the brink

by

Roberto Benabib
&
Kim Benabib

6/12/13

"Pilot Episode"

OPEN ON: The golden lit rooftops of a foreign city. We hear the call to prayers and see the minarets of a huge mosque.

SUPER: "ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN"

EXT. AMERICAN EMBASSY COMPOUND - SUNSET

The flag and a Seal of the United States let us know this is sovereign territory. ALEX COPPINS, a junior Foreign Service Officer, (think young Robert Downey Jr.) walks out onto the large driveway. Workers wheel hand trucks stacked with cases of hard liquor past him.

ALEX
Keep the river flowing, boys.

Embassy SUVs and sedans are parked along the curb. A young locally employed driver reads a newspaper spread out across the hood of a Ford Taurus. This is RAFIQ MASSOUD.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Rafiq, we're going on a mission.

RAFIQ
A "mission?"

ALEX
I'm afraid it's classified.

Rafiq in the driver's seat, Alex in back. They pass through a checkpoint leading from the Diplomatic Enclave out onto the city grid. Spray painted graffiti-style on the outer side of the concrete wall that surrounds the enclave: 'BOOM!'

INT. FORD TAURUS - MOMENTS LATER

RAFIQ
Where am I taking you?

ALEX
The bazaar near Aabpara.

RAFIQ
I do not feel safe going out. There is rage in the air tonight.

ALEX
There's rage in the air every night. And paranoia. And misogyny. And virulent anti-semitism. Wonderful country you've got here. For once I'd love to see us nation-build a nation that doesn't hate our guts.

RAFIQ
I do not know what you are up to but if it is CIA I could be hung for helping a foreign agent.

ALEX
You know what your problem is? You telegraph fear. The militants can smell it on you.

RAFIQ
You telegraph arrogance. The militants want to cut your throat and put it on YouTube.

ALEX
Exactly. So you think I wanna take any risks? I only have to make it through five more days in this anal cavity of a country. No offense. Then next week I leave for the consulate in Vancouver. I've already ordered new skis.

RAFIQ
Take me with you.

ALEX
Canadian immigration's a bitch these days. Rafiq, I'm afraid our time together is coming to an end.

They drive off as the sun begins to set. We PULL BACK to see an ominous cloud of thick black smoke rising into the distant sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - SAME TIME

It's early morning. As the sun begins to rise we see an idling black SUV with official looking license plates and its driver waiting out front.

SUPER: "WASHINGTON D.C."

INT. HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

A beautiful naked Asian woman-- "JASMINE"-- straddles a distinguished looking man in his sixties. Meet U.S. Secretary of State WALTER HOLLANDER, tan, fit, very drunk. (Think Bill Murray.)

WALTER
Oooooh... Sweet Jeeeeesus...

As the sex continues Jasmine quietly reaches for a pillow and places it over Walter's face to suffocate him. We hear his drunken muffled screams from under the pillow. She holds the pillow firmly in place until he becomes silent. She slowly pulls the pillow away. His eyes are open but lifeless.

JASMINE
(long beat)
Walter...

She shakes him but he doesn't respond. He's dead. Then suddenly he begins laughing.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Shit. Don't scare me like that.

WALTER
Too soon. Sexy Ninja Assassin pulled the pillow away too soon. And you're supposed to ride me *while* I can't breathe.

Jasmine climbs off him.

JASMINE
Let's try something else.

WALTER
We'll get it. It's a timing issue.

She goes into the bathroom.

JASMINE (O.S.)
I don't want to go to jail for murder, Okay?

WALTER
They'd hit you with involuntary manslaughter. Not murder. Much harder to prove.

Walter fingers several prescription pills on the table. Pops a few into his mouth. Chases them with a glass of Scotch.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'm an iron horse. Sixty is the new thirty.

CLOSE UP on his silenced Blackberry lying on the floor as it lights up and begins vibrating. Sixteen new voice mails become seventeen. Jasmine returns and climbs onto the bed.

JASMINE
Why do all your sexual fantasies involve you getting murdered?

WALTER
Pretending I was dead was the only way I could get my mother's attention. How the hell should I know?

He holds out his now empty glass.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Just pour, baby.

She grabs a bottle of Macallan off of the nightstand and refills his glass. Suddenly they hear a forceful knocking on the door.

VOICE (O.S.)
Walter!

WALTER
Christ o'mighty!

Walter jumps off the bed. Whispers to Jasmine.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Answer it. Whoever it is, get rid of them.

He quickly hides in the closet. Jasmine throws on a robe and goes to the door.

