

UNTITLED MICHAEL PETRONI PROJECT
EPISODE #101

by
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TEASER

OVER BLACK:

THE SOUNDS OF WOOD CRACKLING AND POPPING FROM A FIRE... A BIG FIRE...

FADE IN:

A WHITE WEATHERBOARD CHURCH WITH A STEEPLE... ENGULFED IN FLAMES. Hot air gusts out of its fiery doors, ROARING. Mesmerizing.

Standing before the church is A MAN, his back to us... his silhouette stark against the bright blaze. Columns of orange ashes shooting up into the night from the heat.

DETAIL: Through the flames, graffitied on the church's wall are the words "FALSE GOD".

As the roof collapses in on itself, the steeple topples like a sinking ship's mast into a bloom of embers, feeding the inferno. The figure stands before the flames, unflinching. We linger on this image...

CUT TO BLACK.

THE SOUNDS OF HUMAN SUFFERING... BABIES CRYING... FLIES BUZZING... MOANS OF HUNGER... AND DISTANT GUNFIRE...

FADE IN:

EXT. YARMOUK REFUGEE ENCLOSURE. DAMASCUS. SYRIA - PRESENT DAY

A blockaded compound within a city.

ARMED MILITIA guard every street entrance.

Concrete apartment blocks pitted and crumbling from years of shell-fire and civil war offer no shelter to the sea of starving Palestinian refugees trapped within. *

SUPER: Yarmouk Palestinian Refugee Enclosure. Damascus. Syria. *

There are so many people it is impossible to see the road or pavement they stand or lie on. Conditions are squalid.

A man steals the shoes from a sleeping woman's feet - or perhaps she's dead.

Thousands of hungry eyes stare vacantly, awaiting food relief that will not reach them.

The distant, persistent CLATTER OF GUNFIRE fills the air.

We move over the desperate faces to find JIBRIL (16) - hungry and helpless like every other soul around him. On his lap, his MOTHER lays her head... her eyes closed.

Looking down at her, concern clouds his expression...

JIBRIL
(Arabic: subtitled)
<Mother...?>

He gently nudges her shoulder...

JIBRIL (CONT'D)
<Mother...>

He touches her cheek... she does not move.

He opens one of her eyes carefully with his fingers - it stares lifelessly back at him.

From the pain in Jibril's eyes--

CUT TO:

INT. JIBRIL'S MOTHER'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

DARKNESS.

We hear the soft padding of footsteps...

A small bedside LIGHT SWITCHES ON illuminating the face of Jibril's Mother - she is younger, and sleeping. She opens her eyes, woken by the light and looks kindly at her son Jibril (WHO IS 7 YEARS OLD IN THIS MEMORY), standing by her bed, his eyes full of fear.

JIBRIL
<I had a nightmare.>

Without a word she lifts her blankets and lets him crawl into her bed - snuggling... hoping she is enough to comfort him.

JIBRIL (CONT'D)

<I saw them shoot him, in the dream.>

JIBRIL'S MOTHER

Shh...

She strokes his hair... soothing him...

JIBRIL

<Mama... Why did he die?>

JIBRIL'S MOTHER

<Because it was written in God's book.
*"Nothing shall befall us, except what
Allah has ordained."*>

The boy's eyes shimmer with a frightening thought...

JIBRIL

<Did God not love him?>

JIBRIL'S MOTHER

<God loved him so much he took him sooner
than we wanted.>

JIBRIL

(worried)

<Does God love me so much?>

JIBRIL'S MOTHER

<Yes... but God has a different plan for
you.>

JIBRIL

<What is it?>

JIBRIL'S MOTHER

<He will reveal it to you when He is
ready.>

JIBRIL

<How will I know?>

JIBRIL'S MOTHER

<You will know. Now off to sleep.>

She kisses his head and turns out the light, returning
the room to DARKNESS.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT PARKING LOT. YARMOUK REFUGEE CAMP - DAY
(PRESENT DAY)

SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD JIBRIL struggles to drag the body of his mother into the lightless corner of a crumbling basement carpark. GUN CLATTER still echoes outside.

CUT TO:

SAME - LATER

CLOSE ON: THE LIFELESS FACE OF JIBRIL'S MOTHER lodged between rubble.

Jibril has covered her body under a pile of rocks and concrete - a makeshift grave.

He looks at her heartbroken, touches her cheek. Covering her face with one final stone, he kneels and begins to pray as tears fill his eyes...

JIBRIL

Allaahum-maghfir lihayyinaa, wa
mayyitinaa, wa shaahidinaa, wa
ghaa'ibinaa, wa sagheerinaa wa
kabeerinaa, wa thakarinaa wa
'unthaanaa...

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT. YARMOUK REFUGEE CAMP - DAY - SAME

Jibril crawling through a narrow hole in a wall clearly made by an artillery strike...

Struggling through the tight space, he falls onto the pavement on the other side. Quickly getting to his feet, he looks around to see TWO MILITIA SOLDIERS with guns at the end of the blockaded street - their backs to him.

Turning in the opposite direction, he runs.

EXT. HILLS OUTSIDE DAMASCUS - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON: Tank tracks lurching to a stop.

WIDE ON: A row of ISIS tank gun turrets rotating as they line up the ancient city in their sights.

A sharp wind WHISTLES up the mountain side as calls of
"ALLAHU AKBAR!" rise from the masked soldiers in a shrill
chorus.

CUT TO:

A MOB YELLING IN ARABIC.

EXT. BAB TOUMA (GATE OF ST. THOMAS). DAMASCUS - SAME TIME

His head spinning with grief and hunger, Jibril wanders
through the war-torn city - barely comprehending his
escape from the compound... but escape into what exactly?
More mayhem.

The streets are crumbling... burnt out cars lay abandoned
on the pavement. WIND blows rubbish in all directions.

Stumbling over rubble, he cups his hands under an exposed
tap in a blown out building and thirstily drinks from the
meager trickle of water. People hurry through the
dilapidated streets.

HADAD (O.S.)

Jibril...

Jibril turns to see another boy his age, HADAD, standing
in the gutter with ragged clothes like his.

JIBRIL

Hadad?

HADAD

(Arabic: subtitled)

<Where is your family?>

*

Jibril shakes his head, unable to say, tears welling.
Hadad nods... it's a common story.

JIBRIL

<Yours?>

Hadad walks on. Jibril follows. As they turn a corner the
two orphans come upon--

THE MOB swarming at an intersection, blocking traffic.
They try skirting around the throng but it's near
impossible.

And now they see the focus of the crowd's attention...

A MALE FIGURE dressed in bright yellow traditional kandura robes stands on top of the ancient arch of ST. THOMAS'S GATE, emphatically yelling at the crowd below him.

THE MAN

(Arabic: subtitled)

<Listen to me! Listen to me, my brothers and sisters, they pretend to preach God's word-- and all they do is twist its meaning.>

Some try to listen above the din of detractors and the general chaos... OTHERS RECORD WHAT HE IS SAYING ON THEIR IPHONES.

THE MAN, Middle-Eastern looking with a rough beard, fervently preaches his message - eyes burning with passion. From his vantage he looks out over the city walls toward the TANKS ON THE HILLS...

THE MAN (CONT'D)

<It is written in The Book. *"They shall be held up to shame in this world. They have incurred God's most inexorable wrath. An ignominious defeat awaits them!"*>

Amongst the crowd we see an OLD MULLAH cupping his ears forward, trying to listen, annoyed at the rabble. Next to him Jibril listens to The Man... curious.

A DETRACTOR in the crowd objects -

DETRACTOR #1

<An ignominious defeat awaits you!>

He throws a rock at the preacher, yelling more abuse -

DETRACTOR #2

<May the devil swallow you up!>

THE MAN

(to his detractors)

<I've looked the devil in the eye. He cannot swallow me. God will not allow it.>

HADAD

(to Jibril)

<Come on.>

Hadad pulls at Jibril's arm when The Man on the arch looks across the crowd, seemingly right at Jibril--

THE MAN

<It is written in God's Book. *"Nothing shall befall us, except what God has ordained."*>

His words echoing in Jibril's memory--

THE MAN (CONT'D)

(repeating emphatically)
<*"Nothing shall befall us, except what God has ordained!"*>

Jibril pulls away from Hadad and listens closer to The Man now.

