOSER, we see the capital, Tel Aviv, rushing up towards us now. Finally, the CAMERA FINDS a GRAND HOTEL by the Mediterranean Sea.

PICCO (V.O.)
Gentlemen. What is the single most important tool we negotiators use?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - ISRAEL - DAY

We find Picco in a hotel room overlooking the sea. He's in deep discussions with an ISRAELI LAWYER and Israel's DEPUTY CHIEF of Military Intelligence...

...a plain-clothed BODYGUARD stands by the door, a SURV KIT mike in his ear. And a PISTOL tucked under his suit jacket.

Picco's currently making an important point:

PICCO
Credibility. The ability to deliver what we promise. Credibility has a currency all of its own. Deeds, not words. People, not institutions. If you want a seat at this table, you must prove credible.

The two men stare at Picco, unable to counter...

...a GRUFF VOICE from the door counters for them:

LUBRANI (O.S.)
That the kind of Voltairean crap they teach at the U.N. these days?

Picco turns to see URI LUBRANI in the doorway, showing his STATE SECURITY I.D. to the BODYGUARD as he grins at Picco.

Lubrani is a tough and wily negotiator. Sixty-four. Built like a triangle. Trousers. Shirt. No jacket. A kippah. And never a tie if he can help it...

...he wears a small HANDGUN tucked behind his large waist.

He crosses the room and joins the group, dumping a disheveled BUNDLE OF PAPERS on the coffee table and pouring an ICE TEA.

LUBRANI

So you're the lunatic who went one on one with our "friends" over the border...

(pause)

...and came back with two hostages.

PICCO

I'm Gianni Picco.

LUBRANI

Know who I am?

PICCO

Uri Lubrani.

LUBRANI

Know what I do?

PICCO

You were the Israeli Ambassador in Iran before the revolution. And you ran Operation Moses to get the Jews out of Ethiopia in 1984. You're now Israel's chief expert on Hizbollah and Iran. And...

LUBRANI

And?

PICCO

You're allergic to ties.

Lubrani stares at him hard...

LUBRANI

You know, keeping intelligence files on people isn't very nice.

PICCO

I'm sure you have your own files.

LUBRANI

I don't work for the United Nations.

PICCO

We're always hiring.

...a moment, then Lubrani breaks into a smile.

He takes a seat beside Picco, his large frame deliberately blocking out the other two Israelis who can do nothing...

...watching Lubrani share various MOSSAD FILES with Picco.

LUBRANI

I want information on six Israeli MIAs. Two were lost in a battle in June 1982. Three were captured the same year in a different operation.

(pause)

Most important is Ron Arad. He was a pilot. Shot down over Lebanon in 1986. We believe Ron's still alive.

PICCO

You think Hizbollah can deliver all this to you?

LUBRANI

We know they can. And they have to do it before we release one single prisoner.

PICCO

Before?

LUBRANI

If these people think the ball's in our court, then we have a problem.

We see the blood drain from Picco's face...

PICCO

They made the first move by giving me two hostages. You must see that it's *your* turn now.

LUBRANI

The hostages weren't Israelis. Had nothing to do with us... Don't let a room full of terrorists lead you down the garden path, Mr. Picco.

PICCO

If you don't reciprocate, they just might *shoot* the remaining hostages.

LUBRANI

I'm open to suggestions. But I have my orders. I'm sure you understand.

...and unfortunately, Picco does. He thinks fast.

Picco turns to his notes, doing some rapid calculations.

PICCO
If I can get information on two of
the six MIAs, will you release some
of the prisoners?

LUBRANI
How many is some?

PICCO
(pause)
One hundred.

LUBRANI
Sixty.

PICCO
Ninety.

LUBRANI
Seventy.

PICCO
Eighty.

LUBRANI
Seventy to eighty. Highest offer.

The two men eyeball each other. Then Picco nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - SYRIA - DAY

We're back at the Iranian Embassy in Damascus now. Just down
the road from U.N. HEADQUARTERS. Bjornsson waits out front.

SUPER: *9th September, 1991*

INT. EMBASSY CORRIDORS - SYRIA - DAY

Inside, Picco patiently appeals to a busy EMBASSY STAFFER.

EMBASSY STAFFER
The Ambassador's very busy today,
perhaps you should try coming back
tomorrow.

PICCO
I can't come back tomorrow --

EMBASSY STAFFER
There is nothing I can do.

PICCO
Look, my boss -- the secretary-general of the United Nations -- is meeting with the President of Iran in less than...

(checks his watch)
...forty-eight hours now. At that meeting, he's going to personally ask President Rafsanjani for help in releasing the other hostages.

The EMBASSY STAFFER quickly signs some forms...

...he's only half-listening, but Picco persists:

PICCO
But he can't do that until Israel releases seventy to eighty Lebanese prisoners. But Israel won't do that without information on two of their soldiers still missing in Lebanon.

The EMBASSY STAFFER says something to an aide...

...and Picco waits impatiently until they're done.

PICCO
Now *your* boss promised me he'd get that information from Hizbollah to me *today* so that I could get across the border to the Israelis. Show it to them. Get them to release those prisoners. Then get *back* across the border and fly from here to Iran in time for the meeting so that we can release the rest of the hostages.

EMBASSY STAFFER
(looks up)
I apologize, are you talking to me?

CUT TO:

INT. AKHTARI'S OFFICE - SYRIA - NIGHT

It's night as Picco's finally led into Akhtari's office. The big mullah rises from his desk as if he's immune to time.

SUPER: *Forty hours until the meeting.*

Conversely, Picco is all too aware of his looming deadline.

AKHTARI

I'm so sorry for the delay.

PICCO

May I have the information, Sir?

AKHTARI

There have been some complications.

PICCO

Whatever it is, I'm sure --

AKHTARI

The two Israelis you seek are dead.

(pause)

They have been for many years. But their bodies have been preserved.

PICCO

When can I get the material?

AKHTARI

As soon as I receive it.

Picco just stares at him. Akhtari smiles obliviously.

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - DAY

Picco and Bjornsson stare at the PHONE on Bjornsson's desk at the local U.N. HEADQUARTERS. Both men are sweating profusely, a DESK FAN blows cool air on them...

SUPER: *Twenty-three hours until the meeting.*

...finally, Picco stands and begins to pace the room. Gazing out the side windows at the IRANIAN EMBASSY two houses down.

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - NIGHT

Night has fallen once more and Picco and Bjornsson are *still* waiting by the phone. Bjornsson has fallen asleep. SNORING.

SUPER: *Fifteen hours until the meeting.*

All of a sudden, the PHONE finally rings...

...and Picco dives for it, knocking Bjornsson off his seat.

PICCO
(into phone)
This is Picco.

INT. AKHTARI'S OFFICE - SYRIA - NIGHT

Akhtari's on the other end, in his office. Staring out a SIDE WINDOW at the U.N. HEADQUARTERS. *He can see Picco inside...*

AKHTARI
(into phone)
You look hungry. Have you eaten?

...through the window, we see Picco turn and look at Akhtari.

INT. U.N. HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - NIGHT

Bjornsson helps himself up as Picco gazes at Akhtari.

PICCO
(into phone)
Can I have the material now?

AKHTARI
You should eat. Why don't you come over here and have dinner with me?

PICCO
Mr. Ambassador, I actually have something *else* to do right now.

INT. AKHTARI'S OFFICE - SYRIA - NIGHT

Akhtari scoffs, genuinely uninterested in Picco's deadline.

AKHTARI
(into phone)
Yes, but we must have a nice dinner before your important achievement.

PICCO
I thought it had already been achieved, Sir.

AKHTARI
There's been a slight complication.

And even from here, we can see Picco start to lose it...

INT. U.N. HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - NIGHT

...he barely keeps his frustration in check.

PICCO
(into phone)
How slight?

AKHTARI
Be patient. The material will
arrive here shortly.

PICCO
Where's the material coming from?

AKHTARI
The airport.

PICCO
Then you and I should go there to
receive it, don't you think?

AKHTARI
That might be a good idea...

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING LOT - SYRIA - NIGHT

The scene at the airport parking lot just off the runway is surreal. AKHTARI'S MERCEDES waits in the middle. An Iranian SECURITY CAR parked in front...

...while Picco and Bjornsson wait thirty yards behind in a white U.N. JEEP. Two U.N. SOLDIERS sit vigilantly in back.

FIFTY SYRIAN SOLDIERS form a protective ring around everyone, their AK-47s in their hands and the Iranians in their eyes...

...we notice Colonel Fawzil, the Syrian Intelligence officer with the off-colored suits, among these troops. Sunglasses on even though it's late at night.

SUPER: *Twelve hours until the meeting.*

ANGLE ON: PICCO

in the U.N. JEEP. He checks his watch for the hundredth time, glances at Bjornsson, then climbs out. Everybody watching...

...as he strides across the parking lot to the MERCEDES.

IN THE MERCEDES: AKHTARI

smiles at Picco as an IRANIAN SECURITY GUARD lets him inside.

PICCO

May I ask what the delay is now?

AKHTARI

Our courier has been detained in the terminal by the Syrians.

PICCO

Perhaps I could go retrieve the material from him?

AKHTARI

The information is locked inside a briefcase. The briefcase is chained to the courier's wrist.

He shrugs helplessly. Picco stares at him, then gets out.

ANGLE ON: PICCO

returning to the U.N. JEEP. Glaring at Colonel Fawzil who actually seems to be smiling back at him, *enjoying this...*

...and Picco just stops. And storms over to the Colonel.

PICCO

You said you'd help me.

COLONEL FAWZIL

I said you had to ask.

PICCO

(pause)

Can you please help me, Colonel?

Fawzil stares at him, then struts off towards the terminal.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING LOT - SYRIA - NIGHT

Picco's back in his U.N. JEEP, still waiting...

SUPER: *Six hours before the meeting.*

...finally, Picco spots Colonel Fawzil approaching through the empty parking lot with the IRANIAN COURIER who's got a BRIEFCASE chained to his wrist.