JASMINE
Yes?

EXT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A young woman stands in front of the door. She has a no-nonsense air about her. This is KENDRA WILLIS.

KENDRA
I know you're in there, Walter!

JASMINE (O.S.)
There's no Walter here.

KENDRA
Open this door now!

Two Latina maids nearby move in and out of rooms being cleaned. Kendra walks over to their service cart, picks up a key card and uses it to open Walter's door.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

JASMINE
You can't come in here! I'll call security!

KENDRA
Walter!

Suddenly the closet door slides open to reveal a naked Walter holding a hotel laundry bag like a fig leaf.

WALTER
You better have a damn good reason for coming here.

Kendra grabs her cell and speed dials.

KENDRA
(into phone)
I found him. We'll be there in seven minutes.

JASMINE
You're not his wife.

KENDRA
Thank God.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - SAME TIME

Flight operations on an aircraft carrier. An F/A-18 Super Hornet lands, catching the arresting gear.

SUPER: "USS LINCOLN, ARABIAN SEA"

INT. USS LINCOLN - CONTINUOUS

Lieutenant Commander ZEKE CALLAHAN, fighter pilot, (think young Owen Wilson) stands at a bank of payphones where crew members can call home. Other crew wait nearby for a phone to become available.

ZEKE
Come on, pick up.

EXT. STRIP MALL, DESTIN FLORIDA - CONTINUOUS

ASHLEY, cheerleader pretty, is walking through a strip mall when she realizes her phone is ringing. She fishes through her bag and answers.

ASHLEY
(into phone)
Hello.

INTERCUT:

ZEKE
It's Zeke.

ASHLEY
Where are you?

ZEKE
Somewhere in the Arabian sea. Can't be too precise. Op Sec and all that. How are the kids?

ASHLEY
Good. When can you Skype with them?

ZEKE
Not for a while. We're under way.

ASHLEY
The guy from the bank called again. Sounds like they're gonna foreclose. I need you to increase the cash flow.

ZEKE
I keep telling you send me more product. I need inventory. This ship is filled with Oxy freaks.

ASHLEY
I'm not gonna break into my stock. You need to charge more. Your markup is pathetic.

ZEKE
They can't pay more. Most of these guys net two-fifty a week. After sending money home, X-Box, porn, there's not much left.

ASHLEY
I can make twice as much selling here. Tell me why I should send my inventory to some poor schmucks stuck on a boat?

ZEKE
If I get the supply I can open up new territory. I heard the submarine guys place huge orders, and they make hazard pay.

An officer approaches Zeke. This is wing operations officer DOUGAN.

DOUGAN
Zeke, we've been looking all over for you.

ZEKE
(cupping phone)
I'm off for twelve hours.

DOUGAN
Not anymore. You're back on. Shit is getting real. Admiral wants his best jocks in the air. And that definitely means you, Callahan. Get off the phone. Now.

Dougan walks off.

ZEKE
(into phone)
Ashley please. Send me more supply. It's my only way out.

ASHLEY
(into phone)
Sorry Zeke. I can sell it all here and hold off the bank. Gotta go. I'm late. And by the way, so is your alimony check. Bye.

She hangs up.

ZEKE
God damn.

EXT. STRIP MALL, DESTIN FLORIDA - CONTINUOUS

Ashley walks into a Walgreens pharmacy.

INT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

A long line of customers wait at the prescription counter. Ashley buttons up her white lab coat and walks behind the register. The MANAGER looks at her.

MANAGER
Ashley, I really need you to get here on time.

ASHLEY
I can take the first customer.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAZAAR, ISLAMABAD - SAME TIME

Rafiq pulls the car in front of a small shop. It's little more than a deep stall packed with Chinese made goods. The bazaar feels unusually empty. Alex can sense something's not right. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

ALEX
If I'm not back in ten minutes just drive off like nothing's wrong and call the op desk.

RAFIQ
Can I have your skis?

INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Alex enters. A bearded SHOPKEEPER stares at him with cold eyes.

ALEX
You have the package?

SHOPKEEPER
The price has gone up.

ALEX
What is it with you people? We agreed.

SHOPKEEPER
I agreed to nothing.

The shopkeeper starts to walk away.

ALEX
Wait. Whatever it is I can pay.

The shopkeeper stops, turns.

INT. FORD TAURUS - MOMENTS LATER

Alex gets back inside holding a plastic grocery bag.

ALEX
Quick. Back to the embassy, Tonto.