DETRACTOR

<It is forbidden to misquote the scriptures.>

THE MAN

<Forget the scriptures! Lay your faith in my words. Look at you. You've suffered more than anyone on this earth. You're surrounded by enemies who want to eradicate you and yet you still live. Why? Because God allows it. They cannot kill you, no matter how hard they try. Why? Because God wants you to live. Your destiny lies with Him. You are His instrument.>

Jibril weaves his way through the crowd... drawn to the stranger.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

<*"He is with you, wherever you are."* He is with you now. Only you who have suffered know the hand of God. Only you who grieve understand His mercy. And only He knows your pain. *Walk with Him. Walk with me.*>

Just then some SYRIAN SOLDIERS run towards the mob, yelling - trying to break up the gathering.

SYRIAN SOLDIERS

<Go home!/Get inside!/It's curfew!>

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE MASKED MILITIAS. Their cries of "ALLAHU
AKBAR!" rise in intensity above the HOWLING WIND.

THE ISIS TANK TURRETS settling into their final
position...

BACK TO:

THE MAN ON THE GATE OF ST. THOMAS.

THE MAN

<Mark my words! On this day, mark my
words! God will turn them away! Salvation
is at hand!>

A sudden gust whips sand into his face, stifling his
words.

Below, Jibril still struggles in the crowd, trying to get
closer to the preacher.

Just then a deep BOOM rumbles across the city - something
tears the air - eyes look up to the heavens...

An artillery shell STREAKS through the sky and strikes a
nearby building - BOOM!

The MOB SCREAMS and YELLS as chaos breaks out... another
artillery shell STRIKES! BOOM!

Jibril is jostled in the crowd.

HADAD

<Quickly!>

Hadad pulls Jibril away as the EXPLOSIONS continue. All
the while Jibril is looking back at The Man. BOOM BOOM -
more shells STRIKE!

The wind gales now as sand thickens the air. The crowd
runs in all directions taking shelter from the bombs and
the SANDSTORM--

Taking cover, Jibril looks back up at the preacher... he
looks certifiably insane as he continues preaching
undeterred and unheard over the screams and explosions -
the sandstorm literally erasing him and the whole scene
from view.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLES

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

A TUMBLEWEED...

Drifts and bounces on the wind, down a road, past shop fronts and vacant businesses...

We follow the tumbleweed skittering across the main street of this little, sleepy town...

SUPER: DILLEY, TEXAS.

The tumbleweed finally comes to rest at the steps of a typical American white weatherboard church with a steeple... the very same church we saw burning in our opening image.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY

A TEENAGE GIRL (CORALINE) sits in a small circle of youths ranging from 15 to 18 years of age. Leading the group is FELIX SALGUERO (40's) a Hispanic-American man with a quiet patience borne out of years of self-determination.

CORALINE

It just feels like things are shit.

FELIX

What do you mean by that?

CORALINE

Everything. The world's just fucked.

There is one chair in the circle conspicuously vacant...
which seems to be playing on Felix's mind as he listens--

FELIX

Sometimes when we're overwhelmed by our own feelings we project them onto the world... know what I mean? So maybe you're feeling hopeless right now and so the whole world feels hopeless to you...

Coraline shrugs. Another girl, MADDIE, snipes a comment--

MADDIE

Yeah, Coraline, brighten the fuck up.

The others smirk and titter...

CORALINE

What's the point of anything?

FELIX

That attitude won't help you. OK? If I took that attitude...

(starts again)

I was a poor kid who went to community college... but I tried hard and one day I got a letter from Princeton.

They all stare back, blank.

FELIX (CONT'D)

Do you know what Princeton is?

They do. They just don't care.

CORALINE

You still ended up here.

The girl's snide comment stings Felix more than it should. He sighs, looks up at the ground level basement window - a tumble weed bumping against it... *What is he still doing here?* Checking his watch--

FELIX

We'll leave it there for today.

*

Felix looks back at that vacant chair, pissed.

EXT. DILLEY OUTSKIRTS - DAY

CLOSE ON AN IPHONE SCREEN: A DEAD BABY BIRD lays in long grass at the base of an oak tree.

CLICK. The image is captured.

REBECCA (15) lit cigarette in mouth, posts the image on her Instagram account: #stilllife [we note she has 74 followers].

Pocketing her phone, she continues through a grassy meadow.

Up ahead, a broken-down barn stands in a field.

She walks toward it.

INT. BARN. DILLEY - DAY

Wood rot has eaten away at the cow pens... the place is clearly used for little more than storing hay and tools these days.

Rebecca climbs a rickety ladder up into the loft where she sits.

Dangling her legs over the edge, she draws in a lung full of smoke from her cigarette and stares down at the large pile of hay on the floor. She ashes her cigarette watching it flutter to the floor... 18 feet below.

A cross-beam extends out from the loft along the length of the roof.

Standing, Rebecca steps onto the rafter and unsteadily balance-walks out onto the beam's center...

Taking another deep draw on her cigarette, she extends her arms and looks down...

Closing her eyes, she slowly, fearlessly falls forward...

Tipping head-over-heels, she drops toward the ground - her body slipping through the soundless moment - then disappears into the stack of hay with a soft THUD.

Silence... until her soft GIGGLES rise from the hay...

Rebecca sits up - her face lit with a death defying exhilaration. It takes her a few moments to see the pitch fork that narrowly missed her... a close call... but it seems she wouldn't have cared how things turned out.

Getting to her feet, she walks out of the barn...

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

She makes her way across the meadow, a little lighter on her toes. She looks up at the sun momentarily breaking through the clouds - her eyes suddenly blinded by the light. Her expression becomes strangely blank... her fingers twitch, her gait wavers... and she is falling to the ground, her hands outstretched as her eyes roll back in her head...

CUT TO:

A CNN NEWSCASTER delivers the headlines -

CNN NEWSCASTER

Islamic State militia have withdrawn troops from their long held position outside the city of Damascus after a month-long sandstorm literally buried their ground forces. This was ISIS's last stronghold in Syria and this may finally spell the end of the radical group's existence.

The report cuts to footage showing entire city blocks of Damascus covered in mountains of sand.

MUTE FOOTAGE OF U.S. DEFENSE SECRETARY LAUTON talking to press.

CNN NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

US Defense Secretary, Andrew Lauton said the turning point in the siege was the break in the chain of supply caused by the severe weather.

PULL OUT ON:

INT. SURGERY ROOM - HOSPITAL - DAY

As the report continues we find ourselves in a small PRIVATE SURGERY room.

EVA GELLER (39) - intelligent, beautiful, obstinate - lays on a day bed in a paper hospital gown. She simultaneously texts on her phone as she half-watches the report on the TV mounted above the bed.

A NURSE enters.

NURSE

You can sit up and get dressed now, Ms. Geller.

Eva sits up.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Has the doctor gone through everything with you?

EVA

Yes.

NURSE

You'll probably feel funny for the first few days.

EVA
(prickly)
I know... This isn't my first time.

The Nurse smiles contritely.

EVA (CONT'D)
(catching herself)
I'm sorry... I'm just a little tense.

NURSE
That's OK, hun.

She leaves Eva to get dressed.

INT. PRIVATE SURGERY RECEPTION - DAY

Dressed in a smart skirt and blazer with her hair pulled back, Eva looks transformed. She settles her account with the RECEPTIONIST at the front desk as the news continues on a TV in reception. The sound is down but a photo of a handsome Pakistani-American man appears behind the anchorman with a slug "UNDER SECRETARY DANNY KIRMANI" -

EVA
(to Receptionist)
Can you turn that up, please?

RECEPTIONIST
Of course, just a moment.

The Receptionist continues doing what she is doing. Impatient to hear the report, Eva grabs the TV remote and turns the sound up for herself, causing the Receptionist to give a small frown.

CNN REPORTER (ON T.V.)
...the House Select Committee's probe into the murder of CIA and NSA operatives in Turkey following a security breach. Under Secretary for the Near East, Danny Kirmani, will provide testimony this morning in the closed hearings.

Just then the receptionist mutes the TV and hands Eva her receipt--

RECEPTIONIST
(with attitude)
You're all done.

CUT TO:

I/E. EVA'S CAR/WASHINGTON BELTWAY - DAY

As Eva drives, her phone CHIRPS -

She answers on the hands free -

EVA
What's up, Dad?

CUT TO:

INTERCUT WITH ZELMAN KATZ (80's) in his FLORIDA CONDO -
everything you'd expect in a widower's retirement nest
except perhaps the walls have more books.

ZELMAN
How'd it go?

EVA
(dismissive)
Oh... fine... Just like the last time.

ZELMAN
What did the doctor say?

EVA
He said to make sure my father
didn't stress me out about it.

ZELMAN
You tell him your father's just
concerned.

EVA
Your timing's impeccable Dad, I'm just
about to pull up to work.

ZELMAN
You're going to work?

EVA
I'm fine.

ZELMAN
Eva.

EVA
I'm beginning to regret even telling you.