ANGLE ON: PICCO

diving out of the U.N. JEEP. Racing up to AKHTARI'S MERCEDES as the ambassador is helped out. He produces a key to unlock the courier's BRIEFCASE...

...inside are two FILE FOLDERS which he gives to Picco.

With no desk to work on, Picco drops to the ground. Spreading the information out so he can compare it with a CHECKLIST the Israelis have given him...

...after several moments, he looks up at Akhtari in horror:

PICCO

Ambassador, this's not enough. I'm missing details on the second body.

AKHTARI

I tried to warn you.

PICCO

What do we do now?

AKHTARI

I suggest we both go get a good night's sleep.

Picco can't believe his ears.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT - GOLAN HEIGHTS - NIGHT

The Israeli/Syrian border stands on the Golan Heights above the Jewish State. We see LARGE SIGNS in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. Lots of BARBED WIRE FENCING...

...and ARMED SOLDIERS manning the gates on both sides. One of the Syrian BORDER GUARDS sees the WHITE U.N. JEEP racing up.

ANGLE ON: PICCO

in the jeep with the two FILE FOLDERS. Bjornsson drives fast.

BJORNSSON

You know, nobody's crossed this border at night since 1967.

Picco glances at him, *didn't need to know that.*

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT - GOLAN HEIGHTS - NIGHT

The WHITE U.N. JEEP passes through the SYRIAN GATE and moves onto the ISRAELI GATE. An Israeli BORDER GUARD stops them...

BORDER GUARD
Is this the car that was supposed
to be here at eleven-fifteen last
night?

PICCO
Yes, Sir.

BORDER GUARD
I'll have to make some calls.

...and he returns inside his hut before Picco can object.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORWARD OUTPOST - ISRAEL - NIGHT

The WHITE U.N. JEEP screeches up outside a SMALL CHALET about a mile in from the border. The chalet has been SANDBAGGED and armed with MACHINE GUNS...

...this is a forward military outpost for the Israeli Defence Force. Lubrani's out front. Picco gives him the two FOLDERS.

PICCO
I did the best I could but it's not
all there. I'm sorry.

LUBRANI
Let's go talk to the rabbi.

And Picco quickly follows Lubrani inside.

CUT TO:

INT. FORWARD OUTPOST - ISRAEL - NIGHT

Picco sips a CUP OF COFFEE inside the outpost, watching an old RABBI examine the documents in the two FILE FOLDERS...

SUPER: *Four hours until the meeting.*

...at long last, the RABBI says something to Lubrani who says something back as if checking. The RABBI nods concretely. And Lubrani approaches Picco.

He hesitates a moment, leaving Picco hanging...

LUBRANI

The information on the first body is good. The second one's sketchy but good enough to make the I.D.

PICCO

What can you give me?

LUBRANI

(pause)

Fifty-one live prisoners and nine bodies. If the information had been complete...

PICCO

Thank you, Uri. Thank you.

...a look between them, then Picco's out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT - GOLAN HEIGHTS - NIGHT

Back through the border checkpoint, back into Syria. Picco hurtles along in the WHITE U.N. JEEP. An eye on his watch.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRANIAN PRIVATE PLANE - SYRIA - NIGHT

An Iranian PRIVATE PLANE sits on the runway back in Damascus as the WHITE U.N. JEEP drops off Picco. He climbs aboard...

INT. IRANIAN PRIVATE PLANE - SYRIA - NIGHT

...the IRANIAN PILOT is waiting for him inside the door. We notice a PISTOL tucked discreetly in a holster by his seat.

PICCO

Let's take off as soon as possible.

PILOT

Yes, Sir. As soon as the Syrians give us permission.

Picco stares at him, *of course*.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - IRAN - DAY

A BLACK SEDAN delivers Picco to the Presidential Palace.

SUPER: *One minute to the meeting.*

INT. PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - IRAN - DAY

Picco quick-walks awkwardly down a palace corridor, carrying his LEATHER FOLDER. A BEVY OF ARMED SOLDIERS quick-walk with him, trying to keep up.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR (V.O.)
I must congratulate you. Iran seems
to have stabilized remarkably since
the early days of the revolution.

INT. RAFSANJANI'S OFFICE - IRAN - DAY

Rafsanjani and Perez de Cuellar are waiting as patiently as they can in the president's office. Samir sits between them, translating Rafsanjani's response:

SAMIR
(translating)
Revolutions make the work of the
U.N. more difficult, don't they?

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
If revolutions solely meant justice
and development, then I would be in
favor of them every day.

President Rafsanjani and Perez de Cuellar square off...

...the tension broken by the SOUND OF DOORS OPENING. Everyone turns as Picco's led through the DOUBLE DOORS while trying to regain his breath.

Samir shoots him a look, tapping his watch. Picco just glares back, *don't start with me*. He gives his boss a SLIP OF PAPER.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Mr. President, I'm happy to be able
to inform you that, thanks to your
help, fifty-one Lebanese prisoners
have just been released by Israel,
as well as nine bodies.

Samir translates for Rafsanjani...

...who then replies, glancing at Picco.

SAMIR

(translating)

We simply received a lead from Mr. Picco. And we followed it.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR

All of the Lebanese prisoners in Israel could be released if only Ron Arad could have been found.

SAMIR

(translating)

We will talk to the Syrians, that is all we can do.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR

Thank you, Sir. And in this spirit of international cooperation, I'd like to personally call upon your continued help in the release of the remaining nine Western hostages in Lebanon --

Rafsanjani cuts the secretary-general off...

...and Samir has to quickly switch languages:

SAMIR

(translating)

There's something I must have to satisfy those in my government.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR

And what is that?

SAMIR

Paragraph Six of U.N. Resolution 598. "To explore the question of entrusting an impartial body with inquiring into responsibility for the war between Iran and Iraq".

PICCO

You want us to say Saddam Hussein started the Iran-Iraq war?

SAMIR

He *did* start it.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR

Paragraph Six? That's all you want?

SAMIR
You give us Paragraph Six, we'll
give you the remaining hostages.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL - BEIRUT - DAY

A WHITE U.N. JEEP drives Picco to a "one star" hotel near the U.N. HEADQUARTERS. A BROKEN NEON SIGN reads: "HOTEL BEIRUT".

SUPER: *September 21st, 1991*

As Picco heads inside the hotel, he notices a LEBANESE FATHER holding his THREE YEAR OLD SON on his shoulders as they walk down the battle-scarred street...

...the boy is LAUGHING as his father tickles his belly. Picco grins at a distant memory. But too soon, his grin fades away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BEIRUT - DAY

Picco UNLOCKS the door to a shabby room in the hotel. He lugs his SUITCASE onto the bed. *Something heavy inside there...*

ZAMANIA (V.O.)
We've picked up some hostile noise
on the street about you. It seems,
not everybody's happy to free more
hostages.

...as he opens his SUITCASE, we see Picco's LEATHER FOLDER and two CONCRETE BRICKS. Picco takes the folder. Locks the SUITCASE. And leaves the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - BEIRUT - NIGHT

It's another dark night in Beirut. Zamania stands with Picco at the IRON GATES to the Iranian Embassy, staring out at the poorly-lit streets.

ZAMANIA
Don't get picked up by the wrong
people.

Picco glances at Zamania, then walks off into the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRWAY - BEIRUT - NIGHT

BLACKNESS. Urgent movement. People hustling. Curt whispers in Arabic. FOOTSTEPS climbing stairs. *We're under the hood again with Gianni Picco.*

INT. CORRIDOR - BEIRUT - NIGHT

A MASKED MAN yanks the hood off Picco's head. He finds that he's in a narrow corridor with two small chairs facing each other. Abdullah's sitting opposite...

...we recognize his eyes and his all too weary voice.

ABDULLAH
We were told eighty people would be released. Eighty *alive*. You cheated us, Picco. You --

PICCO
Abdullah, I... Sorry, I have to go.

ABDULLAH
Go? Go where?

Picco shrugs helplessly. And Abdullah suddenly realizes.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Abdullah paces outside a small bathroom while Picco does his thing. The BATHROOM DOOR has been deliberately left ajar...

...the two men talking through the door with each other:

PICCO
The deal was seventy to eighty *if* Israel got all the information on the two bodies.

ABDULLAH
Which they did.

PICCO
No. The information on the second body was incomplete.

ABDULLAH
I'm sorry, I was not aware of this.

PICCO
I need to know that you'll send the
rest of that information tomorrow.

ABDULLAH
Trust me, Picco. It shall be done.

Picco finally comes to the door now...

PICCO
How can I trust a man who's keeping
a photograph of my son?

ABDULLAH
How can I trust a man if I'm not?

...and they just stare at each other, stand-off.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco and Abdullah are back in their chairs in the corridor,
looking worn-out. They've been negotiating for several hours.

PICCO
No, I want *two* hostages this time.

ABDULLAH
You only get one.

PICCO
We have to move faster. For your
own safety as well as mine.

ABDULLAH
Our lives are in the hands of the
mighty Allah. Nothing can prevent
His will.

PICCO
Don't you think it's His will that
these men return to their families?

ABDULLAH
Of course. That's why you're here.

PICCO
Then for God's sake, help me!

ABDULLAH
You have to work harder.

PICCO
No, *you* have to work harder.

ABDULLAH
I want twenty Lebanese prisoners.

PICCO
In exchange for?

ABDULLAH
The rest of the information on the second body.

PICCO
Twenty's a big number.

ABDULLAH
My people need to be satisfied.

PICCO
The most I can get you is ten.

ABDULLAH
There is no deal unless we can get twenty.

PICCO
Ten's not so bad. The median point between zero and twenty isn't ten, because ten is much further from zero than twenty. So if I were to give you ten, it'd mean more than fifty percent of twenty.

Abdullah stares at Picco's poker face...

...we can see in his eyes, Abdullah's impressed.

ABDULLAH
Which hostage would you want?