Rafiq speeds off as Alex pulls a small tin canister out of the bag. It's filled with what looks to be marijuana.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Much as I will relish leaving this place, I'm gonna miss your exquisite weed.

RAFIQ
Classified? Bullshit.

ALEX
Classified. Yes. If Eva from the German embassy finds out she'll send me to the gas chamber.

RAFIQ
A new one?

ALEX
Malena. Works on the consular desk at the Danish embassy. And I intend to conquer her at the big party tonight. Hence the primo smoke. Besides, I spend all day organizing clean water projects only to see them sabotaged by the Taliban. I deserve a little fun.

They turn up a street to see a large crowd of angry protesters chanting and waving banners we can't quite read.

ALEX (CONT'D)
That's no Disney parade.

RAFIQ
They are probably protesting the drones.

ALEX
Where do they find time to do all this protesting? Don't they have jobs?

Suddenly we hear a loud POP followed by THUD THUD THUD.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Please God. Let that not be us.

EXT. ISLAMABAD STREET - CONTINUOUS

Rafiq manages to pull the car over. He gets out. Inspects the front tire. Walks back over to the car window.

RAFIQ
Totally shredded. Somebody laid down nails.

ALEX
Screw you, God.

RAFIQ
Could have been an IED.

ALEX
Thank you, God.

The crowd of protesters is behind them now, marching closer and closer.

RAFIQ
They are coming after us.

ALEX
Somehow I don't see my brash charm converting them to Christianity.

Just then a rock smashes the rear window, shattering it.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I'm gonna be raped. I always knew this day would come. I just thought it would be in a Turkish jail cell so I could at least live out a few of my closeted fantasies.

RAFIQ
You must stop obsessing over all this man-rape and get out of the car.

Alex gets out of the car, clutching his bag of pot. They both start running as the crowd surrounds the car and starts rocking it from side to side attempting to tip it over. Alex and Rafiq sprint across the street to a gated alley. They climb the gate and drop onto the other side. From behind the gate they look back. The crowd finally tips the car on its side. Then a torch gets tossed inside. The car explodes into flames.

ALEX
I'm now responsible for thirty thousand dollars of government property getting torched.

RAFIQ
A drop in the bucket compared to what your government spends on militarizing the religious fanatics who run this country.

They run down the alley and come to another street. They scale the gate and drop onto the new street only to find another group of protesters chanting forty yards away.

RAFIQ (CONT'D)
This is not about the drones. It is organized. They are all converging on Jinnah Avenue.

ALEX
Which way back to the embassy?

RAFIQ
It is blocked. We will have to find a place to lay low.

ALEX
How about Vancouver?

They take a couple of turns and come to a wide avenue where a column of army tanks and trucks filled with soldiers passes. Officers on foot are directing the traffic. The column seems endless. Alex whips out his cell phone.

ALEX (CONT'D)
No service.

RAFIQ
The army has cut off cell reception.

ALEX
For this I could have stuck with AT&T.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - SAME TIME

We focus on the black SUV with official plates as it speeds down Pennsylvania Avenue.

INT. BLACK SUV - CONTINUOUS

Walter and Kendra in back. He's still drunk.

WALTER
Brief me.

KENDRA
Pakistan. Did you read through the binders I sent you?

WALTER
Unless they were encrypted on the vaginal walls of an Asian call girl, no. What binders?

KENDRA
The ones marked Secretary of State on the covers.

WALTER
Shit, I think I left them at Bobby Van's.

KENDRA
We'll need to send someone to track them down and shred them.

WALTER
Billy can do it.

KENDRA
Billy?

WALTER
Bartender there. Great kid. Now tell me everything I need to know and not a goddamn thing more.

INT. WHITE HOUSE WEST WING CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

We TRACK Walter as he rushes down the hall trailed by Kendra.

WALTER
This job sucks ass. I should've asked for Secretary of Interior like my wife told me.

KENDRA
Too late.

Walter pauses at the door to tuck in his shirt tail.

WALTER
I need hair of the dog pronto.

KENDRA
You know there's no alcohol allowed in the situation room.

WALTER
Then make it look like orange juice. Christ. You think LBJ fought Vietnam in that room sober?

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Walter and Kendra enter. All of the principal national security players are seated around the table: CIA, NSC, CHIEF OF STAFF, VP, CHAIR JOINT CHIEFS, the Secretary of Defense PIERCE MULLEN, and Walter. PRESIDENT JULIAN NAVARRO, sits at the head. He's young, Hispanic, handsome and the adult in the room. Kendra takes her seat at the perimeter with the other aides. Walter takes a seat at the table and reaches across it for a chrome pitcher of water. He pours a cup and chugs it like a hangover cure.