ZELMAN
(not hearing)
What was that?

EVA

I've gotta go.

ZELMAN

Call me later, will you?

EVA

Bye.

As she heads off the freeway exit -

HONK! SCREEECH!

She jams the brakes before even seeing the car she almost hit. The WOMAN inside the other car is yelling at Eva. Eva BLASTS her horn! As the car pulls away a TODDLER stares at her impassively from the back passenger window. Her eyes and Eva's meet...

It's only now Eva notices her hands shaking and the tears welling in her eyes. Quickly wiping her tears -

EVA (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Fuck.

EXT. PARKING LOT. CIA HQ - DAY

Her hand still shaking, Eva holds up her ID to a SECURITY OFFICER at a heavily guarded gate, then drives through.

Pulling into her car space, she gathers herself - takes a deep breath, checks her makeup and steps out of her car.

INT. EVA'S OFFICE - DAY

Through a glass door with her name and title - EVA GELLER, OPERATIONS MANAGER - we see Eva interviewing a young RECRUIT using a questionnaire.

She masks the residue of her panic attack with an inscrutable demeanor.

EVA

You're a philosophy major.

RECRUIT

Yes, ma'am.

EVA

So why do you want to work for the CIA?

RECRUIT

I think it's one of the most important jobs a person can have. Keeping our country safe. Upholding its values.

Eva notices her phone VIBRATING in her bag on the floor beside her. She ignores it and continues the interview.

EVA

What's a misconception that people may have about you?

RECRUIT

(thinks)

That I'm judgemental.

EVA

So you're not?

RECRUIT

Not really. I think I accept all different kinds of people.

Looking up from her questionnaire - scrutinizing -

EVA

Would you accept a criminal?

RECRUIT

If he'd served his time and was remorseful.

EVA

Would you trust him?

RECRUIT

No.

(thinks again)

Not with everything.

EVA

What wouldn't you trust him with?

RECRUIT

My family... a secret.

EVA

The truth?

(repeating)

Would you trust him to tell you the truth?

RECRUIT

The truth has many different versions. So
it's hard to say...

*
*

His answer makes Eva think a moment.

EVA

(repeating)

The truth has many different versions.

RECRUIT

The truth is pretty grey.

She looks back down at her questionnaire about to move
on, when something stops her.

EVA

Look... I'm going to stop the interview
there. I know I'm not supposed to tell
you this, but I won't be recommending
you.

The Recruit looks devastated.

RECRUIT

(barely getting the words
out)

Why not?

EVA

I'm not hearing certainty.

(off the Recruit's look)

The CIA is like a holy order. We don't
have room for multiple truths. When
you're in the trenches you have to know
who your enemies are. People's lives
depend on it. It's a doctrine you have to
live by. There's no room for grey. Sorry.

Her phone VIBRATES again. This time she picks it up--

EVA (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

She steps out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Eva steps into a corridor heavy with foot traffic -
MILITARY OFFICERS, BUREAUCRATS and AGENTS.

Pulling into an alcove she checks her text from "Q" -

Q: "Watch this."

There's a file attached...

She downloads...

It's footage of A CROWD rejoicing in the sand covered streets of Damascus.

Ducking out of the busy corridor into a vacant CONFERENCE ROOM, Eva watches the footage... intrigued.

ON THE VIDEO: The mob is crowding around someone as they dance and cheer. The footage jostles getting closer to the focus of the crowd's attention... it's THE MAN we saw earlier preaching in Arabic on the gate of St. Thomas.

Eva texts back: "Damascus?"

Q: "Yes."

EVA: "Who is he?"

Q: "Turn your sound up."

She plays it again with the sound up to hear the crowd chanting "Al-Massih! Al-Massih!"

EVA: "Messiah?"

Q : "You heard right."

EVA: "What's his real name?"

Q: "No name yet. 2000 followers."

EVA: "Inciting violence?"

Q: "Big mob... bound to happen. Will send more soon."

Eva ponders the frozen video of the MOB again... curious.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAMASCUS - DAY

The very same MOB rejoicing and chanting -

CROWD
Al-Massih! Al-Massih! Al-Massih!

They jostle and crowd around the preacher - it is he they are calling AL-MASSIH - men and women touching him, kissing his hands and clothes, whatever they can manage to grab...

He makes slow progress walking through the sand covered streets, heading out of the gates of the walled city. Behind him THOUSANDS OF FOLLOWERS... before him the desert wilderness.

CLOSE ON AL-MASSIH walking towards the horizon - seemingly held aloft on the cheers of adoration.

Jibril (the 16 year-old-boy from the beginning of our story) walks alongside al-Massih.

JIBRIL

<Where do you lead us, Imam?>

AL-MASSIH

<To our destiny.>

CUT TO:

EXT. BARN. TEXAS - DAY

CLOSE ON REBECCA waking from her seizure.

She looks up at the clouds passing...

Sitting up, she looks around. Nothing seems too different.

Spitting the foul taste from her mouth, she gets to her feet and heads back towards town...

*

INT. SALGUERO HOUSE - DAY

A neat, modest house with cheap furnishings. On a mantle, amongst a display of ornaments we see reflected in the mirror ANNA SALGUERO - 40, intelligent, well bred and once beautiful, but the years have not been so kind to her. She works at her computer.

CLOSE ON THE COMPUTER - a spreadsheet with numbers. Anna adds to the expenses column... the program automatically recalculates sending the total into deficit highlighted in red at the bottom.

Sighing, she looks out the window... a gust of wind blows dust across her view of the street.

She instinctively draws the lace curtains across the window shutting out the view and heads upstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. SALGUERO HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Anna enters her bedroom. Standing at the tallboy, she looks at her reflection - saddened by what she sees. Opening her underwear drawer, she removes a HIP FLASK and takes a good swig, then lays down on the bed and closes her eyes...

Just then she hears THE FRONT DOOR OPENING DOWNSTAIRS.

Eyes snapping open--

ANNA
(sotto)
Shit!

--She puts the flask back and quickly heads ACROSS THE UPSTAIRS LANDING into the --

BATHROOM. She swigs some mouthwash.

FELIX (O.S.)
Sweetheart?...

Flushing the toilet -

ANNA
(calling out)
Thought you were heading across town?

FELIX (O.S.)
Forgot something.

Checking herself in the mirror, she heads--

INT. SALGUERO HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

--To find Felix looking at the computer -

FELIX (CONT'D)
(re: the spreadsheet)
That doesn't look pretty.

ANNA
That's not even the worst of it. We got
one of these again--

*

[N.B. Anna has a well-heeled Southern accent].

She hands him an opened piece of mail - Felix reads...

WE SEE THE LETTERHEAD: TEXAS STATE BANK.

ANNA (CONT'D)
They're giving us 20 days.

Felix finishes reading the letter, then lays it on the table... and closes the computer. Anna looks at him expectantly... but he says nothing.

ANNA (CONT'D)
You can't keep ignoring it, Felix.

FELIX
It's a church for God's sake.

ANNA
It's just a building to them.

FELIX
What are they gonna do, turn it into a McDonalds?

ANNA
(frustrated)
You have to take this seriously, Felix.
We're going to lose everything.

He knows that tone. He pulls open the lace curtain that Anna just closed and looks out at the church across the yard.

FELIX
When was the last charity drive?

ANNA
People don't have jobs!

FELIX
(sharply)
What should I do Anna, quit?

She sighs fed up. Then--

ANNA
You know things don't have to be this way.

FELIX
I could hear this coming.

ANNA

It would just be a loan. We would pay him back.

FELIX

How many more times can we have this conversation?

ANNA

How many more letters do you think we're going to get before they knock on our door, Felix?! Be practical for goodness sake. This is it - we're out of options.

FELIX

I told you last time, I won't do that.

ANNA

Why not?

FELIX

(angrily)

Because your father would just enjoy it too much.

ANNA

(snapping back)

So you'd rather take food from people's tables than swallow your damn pride?

FELIX

It's not my pride I'm worried about, it's my soul.

ANNA

(stung)

What's that supposed to mean?

Before he can respond--

The front door opens...

Anna and Felix halt their arguing as--

Rebecca enters. She is Felix and Anna's daughter.

Barely acknowledging her parents, she heads upstairs. Felix calls to her -

ANNA (CONT'D)

Rebecca.

She stops at the foot of the stairs...

ANNA (CONT'D)

Where have you been?

REBECCA

Nowhere... just walking.

Noticing a stray piece of straw on her back.

ANNA

You've got straw on your shirt... what is that?

She goes to brush it off...

REBECCA

(pulling away)

I fell down...