PICCO
Don't ask me that.

ABDULLAH
Which hostage?

PICCO
I want them altogether.

ABDULLAH
If you do not name a hostage, you will not receive a hostage.

PICCO
I'm not going to play God with the
lives of these men -- *I want them
altogether.*

Stand-off. Neither of them speak...

...then Abdullah rises from his chair.

ABDULLAH
It's time for you to go home.

PICCO
I'm not going anywhere without a
hostage.

ABDULLAH
Do you know what you just said to
me? I offered you to go home, and
you want to stay? Should this not
be the other way around?

Both men look at each other a moment...

...then share an EXHAUSTED LAUGH together.

PICCO
Can I have my hostage now?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - BEIRUT - DAWN

A MERCEDES pulls up next to a JEEP in the pre-dawn light...

...two MASKED MEN shove Picco out of the MERCEDES into the
back of the JEEP. Picco's shocked to see a HOSTAGE in here
with him.

It's JACKIE MANN. A seventy-seven year old retired British
fighter pilot. Bent over with his head between his knees.

Picco reaches out tentatively and touches Mann's shoulder.

PICCO
Jackie Mann? I'm Gianni Picco from
the United Nations.

JACKIE MANN
Picco...

He whispers the name like a mantra over and over...

...his head still bowed tightly between his knees.

PICCO

I'm here to tell you, you're going to be taken to Damascus and turned over by the Syrians to the British ambassador. You're going *home*.

JACKIE MANN

Is...is this true?

PICCO

Yes. You're free.

We hear Mann gasp and start to cry.

JACKIE MANN

I...I have to inform my wife.

PICCO

She'll be informed in plenty of time, I assure you.

JACKIE MANN

Oh, my God!

PICCO

What? What is it?

JACKIE MANN

I don't have the keys to my apartment!

PICCO

Don't worry, we have your keys.

And now Mann's entire body is shaking with emotion...

...then ever-so-slowly, he reaches out and touches Picco's arm. Gripping it repeatedly as if to check that he's real.

PICCO

You can lift your head, if you like.

JACKIE MANN

But they haven't given the order.

PICCO

Just keep your eyes closed. Don't look at the driver. It's alright.

Mann carefully lifts his tear-stained face...

...bringing his hands up to feel Picco's face.

JACKIE MANN

This is really real? You're not one of them. You're not fooling me.

PICCO

I'm one of you, Jackie...

(pause)

...and as of today, you are free.

Jackie Mann begins to crumble, overwhelmed by those three simple words. Picco gazes at him, unable to speak...

...then suddenly, the MASKED MEN haul Picco back out of the JEEP and back into the MERCEDES. Picco glimpses the jeep as it roars off down the street.

CUT TO:

INT. FOREIGN MINISTRY LOBBY - SYRIA - DAY

CAMERAS FLASH, blinding Jackie Mann who's now dressed in a suit and shaved and in the arms of his trembling WIFE...

SUPER: *September 25th, 1991*

...they're gathered in the bland lobby of the Syrian Foreign Ministry building. Colonel Fawzil hugs Jackie Mann, grinning for the INTERNATIONAL MEDIA.

Mann glances sideways at Fawzil, *no idea who the hell he is.*

AKHTARI (V.O.)

Iran is not a dangerous country. We have had our share of war. Violence is *always* a last resort.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARKET - DAMASCUS - DAY

Picco is walking through a crowded outdoor market in Damascus with Ambassador Akhtari. A POSSE OF ARMED BODYGUARDS follows.

AKHTARI

And yet somehow we are considered to be a terrorist state, a country in turmoil, repressed and backward.

Akhtari buys some LARGE DATES from a STREET VENDOR...

...the VENDOR glances at the ARMED BODYGUARDS and gives the dates to him for free. Akhtari just thinks he's being nice.

AKHTARI

You understand, Mr. Picco, all we want is a place on the world stage.

PICCO

The world stage is very small, Mr. Ambassador. Room for only a few.

Akhtari offers Picco a date...

...but Picco politely declines.

AKHTARI

You should know that Iran paid a very high political price for the release of Jackie Mann.

PICCO

The United Nations and the British government are eternally grateful.

AKHTARI

And the Americans, I should hope.

PICCO

Naturally.

AKHTARI

Goodwill begets goodwill, yes?

PICCO

You have my word on that, Sir.

AKHTARI

Of course, the more hostages that are released, the greater becomes the danger for you.

PICCO

Yes, I'm aware of that.

AKHTARI

Sooner or later, they might kidnap you to guarantee their safety.

PICCO

They might... But I can't very well stop now, can I?

Akhtari studies Picco cautiously...

...impressed by his calm under pressure.

AKHTARI

You know who can help you? Colonel Khaddafi. He has influence over the kidnapers.

PICCO

Colonel Khaddafi?

AKHTARI

Yes, you must go to Libya and see him. You can probably work things out in two or three days. Date?

PICCO

What? No. Thank you, Sir. I...

(pause)

...look, I don't have two or three days to go to Libya. I'm already --

AKHTARI

You should go on Saturday. Khaddafi is expecting you then.

PICCO

He's expecting me? Who told him to expect me?

AKHTARI

In the meantime, I shall find the remaining information on the second Israeli body.

Picco is staggered, finding this all hard to comprehend.

PICCO

Can't I just send him a message?

AKHTARI

A message would never be accepted.

PICCO

Why do I need to see Khaddafi? What possible reason is there for that?

AKHTARI

(thinks)

Have you ever heard the story of the scorpion and the crocodile?

PICCO

No.

AKHTARI

A scorpion wanted to cross the Nile and asked a crocodile for help. The crocodile refused: "Do you think me mad? You could sting me." But the scorpion insisted: "If I were to sting you, I would drown." So the crocodile decided this made sense and took the scorpion on his back and about halfway across the river the scorpion *stung* the crocodile. And as the two of them sank under the water, the crocodile said: "You fool. Now we both will die. For what reason did you do that?" And the scorpion replied: "There is no reason. This is the Middle East."

Picco stares blankly. Akhtari offers him another date.

CUT TO:

A LIVE SATELLITE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST

We see Libya now to the west of Egypt. A large rectangular-shaped land. Larger than Iran. The capital, Tripoli, sits on the Mediterranean Sea...

...as the CAMERA PUSHES CLOSER, we see the vast sands of the Sahara reaching to infinity. And Tripoli built on the coast.

SUPER: *October 18th, 1991*

Finally, the CAMERA FINDS a LEAR JET landing at the airport.

EXT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - LIBYA - DAY

The plane comes to a stop on the tarmac, five hundred yards from the terminal. There are no other planes in sight. None taking off and none landing.

ANGLE ON: PICCO

emerging from the LEAR JET as the STAIRWAY is extended...

...he climbs down onto the tarmac with his LEATHER FOLDER and looks around at the airport. *There are no people in sight.* No ground crews. No maintenance workers. Nobody.

He spots the CONTROL TOWER and sees through the large windows that there are not even any air traffic controllers in there.

Picco glances back at the LEAR JET PILOT who just shrugs in his window, then sees something. Picco follows his eyes and sees a small BLACK SPECK in the shimmering distance...

...as the speck approaches, it takes the SHAPE OF A MAN.

Picco waits by his plane, afraid to move too far. Watching as this man walks closer and closer. He wears a suit and no tie.

Finally, the man reaches Picco...

...extending his hand with a smile.

CHIEF OF PROTOCOL
Hello, Mr. Picco. I am Colonel
Khaddafi's Chief of Protocol.
(looking about)
Where is your luggage?

PICCO
I'll only be staying a few hours.

To this, the CHIEF OF PROTOCOL just smiles.

CHIEF OF PROTOCOL
This way, please.

He turns and walks back towards the distant terminal...

...for several moments Picco doesn't move. Glancing again at the LEAR JET PILOT. And then he begins to follow the Libyan.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LIBYA - DAY

Picco's now in a large hotel room in downtown Tripoli. He's angrily going over his notes at a table when the DOOR OPENS suddenly. Picco rises respectfully...

...surprised to find the Libyan FOREIGN MINISTER entering the room. This man wears a military uniform. A GUN on his waist.

PICCO
Where's Colonel Khaddafi? I've been
waiting three hours --

FOREIGN MINISTER
The Colonel is out of country. I am
the Foreign Minister.

Picco stares at the man, incensed...

...then he begins to pack up his LEATHER FOLDER.

PICCO

I didn't ask for this meeting, but
I came because I was told it would
help me free more hostages.

FOREIGN MINISTER

Hostages? What hostages?

PICCO

(pause)

The Western hostages in Lebanon.

FOREIGN MINISTER

Libya has no relations with those
people.

Picco's floored by this...

PICCO

Then why am I here? Why did I have
to violate a U.S. embargo to fly in
here? Can you tell me that?

FOREIGN MINISTER

We were hoping you could tell us.

(pause)

Let me do some work on this and we
shall meet again tomorrow.

PICCO

I won't be here tomorrow.

FOREIGN MINISTER

Why not?

PICCO

Because I'm leaving *now*.

FOREIGN MINISTER

I need a few days to do this.

PICCO

I appreciate that, Mr. Minister,
but the people I'm trying to help
are in bad shape. And for them, a
few days is a very long time. Give
my regards to the Colonel.

...and with that, Picco brushes past him and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING LOT - SYRIA - NIGHT

We can see the LEAR JET in the background as Picco crosses the airport parking lot in Damascus. Akhtari's waiting here beside his MERCEDES...

...he smiles at Picco, but Picco doesn't return it.

PICCO

You have the remaining information
on the second Israeli body?

AKHTARI

We've had some complications.

PICCO

(exploding)

What do you think? You think I'm
playing? You think I'm doing all
this for fun? These men are good
men. Innocent men. *With families
who miss them.* You treat them like
a packet of pistachios!