PIERCE
Are you sick? You don't look well.

WALTER
Never been better.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Walter. Finally someone who knows what's going on in the world. What the hell's going down in Pakistan?

WALTER
There are curfews in Islamabad and Karachi. The diplomatic enclaves are sealed. Radio and TV are down. Internet is down.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Why can't we reach their ambassador?

WALTER
He was recalled. It's a signal.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Signal of what?

WALTER
Last call. Stools on the bar. No more business as usual. Smells like a coup.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
I need to know by who.

CIA
At the present time we can't answer that.

PIERCE
Mister President, right now all of Pakistan's nuclear warheads are at risk. Imagine Al Qaeda getting their hands on them. Our contingency plan needs to be put in motion immediately. CENTCOM needs an answer.

CHAIR JOINT CHIEFS
We've already begun putting assets in the air. We can always recall.

WALTER
Whoa... gentlemen, let's all just take a breath here and tuck our tiny little peckers back in our pants. And by the way, if we're gonna get into another war we oughta at least warn the Fed so they can start printing more money.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Who do we have on the streets outside the embassy?

WALTER
Besides a few hundred thousand pissed off Pakistanis?

CIA
We're still checking on that. Most of our key people were at the embassy for a social function when it got sealed off.

WALTER
It was the annual 'This country's a ticking bomb so we might as well all get shit-faced' gala.

CIA
The timing of all this was no accident.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
We need eyes and ears on the ground goddamn it!

An AIDE whispers to Walter.

AIDE
A guy named Billy called. Says he's a bartender at Bobby Van's. He says it's important.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISLAMABAD STREET - SAME TIME

Alex and Rafiq make their way through the city. The army columns still roll through. Protesters are chanting. Rafiq shoves Alex out of sight then approaches an army officer. They exchange words in Urdu. Rafiq heads back to Alex.

RAFIQ
We have to get off the streets.

ALEX
And go where?

RAFIQ
We will go to my parents' house. It is not far.

ALEX
I'm sure all they hear from you is what a jerk I am. They must hate me.

RAFIQ
Do not worry. They are too busy hating each other.

CUT TO:

INT. USS LINCOLN, PRE-FLIGHT AREA - SAME TIME

Pilots are suiting up all around. Zeke stands in front of his locker which has photos of his two young children (boy and girl) taped to the door.

ZEKE
Even though Mommy can be a cold hearted bitch sometimes, Daddy crazy misses you two little peeps.

Zeke kiss touches each photo. Weapons officer Lt GLENN TAYLOR, wiry good old boy, approaches.

GLENN
Rock and roll, buddy.

We TRACK them as they head up to the flight deck.

GLENN (CONT'D)
Hey, you know that public affairs officer Gale what's-her-name. Real cute.

ZEKE
Gale Sweet?

GLENN
Yeah. I heard she's pregnant.

ZEKE
What?

GLENN
CJ from the medical unit told me. Whoever she's bonking, the luckiest guy on this ship just became the unluckiest.

ZEKE
She's not pregnant. She can't be.

GLENN
How would you know? Oh shit.

ZEKE
Christ! I'm dealing with two underwater mortgages and child support. Been living on credit cards since flight school. I've got a lot on my plate. I don't need this.

GLENN
I worry about you, Zeke.

ZEKE
If I don't expand my ex'll cut off my supply and I'm screwed. I mean, I could teach people how to move pills for me. Two hundred and eighty-six ships in the Navy. I've been doing the math. I could get associates working the whole fleet.

They move through a long corridor.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
You in?

GLENN
No way. Was thinking of quitting and flying for FedEx or JetBlue.

ZEKE
Hate to be the one to break this to you, but FedEx jobs are rarer than a hen's tooth and JetBlue pays shit.

GLENN
Where'd you hear this?

ZEKE
Why do you think Corrigan just re-upped? Busted my ass to serve my country and I can't even keep my head above water. Shoulda been a plumber like my brother, son of a bitch makes out like a bandit.

They climb stairs.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
So you with me?

GLENN
Doesn't sound like I have a choice.

ZEKE
Roger that.

They hit the flight deck which is bursting with activity.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Now someone please tell me who the heck we're supposed to bomb the shit out of?

CUT TO:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET, ISLAMABAD - SAME TIME

Alex and Rafiq walk along a deserted leafy street with walled compounds. They share a joint.