ANNA

Did you have another episode? *

REBECCA

I'm OK. I'm gonna lie down.

FELIX

Would you like to tell me why you didn't come to group today?

REBECCA

No.

ANNA

(warning)

Rebecca.

REBECCA

I don't have to. It's voluntary.

FELIX

We had an agreement.

REBECCA

You never said for how long.

FELIX

For as long as it's necessary.

REBECCA

It's embarrassing. You're my father.

FELIX

I could say the same.

ANNA
(warning)
Felix.

She continues upstairs--

FELIX
Wait a minute.

She stops again - irritated.

FELIX (CONT'D)
Turn out your pockets... please.

Rebecca sighs, rolls her eyes, then does as she is told -
tissues, phone, Tampax.

REBECCA
Happy?

Hiding his embarrassment, Felix lets her continue
upstairs. Rebecca SLAMS her bedroom door.

Anna shakes her head. Felix walks over to the table,
snatches the letter from the bank and heads out the back
door.

Remain on ANNA left alone.

INT. EVA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eva enters, switches on the light - the apartment is,
unlike her professional appearance, a mess. Books and
files stacked on the floor amongst old takeout cartons.

Without apparently lifting her gaze, she steps deftly
around the disorder as she sorts through her mail.

CLOSE ON: Letters flipping through her fingers... she
stops on a piece of forwarded mail addressed to -

"Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Geller."

She seems annoyed by the letter and sets it aside.

BING -

A text from Q: "You around?"

Eva's reply: "news?"

Q: "talk?"

Another text interrupts from DAD-

DAD: "you never called back."

Eva (to Dad): "still working."

Eva (to Q): "call me"

Q: "finding a secure line"

DAD: "I'm calling."

Eva: "I'm working!"

Her phone RINGS. Exasperated, she answers -

EVA

What part of "I'm working" didn't you understand?

INTERCUT WITH ZELMAN in his FLORIDA CONDO.

ZELMAN

What are you doing still working?

EVA

Please, Dad.

ZELMAN

You need to rest. You're not taking this seriously.

EVA

Of course I am.

Her phone BINGS - another call waiting.

EVA (CONT'D)

I've gotta go.

ZELMAN

You know what tomorrow is, right?

EVA

(forgetting)

What?

ZELMAN

Eva!

Remembering with a jolt of shame...

EVA

Oh God, Dad! Of course I remember. I'm
sorry.

ZELMAN

Lay a stone for me.

EVA

I will.

ZELMAN

Get some sleep.

EVA

Good night.

ZELMAN

I love you.

She switches over to a Facetime call -

To see FIELD AGENT QAMAR MALOOF (A.K.A. "Q")- swarthy,
30's, American - sitting on his bed in some MIDDLE
EASTERN HOTEL.

EVA

What've you got?

Q

Nothing solid. Rumor is he's from Egypt.

[N.B. Q speaks with an American accent.]

EVA

I listened to those other files... I'm
hearing some other accent... Iranian
maybe, which means he's likely Shiite.

Q

He just led two thousand Syrian
Palestinians into the desert.

EVA

What's a Shiite doing leading a bunch of
Sunnis?

Q

Feels like trouble.

EVA

I'll put him on our watch list and get
eyes on him in the morning. Thanks Q.

Q

OK.

She hangs up... then looks over the mess in her apartment. Her life didn't always look like this.

Just then the alarm on her phone CHIMES.

EVA

Shit...

CUT TO:

INT. EVA'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eva has her dress off and is injecting herself with a hypodermic in her thigh.

Just then she notices a few long strands of hair on the floor...

She runs her fingers through her hair... and several more strands fall out.

EXT. SOUTHERN SYRIAN DESERT MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Campfires dot the hillside of the rocky ravine as the horde of followers bed down for the evening, exhausted by their trek.

WE FOLLOW JIBRIL up a rocky slope to a clearing where al-Massih sits amongst a CIRCLE OF MEN - they all sit on rocks or stumps of wood, sipping tea, listening to their teacher.

AL-MASSIH

(Arabic: subtitled)

<"If you look for truth you may find comfort. If you look for comfort you will never find truth.">

One of the listeners speaks up (it is clear by his black robes he is an Islamic CLERIC).

CLERIC

<Why do you quote an infidel?>

AL-MASSIH

<Who are you to judge who's an infidel?>

The Cleric frowns, confused. Among the men is an older, more senior holy man, MULLAH UMAR (we saw him in the crowd at the Arch of St. Thomas). He is listening carefully, holding his tongue.

Jibril interrupts--

JIBRIL

<People are hungry, Imam.>

CLERIC

(to Jibril)

<Don't interrupt, boy.>

*

Overriding the Cleric's reprimand, al-Massih turns to Jibril -

AL-MASSIH

<Why do you call me Imam?>

Jibril is suddenly self-conscious before the circle of elders.

JIBRIL

<Because you are great.>

AL-MASSIH

<No greater than you. *"There is no deity but God."*>

JIBRIL

<But you turned away evil as you said you would.>

AL-MASSIH

<He turned away evil.>

JIBRIL

<But He works through you.>

AL-MASSIH

<*"Did He create you in jest? Without purpose?"*>

The young man is unsure how to answer.

CLERIC

<You expect a shoemaker's son to know the scriptures?>

Ignoring the comment, al-Massih persists with Jibril.

AL-MASSIH
(to Jibril)
<Do you serve God?>

JIBRIL
<Yes.>

AL-MASSIH
<Then He works through you.
(turning to the others)
He works through everyone.>

CLERIC
<You mean He works through all who
righteously follow Islam.>

Al-Massih turns to the Cleric -

AL-MASSIH
<Don't tell me what I mean.>

This clearly irritates the man, who spits.

Al-Massih stands... the Cleric remains seated. Tension suddenly fills the air.

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)
<Why are there no women here?>

The Cleric laughs - but his smile quickly disappears when he sees al-Massih just staring.

CLERIC
<Surely you're not serious.>

With a sudden move al-Massih kicks out the stump from under the Cleric.

AL-MASSIH
(to Cleric)
<Go find a woman and give her your seat.>

The Cleric gets to his feet and pridefully dusts himself off. The others look on, shocked. The old Mullah keeps his eyes on al-Massih the whole time.

CLERIC
(to the others)
<This man is the Devil. He has led us
into the desert with no food.>

AL-MASSIH
<And to leave me now is to perish.>

The circle of men shift uncomfortably. The Cleric marches off down the hillside, away from the camp.

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)

<I'm here to tell you to throw away your assumptions about God. Stop clinging to what you think you know. In this hour mankind is a rudderless boat. I am your salvation. Cling to me.>

He walks off, alone. The followers share worried looks.

ANGLE ON Old Mullah Umar, inscrutable, as he watches al-Massih head up the embankment.

INT. EVA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Eva lays in bed with her computer playing WORDS WITH FRIENDS (an online community Scrabble game). *

She scrambles her letters, thinking, unconsciously twisting the wedding band on her finger round and round. *

She checks the time, 1:30 a.m. Shutting the computer she switches off the light to sleep. *

REMAIN IN DARKNESS... Until... *

She switches the light back on. Sighs.

Giving in to her insomnia, she gets up.

EXT. EVA'S CAR - NIGHT

Eva drives through the deserted streets of Washington.

EXT. FOGGY BOTTOM'S DINER - NIGHT

Eva's car pulls up outside the front of a streetcar diner called FOGGY BOTTOM'S.

INT. FOGGY BOTTOM'S DINER - NIGHT

The place is empty except for the solitary AFRICAN AMERICAN WAITER (20) - reading a tome. [We will come to know him as KEON.]

The only customer is Eva sitting at a booth, alone, writing up a report on her computer.

The place feels like it's been here for decades - a university student haunt replete with aphorisms by Sartre and Voltaire graffitied on the booth walls in biro. We settle on one such quote: "'You become what you believe' - Oprah."

*
*

Keon sidles over with a coffee pot and fills her mug.

KEON
We're closing in twenty.

EVA
Already?

KEON
It's 3 a.m.

EVA
I'm sorry. Am I stopping you from getting home?

KEON
It's my job... I gotta be here anyway.

He goes back to his book...

Eva looks around the diner, then outside at the empty street... then back at the Waiter and the book he's reading.

EVA
"The Clash of Civilizations". Samuel P. Huntington.

The Waiter looks up, a little surprised.

EVA (CONT'D)
How are you finding it?

KEON
Dry.

EVA
Poli Sci?

KEON
Yeah.

EVA
Senior year?

KEON
Uh huh.

*

He goes back to his book, trying to concentrate.

EVA
When's your paper due?

KEON
(reluctant)
Tomorrow.