(no reply)

If I don't get that information by
dawn today, I'm going to call the
secretary-general and I'm going to
tell him to spread the news that
the U.N.'s been asking Iran for
something *vital* to the release of
the hostages -- something Iran had
promised more than a month ago --
something simple and doable that's
deliberately being delayed. Do you
understand what I'm telling you?

Akhtari just glares at Picco coldly.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - ISRAEL - DAY

Picco returns to the hotel by the sea in Tel Aviv. An ARMED
GUARD letting him in. He delivers a FILE FOLDER to Lubrani.

PICCO

(re: the folder)

That's everything on the second
body. Looks complete to me.

Lubrani barely even looks at the material...

...and only now does Picco notice how worried he looks.

PICCO
What's wrong?

LUBRANI
I can offer you fifteen Lebanese
prisoners, including two women.

PICCO
Fifteen? What happened to ten?

Before Lubrani can reply, an Israeli MILITARY OFFICER steps
out of a side room along with several DEFENSE OFFICIALS...

...the officer approaches Picco. This is GENERAL EHUD BARAK.

GENERAL BARAK
General Ehud Barak, Chief of Staff.

PICCO
An honor to meet you, General.

GENERAL BARAK
Why has there been no movement on
Ron Arad?

PICCO
Nobody knows where he is.

GENERAL BARAK
We believe the Iranians *do* know and
they're not telling us. And we want
him found before the United Nations
gives Iran Paragraph Six.

PICCO
What if you're wrong? We all know
Mossad's a superb organization but
it's not God... What if I present
this to the Iranians and they say
go to hell?

GENERAL BARAK
(smiles)
I'm told the great Gianni Picco can
make anyone agree to anything.

Picco glances at Lubrani...

...he just shrugs helplessly.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco stands on the street corner in Beirut where we last saw him picked up. Holding his LEATHER FOLDER. Staring at nothing as he ponders this latest development...

...he hears a car approaching and routinely turns his face away from it. A CAR DOOR OPENS. And then he hears a voice:

ABDULLAH (O.S.)
Get in the car.

Picco turns around, surprised...

...there's Abdullah in the back seat.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. DARK BLUE SEDAN - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco and Abdullah share the back seat as two MASKED MEN speed the old car through the dark streets of Beirut...

...the men are agitated and afraid, eyes out the windows.

PICCO
What's happening?

ABDULLAH
They're looking for you. They're looking for me, too.

PICCO
Who's looking --

ABDULLAH
The Syrians! The whole intelligence force is out! They're very angry at you!

PICCO
Why? What'd I do?

ABDULLAH
They know I'm going to release the next hostage directly to you.

PICCO
Me? No. Please. The Syrians won't accept being upstaged. They could shut down my whole operation.

ABDULLAH
The decision has already been made.

PICCO
But why? Why defy the Syrians?

ABDULLAH
Look about, Picco! We are *occupied*!
It's time the Syrians were taught a
lesson.

Picco and Abdullah stare hard at each other...

...and Picco can tell he's not going to win this one.

PICCO
Israel agreed to release fifteen
prisoners for the information on
the second body.

ABDULLAH
Fifteen is good.

PICCO
It's very good.

ABDULLAH
Thank you for going to Libya.

PICCO
That was *your* idea?

ABDULLAH
I had to prove to my people that we
could trust you. That you would do
anything we asked...
(pause)
...you didn't fail me, Picco.

Picco's astonished by this...

ABDULLAH
I wonder if this will be our last
meeting.

...and now Abdullah does something unexpected. Reaching over
and tightly gripping Picco's hand. Picco looks at Abdullah.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - BEIRUT - NIGHT

ABDULLAH'S CAR pulls up next to the WHITE STATION WAGON we've
seen before. DOORS OPEN on both cars. Picco goes to leave...

...but Abdullah's still holding his hand.

Abdullah realizes this and lets go. And his car speeds off as a HOSTAGE is pushed out of the back of the STATION WAGON...

...this is JESSE TURNER, a former university professor.

The STATION WAGON tears away, abandoning the two men in the deserted alleyway. Picco looks across at Turner who's still bent over with his head on his knees.

PICCO
Professor Turner?

JESSE TURNER
Jesse Turner. I'm Jesse Turner.

PICCO
Gianni Picco from the U.N. You've
just been released.

Turner's trembling now and smiling...

...he dares to look around for the first time.

JESSE TURNER
I'm glad you know where we are,
because I don't.

Picco nods reassuringly, then looks about nervously. *He's got no idea where the hell they are.* He quickly leads Turner off.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco and Turner. On foot. Navigating the labyrinth of Beirut in the middle of the night. Picco looks like he knows the way now, but they're still in a dangerous place...

...there are no cars on the street. No people in the windows. No SYRIAN SOLDIERS anywhere. Picco doesn't let Turner rest.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.N. HEADQUARTERS - BEIRUT - NIGHT

They finally reach the U.N. HEADQUARTERS where the soldiers let them both in. Staring at Jesse Turner like he's a ghost.

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. COMMAND CENTER - BEIRUT - NIGHT

U.N. MEDICS tend to Jesse Turner as Major Nielsen bursts into the room, finding Picco already making preparations to leave.

NIELSEN
Where the hell have you been?

PICCO
Major, do you know who this is?

NIELSEN
Well, I can guess if he's with you.

PICCO
The Syrians are looking for him.

NIELSEN
If they find out he's here, they'll storm the building.

PICCO
Then we best find *them* first.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.N. JEEP - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco and Nielsen race through Beirut in a WHITE U.N. JEEP which bears a ubiquitous U.N. FLAG. Picco wears a U.N. CAP.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - BEIRUT - NIGHT

Picco now waits with Nielsen in a deserted town square. All of a sudden, no less than TWENTY ARMY VEHICLES converge upon them from all different directions...

...their HEADLIGHTS blind the two men. Dozens of angry SYRIAN SOLDIERS take deadly aim at them with dozens of MACHINE GUNS.

Nielsen reaches for his pistol...

...but Picco gives him a look, *don't*.

SYRIAN OFFICER
Are you Mr. Picco?

Picco nods, trying to keep his fear in check...

...the SYRIAN OFFICER approaches with a scowl on his face.

SYRIAN OFFICER
Where is the hostage?

PICCO
I need to see some identification.

SYRIAN OFFICER
Mr. Picco, you cannot ask for our
identification.

PICCO
I want to know who I'm giving this
hostage to. Name and rank, please.

SYRIAN OFFICER
Who do you think you are?

PICCO
I want to speak to the officer in
charge.

The SYRIAN OFFICER stares at him...

...then looks back at the headlights. Out of the glare steps
Colonel Fawzil. He's wearing another sadly off-colored suit.

One look at him and Picco knows...

...this guy is utterly fucking livid.

PICCO
Colonel, I don't mean to deprive
you of your prize --

COLONEL FAWZIL
Where is he?

NIELSEN
You have to tell him, Mr. Picco.

PICCO
Do I have your word you'll take him
to the American Embassy tomorrow?

COLONEL FAWZIL
I will take him to Damascus, to my
superiors.

PICCO
He's supposed to be delivered to
his embassy.

COLONEL FAWZIL
I have no instructions to answer
such questions.

PICCO
You want me to wait here while you
get those instructions?

COLONEL FAWZIL
(pause)
Very well. He'll be taken to the
American Embassy.

PICCO
I have your word as an officer?

COLONEL FAWZIL
Nothing will happen to Professor
Turner. We are here to help him.

A long beat of eye contact between the two...
...the colonel unreadable behind his sunglasses.

CUT TO:

INT. FOREIGN MINISTRY LOBBY - SYRIA - DAY

NEWS CAMERAS FLASH at the Syrian Foreign Ministry...

SUPER: *October 22nd, 1991*

...we see Jesse Turner. Showered and shaved. Colonel Fawzil.
And the AMERICAN AMBASSADOR. All mugging for the cameras.

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. COMMAND CENTER - BEIRUT - DAY

A TELEVISION replays the release in the U.N. Headquarters in
Beirut. Nielsen stares at Picco who's going over his notes at
a nearby table.

Picco's hands are shaking visibly and he can't write...

NIELSEN
You need a break.

...and Picco just looks up at him, too exhausted to argue.

CUT TO:

EXT. PICCO'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - NIGHT

We're back in New York now. Picco's apartment building rising against the MANHATTAN SKYLINE. Lights dance across the river.

INT. PICCO'S KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - NIGHT

Picco and his son have plopped down on opposite ends of the couch, watching the end of a movie late at night. A bowl of POPCORN CRUMBS between them...

...as the CREDITS ROLL, Picco switches off the TELEVISION and glances over at his son. Giacomo simply gets up to go to bed.

PICCO

Thanks for coming over. I really needed to see you.

GIACOMO

(pause)

Were you in any danger?

PICCO

No.

GIACOMO

Would you tell me if you were?

PICCO

(smiles)

No.

GIACOMO

Are you going back there?

PICCO

(pause)

Let's wait and see, shall we?

Giacomo says nothing, standing there...

...as Picco rises and kisses his forehead.

PICCO

See you in the morning. I have to be in at eight so --

GIACOMO

I don't want you going back there.

Picco stops and turns to look at his son...

...the young boy clearly feels ashamed for saying this.

PICCO

There are still seven hostages.

GIACOMO

Why can't they send somebody else's dad? Why does it have to be *you*?

PICCO

The kidnappers trust me. I have credibility with them now. Jack, most of these hostages are fathers just like me. And they have sons just like you --

GIACOMO

No. *Their* fathers didn't *choose* to be gone this long.

Giacomo hurries into his room. Picco watches him go.

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. CORRIDOR - NEW YORK - DAY

Judith is making some COFFEE outside Picco's office. Dayal, the Chief of Staff, is in the middle of yelling at her...

DAYAL

Where's Picco?

JUDITH

I told you, Sir. I don't know.

DAYAL

Judith, I'm the Chief of Staff. I'm supposed to know every little thing that goes on here.

JUDITH

Mr. P never tells me where he goes.

DAYAL

But you make his reservations!