ALEX
Word is Walter Hollander's gonna make a run for president. And the last time he was here I hooked him up with girls. He told me that he and I were, and I quote, cut from the same cloth. If he gets elected it'll be payback time.

RAFIQ
Why are you here?

ALEX
I can't get back to the goddamn embassy.

RAFIQ
No. I mean why are you in the foreign service? You make a miserable diplomat.

Rafiq passes the joint to Alex who takes a long hit.

ALEX
Because when all the other pricks in my class at Dartmouth went off to Wall Street to suck every last nickel from the poor and middle class I didn't wanna be one of them. Hard as it may be for you to fathom, I wanna make a difference.

RAFIQ
By procuring prostitutes for your boss?

ALEX
An army marches on its stomach. Walter Hollander marches on his dick. So what?
(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)
May not seem like it but underneath all that Hollander's a good man.

RAFIQ
I have heard he tips well.

Rafiq opens a corrugated metal gate and they walk through. Behind the wall is a well-kept garden driveway.

ALEX
This is nice. You live here?

RAFIQ
What were you expecting?

ALEX
A mud hut. Stray goats.

RAFIQ
What does it feel like to be such an asshole?

ALEX
Face it. The world is run by assholes. Bows to assholes. Show me one person in a position of power who isn't an asshole.

RAFIQ
My father.

ALEX
Your mother might beg to differ.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Kendra arrives holding a styrofoam cup.

WALTER
Fresh squeezed?

KENDRA
Just like you asked for.

Walter takes a huge gulp. Then he leans over and looks at a document in front of the CIA director. He puts his glasses on and picks it up. The CIA director grabs it back.

CIA
I'm sorry. That hasn't been prepared for you.

WALTER
(to President Navarro)
See. I told you these assholes don't share all their intel. They hold stuff back that contradicts their conclusions.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Knock it off, Walter. Let him continue.

Walter grumbles and gulps his "orange juice."

CIA
Thank you. We now believe that whoever's in charge has assumed command and control of their nuclear arsenal and is attempting to relocate the warheads.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Terrific.

PIERCE
We have to take out the key sites before they can be moved. Once they're hidden it'll be too late.

WALTER
Your plan to "take out the sites" has been around for years. Some of those locations are just guesses. It's your same lousy intel that missed Bin Laden year after year while he was throwing keggers every night right in the middle of Abbottabad.

PIERCE
Then what's your proposal?

WALTER
We raise it at the UN Security Council and call a regional summit.

PIERCE
Are you on the level? The region will be a smoking ruin before your summit can negotiate a group rate on hotel rooms.

WALTER
Not bad. Who's writing your material?

CUT TO:

INT. RAFIQ'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Alex and Rafiq stand in the living room of the Massoud family home. With them are Rafiq's mom, NEEMA, and his father RAFIQ SENIOR. They look upscale, intelligent, and pretty much like every other unhappily married couple.

RAFIQ
This is Alex. The one I have been telling you all about.

NEEMA
Why do you treat our son so badly?

RAFIQ SENIOR
Neema! He is lucky to have this job!

NEEMA
My little Rafi has gained so much weight since he started working for you people. What are you feeding him?

ALEX
Corn syrup. Trans fats. Nitrites. We bring all the comforts of home.

RAFIQ SENIOR
Ignore my wife. My son is very happy working for you.

NEEMA
You are exporting diabetes. At least you could pay a little more.

ALEX
Republicans in Congress cut our staffing budget. They believe earning a living wage makes people stupid and lazy.

Alex looks at all the books lining the shelves.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Mind if I ask what you do?

RAFIQ SENIOR
I am a writer.

RAFIQ
He writes popular fiction. Spy novels, thrillers. Translated into seven languages.

RAFIQ SENIOR
Knopf has an offer on the table.

Neema turns to her husband, upset.

NEEMA
A very *generous* offer.

RAFIQ SENIOR
I refuse to give up movie and television rights. The Middle East is hot right now.

Just then an older man comes down the stairs using a cane. This is ANWAR, Rafiq's great uncle. A true malcontent.

ANWAR
What is going on? Who is this?

NEEMA
It is Rafi's friend from the American embassy.

RAFIQ
This is my great uncle Anwar. He is a renowned psychologist. Teaches at the university.

Anwar points his cane at Alex and jabs him in the chest.

ANWAR
You work for the CIA, don't you?

ALEX
No. Honest, I'm just a low level State Department functionary.

The family begins speaking amongst themselves in another language. Alex can only watch as he doesn't understand a word.

RAFIQ SENIOR
(subtitled)
Does he speak Urdu?

RAFIQ
(subtitled)
A U.S. State Department Official actually bothering to learn the native language? You must be joking.

ANWAR
(subtitled)
He is CIA.

RAFIQ SENIOR
(subtitled)
Calm down. He is not CIA, is he Rafi?

RAFIQ
(subtitled)
I seriously doubt it.

NEEMA
(subtitled)
On the other hand, if he is CIA and we turn him in, that would surely blow the Knopf deal.

Alex is now totally paranoid.

ALEX
Is everything okay?

RAFIQ
Everything is fine.

ALEX
Do any of you know what's happening out there? Has there been any news?

RAFIQ SENIOR
Just bits and pieces.

ANWAR
...of people who they believe to be CIA collaborators.

Off Alex's reaction we...

CUT TO:

EXT. USS LINCOLN - SAME TIME

Flight operations lit by the glow of the jet engines. The crew is busy launching jets. Zeke and Glenn are doing their equipment checks under the aircraft when Dougan appears.

DOUGAN
Zeke. You're being singled out for something special.

ZEKE
What is it?

DOUGAN
Can't tell you. Just get on station and await further instructions.

ZEKE
What the hell's going on?

DOUGAN
You now know as much as I do.

He presses some cash into Zeke's hand.

DOUGAN (CONT'D)
And here's the fifty I owe you for the Adderall. How soon can you get me more?

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

An AIDE runs over to the AV panel on the table and punches up a new image on one of the screens.

AIDE
Pakistani TV is back up!

On screen a man wearing a traditional kurta collar shirt, addresses the camera. This is UMAIR PASHA. There's no sound at first.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Can we get sound?

AIDE
Working on it.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Who the hell is he?

CIA
Umair Pasha. Former General. Ex-ISI. Left and went totally radical. Beyond the pale. But has lots of support within the Army. It looks like he's in charge now.

The sound comes on and we can hear Umair Pasha speaking in Urdu. Walter turns to the row of aides at the perimeter.

WALTER
Which one of you speaks Urdu?

A young regional specialist named NIRYA raises her hand. She's stunning - think Padma Lakshmi.

NIRYA
I do, sir.

Her beauty is not lost on Walter.

WALTER
Lovely. If you could please translate.

NIRYA
He's saying the drone war being carried out inside Pakistan's sovereign borders is illegal. The former government was complicit in these crimes. He says the US drone war is a Zionist conspiracy.

PIERCE
This is full-blown Chomsky.

NIRYA
He says the American-Zionist drones have spread dangerous electromagnetic activity across Pakistan.

She hesitates.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Yes. Keep going.

NIRYA
This electromagnetic energy is a secret diabolical program to alter the reproductive biology of our girls and to emasculate our boys.

WALTER
What are they calling it? The San Francisco Project?

CUT TO:

INT. RAFIQ'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Alex and Rafiq's family watch the same speech on the TV in the living room.

ALEX
What's he saying?

RAFIQ
Something about the drones being a form of birth control invented by the Israelis.
(laughs)
He is off his rocker.

ANWAR
Yes, Umair Pasha is certifiable. In fact, I certified him. He suffered a full psychotic break about five years ago.

ALEX
You treated him?

ANWAR
He was a patient of mine for many years. Acute episodic schizophrenia. A textbook case really.

ALEX
So much for doctor patient confidentiality.

RAFIQ
The militants will eat it up. There will be rioting.

RAFIQ SENIOR
Just what he wants.

At that moment a beautiful young woman comes down the stairs. This is Rafiq's sister, FAREEDA. Alex takes notice.

ALEX
Don't believe we've been introduced.

RAFIQ
This is my sister Fareeda.

Alex pulls Rafiq aside.

ALEX
(sotto)
You never told me she was hot.

RAFIQ
(sotto)
I did not want you adding her to your list of conquests. The last thing she needs is an STD.

FAREEDA
You must be my brother's insufferable oversexed boss.

Alex turns to Rafiq.

ALEX
Jeez. You didn't do me any favors, did you?

Fareeda ignores Alex and turns to her family.

FAREEDA
Have you been listening to this lunatic on the television?

They all turn their attention back to the TV as we...

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Nirya is still translating the speech.

NIRYA
"...We cannot stand by while our ability to reproduce is attacked in this way. We will respond by using our long range power to remove the Zionist state. Israel is an illegal entity..."

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Did he say remove?

NIRYA
Yes. Remove.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
What's the range on their missiles?

CHAIR JOINT CHIEFS
They can reach Tel Aviv.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Terrific.

NIRYA
"...Tonight we have made history. Good night and Allah be with you."

The signal in the situation room goes dark. It's replaced by the logo for CENTCOM in Tampa. There's a beat of stunned silence.

WALTER
(to Nirya)
Great job.

He leans back toward Kendra.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Get her details. Then call my wife and convince her that this time I'm actually really working late.

AIDE
Prime Minister of Israel on line one.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Oy.

CUT TO:

INT. F/A-18 HORNET - SAME TIME

Zeke's in the front seat of this tandem cockpit jet. Glenn in back. They're waiting to be hooked up to the catapult.

ZEKE
Dude, I'm really nervous. This isn't my thing. Why'd they have to choose me?

GLENN
You kidding? After downing that Iranian arms shipment you're a rock star. They've got plans for you.

ZEKE
Unless those plans include debt relief I'm not interested.

GLENN
C'mon man. This is your chance to shine a light on it. Just relax and be Zeke.

Zeke removes his flight mask, pops a pill into his mouth.

GLENN (CONT'D)
What was that?

ZEKE
Xanax.

GLENN
Gimme one.

Zeke hands one back to Glenn who does the same.

GLENN (CONT'D)
I love flying with you.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE, SITUATION ROOM - SAME TIME

President Navarro is on the phone.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
(into phone)
Avi... I understand your concern... slow down... Avi, please... We're in the process of finding out what he meant... I promise you we will not let that happen... As soon as I know more I will call you... Yes, I promise that unlike your grandchildren I *will* call.

He hangs up.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO (CONT'D)
Walter, talk to me.

WALTER
There are moderate elements waiting in the wings. Give me twenty-four hours to find another way.

PIERCE
We don't have twenty-four hours. Mister President, we need to remove those weapons now.

WALTER
Spoken like a true chicken hawk.

PIERCE
You're outta line!

WALTER
Am I? I completed two tours of duty in Vietnam and was awarded the purple heart defending the last helicopter out of Saigon before my twenty-first birthday. All the while you were spending your deferment date raping Radcliffe girls.

PIERCE
Fuck you, Hollander!

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Enough! Jesus, what is it with you two?

They both look away like chastised schoolchildren.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO (CONT'D)
I need a tie breaker.

CUT TO:

INT. RAFIQ'S HOUSE, GUEST BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Alex is lying awake on the bed. He gets up, walks to the door, puts his ear against it to listen. He carefully exits to a darkened hallway.

INT. RAFIQ'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alex steps slowly so as not to make a sound. He turns into a study and gently closes the door behind him.

INT. RAFIQ'S HOUSE, STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Alex switches on a desk lamp. He fingers some papers on the desk, then sees a file cabinet. He opens one of the drawers and flips through the file tabs. He closes that drawer and opens the next one. Near the end of the tabs he stops on a file. It reads Pasha, Umair. Alex pulls it out and thumbs through the pages. It's a medical file. There are pages of psychiatric analysis with Anwar's signature at the bottom.

ALEX
Forget Vancouver. I want Paris for this.

Alex looks around. He walks to a fax machine in the corner, places it all on the fax tray, and punches in a number. Alex presses the send button. The pages begin to slowly feed into the machine. Just then the door bursts open. Anwar walks in using his cane.

ANWAR
What are you doing?

Anwar starts rapping his cane against Alex.

ALEX
Ahh, stop! Stop! Or I'll break that thing in half and shove it up your wrinkled, pock-marked ass!

They become entangled in a struggle. Anwar manages to hit the fax with his cane, but the pages continue to feed. Alex grabs the cane to keep him from hitting the fax. They both have a hand on the cane now. Rafiq arrives at the door.

RAFIQ
What is going on in here?

ANWAR
He is CIA! I knew it!

Anwar gets his cane back and smashes the fax again. The fax is now jammed. Only half the pages have gone through.

CUT TO:

INT. F/A-18 HORNET - SAME TIME

Zeke and Glenn take off and make the steep climb for higher altitude.

GLENN
Boy. That Xanax is really startin' to kick in.

ZEKE
Wait. This target's right in the middle of a majorly populated area in Pakistan.

GLENN
Yeah, we went over it in the pre-flight, remember?

ZEKE
To be honest I wasn't really paying attention. In case you haven't noticed, I'm a little preoccupied today. I'm gonna re-confirm.
(to the flight deck)
Flight op this is alpha kilo one eight nine...