He goes back to his reading...

She watches him a moment... then her loneliness speaks again -

EVA
The only thing you have to remember is that he was right... Huntington predicted that the primary axis of world conflict after the Cold War would be along cultural and religious lines... which is exactly what's happening in world politics today. Just center your paper around that argument.

KEON
(more intrigued)
You teach?

EVA
No... I'm just a nerd.

He looks at her now... a woman alone in the cafe trying to strike up a conversation...

KEON
My boss calls you Miss Night Owl.

EVA
(embarrassed)
I've got a nickname?

KEON
I think he likes you.

She smiles... remotely flattered.

EVA
I'm Eva.

KEON
Keon.

EVA
Nice to meet you, Keon.

Now what?...

EVA (CONT'D)
So, what do you want to do when you graduate?

KEON
I don't know... maybe journalism.

EVA
Take your time deciding... that's my advice. And do something you love.

KEON
So what do you do... if you don't teach?

EVA
(hedging)
I work in international relations.

He looks at her assessingly...

KEON
That's what my uncle used to say... he worked for the CIA.

Surprised by his intuition, she suddenly regrets inviting this conversation.

KEON (CONT'D)
He used to say he had the most interesting and difficult job in the world.

EVA
I'm sure he's right.

She closes her computer now, uncomfortable.

KEON
You a field agent?

EVA
I didn't say I was with the CIA.

Keon nods... gets the hint...

KEON
He died last year... my uncle. In Turkey. That bombing.

Eva tries to cover her reaction.

EVA
That's... terrible. I'm sorry to hear
that.

Slipping her computer into her bag, she leaves her tip on
the table...

KEON
He was doing what he loved... like you
say.

They regard each other with some affinity.

EVA
I should let you lock up.

She stands...

EVA (CONT'D)
Good luck with the paper.

KEON
Thanks.

*

Keon watches her leave.

INT. ZELMAN'S CONDO - NIGHT

Zelman sits at his desk with his latest project -

A hand gun laying in pieces. Picking up the extractor
spring, he dips it in cleaning solution.

Just then the clock on his mantle CHIMES. Looking up from
his work, he checks the time...

Crossing the room, he takes a bottle of schnapps from the
mantel and pours himself a shot.

He raises the glass to a framed photo of himself with his
arms around his wife RUTH.

ZELMAN
L'Chaim.

He drinks to her memory.

EXT. ELESAVETGRAD CEMETERY. WASHINGTON DC - NIGHT

Eva stands before a grave... pale in the moonlight.

Picking up a pebble, she places it on top of the headstone.

She looks over the rows of graves...

Walking the narrow path between the plots, she comes to ANOTHER HEADSTONE. She places a pebble on it.

She stares for a long moment...

Pulling her eyes from the grave, she looks up at the full moon...

EXT. SYRIAN DESERT - NIGHT

WIDE ON: Al-Massih standing in the moonlight, a lone figure looking up at the same moon.

We cannot hear him but he seems to be talking to himself and gesticulating.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

Jibril and Hadad looking on.

HADAD
(Arabic: subtitled)
<What is he doing?>

JIBRIL
<Talking with God.>

HADAD
<He looks crazy.>

*

JIBRIL
<He stood for 30 days on St. Thomas's Arch without food or water and preached... during a sandstorm, while we hid in a deserted building fearing for our lives.>

HADAD
<You don't believe he really did that, do you?>

JIBRIL
<He is the incarnation.>

Al-Massih suddenly turns toward the youths -

AL-MASSIH

Jibril!

Jibril humbly walks over to his master... and stands at a respectful distance. Hadad jealously skulks away.

*
*

Al-Massih sits on the ground staring up at the stars.

*

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)

<Sit down with me.>

Jibril obliges. They sit silently... until -

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)

<Do you know there is a star for every soul?>

Jibril gazes up at the firmament...

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)

<Do you believe me?>

JIBRIL

<Yes.>

Al-Massih smiles. Jibril isn't sure why.

They sit in their silence some more. Eventually, Jibril plucks up the courage to ask a question -

JIBRIL (CONT'D)

<Imam... is my mother in a good place?>

Al-Massih looks into Jibril's open, vulnerable face...

AL-MASSIH

<She's where God wants her.>

JIBRIL

<She is with Him?>

AL-MASSIH

<Do you think He would forsake a soul as good as hers?>

Al-Massih tenderly places his arm around Jibril. The boy cries for his mother and himself.

JIBRIL

<I miss her. I want to see her.>

AL-MASSIH

<It's good you're thinking about the next
life.>

Jibril looks at him... his eyes burning with questions...

JIBRIL

<Why have you come now?>

AL-MASSIH

<It's pointless to question these things.
I'm here in this moment because I have
always been here in this moment... and so
have you.>

Jibril senses the personal importance of these words -
that this moment is predestined... his moment with his
savior.

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)

<You have light in you, Jibril... but God
is going to ask some hard things of you.>

JIBRIL

<I am ready.>

*

Al-Massih stands...

AL-MASSIH

<Pack up the camp. We're moving.>

CUT TO:

iPhone footage of the Syrian crowd chanting "Al-Massih"
plays on Eva's phone.

WIDE ON:

INT. CIA OPERATIONS DIRECTOR OFFICE - DAY

ON: A framed photograph on a desk. A happy, smiling
family of four; Mom, Dad, and two 16-year-old twin boys.
Dressed in zipline harnesses, standing on a zipline
platform high up in the middle of the rainforest.

REVEAL: Eva sits before her boss KATHERINE BAILEY - 50's,
unflappable, no frills. The smiling mom in the picture.
Not smiling now - looking at the footage.

EVA

"Massih" in Arabic means Messiah.

BAILEY

So this is a cult?

EVA

Possibly. ISIL has been using this type of apocalyptic propaganda for years now - to good effect. This guy's just taken it to the next level. It's sophisticated.

BAILEY

So he's some rival faction - Revolutionary Guard?

EVA

We don't know who he's associated with.

BAILEY

What do we know about him?

EVA

That's the concerning thing. He's come out of nowhere and he's leading desperate people into the desert.

BAILEY

To what end?

EVA

If it's a cult, he could be leading them to their death... or he could be creating an army.

BAILEY

An army of sick and starving refugees?

EVA

He's creating a cause in the hope that other people will join him.

BAILEY

That's a lot of speculation, Eva.

EVA

It's my job to speculate, ma'am. He has two thousand followers. What if this guy turns out to be another al-Baghdadi?

Bailey considers this...

EVA (CONT'D)

I'd like to keep an eye on him.

BAILEY
Minimal resources.

EVA
Thank you, ma'am.

Bailey doesn't respond - her attention back on her computer.

INT. CIA OPERATIONS CENTER. LANGLEY, VA. - NIGHT

A large room with dimmed lighting surrounded by walls of monitors displaying muted TV news links, satellite images, maps and live UAV (drone) feeds.

In one corner Eva sits at a computer watching a program automatically comparing the gamut of terrorists' facial features against al-Massih's photo. No matches so far.

She wanders over to another station where a TECHNICIAN works on surveillance satellite feeds.

EVA
What do we have over Syria?

EXT. SOUTHERN SYRIAN DESERT/GOLAN HEIGHTS - DAWN

A faint mist rises off the desert mountains to reveal al-Massih and his horde of weary followers. From the looks of things they have been trekking all night.

Coming to a precipice, he looks out at the desert's plain below. On the near horizon a tall barbed wire fence extends as far as the eye can see.

Al-Massih smiles...

But Jibril and Hadad only seem terrified by the sight. *

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM. CIA HQ - NIGHT

Eva stands by the TECHNICIAN.

They are looking at a surveillance feed over a rocky desert.

TECHNICIAN
We lose range in about 4 minutes. What are we looking for exactly?

Pointing to a grainy image on the feed -

EVA

Can you zoom in on that?

The technician taps away at some keys.... The image ZOOMS IN on one of the fissures in the landscape to reveal A SWARM OF DOTS... people.

EVA (CONT'D)

There we are.

She puzzles a moment...

EVA (CONT'D)

They're nowhere near Damascus...

(to Technician)

Where are we?

The Technician ZOOMS OUT and points to a serpentine city grid in one corner of the screen -

TECHNICIAN

There's Damascus...

Scrolling the image down and to the left the Technician points to a much larger grid of roads and buildings -

TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)

And that's--

EVA

(realizing)

Israel.

EXT. SOUTHERN SYRIAN DESERT/GOLAN HEIGHTS - DAWN

Israel's border stretches before the 2000 refugees.

