

PHOTO OP

By

Nick J. Scott

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET (SOUK AHRAS) - DAY

Rundown breeze block buildings and steel covered storefronts line the narrow road. Arabic signs hang above the shuttered businesses. A thin veil of dust blankets the area.

The street is devoid of life, almost silent if not for a low RUMBLE in the distance, like a herd of elephants approaching.

CALEB MILLER (30s) races around the corner, hauls ass down the middle of the street. Stubborn, experienced, driven by determination. A beard covers his chiseled jaw.

He clutches a digital SLR camera in one hand as another dangles from his neck. A backpack hugs his strong frame.

Caleb stops, turns and aims his camera back up the street.

He waits. The RUMBLE is close.

Hundreds of PROTESTORS suddenly round the corner, marching toward Caleb. The roar of their ARABIC CHANT consumes the heavy air as they stomp with the rhythm of a massive heart, fists held high.

Caleb SNAPS PICTURES as he scuttles backwards:

An ELDERLY WOMAN, her weathered face brown from the sun --

A FATHER chanting passionately, his young SON in his arms --

PROTESTORS swarming past, parting around Caleb --

A ringing PHONE barely cuts through the noise. Caleb fishes through his pocket, pulls out a satellite phone and presses it against his ear. His editor VINCENT is on the other end.

CALEB  
(into phone)  
This is not a good time!

VINCENT (V.O.)  
(over phone)  
You at the protest?

CALEB  
What do you think?!

The CHANTING dominates now. Caleb pushes through the protestors and ducks into --

AN ALLEY

He crouches down, leans against the wall. Plugs one ear.

VINCENT (V.O.)  
Anything happen?

CALEB  
Not yet, but it's gonna. Still no  
cops!

VINCENT (V.O.)  
You'll get the same old shots and  
file the same old story.

CALEB  
I knew you loved my work! Why the  
fuck are you calling?

VINCENT (V.O.)  
Because I pay your bills and you  
pay mine. Got an assignment.

CALEB  
I'm working one.

VINCENT (V.O.)  
Then where are my shots of the  
village? Or my interview with the  
militants?

CALEB  
They're coming.

VINCENT (V.O.)  
You said that months ago. Forget  
about them. I've got something  
big. An actress is headed there.

CALEB  
To northern Algeria?

VINCENT (V.O.)  
She's touring an orphanage  
tomorrow. We need pictures.

CALEB  
Of a fucking celebrity?!

VINCENT (V.O.)  
It's just a few shots.

CALEB  
And a shit load of money.

Caleb rises to his feet, steps back into --

THE STREET

-- and immediately blends in with the protestors as they continue down the street. A giant wave of humans.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Look, you want to keep doing what you're doing? Then we need those shots. Just trying to survive.

CALEB

You sure you want to use that expression with me?

The CHANTING begins to really swell.

CALEB (CONT'D)

I can't have this conversation right now!

VINCENT (V.O.)

Call me tonight?

CALEB

If I don't get blown up!

VINCENT (V.O.)

Stop being so dramatic.

Caleb hangs up the phone, shoves it into his pocket. Pushes through the mass of people as he fights for position.

He spins, raises the camera, aims back up the street when --

AN EXPLOSION

-- throws Caleb to the earth. Fire and concrete spray across the crowd. Bodies sail through the air.

Black smoke floods the chaotic mess. SCREAMING dominates.

Caleb bounces to his feet, begins FIRING AWAY:

PROTESTORS stagger away from the choking smoke --

Two TEENS drag an injured WOMAN --

A lonely SEVERED HAND wedged up against a building --

Charred remains of a BODY, bare feet untouched by flames --

An injured CHILD CRIES, ignored by fleeing protestors --

Caleb lowers the camera, watches the helpless child. Their eyes lock. He suddenly darts toward the child when --

ANOTHER EXPLOSION