JUDITH

Which he routinely changes when he reaches the airport. Honestly, Mr. Dayal, I have no idea where he is.

...just now, the ELEVATOR DOORS open down the hall.

And in walks Picco. And Judith gives *him* the coffee...

JUDITH
Morning, Mr. P. What a surprise.

PICCO
Good morning, Judith.
(to Dayal)
You look a little flushed this morning.

...and he heads into his office. Dayal glares at Judith.

INT. PICCO'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - DAY

Samir is waiting for Picco in his office. He looks grim.

PICCO
Sorry, I'm late. What's the news?

SAMIR
You can't go back to Beirut.

PICCO
Is it something specific?

SAMIR
A fatwa calling for your death.

PICCO
(pause)
How real is it?

SAMIR
It's you and Salman Rushdie.

Picco stares at him, wondering what to do.

CUT TO:

EXT. U.N. GARDENS - NEW YORK - DUSK

Picco walks through the U.N. gardens, joining the secretary-general who's having a quiet drink of wine by himself...

...we notice THREE U.N. REPORTS on the bench next to him.

PICCO
You heard about the death threat?

Perez de Cuellar just nods...

...gazing up at the U.N. BUILDINGS.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Gianni, I'm leaving the U.N.

PICCO
(shocked)
Leaving...?

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
I tried to negotiate a peace in the Gulf. I failed. Therefore, it seems I must resign.

PICCO
I'm sorry... I didn't know. I've been gone awhile.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
It's all right... I have until the end of the year. Maybe I can still stop the civil war in El Salvador, I don't know.

PICCO
Who'll be replacing you?

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Boutros Ghali, he's Egyptian. Very smart man. Very qualified.

PICCO
You think he'll let me continue to operate as I have been?

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
No.

PICCO
But the hostages...

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
We must get them out before I go.

PICCO
But that's less than two months, I can't possibly...

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
(smiles)
Who said diplomacy was easy?

Perez de Cuellar has some more wine...

...then he gives Picco the three U.N. REPORTS.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
This just came in. It's the report
on Paragraph Six.

PICCO
What does it say?

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
What everyone already knows. That
Saddam started the Iran-Iraq war.

PICCO
The Iranians will want this.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Hide them. For now. It's the only
leverage we have left.

PICCO
I don't think I can get any more
hostages out.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
Don't think you can? Or don't *want*
to think you can?

PICCO
I don't want Giacomo to grow up
without a father.

Perez de Cuellar considers this a moment.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
When I was a young man, my father
told me that if I wanted never to
work a day in my life, I should do
what I liked most. I did. And in
fifty-one years, you know what I
learned? Governments don't fail.
History doesn't kill. Religion
doesn't rape women. And purity of
blood doesn't destroy buildings.
Only *individuals* do these things.
And because of that, *individuals*
are the source of every solution.
(pause)
I'll support whatever decision you
make. But if I was you, I wouldn't
go back either.

CUT TO:

INT. PICCO'S APARTMENT - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - NIGHT

Picco hides the THREE U.N. REPORTS in a book shelf in his apartment. He then pours himself a GLASS OF RED WINE...

...but decides against it, tossing the wine down the sink.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - ROOSEVELT ISLAND - DAY

Picco jogs through a small park on Roosevelt Island early in the morning. Pushing himself hard, punishing the dirt track.

CUT TO:

INT. GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco has lunch with Perez de Cuellar and the Ambassador to El Salvador in an exclusive New York gentlemen's club...

...as they talk, Picco's eyes drift aside to a BIG SCREEN TV which is broadcasting a twenty-four hour CABLE NEWS CHANNEL, the NEWS ANCHOR on screen.

Though Picco can't hear what he's saying, the ON SCREEN LOGO beside him shows a MAP OF LEBANON. And the word: "HOSTAGES".

Picco rises from his table, unnoticed by the others...

...walking with increasing pace towards the BIG SCREEN TV.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON TELEVISION)

...released two more hostages in Lebanon today. British envoy and former negotiator, Terry Waite, who was held in captivity for almost five years. And American university dean, Thomas Sutherland, who was held for six years. A statement released by the kidnappers said that one hostage was released for the work done by U.N. diplomat and negotiator, Gianni Picco. And the other hostage was released for the work he has yet to do.

Picco stares at the screen, stunned.

CUT TO:

INT. PICCO'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Picco's back at his desk. Speaking into the phone as he gazes out the windows at the TWINKLING LIGHTS of Roosevelt Island.

PICCO
 (into phone)
 No... No, I can't go back... It's
 just impossible now, I can't say
 anymore than that...
 (pause)
 ...I know. I'm sorry.

Whoever's on the other end HANGS UP...

...and Picco just stares out the windows.

GIACOMO (O.S.)
 So this is your office, huh.

Picco whirls around to see Giacomo in the doorway, a set of VISITOR TAGS on his neck. Looking in at his father's office from the threshold...

...initially, Picco's face fills with welcome surprise. But surprise swiftly turns to anger as he rises from his desk.

PICCO
 How did you get in here?

GIACOMO
 Relax, dad. I'm not a terrorist.

PICCO
 How did you get in?

GIACOMO
 I got a little lost on the tour.

PICCO
 Judith!

Judith appears behind Giacomo...

JUDITH
 He's your son, Mr. P. He wanted to
 see you.

GIACOMO
 Can I come in?

...his father stares at him, then nods.

Judith smiles to herself and returns to her desk outside as Giacomo hesitantly enters Picco's office, looking around...

PICCO
I usually have a photo of you on my desk...

...an awkward silence between them.

GIACOMO
I saw the news. Two more hostages.
(Picco nods)
How many left now?

PICCO
Five.

GIACOMO
Who's going to get them out?

PICCO
The Swiss are working on something but... I really don't know.

Giacomo studies his father, considering this.

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. CORRIDOR - NEW YORK - NIGHT

The ELEVATOR DOORS open and Giacomo steps inside. Touches a BUTTON. Glancing at Picco as the ELEVATOR DOORS close...

...he catches the doors suddenly, staring at his father.

GIACOMO
Would you go back there again if it weren't for me?

PICCO
Giacomo, I... Don't ask me that.

GIACOMO
But these hostages, these five men are never gonna go free unless you go back.
(Picco nods)
Then you should go. You *have* to go.

Picco stares back at his son, a proud smile on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. PICCO'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Picco rushes back into his office with Judith on his heels, madly scribbling down notes. He grabs his LEATHER FOLDER...

PICCO

I have to get on the next plane to Damascus. Don't go through the U.N. travel office and don't tell Dayal, don't tell anyone.

JUDITH

What about the secretary-general?

PICCO

Don't tell him either. Use one of my credit cards for the plane but don't book a hotel.

JUDITH

Mr. P, you're scaring me.

PICCO

Tell the families of the hostages that I'll contact them when I know there's going to be a release...

(pause)

...tell them I'll call and say that I'm inviting them for coffee.

...he gives her a reassuring smile, then he's out the door.

CUT TO:

A LIVE SATELLITE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST

The CAMERA RUSHES in now on Syria and its capital, Damascus, quickly finding an AIRPORT TAXI navigating the city streets.

SUPER: *November 30th, 1991*

INT./EXT. AIRPORT TAXI - SYRIA - NIGHT

Picco stares at the LOCALS passing by his window outside.

AKHTARI (V.O.)

Thank you for returning. I did not expect you would.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - SYRIA - NIGHT

The AIRPORT TAXI deposits Picco outside the Iranian Embassy, two doors down from the U.N. COMPLEX. Picco gazes at the U.N. SOLDIERS, then enters the Iranian Embassy alone.

AKHTARI (V.O.)
I think everything can be resolved
now with one last meeting.

CUT TO:

INT. AKHTARI'S OFFICE - SYRIA - NIGHT

Picco and Akhtari sit in the Ambassador's office. Akhtari's uncharacteristically nervous. A fact not lost on Picco...

AKHTARI
The people holding the hostages no longer trust Iran. But you? You've displayed what they call "the heart of a lion".

PICCO
I'm not going to Beirut.

AKHTARI
They're expecting you in Beirut.

PICCO
They may say I have the heart of a lion but I don't have the skin of a metal tank.

AKHTARI
They have assured me that you will have "bulletproof" security.

PICCO
I'm not going, Mr. Ambassador. They can meet *me* this time.

AKHTARI
Where?

PICCO
Anywhere but Beirut. You'll need a few days to sort this out. I'll be in Damascus until Friday.

...and with that, Picco rises and leaves the office.

INT. IRANIAN EMBASSY - SYRIA - NIGHT

Picco heads downstairs, passing the few EMBASSY STAFFERS on night duty. As he reaches the FRONT DOOR, a voice calls...

AKHTARI (O.S.)
They've agreed to meet you halfway.

...he turns to see Akhtari, out of breath.

PICCO
Halfway?

AKHTARI
Outside Damascus. A driver is waiting for you in the garage.

PICCO
Here? They've got a driver here?

AKHTARI
No more complications.

PICCO
Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

AKHTARI
I've never run so fast in all my life...

The two men share an unlikely smile.

CUT TO:

INT. EMBASSY GARAGE - SYRIA - NIGHT

A DRIVER in a SKI MASK is waiting for Picco in the garage by a RED SEDAN. The door open. *Picco sees a gun in his belt...*

...he hesitates, glancing at Akhtari who's next to him.

AKHTARI
With the help of God, we can work miracles.

PICCO
Let's hope God is watching.

With that, Picco climbs into the car. Akhtari watches it go.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. RED SEDAN - SYRIA - NIGHT

Picco lies face down in the back of the car as it drives him somewhere. The DRIVER says nothing the entire journey...

...the car twists and turns for several minutes. The yellow lights of the city are soon replaced by the silver light of the FULL MOON.

EXT. FIELD - SYRIA - NIGHT

The car stops abruptly. But Picco doesn't move. The DRIVER climbs out of the car. Opens Picco's door. Barking at him:

DRIVER

Get out.

Picco looks up tentatively...

...all he can see is a FIELD OF TALL GRASS.

He crawls out of the car and looks around him.

There are no houses. No apartments. No place of any kind to hold negotiations. *Just endless fields of tall, wavy grass.*

Panic starts to grip Picco like a vice...

...as the DRIVER steps up behind him:

DRIVER

Walk.

PICCO

Where?

DRIVER

Just walk.

The DRIVER prods Picco forward...

...and they walk out into the field.

PICCO

I want to see Abdullah. He's expecting me.

(no reply)

The U.N. knows I'm here.

DRIVER

Nobody knows you're here.

PICCO
My secretary... She knows... She's
waiting to hear from me...

DRIVER
Keep walking.

PICCO
Please... Don't do this... I have a
son... He's worried about me...

DRIVER
Stop here.

Picco does as he's told, his breath shortening...

...they're literally in the middle of nowhere now. Far from
the road. Far from anyone who might see or hear anything.

Picco keeps his eyes forward, not daring to look back.

DRIVER
Now take off your clothes.

PICCO
No... No, please...

DRIVER
Your clothes.

Picco hears the unmistakable CLICK-CLACK of a pistol...

...and he begins to take off his BLAZER. His hands trembling
violently. Tears in his eyes. *Only moments left to live now.*

He lets his BLAZER fall to the grass...

...and now he begins to unbutton his SHIRT.

WHACK! Something hits Picco in the back of the head. He gasps
with fear. *Until he realizes he's not dead.* Feeling about...

...the DRIVER has slapped a BASEBALL CAP on Picco's head.

Now the DRIVER picks up PICCO'S BLAZER and gives him a dark
blue WINDBREAKER to wear. As well as some old SUNGLASSES.

DRIVER
Put these on.
(Picco hesitates)
Abdullah is waiting for you.

Picco just stares at the DRIVER in shock...

...then he quickly dons the WINDBREAKER. The SUNGLASSES have been painted black on the inside. Picco has trouble seeing as the DRIVER leads him back to the car.

He helps Picco into the back seat...

...and Picco once again goes to lie down.

DRIVER

No. Sit up. Do exactly what I tell you. For everybody's sake.

Picco nods and sits. And the DRIVER starts the car.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. RED SEDAN - SYRIA - NIGHT

Picco rides in the back of the RED SEDAN. Trying to glimpse what he can out of the sides of the painted SUNGLASSES...

...the fields turn to farms, then the farms turn to houses.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT - SYRIA/LEBANON - NIGHT

SYRIAN SOLDIERS man a checkpoint not found on any map. It's on the edge of a small village that straddles the border...

...they see the RED SEDAN approaching, HEADLIGHTS dimmed.

INSIDE THE CAR: THE DRIVER

removes his SKI MASK, though we don't see his face.

DRIVER

(to Picco)

Sit still and don't turn your head no matter what happens.

Picco goes perfectly still, trying to stay calm.

OUTSIDE THE CAR: SYRIAN SOLDIERS

swarm suspiciously. Talking to the driver. One soldier shines a FLASHLIGHT at Picco through the dark glass of the car...

...he doesn't dare even flinch, staring straight ahead. From the outside, Picco looks like some kind of VIP. The kind who passes through this kind of checkpoint all the time.

INSIDE THE CAR: PICCO

feels the FLASHLIGHT on him and he's terrified...

...finally, the FLASHLIGHT clicks off and the SYRIAN SOLDIERS peel away from the car. The CHECKPOINT GATE swings up and the car passes through.

Picco breathes relief, the DRIVER grins.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LEBANON - NIGHT

The RED SEDAN now stops in front of an apartment building in the border town. The DRIVER helps Picco step out of the car.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT STAIRS - LEBANON - NIGHT

Up five flights of stairs now, the DRIVER guiding Picco.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - LEBANON - NIGHT

Down a corridor. Up to a door. Picco glimpses a WELCOME MAT in front of the apartment door. An Italian word embroidered upon it: "*Salve!*"

The DRIVER knocks on the door and it opens immediately...

INT. APARTMENT - LEBANON - NIGHT

...several MASKED MEN grab Picco and haul him across a large room stripped of its furniture. In fact, all of the furniture has been piled to one side. Hidden under a WHITE SHEET.

More WHITE SHEETS drape over the windows and walls. A small table and two chairs in the middle. The MASKED MEN sit Picco down here...

...and Abdullah removes Picco's SUNGLASSES.

ABDULLAH

Why did you doubt us? You were told
we would have made it safe for you
in Beirut.

PICCO

I didn't doubt you, Abdullah. I doubted those I didn't know.

ABDULLAH

We wouldn't let anything happen to you in Beirut. No one would dare to touch you. We guarantee it.

PICCO

Guarantees are given only by God.

ABDULLAH

I had a present for you.

PICCO

A present?

ABDULLAH

We couldn't carry it here and now you will never know.

Picco wonders briefly what it was...

...then he opens up his LEATHER FOLDER.

PICCO

Thank you for releasing Waite and Sutherland.

ABDULLAH

I knew that would bring you back.

PICCO

Let's talk about the five you're still holding.

ABDULLAH

We hold the three Americans. The Germans are being held by others and we can't negotiate for them.

(pause)

Maybe the Iranians can help you.

PICCO

I'll ask them.

ABDULLAH

How many prisoners can we get for the three Americans? One hundred?

PICCO

Twenty-five.

ABDULLAH
Twenty-five is no good.

PICCO
I agree it's not good. I recommend
you ask for none. No prisoners. Not
even one.

Abdullah gazes at Picco like he's gone insane...

...but the look in Picco's eyes is utterly serious.

ABDULLAH
What are you playing at, Picco?

PICCO
The time's come for you to surprise
the Israelis by proceeding with the
release of hostages irrespective of
what they do. They *provoke* you. And
you do just what they expect you to
do.

ABDULLAH
There is no other thing we *can* do.

PICCO
You began kidnapping these men over
seven years ago. What's it done for
you?

ABDULLAH
You think I wanted this? You think
I like wearing a mask and risking
my life like this? We had no choice
because we had no other weapon.

PICCO
What do you want, Abdullah? When
you lay awake at night, thinking
about your life?
(pause)
What is it that you want?

ABDULLAH
(thinks)
A better world for my children.

PICCO
Then here's how you do it. Release
the three Americans. Not because of
what you can get out of Israel, but
because it's the right thing to do.

Abdullah's intrigued in spite of himself.

PICCO

The Koran says: "Don't punish one man for the sins of another."

ABDULLAH

You're reading scripture now?

PICCO

You'll be backed by public opinion almost certainly. This will improve the world's perception of Lebanon, so you'll be doing your country a favor. Not to mention helping the Shiite community in which you live. Because for the first time, you'll be seen in a *positive* light. That will give support to your political platform and you'll have no need to resort to force ever again.

ABDULLAH

Only the force of God will prevent us from freeing our people who are held unjustly in Israel.

PICCO

(pause)

Then you doom your children to repeat *your* mistakes.

ABDULLAH

I must have more than twenty-five.

PICCO

Twenty-five is all I can get.

ABDULLAH

Not even one or two more?

PICCO

No.

ABDULLAH

Then I won't release the Americans.

PICCO

Abdullah, you and I've come to the end of the road... There's nothing more to talk about.

Abdullah stares at him a long moment...

...then stands and walks behind him. Picco gets his breath back as he listens to several men talking in Arabic behind his chair.

There are one or two SHOUTS. Some SCUFFLING. But then more calm voices prevail. One of the men storms out of the room and then there is silence...

...finally, Abdullah returns in front of Picco.

ABDULLAH
Our negotiations are finished. We will deliver the three Americans, and expect nothing in return.

PICCO
You made a wise choice, Abdullah.

Abdullah shrugs, exhausted but relieved.

ABDULLAH
This is our last meeting. But one day I'll write you a letter. And after that, perhaps we'll meet in the next world -- if there is one.
(pause)
At that time, I shall tell you the real story of the Western hostages.

Picco clearly has no idea what that means...

...now both men stand. Abdullah takes Picco's hands and the two of them look each other in the eye for a final goodbye.

ABDULLAH
Actually, you are the only person who could be an ambassador for us.

Abdullah deliberately brushes past Picco, then peels away...

...several MASKED MEN surround Picco and begin to take him out of the apartment. As he leaves, Picco glimpses Abdullah slipping off his mask.

WE SEE THE SIDE OF HIS FACE. PART OF HIS RIGHT EYE. HIS RIGHT EAR. HIS DARK, SWEAT-STREAKED HAIR. AND THEN ABDULLAH'S GONE.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT - SYRIA/LEBANON - NIGHT

The RED SEDAN now carries Picco back through the border...

INT./EXT. RED SEDAN - SYRIA - NIGHT

...as he's driven back into Syria, Picco glances back past the checkpoint at Lebanon. A warm feeling sweeps over him.

He sits back in his seat, settling in for the ride...

...when all of a sudden, he feels something in the pocket of his WINDBREAKER. He takes it out. It's his PHOTO OF GIACOMO, *the one Abdullah's men took during his first meeting.*

Picco's overwhelmed by emotion in this moment. He holds the PHOTO to his chest. Tears trickling beneath his SUNGLASSES.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - SYRIA - DAWN

The glow of the coming dawn paints the eastern horizon as the RED SEDAN deposits Picco back amongst the field of grass. The masked DRIVER returns his BLAZER...

...and Picco gladly sheds his VIP DISGUISE. Then the DRIVER jumps back into his car and does a U-TURN, speeding back in the direction of Lebanon. Abandoning Picco there.

ANGLE ON: A BLACK SEDAN

now approaching from the other direction. A DOOR OPENS. Picco climbs into the backseat without being asked, lying face down as the BLACK SEDAN turns and heads back towards Damascus.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDOF HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - DAY

Picco eases himself out of the BLACK SEDAN outside the U.N. HEADQUARTERS, just up the street from the Iranian Embassy...