Hadad whispers to Jibril, panicked -

HADAD

(whispering, Arabic:
subtitled)

<He's led us to our death.>

The FOLLOWER next to him pulls out a pistol -

FOLLOWER #1

<He's led us into battle!>

He lets out a high pitched ULULATION-- a CHORUS OF
ULULATIONS rise from the mob behind them.

Al-Massih calmly looks over his followers.

AL-MASSIH
(to Jibril)
<Collect all the weapons.>

Jibril and Hadad share frightened looks.

INT. RESTAURANT. WASHINGTON - NIGHT

CIA Operations Director Katherine Bailey dines with a
table of "Beltway types" - all MEN - when her phone
rings.

BAILEY
(into phone)
Yes.

EVA (V.O.)
We need to get an urgent message to a
security post in Israel.

Off Bailey -

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHERN SYRIAN DESERT/GOLAN HEIGHTS - DAWN

A PILE OF WEAPONS: Old rifles, AK47s, and handguns. *

Al-Massih stands over the arsenal as more weapons are
piled on...

EXT. RESTAURANT. WASHINGTON - NIGHT

Bailey steps out of the restaurant, still on her phone -

BAILEY
(into phone)
Are they armed?

INTERCUT WITH EVA.

EVA
We don't know but armed or unarmed, two
thousand Syrians turning up on Israel's
doorstep isn't going to end well.

EXT. SOUTHERN SYRIAN DESERT/GOLAN HEIGHTS - DAWN

Al-Massih walks away from the arsenal of weapons...

JIBRIL

<Imam... what do you want us to do?>

AL-MASSIH

<Dig a hole and bury them.>

FOLLOWER #1

<Then how do we fight?>

Without answering al-Massih strides off across the high desert plain towards the fenced border.

In the near distance an Israeli patrol tower can be seen perched high on stilts.

The followers look on from the foothill... unsure what to do...

One by one, they begin to follow al-Massih...

I.E. ISRAELI BORDER POST - DAWN

TWO YOUNG ISRAELI SOLDIERS slouch in their patrol box rolling a spliff and listening to ISRAELI POP MUSIC on the radio as they look out at the stretch of arid borderland.

Looking at his watch, one of the soldiers swivels his seat and casually peers through the large pair of field binoculars mounted on a tripod. He scans left to right.

HIS POV PANS: Desert scrub... rock formations... abandoned battlements... A FIGURE.

ISRAELI SOLDIER #1

(Hebrew: subtitled)

<Shit...>

ISRAELI SOLDIER #2

<What?>

ISRAELI SOLDIER #1

<We've got a crazy fucker.>

The Second Soldier switches off the radio, pushes his partner out of the way and takes a look himself.

HIS POV finds al-Massih striding across no-man's land.

ISRAELI SOLDIER #2 (O.S.)
<Hello there, crazy fucker.>

Just then a shimmer of movement flickers behind the intruder... The POV REFOCUSES bringing into sharp contrast THE HORDE OF THOUSANDS walking behind al-Massih.

ISRAELI SOLDIER #2
(CONT'D)
<Oh shit.>

Tossing his joint, he grabs for the landline.

EXT. GOLAN HEIGHTS. ISRAELI BORDER - DAWN

NO-MAN'S LAND. Al-Massih walks directly towards the checkpoint - closer now...

His followers hasten their pace, emboldened with every step.

I.E. ISRAELI BORDER POST - DAWN

One of the Israeli Soldiers talks urgently into the landline phone.

ISRAELI SOLDIER #1
<Patrol house 283ip. Repeat 283ip.
Request immediate reinforcement.>

Meanwhile his partner packs ammunition into his flak jacket, straps his helmet tight.

He hangs up the phone. Then the two soldiers hustle out of the patrol hut, down the steps and into an armored jeep.

They tear off towards the intrusion.

EXT. GOLAN HEIGHTS. ISRAELI BORDER - DAWN

NO-MAN'S LAND.

Al-Massih approaches the checkpoint. In the near distance a trail of dust rises from the approaching jeep...

Al-Massih continues walking through the checkpoint...
ONTO ISRAELI SOIL...

Behind him, his followers can't believe how simple this seems, when -

PAH-PAH-PAH-PAH-PAH - automatic rounds ring out.

Everyone except al-Massih drops to the ground. Suddenly there are CRIES and SCREAMS from the women and children in the crowd. Some run.

Amidst the mayhem, al-Massih turns to his followers and holds out his palms. He sees the terror in Jibril's eyes and tries to calm him -

AL-MASSIH

<Be strong. God is with you.>

The armored jeep surges over a rise and slides to a stop just feet from al-Massih. The two Israeli Soldiers pile out, shouting orders.

SOLDIERS #1&2

(randomly in Arabic:
subtitled)

<Hands up! - Get the fuck on the ground! -
Hands away from your clothes! - Now!
Hands up! Now!>

Al-Massih calmly raises his hands...

The bug-eyed Soldiers look down the sights of their automatic rifles at al-Massih while casting wary glances at the horde behind him.

SOLDIER #1

<On the ground!>

Al-Massih slowly kneels. Soldier #1 points his gun at Al-Massih's head -

SOLDIER #1 (CONT'D)

<Why are you here?>

AL-MASSIH

(Hebrew: subtitled)

<We are here to see the Holy Land.>

*

The soldier's TWO-WAY SQUAWKS an inaudible message. Ignoring it -

SOLDIER #1

(Arabic: subtitled)

<What is your name?>

*

AL-MASSIH
(Hebrew: subtitled) *
<Why are you speaking Arabic, brother?>

The two way SQUAWKS again.

SOLDIER #1
(Arabic: subtitled) *
<Answer me! Who are you?>

AL-MASSIH
(Hebrew: subtitled) *
<I'm a traveller.>

The Second Soldier takes over -

SOLDIER #2
<Stop this bullshit or I'll shoot
you in the eye!>

SQUAWK.

TWO-WAY (V.O.) *
<Hold fire! Hold fire!>

SOLDIER #2
(Into two-way.)
<Where's backup?!>
(to al-Massih, Arabic:
subtitled)
<Where is your passport?>

AL-MASSIH
<I don't have one. We're refugees.>

SOLDIER #2
<Then go ask fucking Lebanon to take
you!>

AL-MASSIH
<These people need food.>

SOLDIER #2
<That's not our problem.>

AL-MASSIH
<There are children.>

The Soldier looks out over the crowd-- hesitates.

SOLDIER #1
(fed up)
<Lay down! Lay down on the ground!>

Al-Massih looks into the young Soldier's eyes. The Soldier raises the butt of his rifle to strike al-Massih when--

FOUR MORE ARMORED JEEPS barrel over the rise. A DOZEN ISRAELI SOLDIERS pile out. A SERGEANT leaps out of the lead vehicle and barks a command -

SERGEANT
(Hebrew: subtitled)
<Stand down!>

The two original Soldiers step back. The Sergeant looks over the mass of people laying on the ground just across the border. His gaze settles on al-Massih.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
<Arrest him.>

CUT TO:

AERIAL VIEW OF ISRAEL/SYRIA BORDER REVEALS -

The two thousand refugees sit, stranded at the border.

HELICOPTERS swoop overhead.

Hours have passed.

On the Israeli side of the border a blockade of SOLDIERS and MILITARY VEHICLES line the fence. And behind them, TV cameras have descended on the scene and set up camp.

CUT TO:

MIRIAM KENEALLY (40) reporting for CNN - tough with looks to prove it (you couldn't call her beautiful), she's whip smart and at the top of her game. She stands on the Israel side of the border dressed in a flak jacket.

KENEALLY (TO CAMERA)
Over two thousand Syrian-Palestinian asylum seekers have landed on the border of Israel this morning, demanding entry into the Holy Land. Israeli authorities have refused the refugees passage, drawing criticism from Muslim communities and their leaders worldwide. As displaced Palestinians they claim they are entitled entry into the West Bank as rightful citizens.

THE IMAGE OF KENEALLY FREEZES.

WE PULL OUT on Miriam watching her frozen image on a tiny monitor under a black tarp in the EXACT SAME LOCATION. Her CAMERA CREW waits patiently as she scrutinizes the screen.

KENEALLY (CONT'D)

OK. We'll go again.

She heads back out to the same position at the border -

KENEALLY (CONT'D)

And someone fix my hair, I look like Phil Spector.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

In a dingy garage space AVRIM DAHAN (30's) ferociously pounds away at a punching bag - his powerful blows packed with anger, like small explosions - BOOM - BOOM - BOOM.

Close by, a cellphone BEEPS on the floor, but Avrim won't stop punching. As he works the bag, sweat trickles down his shirtless back where we notice the round, raised keloid scars that mar his skin - burn marks? Electrocutation?

