

BLOOD AND OIL

Teaser:

We open with McGINTY and VANOWEN in a truck, barreling along a deserted Iraqi highway. Up ahead, a roadblock, and trouble. McGinty insists he can bribe their way through, but as they slow down, they see they've made a bad mistake. Vanowen hits the gas and makes an end-run around the roadblock. Road warrior chase ensues, with the bad guys showing mysterious reluctance to risk damaging the truck's cargo—whatever it is. The chase ends with McGinty and Vanowen surrendering to a band of angry Iraqi militia. It looks like curtains for our heroes even before their series has begun.

MAIN TITLES

Act I:

Vanowen and McGinty are held prisoner by the Iraqi band, along with one very scared Norwegian, who was doing oil consulting. Unexpectedly, the big boss turns out to be not the Sadr-like radical they expect, but an American civilian—BARKER. And they know each other: Vanowen and McGinty used to work for him until they quit to start their own company. There's no love lost between them, but Barker lets them go, along with the Norwegian, with a warning to stay off his turf. McGinty pushes their luck and gets the remaining Iraqis released as well. (We get the feeling that if it weren't for the presence of McGinty and Vanowen, Barker might well have found it easier to simply kill them all.) On their way out, they glimpse the truck's precious cargo being unloaded: a high-end Viking range.

Back to their home office in Connecticut, where we meet McGinty's sister and bookkeeper TINA, and get the bigger picture: Falcon is a mom-and-pop startup, their first Iraq contract has ended in a fiasco, and they're broke. Into this situation walks an unexpected savior—the Norwegian, now cleaned up as a respectable oil consultant. He's with a group of European oil execs traveling to Venezuela, and wants to hire Falcon to provide close protection. They jump at the job.

Cut to Venezuela airport: We see Vanowen and McGinty organize security for the arriving execs. In addition to the Norwegian, they'll be protecting the Norwegian's teenage niece DAGNY and her father (both Americans).

At a posh welcoming party thrown by local oil exec ROMERO, the visiting execs and their families mingle. Dagny soon finds friends among their Venezuelan hosts' kids, who whisk her off, making Vanowen's task more challenging. (The hosts have their own bodyguards, but he can't count on them to do his job.) But it seems she's up to nothing more sinister than smoking and flirting with Romero's teenage son FELIX.

Next day, the big oil refinery tour: Our guys keep a sharp eye on everything and everyone. Even McGinty thinks he's being overly paranoid; after all, PDVSA (the state oil company) has plenty of security of its own.

Dagny's dad, over Vanowen's objections, has let her go to the beach with her new friends. This means Vanowen, who can't be in two places at once, has to send two men with them, and check in by remote. The beach-trip bodyguards report no problems—but on a hunch, Vanowen double-checks. Sure enough, Dagny has traded outfits with another girl so she can slip off with her new boyfriend Felix for a few hours. She's gone.

Act II:

Vanowen and McGinty race to track down the missing girl. They find Felix terrified and alone. Vanowen's worst fears are confirmed: Dagny's been kidnapped.

Our guys start to grill Felix, but the kidnap-and-ransom people descend: PDVSA security, police investigators, insurance people.

McGinty doesn't buy the official consensus that this was a straight criminal kidnap for ransom; he suspects the kidnapers have someone on the inside, maybe someone who wants to scuttle the Norwegian oil bid?

While the officials wrangle, our guys steal the PDVSA personnel files of everyone on the security detail, and check through them looking for anyone who doesn't fit. Suddenly Vanowen stops: he recognizes HECTOR GONZALES, a CIA operative he worked with in Nicaragua, on a covert op that went bad. You don't go from elite sniper assassin to straight bodyguard work. Something's up.

At that moment the phone rings: It's the kidnapers with their demands. Everyone jumps into action; proof of life and ransom instructions ensue. It seems the police were right, they're ordinary criminals, which means there's a good chance of saving her.

Vanowen and McGinty handle the ransom drop. Vanowen, as usual, is tense and hates to leave anything up to others. Sure enough, someone screws up: A shot is fired, sparking an all-out firefight despite Vanowen's shouted orders to stop. Two of the kidnapers are killed; the survivors flee with the girl. It's a disaster.

Act III:

Back at headquarters, the mood is somber; all know there's a good chance the girl will be killed in reprisal. Through a soundproof window, Vanowen sees Felix and his father in a screaming argument. On a hunch, he takes McGinty, and they snatch the kid as he's leaving. Vanowen scares Felix into admitting the truth: He recognized one of the kidnapers as a laborer who's done some work for his dad Romero.

Romero and his compatriots (a radical element of the Venezuelan power elite) staged the kidnapping in order to scare off the European investment and further their own agenda. He promised his son the girl wouldn't be harmed—but Vanowen thinks otherwise.

He's sure now that the men who hired the kidnapers touched off the firefight deliberately, figuring no survivors = no witnesses. But one of them got away with the girl, so now the killers need to finish the cleanup job.

Felix leads them to the kidnapper's house. His terrified wife insists she doesn't know where he is, even when McGinty tries to convince her they're his only hope of survival. Then Vanowen spots the clue that tells him the girl's here—*right here*. But there's no time to run away—the killers have arrived.

Act IV:

Vanowen, McGinty and Felix hole up with the kidnapper, his wife and Dagny, as the *real* bad guys surround the house. They're a deadly, well-armed hit squad, led by Gonzales. Vanowen's one advantage—the killers don't know who's inside, they're expecting this to be a pushover—disappears when they ID the car. So it's Vanowen's tactical military skills against those of his former colleague. A suspenseful shootout, in which Vanowen wipes out the entire hit squad... at a price. On his side, he loses the kidnapper. Felix, who with brave/stupid recklessness defies Vanowen's order to stay put, is hit, but he'll live.

Police arrive, and immediately start covering up and changing evidence around; it's clear the "gangster" story is going to be the official one. Vanowen and McGinty don't even bother to fight it; that's not their job. Romero arrives, full of parental anguish, to find his son alive and wounded. Out of loyalty to his dad, Felix backs up the official story, but gives him a look that lets us know all is *not* forgiven.

In closing, we see Vanowen and McGinty on bodyguard duty, as the fun-loving Norwegians including Dagny, her dad and uncle enjoy a village fair. For once, Vanowen's relatively relaxed with no danger in sight. Just then Felix shows up (clearly over his dad's objections), Dagny lights up to see him, and they run off together. Vanowen scowls and prepares to follow, but McGinty holds him back. Let them pretend the world is fine. It's not our job to snuff out all hope and happiness.