Zeke takes out two wallet sized photos of his young children. Places them in a space on his instrument panel.

FLIGHT OP (O.S.)
Go ahead one eight nine...

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CIA
A medical file on Umair Pasha just came in from a source on the ground.

An aide distributes copies of the report around the table.

WALTER
(sotto, to aide)
While you're at it why don't you grab the menu book?

CIA
It came from a guy named Alex Coppins.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Who's he?

CIA
Low-level embassy guy. Works on clean water malaria projects, that sort of thing.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
One of yours, Walter?

WALTER
(holy crap, he's my pimp)
Never heard of him.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
So he's CIA under diplomatic cover?

CIA
No. Apparently he applied a couple times but we rejected him.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Well, he's working for you now. And probably risked his life for country to get this to us.
(rifling through)
It says here page five of twelve. Where's the rest?

CIA
Transmission ended abruptly. We're pinpointing the phone number.

An aide hands Walter a thick black binder.

WALTER
...anybody object to Thai food?

CIA
Report says Umair Pasha's been treated for episodes of delusion and personality disorder going back a decade. Suffered a full psychotic break in 2009.

PIERCE
There's your tie breaker.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
Pierce. Set your plan in motion.

Pierce turns and grins at Walter triumphantly.

AIDE
Got a location on Alex Coppins! Looks like a house in a residential district in Islamabad.

A satellite image on the screen zooms in on Rafiq's street.

CUT TO:

INT. RAFIQ'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

The family surrounds Alex. He looks scared.

ANWAR
You have been caught red handed!

FAREEDA
We are all going to be shot because of this pompous douche bag.

ALEX
I'm sure you meant that as the compliment it was intended to be.

Just then there's a loud pounding at the door. Fareeda looks out the window.

FAREEDA
It is the army.

ANWAR
We should turn him over to them and be done with it!

ALEX
Rafiq, come on. This is crazy. You know me. We're pals.

As the pounding on the door gets louder we...

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Walter enters, takes his seat, addresses the room:

WALTER
Just got off the phone with the Chinese ambassador. He's warning any action against Pakistan will be seen as an act of aggression against an ally and give China license to move on their disputed border with India. This plan is starting to unleash some major pin action.

Kendra leans forward and whispers in Walter's ear.

KENDRA
Indian ambassador just called. He sounds freaked out. They're going on full alert. Also, potstickers or eggroll? It comes with.

WALTER
Eggroll. And get me in touch with my old friend Naroon Raja in the ISI. If we have any hope of averting armageddon that two faced Paki weasel Raja is it.

Kendra nods, runs off. President Navarro turns to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
I want zero civilian casualties.

WALTER
(under his breath)
...and I wanna fuck Heidi Klum...

CHAIR JOINT CHIEFS
Mister President, there are no guarantees in war. But I have a high degree of confidence in the array of assets we've deployed.

AIDE
General Stanton on screen two.

On the screen we see the CENTCOM commander GENERAL RODERICK STANTON at MacDill Air Force base in Tampa.

PIERCE
General, who's the tip of the spear?

WALTER
(under his breath)
Tip of the spear? What a tool...

GENERAL STANTON
Carrier Strike Group Nine off the USS Lincoln. We're talking some of the best pilots this country has ever sent into harm's way. Mister President, I'd like to show you something now that'll put you right in the middle of all the action...

One of the screens shows a live video feed from Zeke's cockpit. A nervous Zeke clears his throat.

ZEKE
Uh. Hello Mister President. Zeke-- I mean-- Lieutenant Commander Zeke Callahan here--

GLENN'S VOICE
Zeke, I'm startin' to feel really weird.

ZEKE
Oh shit!

Suddenly the sound cuts out on the live feed.

PRESIDENT NAVARRO
What's going on?

AIDE
We seem to have lost audio.

CUT TO:

INT. F/A-18 HORNET - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON: Zeke's finger which has just flipped a toggle switch on his radio marked 'Mute Transmission.'

ZEKE
Think I might have mixed up the pills.

GLENN
What the hell did we take?

ZEKE
If it's what I think it is we're in for one hell of a ride.

GLENN
Holy Christ, Zeke!

ZEKE
Man, I am having one lousy day.

EXT. F/A-18 HORNET - CONTINUOUS

As the jet peels off on its mission we read...

TO BE CONTINUED

(Reader note: This series will follow this crisis in real time through the three arenas as it plays out over the course of an entire season. Subsequent seasons will explore new crisis with the same major characters. Think a comical 24.)