The urgent BEEPING of his cellphone finally wins out over his desire to destroy the bag.

Pulling off a glove, he goes to answer his phone when it stops BEEPING.

AVRIM

(under breath)

Shit...

Just then the garage's door rolls open.

Avrim looks up at MIIKA his ex-wife - late 20's, gorgeous and feisty - stepping out of her car.

MIIKA

(Hebrew: subtitled)

<What are you doing?>

AVRIM

<What's it look like?>

MIIKA

<You can't just let yourself
in.>

AVRIM

<I pay for this place.>

ELLIE (O.S.)

<Papa!>

Four-year-old ELLIE has climbed out of Miika's car. She runs and gives Avrim a big hug.

AVRIM

<There's my princess.>

Miika watches her ex-husband and daughter - the bitter taste of jealousy and resentment rising in her...

MIIKA

<You're supposed to call and let me
know when you're coming... they're the
rules.>

AVRIM

(English)

Fuck the rules.

MIIKA

That's a great way to talk in front of
your daughter.

AVRIM

Like she hasn't heard that from
you? Besides, she doesn't speak English.

ELLIE

Yes I can.

Avrim seems a little shocked and ashamed that he doesn't know his daughter better.

AVRIM

That's my clever princess.

He heads inside the apartment.

MIIKA

Where are you going?

AVRIM

I need to shower.

MIIKA
<This isn't a hotel.>

Riled, Miika follows him into the APARTMENT. It's small
and cluttered -

INT. MIIKA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

AVRIM
Do you ever clean up?

MIIKA
Did you just come here to judge me?

On the TV Miriam Keneally's CNN report catches Avrim's
attention momentarily -

KENEALLY (ON TV)
Prime Minister Nizani so far has made no
comment. Sources say the asylum seekers'
leader was arrested this morning when
attempting to cross the border. He is
being held in Israeli custody.

Al-Massih's image flashes up on the screen before Miika
MUTES the sound.

AVRIM
Hey!

MIIKA
What are you doing here?

AVRIM
I came to see Ellie.

His phone starts BEEPING again.

MIIKA
<Oh, so you bothered this week?>

*

AVRIM
<Have you got a job yet?>

MIIKA
My job is to look after our daughter. You
should try it some time.

PHONE STILL BEEPING...

AVRIM
(to Ellie)
<Go get your coat, princess.>

Ellie runs off, excited.

He answers his phone -

AVRIM (CONT'D)
(into phone)
<Yeah?... It's my day off.>

Avrim listens to whomever has called him...

AVRIM (CONT'D)
(into phone)
<When?... OK.>

He looks back to the TV at the CNN report...

AVRIM (CONT'D)
(into phone)
OK.

He hangs up.

Miika looks at Avrim... she's seen this a hundred times.

MIIKA
Are you going to break her heart
again?

Off Avrim's guilty look -

CUT TO:

INT. DEPT. OF STATE. - D.C. - DAY

Eva and Katherine Bailey sit on a stiff looking settee across from UNDER SECRETARY DANNY KIRMANI-- an AMERICAN-PAKISTANI with a regal air (we remember him from the news report in Eva's clinic earlier). He reads the flimsy report on al-Massih as he stirs a cube of sugar into his tea. The whole setting feels very stuffy.

Bailey leans back into her chair, confident, measured.

BAILEY
We'll eventually pull something on him
but it's going to take time... and
resources.

Eva, on the edge of the settee, is more eager--

EVA

The fastest way to get to know this guy
is to meet him.

Neatly closing the report--

KIRMANI

He's not our detainee. So, for the
moment, he's not our concern. Israel's
handling it.

Eva tries to quell her frustration.

EVA

I wouldn't underestimate this guy, sir.
This wasn't just aimed at Israel.

Kirmani is clearly irritated that Eva is continuing the
discussion. Bailey shoots her a warning look, but she
persists--

EVA (CONT'D)

He knows America has to defend Israel's
position, and the longer those starving
people sit on their border, the more
indefensible that position becomes. We're
going to get dragged into something we
don't want to.

DANNY KIRMANI

(pointedly)

Why don't you let the politicians worry
about that?

Kirmani stands and walks over to his desk-- the
conversation is over.

EXT. HALLWAY - DEPT. OF STATE - MINUTES LATER

Eva and Bailey walk out of Kirmani's office.

BAILEY

That wasn't very politic.

EVA

But it's the truth.

BAILEY

My God you're just like your father.

The comment sits somewhere between a criticism and a compliment. Bailey heads off up the corridor.

CUT TO: *

A CCTV IMAGE OF -

Al-Massih in his yellow robes sitting cuffed to a metal table in an interrogation room with a black jute hood pulled over his head.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Al-Massih sits motionless, breathing under the hood. The only other sound is the fluorescent HUM of the light above.

AL-MASSIH'S POV FROM UNDER THE HOOD - a hatched view of the room. THE SOUND OF THE CELL DOOR OPENING... a shadowy figure approaches.

The hood is pulled off to reveal - AVRIM now dressed for his job as an Israeli Shin Bet security agent. His menacing energy is palpable as he sits opposite his detainee.

Al-Massih squints at Avrim - eyes adjusting to the light.

AVRIM

(in English)

This is my day off. I don't want you to waste my time, so it will be best if you just answer my questions. Why are you here?

AL-MASSIH

To see the Holy Land.

This is the first time we've heard al-Massih speak English. He has a vague Middle Eastern accent.

AVRIM

(wryly)

Welcome to the Holy Land.

AL-MASSIH

So I'm free to leave?

AVRIM

I ask the questions here. Who are you?

AL-MASSIH

Mee-lah.

AVRIM

(laughs)

Mee-lah?... Do you even know what that means?

AL-MASSIH

Yes.

AVRIM

You are "The Word"? ...OK, Mr.
"The Word"... Look it doesn't bother me
if you sit here and rot, I just don't
want you to waste my fucking time.

Al-Massih stares impassively.

AVRIM (CONT'D)

(sarcastically)

So where did you learn all your Hebrew?

AL-MASSIH

Here.

AVRIM

So you're from here?

AL-MASSIH

Originally.

AVRIM

From where... Ramat Gan?

AL-MASSIH

Why do you assume I'm Palestinian?

AVRIM

(humoring him)

So you're Jewish?

AL-MASSIH

Originally.

AVRIM

Originally? So now what are you?

AL-MASSIH

I am with God.

AVRIM

God?

Avrim tauntingly looks around the room...

AVRIM (CONT'D)

I don't see him?

AL-MASSIH

You will.

AVRIM

Will I?

(dangerously)

Why don't you take God and stick him up
your fucking ass.

Al-Massih just stares.

Beat.

AVRIM (CONT'D)

What were you doing in Syria?

AL-MASSIH

Delivering a message.

AVRIM

A message... from who?

AL-MASSIH

My Father.

AVRIM

And who is your father?

AL-MASSIH

(Hebrew: subtitled)

<That will be revealed in time.>

AVRIM

Why not save me the fucking suspense and
just reveal it now?

AL-MASSIH

Because, Avrim, it's not time.

AVRIM

Who told you my name?

AL-MASSIH
(Hebrew: subtitled)
<No one needed to tell me your name. You
are in my Father's book.>

Avrim leans in dangerously--

AVRIM
Don't fuck with me.

AL-MASSIH
Your anger is misplaced.

AVRIM
You don't want to know about my
anger.

AL-MASSIH
(Hebrew: subtitled)
<You hold onto hatred like it's a prize
when it's the weight around your neck.>

Avrim's hand unconsciously curls into a fist.

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)
You want to hurt me...

AVRIM
Oh... yes.

AL-MASSIH
...Like they hurt you.

Avrim tries to hide his surprise at this comment.

AVRIM
You talk a lot of shit.

AL-MASSIH
You hurt a lot of people.

AVRIM
It's my job.

AL-MASSIH
You enjoy it.

AVRIM
I take pride in my work.

AL-MASSIH
Except for that boy.

AVRIM

What are you talking about?

AL-MASSIH

The boy in Megiddo.

Avrim does everything he can not to react but he is clearly flummoxed - the vein in his temple starts to pound. He squeezes the jute sack he still holds in his hands...

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)

Is that when you stopped believing?

AVRIM

I ask the questions.

AL-MASSIH

<He is waiting for you, Avrim, whenever you're ready-->

Avrim violently pulls the sack back over al-Massih's head.

AL-MASSIH'S POV from inside the jute sack as we hear the CELL DOOR OPEN AND SLAM SHUT.

INT. CORRIDOR - HADARIM DETENTION CENTER, TEL AVIV - SAME

Avrim storms out of the interrogation room...