...the car tears away the very moment he's out the door. But Picco barely notices. He's just thrilled to see the blue U.N. LOGO again. Bjornsson steps outside, astonished to see him.

BJORNSSON

What the hell are you doing here?

PICCO

I need to make a phone call.

CUT TO:

INT. ANDERSON HOUSE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

A PHONE RINGS beside a double bed. We see that only one half of the bed is occupied. A LIGHT switches on. It's Madeleine, Terry Anderson's wife whom we met before...

...she grabs the phone, instantly awake as she speaks:

MADELEINE ANDERSON
(into phone)
Hello?

PICCO'S VOICE
Madeleine? It's Gianni Picco. I'm
calling from Damascus.

MADELEINE ANDERSON
Yes, Gianni...?

PICCO'S VOICE
I'm inviting you for coffee.

Upon hearing those words, Madeleine promptly faints.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - BEIRUT - DAY

Three MASKED MEN rush into the lobby of the Summerland Hotel in Beirut. Drop a large WOODEN CRATE. And hurry back out...

...several SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS -- including Colonel Fawzil -- who are hanging out in the lobby see the crate and dive for cover as if expecting it to be a bomb.

When it doesn't explode, they approach it cautiously...

...there's a PADLOCK sealing the box. Colonel Fawzil barks an order at one of his men who darts behind the hotel lobby desk and quickly returns with some BOLT CUTTERS.

He cracks open the PADLOCK and lifts the lid...

...and finds JOSEPH CICCIPPIO crumpled up inside.

SUPER: *December 2nd, 1991*

Ciccipio dares to open his eyes. Looking up at Fawzil. The Syrian Colonel smiles, then reaches down and helps him up.

CUT TO:

INT. FOREIGN MINISTRY LOBBY - SYRIA - DAY

Ciccipio is now released amid much fanfare at the Syrian Foreign Ministry. Colonel Fawzil's there to get his photo taken as much as possible.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDOF HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - DAY

Picco's on the phone to Lubrani in the U.N. HEADQUARTERS.

PICCO

(into phone)

Uri, the time's come for Israel to surprise the other side -- do what they *don't* expect you to do. And do it because it's the right thing to do.

LUBRANI'S VOICE

I want news on Ron Arad.

PICCO

I don't want news on Ron Arad, I just want him back.

Just now, Bjornsson hurries into the room...

...he grabs Picco's attention, beaming at him:

BJORNSSON

They just released Joe Ciccipio.

PICCO

(into phone)

They're releasing the Americans, I have to go.

LUBRANI'S VOICE

Twenty-five prisoners?

PICCO

Yes.

LUBRANI'S VOICE

All right, Gianni. All right.

Picco smiles to himself as they hang up.

CUT TO:

INT. FOREIGN MINISTRY LOBBY - SYRIA - DAY

Picco watches as ALANN STEEN is released now...

...he appears weak and in pain, but happy. The CAMERAS FLASH as Colonel Fawzil delivers him to the AMERICAN AMBASSADOR.

SUPER: *December 3rd, 1991*

An AMERICAN JOURNALIST does a stand-up nearby:

AMERICAN JOURNALIST

Two hostage releases in two days as former university professor, Allan Steen, is delivered to the American Ambassador. Now, everyone waits for the release of the last and perhaps best known American hostage, Terry Anderson.

As the journalist finishes his report we --

CUT TO:

INT. UNDOF HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - NIGHT

Picco and Bjornsson wait up by the phone late at night.

BJORNSSON

Nothing's going to go wrong.

PICCO

Something *always* goes wrong.

BJORNSSON

They delivered Ciccipio and Steen as they promised.

PICCO

And now Terry Anderson's all they have left. They could change their minds. They could simply decide to keep him. Or worse.

BJORNSSON

You worry too much. I'm going to bed. You should, too.

Picco just stares at the phone as Bjornsson trudges off.

CUT TO:

INT. FOREIGN MINISTRY LOBBY - SYRIA - DAY

The next morning, Syrian Foreign Ministry lobby is packed with JOURNALISTS and SOLDIERS, DIPLOMATS and FAMILIES...

SUPER: *December 4th, 1991*

...we spot MADELEINE ANDERSON with her now seven year old daughter, SALOME, who has still never met her father. The minutes pass like hours.

INT. UNDOF HEADQUARTERS - SYRIA - DAY

Picco and Bjornsson are on the phones, worried.

PICCO
(into phone)
Where's Terry Anderson...? He was supposed to be released two hours ago. What's going on?

BJORNSSON
(into phone)
We've heard nothing, what have you heard?

PICCO
(into phone)
There's snow on the road? What does that mean? There's actually snow on the road from Beirut to Damascus?

CUT TO:

INT. FOREIGN MINISTRY LOBBY - SYRIA - DUSK

The sun sets through the windows of the Foreign Ministry now and there's a grim sense of loss cloaking the journalists...

...we find the AMERICAN JOURNALIST doing another stand-up:

AMERICAN JOURNALIST
The sun is setting on Damascus and still no sign of Terry Anderson at the Syrian Foreign Ministry. Rumors are flying. Will he be released any minute? Or in a few hours? Or might he never be released at all...

CUT TO:

INT. FOREIGN MINISTRY LOBBY - SYRIA - NIGHT

It's almost midnight. A lot of JOURNALISTS and DIPLOMATS have gone home. Madeleine and her daughter continue to wait in the lobby, but their hope is fading fast...

...we find Picco rushing into the lobby, looking for them.

PICCO

Madeleine.

MADELEINE ANDERSON

What's going on? Where is he?

PICCO

I don't know...

MADELEINE ANDERSON

Oh my God... They're keeping him, aren't they? Aren't they?

PICCO

It seems a German reporter in Iran was told, incorrectly, that the two German hostages would be released with Terry. He filed his story and that made the kidnappers angry and that's why we haven't seen Terry.

MADELEINE ANDERSON

Are these people going to release my husband or not, Mr. Picco?

And Picco doesn't know what to say...

...all of a sudden, Salome shouts out:

SALOME ANDERSON

Daddy?

All eyes turn to the entrance where TERRY ANDERSON is being led inside by Colonel Fawzil and a bevy of SYRIAN SECURITY...

...there's instant bedlam in the lobby. JOURNALISTS rushing to fire up their cameras. DIPLOMATS crowding around. Salome pushes through to her father.

TERRY ANDERSON scoops up his daughter and holds her for the first time. Sobbing with relief and hope. Madeleine breaks through next. Anderson hugs and kisses her...

...and the CAMERAS record it all. A *seven year reunion*.

Picco hangs back, a content smile on his face as he watches the Anderson family. *No greater reward.* Picco turns to go.

TERRY ANDERSON (O.S.)
Mr. Picco?

Picco finds Anderson behind him...

...the whole crowd watching, silent.

TERRY ANDERSON
My God, I really want to kiss you,
Mr. Picco. You gave us hope.

PICCO
Your freedom is a victory for all.

The two men embrace, holding each other tight...

...as they part, we find Colonel Fawzil standing between them ready for the CAMERA FLASH which FREEZES FRAME and then we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DIPLOMATIC SEDAN - WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

A DIPLOMATIC SEDAN cruises down Pennsylvania Avenue. We see the lights of the domed CAPITOL BUILDING in the background.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR (V.O.)
Well, that's it.

INT. DIPLOMATIC SEDAN - WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

Picco rides comfortably in the back of the DIPLOMATIC CAR with Perez de Cuellar who's just hanging up the CAR PHONE.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
The report on Paragraph Six has
just been delivered to Iran. It
will be front-page news tomorrow.

PICCO
Expect an angry call from Israel.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
I've already received it.

PICCO
I should be in New York to calm Uri
Lubrani down.

PEREZ DE CUELLAR
But then you wouldn't receive your
medal, would you?

PICCO
Medal? What medal?

Perez de Cuellar looks at him and smiles...

EXT. DIPLOMATIC CAR - WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

...we hear his voice as their car makes a turn:

PEREZ DE CUELLAR (V.O.)
Gianni, what do you think we came
down here for?

And now we see the car in the driveway of the WHITE HOUSE.

CUT TO:

INT. SCOWCROFT'S OFFICE - WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

General Scowcroft leads Picco into his small West Wing office and shows him to a seat. Picco's now wearing the PRESIDENTIAL SPECIAL AWARD FOR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE around his neck...

...through the slightly-ajar door we can see the OVAL OFFICE and a throng of people. HOSTAGES. ADVISERS. Perez de Cuellar.

Picco notices a HUNTING RIFLE on the wall as Scowcroft sits.

SCOWCROFT
Any movement on Ron Arad?

PICCO
Unfortunately, no. But we still
have hope.

SCOWCROFT
Oh?

PICCO
President Bush's promise. Goodwill
begets goodwill... It's been three
years. The Iranians are anxious to
see all their hard work rewarded --

SCOWCROFT
Yeah, there's not going to be any
goodwill.

Picco stares at him for several moments.

PICCO

What...?

SCOWCROFT

There's no goodwill, Mr. Picco.

PICCO

But... But President Bush said --

SCOWCROFT

That was three years ago. We were prepared to reciprocate *then*.

PICCO

And now?

SCOWCROFT

Now the Iranians are conducting terrorist operations all over the world. We're also concerned about their nuclear program.

Picco is absolutely floored...

...he regroups quickly, pressing:

PICCO

I have an idea. Iran has approached a certain European company for some materials that *don't* fall under the NATO embargo on trade with Iran.

(Scowcroft sighs)

The Europeans want the green light from Washington before they make the sale and I was thinking, what if you simply ignored the sale? The Europeans could then act as a sort of conduit for the goodwill gesture to Iran. And I could tell President Rafsanjani that the White House had allowed it to happen.

SCOWCROFT

I'm sorry, Mr. Picco --

PICCO

(exploding)

Then what the hell have I been doing! *What have I been doing!*

...his voice bounces off the walls like a cannon shot.

Scowcroft just stares. Picco glances out the door at Perez de Cuellar and the others. Laughing and drinking. Celebrating.

PICCO

For three years I've told Iran that you'd reciprocate. They *trusted* me.

SCOWCROFT

And next year is an election year.

PICCO

You don't understand. Everyone saw Bush make that promise. If you go back on it now, if you break your promise...no Arab Nation will ever trust America again. Right here, right now, *in this office*, you'll chart the course of Arab/American relations for the next fifty years.

Scowcroft mulls this over briefly...

SCOWCROFT

Mr. Picco, thank you for everything you've done to get our boys home. I wish I could help.

...and with that, the meeting is over.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNITED NATIONS PLAZA - NEW YORK - DAY

The FLAGS OF THE MEMBER STATES droop lifelessly outside the U.N. PLAZA. Picco walks up the steps, carrying a BRIEFCASE.

SUPER: *January 2nd, 1992*

CUT TO:

INT. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco walks into the secretary-general's office as he's done a thousand times before. BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI is conferring with Dayal and some other staff...

BOUTROS-GHALI

This is not the men's room. You don't just walk in here.

...he glares at Picco who stops in his tracks.

Picco backs up. KNOCKS. Boutros-Ghali waves him in.

BOUTROS-GHALI
This meeting started six minutes ago. I hope this is not a habit.

PICCO
I apologize, Mr. Secretary-General.

BOUTROS-GHALI
Mr. Dayal and I've been discussing this whole hostage episode.

PICCO
Yes, there are still two Germans being held by a --

BOUTROS-GHALI
Germans... Now the Americans are all freed, I doubt there would be much political return simply for a pair of Germans.

Picco stares at Boutros-Ghali, stunned.

PICCO
The Iranians and the Germans want me to go to Syria to meet with the people holding the hostages --

DAYAL
Oh, I'm glad you brought this up, Gianni, because we're making some changes to U.N. travel policy.

PICCO
Changes?

DAYAL
From now on, all senior officials *must* obtain written approval for any travel both within and outside the United States.

PICCO
But things change so fast in the Middle East. I couldn't possibly --

DAYAL
You hand in all boarding receipts upon your return. Is that clear?

Picco glances at Boutros-Ghali's stern face...

...and he just nods obediently. Dayal grins victoriously.

BOUTROS-GHALI

But why do you have to go to Syria when they can meet with me here in New York?

PICCO

The kidnappers? Come here?

BOUTROS-GHALI

Yes, I can receive them myself.

PICCO

(pause)

They're *terrorists*, Sir. They're wanted by the FBI and Mossad and even Interpol. To get you to meet with them even in Syria would be --

BOUTROS-GHALI

I'm the secretary-general of the United Nations. I don't meet with people, they meet with *me*.

PICCO

Sir, if I may... The problem's not with Syria anyway. The problem's in Iran. America has refused to --

BOUTROS-GHALI

What's the problem?

PICCO

America's refused to reciprocate --

BOUTROS-GHALI

Whatever, it doesn't matter. Just go to Iran and fix it, will you?

CUT TO:

EXT. UNITED NATIONS PLAZA - NEW YORK - NIGHT

End of the day. UNITED NATIONS STAFFERS are filing out of the plaza. Picco's among them. One of many. Briefcase in hand...

...he pauses on the steps. Turns. And looks back at the great buildings that have been his home for so many years. And then he walks on. *Moving with a purpose.*

CUT TO:

A SATELLITE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST

THE CAMERA SWOOPS DOWN ON: IRAN. The enormous country looming up under us as we settle on the capital, Tehran...

...the CAMERA FINDS a BLACK CAR driving through the city.

INT./EXT. BLACK CAR - IRAN - DAY

Samir rides in the back of the car with Picco. Samir appears to be excited by Picco's visit. Picco's sick to his stomach.

PICCO (V.O.)
Mr. President, I come to Iran with
news of broken promises.

CUT TO:

INT. RAFSANJANI'S OFFICE - IRAN - DAY

President Rafsanjani is also uncharacteristically intrigued to hear what Picco has to say. Sitting forward on his chair across from Picco. Samir in between.

Samir hesitates to translate, shocked...

...he gets a look from Picco and complies.

Picco waits for him to finish, watching Rafsanjani's utterly confused reaction. Both men look to Picco for an explanation.

PICCO
Although the hostage operation has
been based on the assumption that a
goodwill gesture from America would
be offered, I've just been informed
by Washington that there will be no
such gesture.

SAMIR
What are you saying? I don't...

PICCO
There's no goodwill, Kamal.

SAMIR
(pause)
No... No, it can't be...

Picco stares somberly at his friend...

...and Samir sees that it's real. Rafsanjani watches the two men, bemused and curious. He doesn't speak a word of English.

SAMIR

Are you sure that you want me to translate this?

PICCO

I want you to tell the President that I have lied to him for three years.

SAMIR

Have you gone mad?

PICCO

(shakes his head)

The principal is more important to me than the consequences.

SAMIR

The consequences might mean he has you shot!

PICCO

If you don't translate...I'll sit on the floor.

SAMIR

Don't be ridiculous. You're not going to sit on the floor of the *President*.

Picco looks at Samir...

...then sits on the floor.

SAMIR

Get up.

PICCO

Tell him.

SAMIR

Get up, you fool!

PICCO

Tell him what I said!

SAMIR

I can't tell him that!

Picco and Samir eyeball each other...

...and Samir blinks first. Picco watches Rafsanjani's face as the message is translated to him. Confusion turns to horror, which quickly turns to anger.

Picco resumes his seat in the chair...

...the President takes a moment to gather his thoughts. Then he begins to speak, his voice grave. Samir again translates:

SAMIR

(translating)

My government has always had good relations with you. We have known you for a long time. We assisted you in Lebanon out of respect for the secretary-general. And we took many political risks in our co-operation with you. Not everybody was in favor of such co-operation.

(pause)

Nevertheless, we went ahead.

Picco gazes at Rafsanjani as he continues:

SAMIR

(translating)

Since we engaged in this effort, we have listened carefully to what you told us, including President Bush's supposed promise of "goodwill". You understand, Mr. Picco, that you are putting me in a difficult position.

PICCO

I know, Mr. President.

SAMIR

(translating)

It may even be a difficult position for *both* of us.

Picco nods, nervous and frightened.

SAMIR

(translating)

I should never let you leave Iran.

PICCO

I came to do what I had to do. To me, my job is done. I trust you to do yours.

Rafsanjani considers Picco a long moment...

...and Picco just waits for his verdict.

SAMIR

(translating)

I'm sad to hear this is the reason you came. I think it's best if you leave Iran very, very quickly. The news of what you have told me will travel fast to other quarters. And they may decide not to let you go.

PICCO

Yes, Sir. Thank you.

Picco stands and shakes hands with Rafsanjani...

...but hesitates before leaving, something else to say:

PICCO

There's still the problem of the two remaining German hostages.

SAMIR

They've already been released...
(off Picco's look)
...in anticipation of your visit.

And Picco feels even worse. He stares at Rafsanjani, guilt-stricken. Then he turns for the DOUBLE DOORS. And leaves...

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - GERMANY - NIGHT

A GERMAN GOVERNMENT JET taxis up to an airport terminal late at night. We see an ILLUMINATED SIGN: "Frankfurt Airport"...

...a THRONG OF GERMAN MEDIA are waiting fifty yards away.

INT./EXT. GOVERNMENT JET - GERMANY - NIGHT

Inside the jet, the two German hostages, THOMAS KEMPTNER and HEINRICH STRUEBIG, are gazing out the windows at their home, giddy with excitement...

THOMAS KEMPTNER

(subtitled, German)

There's my mother... My mother!

...across the aisle, Picco looks up from his LEATHER FOLDER and smiles at them. Struebig offers him a grateful look.

ANGLE ON: A HOSTESS

with a tray of CHAMPAGNE FLUTES. She offers them to both the German hostages. They gladly partake, but Picco declines...

...packing up his LEATHER FOLDER into his BRIEFCASE.

ANGLE ON: THE GOVERNMENT JET

stopping near the MEDIA CROWD. A MOBILE STAIRCASE is rolled up to the door. The crowd cheers as the PASSENGER DOOR on the side of the plane opens...

...and the two hostages appear, smiling and crying.

ANGLE ON: THE HOSTAGES

shaking hands with Picco in the doorway. They take the stairs two at a time. Playfully racing with each other to see who'll touch German soil first...

...they land together and kiss the tarmac. Laughing as they are escorted by GERMAN OFFICIALS over to the waiting crowd.

CLOSE ON: PICCO

watching them from the doorway of the plane...

...a thought occurs to him and he reaches back inside for one of the CHAMPAGNE FLUTES now sitting in the hostess station.

PICCO

May I?

The GERMAN HOSTESS nods pleasantly...

...and Picco takes a sip of the drink. *His first in over ten years.* He thanks her with a nod and returns the champagne.

Then he descends the stairway. Veering past the MEDIA CIRCUS which surrounds Kemptner and Struebig. Slipping away from the scene unnoticed...

...and now we watch Picco walk off alone, disappearing inside the airport terminal. The doors close discreetly behind him.

PULL BACK ON: THE GERMAN HOSTAGES

surrounded by FRIENDS and FAMILY and REPORTERS...

...laughing and calling and talking and embracing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - NEW YORK - DAY

Picco sits on a crowded bench in Riverside Park, watching his son compete with several other SKATEBOARDERS. He's surrounded by other PARENTS and FRIENDS...

...out on the ramps, Giacomo performs a complex move and the crowd CHEERS admiringly. But none cheer louder than Picco.

SUPER: *Gianni Picco left the United Nations in July 1992, and began a diplomatic consultant group in New York.*

To this day, Mr. Picco remains one of the most trusted men in the world...

Giacomo smiles genuinely at his father...

...and Picco waves back, CLAPPING and CHEERING.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END