And into the adjoining OBSERVATION ROOM where al-Massih can be seen through a two way mirror.

Leaning over a CORRECTIONS OFFICER recording the interrogation on his laptop, Avrim highlights the file of the recording and hits DELETE.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER

Hey!

Shutting the computer, Avrim leaves.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Striding across the parking lot, Avrim pulls a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket and lights one.

Stepping into his beat up Mercedes, he sits there and smokes his cigarette with the windows up.

He stares straight ahead - thoughts churning...

EXT. GOLAN HEIGHTS BORDER - DAY

As WE MOVE ALONG the horde of refugees laying exhausted and hungry in the dirt along the fenced border... WE FIND Mullah Umar (we remember from the camp fire scene) speaking to a circle of refugees who strain to hear his tired, old voice -

MULLAH UMAR

(Arabic: subtitled)

<The Qu'ran tells us *"Be patient over what befalls you."*>

REFUGEE

<But we're stranded! They took him away!>

*

MULLAH UMAR

<*"Allah is with the patient... for your patience is but from Allah."*>

But we can see in the old man's eyes that he himself is worried.

Amongst the gathering Hadad turns to Jibril.

HADAD

<What do we do now?>

JIBRIL

<Trust in him.>

HADAD

<But he's gone.>

AN OTHER REFUGEE speaks to Mullah Umar, perplexed--

*

OTHER REFUGEE

<Why did he let them arrest him?>

*

Jibril looks over the border at the ARMED SOLDIERS. Behind the soldiers a flank of TV cameras train their lenses on the camp.

INT. SALGUERO HOUSE, LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT

The house is quiet. Anna and Rebecca have gone to bed.

Felix sits on the couch by himself. The TV is on but Felix's attention is taken up with the thick document he is poring over-- his face close to the page as if he is reading the fine print.

ON THE TV: Miriam Keneally reports for CNN--

KENEALLY (ON T.V.)

Demonstrations have begun around the Muslim world today in protest of Israel, as the presence of the Syrian-Palestinian asylum seekers puts pressure on Prime Minister Nizani to play a more active role in the ongoing crisis in Syria which has been shouldered mostly by Israel's neighbors and European nations--

Rubbing his eyes, Felix puts down the document and goes to the KITCHEN where he pours himself a glass of milk.

WE DRIFT OFF Felix and TILT DOWN to see what he was reading. The paperwork to a STATE FARM INSURANCE POLICY.

CUT TO:

INT. SALGUERO HOUSE, REBECCA'S ROOM - SAME

Illuminated by the glow of her phone, Rebecca sits at her window with a cigarette. She's using WHATSAPP to chat with "Janet AZ" -

Janet AZ: That sounds TFU.

Rebecca TX: Right?

Janet AZ: Your folks are hard asses.

Rebecca TX: I hate it here.

Janet AZ: You should move out here. We've got space. My Mom's chill.

*

Rebecca TX: I don't have money to travel. I don't even have ID.

Janet AZ: Hitch.

Dragging on her cigarette, Rebecca blows smoke out the crack in her window... staring at that last message. The vacant chat bubble awaiting her next response...

INT. CIA OPERATIONS CENTER. LANGLEY, VA. - NIGHT

Eva sits vigil at the facial recognition program still trying to find a match for al-Massih. The program finally stops. A banner appears - NO AVAILABLE MATCHES.

Off Eva's frustration.

EXT. PARKING LOT. HADARIM DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Avrim still sits in his car smoking.

A HAND taps on his window.

He looks out at his boss, Shin Bet Director ZEV BAERMAN.
Avrim winds down his window...

DIRECTOR BAERMAN

What the fuck are you doing?

AVRIM

(defensive)

I'm doing what I do!

DIRECTOR BAERMAN

What you do is scare the shit out
of people till they talk. Why aren't you
in there?

Avrim can't answer...

DIRECTOR BAERMAN (CONT'D)

Just get in there.

Baerman walks off.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM. HADARIM DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Al-Massih still sits in the chair - his head covered in
the jute hood.

Avrim looks at him through the two way mirror... Turning
to the Corrections Officer sitting at his desk--

He leaves.

AVRIM

<Put him in the hole.>

INT. BAR. TEL AVIV - NIGHT

A dingy bar hums with LOW CHATTER and JAZZ MUSIC providing a first floor view of Tel Aviv.

Avrim sits in a booth by the window drinking with his friend and colleague ALON (30's).

ANGLE ON Avrim looking out at the city, caught on some angry thought.

ALON

You look like shit.

Avrim sips his drink, ignoring the comment.

ALON (CONT'D)

Have you seen Kaleb?

AVRIM

Why would I do that?

ALON

Because he's your brother.

AVRIM

He did something stupid, I'm not going to take pity on him.

ALON

I love your compassion.

AVRIM

This country is crumbling and he decides to rob a fucking store. He deserves what he gets.

ALON

What's up? You're angrier than usual.

A WAITRESS comes by with a fresh round of drinks.

Avrim waits for her to leave, then looks Alon in the eye...

AVRIM

(sotto)

You... you've never mentioned Megiddo to anyone, have you?

ALON

Why would I do that? Why are you even talking about it?

He stares Alon in the eye for a long moment... then -

AVRIM
Nothing... Nothing.

E.I. BAR/AVRIM'S CAR - NIGHT

Avrim climbs drunkenly into his car... he waves good night to his friend Alon.

His car is a dump. Takeout boxes and dirty clothes piled on seats. A toothbrush in the cup holder completes the picture. He has clearly been living in his car.

He pulls on his seat belt when he notices a pair of his daughter's dress-up fairy wings in the back seat...

He reaches over and holds them on his lap...

CLOSE ON AVRIM as a memory intrudes...

FLASHBACK TO:

AVRIM DRIVING IN HIS CAR THROUGH THE DESERT AT NIGHT... next to him sits Alon.

Avrim looks in the rearview mirror at a YOUNG TEENAGE BOY handcuffed and terrified.

BACK TO SCENE:

Avrim throws the fairy wings aside.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM. HADARIM DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Avrim sits at the metal table opposite al-Massih who has the jute hood back over his head.

AVRIM
Do you know how many times I have sat opposite that hood?

Al-Massih speaks from under the sack.

AL-MASSIH
Two hundred and twenty-seven.

Avrim almost smiles at the bizarre answer.

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)

And every time it was me.

Avrim's smile disappears.

CLOSE ON: The sack breathing in and out with al-Massih's words.

AL-MASSIH (CONT'D)

We could go on doing this forever, you know? It's up to you. This is no solution.

AVRIM

Who are you?

AL-MASSIH

The better question is who are you, Avrim Dahan?

AVRIM

I'm the one asking the questions.

AL-MASSIH

Are you?

Just then Avrim notices that his hands are cuffed and chained to the table. He GASPS and tries to get away only to fall off his chair as we--

CUT TO:

AVRIM WAKING RUDELY FROM HIS DREAM.

WIDE ON:

INT. AVRIM'S CAR - MORNING

Avrim looks around, dazed... He's slept all night in the car. His seatbelt is still fastened. The car is still parked out front of the bar.

EXT. HADARIM DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Avrim bangs on the caged window of the cellblock gate where a GATE GUARD sits watch. The Guard shrugs at him - "What do you want?"

AVRIM

(Hebrew: subtitled)

<Let me in.>

GUARD
<Where's your pass?>

Holding up his Shin Bet badge he reiterates -

AVRIM
<Let - me - in.>

GUARD
<You need to be accompanied by a facility officer to visit a prisoner.>

AVRIM
<Then accompany me.>

GUARD
<I'm on guard.>

AVRIM
<Then get someone else.>

GUARD
<There is no one else. It's 3 a.m.>

AVRIM
<So you're gonna send me home?>

Avrim stares the man down until he eventually presses a button and unlocks the gate.

INT. CORRIDOR. HADARIM DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Avrim walks down a long passageway leading to a solitary cell door. Ambling down the passage he flips a large key on its hoop, whistling as he walks...

ANGLE ON HIS FEET as he makes his way along the flagstone floor...

Coming to the cast iron cell door, Avrim stops and takes a moment to draw up his anger. He's going to enjoy this...

ANGLE ON the key turning in it's lock... CLUNK CLUNK...

He slowly pushes the door open...

ANGLE ON AVRIM his cruel expression dissolving into confusion...

REVEAL the cell is empty... al-Masih is nowhere in sight.

"MESSIAH" 101 "HE THAT HATH AN EAR" Writers Fourth Draft 64.
8-15-17

Back on Avrim as he is left to comprehend the
incomprehensible.

GO TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE

