

Ops

"BLOOD AND OIL"

written by

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FADE IN:

WE ARE FLYING

along a remote desert road, scrub brush and trash flanking each side of the narrow path.

MUSIC is pounding, intense, built with layers of exotic instruments: flute-like zamrs, spike-fiddles and hand-drums.

TITLE OVER:

SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN

A MILITARY CARGO VEHICLE

pulls into frame. It's going over 70, a thick wedge of dust rising behind it. As it passes, we look into the back, where two AFGHANIS with M4 rifles guard a tarp-covered object the size of four coffins.

INT. VEHICLE CAB - DAY

The driver is an American: THEO VANOWEN (mid-30's to 40's). Effortlessly intimidating, he's fought on four continents and killed many men -- but not one more than he had to. He keeps both eyes scanning the road.

VANOWEN

Is it a camel?

MCGINTY

No. That's twelve.

His business partner, JOE MCGINTY (late 20's to 30's), is more MBA than Marine. Much better with words than weapons, he's an expert negotiator who could talk his way past St. Peter. Both men wear body armor.

VANOWEN

A mountain?

MCGINTY

You're sure you've done this before.

VANOWEN

Yeah.

MCGINTY

Because it's not really a brute force kind of game. You have to have a system. You're constantly trying to winnow it down to smaller categories.

VANOWEN

You got your way, I got mine.

MCGINTY

Okay, but your way will never work.

VANOWEN

Is it a toaster?

MCGINTY

No! That's fourteen.

Noticing something in the distance...

VANOWEN

Heads up.

EXT. THE ROAD - DAY

A pile of BURNING JUNK blocks the road ahead. A half-dozen AFGHANI GUNMEN spill out of two JEEPS and one stakebed TRUCK. A ragtag group, they wear no uniforms, but carry M4 rifles.

INTERCUT WITH VANOWEN / MCGINTY

MCGINTY

And suddenly it's a toll road.

McGinty's not just being flip -- this is pretty common here.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

We're good. We'll pay 'em off.

VANOWEN

Don't count on it. How many cars have we passed in the last hour?

MCGINTY

One.

VANOWEN

Two. And they're both behind us.

IN MCGINTY'S MIRROR,

we see a PICKUP TRUCK and a RUSTED CAR closing from behind.
Inside are MORE AFGHANI GUNMEN, aiming.

MCGINTY

That's not encouraging.

Vanowen picks up the walkie, speaks into it --

VANOWEN

Hold on!

Vanowen suddenly veers off the road. He's an ace at the wheel, completely in his zone. He jackknifes the truck, slams it into a new direction.

EXT. BACK OF THE TRUCK - DAY

The two Afghanis cling on for dear life. The heavy cargo strains against its moorings.

Looking back, we see the two vehicles following them have gone off-road as well.

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAY

The three vehicles making up the roadblock ROAR back to life, the gunmen piling back in.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

McGinty and Vanowen's truck leads the way across the scrub desert, kicking up a massive cloud of dust. The other five vehicles fall into a phalanx behind it.

INT. CAB OF THE TRUCK - DAY

Despite the pressure, Vanowen stays frosty. McGinty tries to pinpoint their location with a map and a GPS.

MCGINTY

They're not shooting.

VANOWEN

They want the cargo intact.

Spotting something in the distance, Vanowen veers right.

VANOWEN (CONT'D)

Coming up on a road.

MCGINTY
(checking map)
Got it. Take it. Left.

INTERCUT INSIDE / OUTSIDE

Vanowen cuts onto the new road.

INT. THE TRUCK - DAY

Suddenly, the truck starts to slow down.

McGinty shoots a look at Vanowen -- what's he doing?

Vanowen floors the pedal. The truck continues to slow.
Apparently the desert sand doesn't agree with its innards.

VANOWEN
How much you pay for this truck?

The nimble Jeeps move up on both sides, flanking them --

MCGINTY
Six.

VANOWEN
Get a refund.

A burst of MACHINE GUN FIRE SHATTERS the windshield, raining glass. Afghan gunmen yank open the doors, SHOUTING in Farsi as they drag McGinty and Vanowen out.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Vanowen and McGinty are thrown face down into the dirt.
Everyone's SHOUTING at once.

MCGINTY
We're civilians! Civilians!

The LEADER approaches, his shadow falling across them.

Bearded, amped on adrenaline, he's every American's nightmare of a *mujahadin* insurgent. He switches his M4 to automatic, aims down at them -- and FIRES, two quick bursts.

McGinty flinches as the bullets kick up a spray of dirt next to his head. Vanowen doesn't react at all.

The leader smiles to his men. He likes fucking with people.

As he steps forward, delivering a vicious KICK --

CUT TO:

QUICK TITLE SEQUENCE

It's just the title, with a DRIVING BEAT to accompany it. The rest of the credits play over the continuing action.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK OF A COVERED TRUCK - NIGHT

By the light of a swinging ELECTRIC LANTERN, we find Vanowen and McGinty side-by-side on a bench. They've been roughed up and blindfolded, hands zip-tied behind their backs.

Their Afghani day-hires flank them, similarly bound, and much the worse for wear. With the truck in motion, it's hard to keep from falling over.

One young Afghani GUARD with an AK-47 across his knees keeps a wary eye on the captives.

We HOLD ON McGinty and Vanowen for a long beat.

VANOWEN

Is it a rabbit?

MCGINTY

No. It's not an animal.

VANOWEN

I didn't ask.

MCGINTY

But you should have. Like, ten questions ago.

GUARD (IN FARSI)

Quiet! No talking!

After a beat...

VANOWEN

What am I at?

MCGINTY

Sixteen.

Freaked out, the guard shoves the barrel in McGinty's face:

GUARD (IN FARSI)

Shut up! Shut up!

Warned by the edge of strain in his voice, our guys shut up.
The truck makes a sharp TURN, throwing the captives against the side. They've arrived.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

BLAZING HEADLIGHTS illuminate its interior as the trucks and Jeeps pull in. The warehouse has been completely stripped by looters, right down to the wiring and electric outlets.

Lots of chaotic action, Afghani gunmen jumping down from their vehicles, others running to meet them.

INT. BACK OF THE TRUCK - NIGHT

Vanowen and McGinty can HEAR everything but see nothing.

The guard jumps down from the truck, leaving the captives alone for a moment.

MAN'S VOICE
You are Americans?

REVERSE to find there's a fifth captive in the truck, who's been there all along. He's VASSILI VOLTOV, a Russian in his fifties. Unshaven, unkempt and (at the moment) blindfolded, he's robust and cheerful in the face of adversity.

VOLTOV
I am Vassili Voltov. From Ukraine.

MCGINTY
Joe McGinty.

VANOWEN
Theo Vanowen.

VOLTOV
You are soldiers?

MCGINTY
We're private contractors.

VOLTOV
Mercenaries.

VANOWEN
(firmly)
Private contractors.

*

Obviously Vanowen's sensitive on this point. Hearing the tone in his voice, Voltov doesn't push it.

VOLTOV

Fifteen years I am coming here on business, everywhere no problem. Now everything is downside-up.

MCGINTY

Upside-down.

VOLTOV

I have wife. Katya, in Kiev. If anything happens to me...

MCGINTY

You're gonna be fine.

Just then, the back of the truck is THROWN OPEN. Armed men pull all five captives down, SHOUTING menacingly.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Guards herd the captives along with kicks and rifle-prods. The Afghani day-hires are separated from the group and shoved through a doorway to an unseen fate.

McGinty is forced down to his knees beside Vanowen and Voltov. BLAZING HEADLIGHTS illuminate their faces. All three men squint as blindfolds are pulled off...

THE BIG BOSS

steps forward. As eyes adjust, the menacing silhouette resolves into BRIAN BARKER (38), an American in Kevlar and cargo pants.

MCGINTY

Barker.

VANOWEN

Son of a bitch.

Barker is senior operations director for S.O.S. Security Solutions, a mid-size private military corporation. Vanowen's assessment is apt: He is a son of a bitch.

McGinty and Vanowen start to get to their feet. The Afghani guards angrily SHOVE them back down to their knees.

BARKER

Did I say you could stand?

The Afghani LEADER hands Barker the captives' wallets. Barker flips through, extracts McGinty's business card.

BARKER (CONT'D)
 (reading from card)
 'Falcon International Security.
 Site protection, transport, VIP
 protection in high-risk
 environments.'
 (mock-impressed)
 Nice font, McGinty. You pick it
 yourself?

Voltov, the outsider, looks back and forth bewildered.

VOLTOV
 You know each other?

BARKER
 Mr. Vanowen and Mr. McGinty used to
 be good little S.O.S. employees,
 before they caught the
 entrepreneurial bug.

Stooping down in front of Vanowen...

BARKER (CONT'D)
 How's it feel being a small
 business owner, Theo? Seen a
 paycheck yet? I hope you're not
 tapping into your pension.

Vanowen is silent.

BARKER (CONT'D)
 It's one thing for McGinty here.
 Most businesses go under. Guy with
 an MBA, he can work anywhere. But
 a man with your special talents...
 you're not getting any younger.

VANOWEN
 I quit for a reason, Barker.
 'Cause I got sick of working for
 the bad guys.

BARKER
 Wow. Life is just one big Western
 to you, Vanowen. Love that.
 (beat)
 Now let's see what that clear
 conscience was hauling.

CUT TO:

THE BACK OF THEIR TRUCK.

Afghanis clamber onto the truck bed, where the mysterious cargo is strapped down. They pull back the tarp to reveal

A VIKING RANGE.

Six burners of culinary wonder, complete with built-in grill.

Barker WHISTLES.

BARKER

She's a beaut. Hard to get that kind of firepower out here. How much was Sardar gonna pay you for delivery? Thirty? Forty?

MCGINTY

You got an eighty-million dollar contract. What's one stove?

BARKER

It's not about money. It's about territory. And right now, you're in mine. Come sunrise, you're on the first truck back to Kandahar.

VANOWEN

Along with our men.

Barker half-turns to look at his lead gunman, who gives an almost imperceptible head-shake.

BARKER

Sorry, cowboy. The Hajis stay here.

MCGINTY

Your contract's with Confederated Oil, right? Wonder how the corporation would feel about being mixed up in a prisoner abuse scandal.

Barker's eyes narrow...

VANOWEN

Maybe you better kill us all, to be sure.

Barker was actually considering it for a second. With an impatient wave of his hand --

BARKER
Get 'em the hell out of here.

As Voltov eagerly starts after them --

BARKER (CONT'D)
Not you.

MCGINTY
Private citizen. Can't hold him
against his will, Barker.

BARKER
Mr. Voltov's a guest, not a
prisoner.

Voltov, quickly sizing up the situation...

VOLTOV
(to McGinty)
Is okay. We are businessmen.
Maybe I see you in Kandahar. Or in
America!

MCGINTY
Your choice.

McGinty, Vanowen and the Afghanis head out. Barker's ice-cold look follows them... suggesting that their survival was a closer call than McGinty realizes. *

EXT. AFGHANI CITY (KANDAHAR) - DAY

In a dark doorway, McGinty pays the two Afghani day-hires in U.S. cash. They eye the street nervously -- it's not good to be seen taking money from a foreigner -- and escape quickly.

McGinty steps out, rejoins Vanowen in the bright sunlight.

VANOWEN
So it's smaller than a tuba. Not
an animal. It's not purple.

MCGINTY
Not necessarily purple. That
doesn't really...

VANOWEN
You got your way, I got...

Suddenly, an EXPLOSION. We don't see the blast, but HEAR it. Vanowen pulls McGinty down into a doorway as debris rains down: scrap metal, dust, a steering wheel.

A car bomb has detonated about half a block away. The remains are still burning.

A smoking BOOM-BOX radio lands beside Vanowen. He looks at it for a moment, while the ECHOES die down.

VANOWEN (CONT'D)

Is it a boom-box?

MCGINTY

What?

VANOWEN

The thing. Is it a portable stereo, a.k.a. boom-box?

A long beat. With disbelief...

MCGINTY

Yeah. Good guess.

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY (MARYLAND)

A low-slung office building like a million others, with a sign advertising square footage available for rent.

TITLE OVER:

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

It's a rented office, cheaply furnished -- but it's home. There are two rooms: this reception area, and McGinty's office, visible through a glass wall with blinds.

TINA GIBSON (30's) is Falcon International Security's only other employee: bookkeeper, receptionist, keeper-afloat-of-things. To look at her, you'd never guess she's a single mom with a ten-year old son -- or Vanowen's half-sister.

McGinty's sitting on the edge of her desk, perusing an accounts payable printout. Tina points out a few lines.

TINA

We're at 30 days on the rent. And the Amex. But I'd start with the phones. They're cutting 'em off tomorrow at five.

MCGINTY

How much is it?

TINA
 Thirteen hundred.
 (off his silence)
 Oh, and, Joe...

MCGINTY
 Right, it's Friday. Cut yourself a
 check.

TINA
 I did. But when can I cash it?

Vanowen has his feet up on the coffee table and is reading
 the new issue of "Firepower" magazine.

MCGINTY
 Vanowen, you want to make yourself
 useful? Start calling your old
 jarhead buddies and find us a gig.
 Ideally something with a profit
 margin this time.

VANOWEN
 What, the website's not bringin' in
 the business?

MCGINTY
 Lay off the website.

VANOWEN
 We hear anything on that DOD
 contract in Kuwait City?

MCGINTY
 They're going with Blackwell.

VANOWEN
 Home of the eight hundred dollar
 screwdriver. Maybe they'll sub-out
 to us.

MCGINTY
 Feast on the crumbs. That's a
 business plan.

His hackles raised...

VANOWEN
 Listen McGinty, you're the business
 side of this equation. I can spec
 artillery. I can tell you how many
 men it takes to guard an airstrip.
 But don't ask me how to make money
 at it. If I could do that, I
 wouldn't need you.

MCGINTY
That was honest.

VANOWEN
Yeah.
(feeling a little bad)
Look, I'll take care of the phones.
The rest of it...

MCGINTY
Yeah. I'll get the money.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

McGinty's shirt hits him in the face. He's in bed, post-coital. The room is modest but cozy, a couple's first home.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Get a move on. I need to be back
at the office.

BROOKE COLESON (30) is getting dressed with brisk efficiency. She's a legislative director, and every bit as sharp as McGinty.

MCGINTY
Can I take a shower? I can let
myself out.

BROOKE
Joe, you can't just come and go as
if you still lived here. We need
to respect boundaries.

MCGINTY
You're right. Me using your
bathroom when you're not here would
be, like, weirdly intimate.

Brooke pulls a short stack of clipped legal papers from her briefcase, hands it to McGinty. There are red arrow-tags for what he's supposed to sign. She uncaps a pen for him.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)
I haven't even read it yet.

BROOKE
It's the same as what you got in
the mail three months ago.

McGinty lifts a corner, peering underneath.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
 You're not agreeing to anything.
 You just acknowledge that you've
 received it.

MCGINTY
 'Dissolution of marriage.' Sounds
 pretty final to me.

He signs without looking up, missing Brooke's pained look.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)
 By the way... I'm gonna need some
 money from the joint account. It's
 a cash flow thing, just to make
 payroll.

BROOKE
 Joe!

MCGINTY
 I'll put it back in a couple weeks.

BROOKE
 The point of mediation was to avoid
 this kind of thing.

MCGINTY
 The point of mediation was
 amicability. I think I'm being
 amicable.

There's obviously something being unsaid.

BROOKE
 How much?

MCGINTY
 Five thousand.

*

Anticipating her next objection...

MCGINTY (CONT'D)
 One contract. That's all we need
 to put us in the black. They're
 spending eighteen billion in Iraq.
 If we can just get a nibble, a
 foothold -- like that water plant
 protection job...

Brooke doesn't want to hear it.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)
 What?

BROOKE

Joe, you should hear yourself. War is not a business. It's a tragedy.

*

MCGINTY

It's reality, Brooke. War is how most of the world gets from Point A to Point B. None of this seemed to bother you when I was at S.O.S.

BROOKE

You were behind a desk. I didn't have to worry about you.

He hands her the divorce papers.

MCGINTY

Well, congratulations. Now you don't have to worry.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Wearing a rock-climbing harness, Vanowen dangles two stories above the parking lot. With a cheap handset, he's clipped in on two telephone wires, part of a tangled switching box mounted to the side of the building.

He pokes around with his Leatherman tool to find other available circuits.

VANOWEN

(to the phone)

Let me know if the line goes dead.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Tina's on the other end.

TINA

Will that mean you've fallen to your death?

INTERCUT VANOWEN / TINA

VANOWEN

Funny.

Tina's 10-year old son MATTY is doing his homework, his head cradled in his hands, staring at a history book.

TINA

I'll tell Matty his uncle was
killed in action stealing phone
service.

Matty looks up.

VANOWEN

If they didn't want us to take 'em,
they shouldn't have put 'em on the
building. Crap!

He accidentally drops a plastic line cap. Looks down as it
falls, nearly beaming a BUSINESSMAN walking below.

The Businessman looks up. He's Voltov, the Russian from
Afghanistan -- cleaned up and wearing a \$4000 suit. He's
just gotten out of a shiny black town car.

VOLTOV

Mr. Vanowen?

VANOWEN

Hey, Voltov!
(to phone)
Tell McGinty I got us a client.

INT. KIT KAT KLUB - NIGHT

An upscale restaurant-nightclub with largely Russian
clientele. McGinty, Vanowen and Voltov have a good table.
The WAITRESS, a young Slavic beauty, leans in close to give
McGinty a good view of her cleavage as she pours champagne.

MCGINTY

How exactly did you find us?

VOLTOV

Your website. In Russia, we have
Google, just like America.

McGinty nods "told ya" at Vanowen.

VANOWEN

(looking around)
What business did you say you were
in?

VOLTOV

My business is blood.
(clarifying)
Plasma. Medical supplies.

MCGINTY

Oh.

VOLTOV

In war, blood is spilled. Blood is needed.

(leaning forward)

I make deal direct with Coalition Authority, northern Iraq. Forty crates of Type O, from donors in Ukraine. To deliver from Ankara to Coalition headquarters, Kirkuk.

Off McGinty and Vanowen's intrigued look...

TRANSITION TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY (TURKEY)

The warehouse door SLIDES OPEN letting in bright sunlight. Vanowen is outside.

ANKARA, TURKEY

Inside the warehouse stands a TRUCK, into which WORKERS are loading crates. The Kit Kat conversation CONTINUES OVER:

VOLTOV (V.O.)

Blood must be kept below four degrees Centigrade. Our truck has state-of-the-art refrigeration. Every crate, every bag with own thermometer.

We glimpse the contents of an open crate just before workers nail it shut. Inside are rows of opaque white plastic bags, each with a temperature sticker. The stickers are green.

VOLTOV (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If blood gets too hot, sticker changes from green to red. No good. Throw out blood.

On the exterior of the crate, a digital readout: 2.0 degrees.

INT. KIT KAT KLUB - NIGHT

Voltov finishes his spiel...

VOLTOV (CONT'D)

No blood, no money. I don't get paid, you don't get paid.

MCGINTY

What's the timeline?

VOLTOV

This morning I get phone call.
They have no blood, and many
wounded. If blood is not there in
48 hours, many will die.

VANOWEN

U.S. soldiers.

VOLTOV

Yes, that's what I say.

Vanowen hangs silent. Though he left the armed forces a decade ago: once a Marine, always a Marine.

MCGINTY

Why us?

VOLTOV

I will be honest. The way things
are... at checkpoints, it's good to
show American face.

MCGINTY

Yes, but why us?

Voltov looks him straight in the eye.

VOLTOV

I have seen how you protect the men
who work for you. Loyalty... is
very important to a Russian.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY (TURKEY)

McGinty and Voltov, talking to a third man, turn as Vanowen enters. Two Iraqis, SALIM and HARETH, trail behind Vanowen.

VANOWEN

One truck, one Humvee. Putting
armor on it now. This is Salim...
Hareth.

MCGINTY

Joe McGinty. Good to have ya.

McGinty shakes hands with the new hires. Salim takes a hit on an asthma inhaler. McGinty shoots a look to Vanowen -- really? this guy? -- but Vanowen waves off the objection.

*

McGinty introduces the third man -- DARKO GOREVICH (30's), a gum-chewing, roguishly handsome Croatian.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

This is Darko Gorevic. Mr. Voltov claims he's the best driver in Turkey.

DARKO

In Iraq. This time tomorrow, I'll be the best driver in Iraq.

Vanowen doesn't return Darko's grin.

VANOWEN

(to Voltov)

Would you excuse us a minute?

He walks away with McGinty.

VANOWEN (CONT'D)

The deal was we hire our own crew.

MCGINTY

Voltov says this guy's good.

VANOWEN

Whose call is it? Ours, or his?

MCGINTY

Vanowen, let's discuss 'luck.'
We've been trying to get a gig in Iraq for eight months. This is it. This is our 'in' with the CPA.

*

VANOWEN

So we let the client call the shots.

MCGINTY

Okay. What's going on?

VANOWEN

I don't like him.

MCGINTY

I don't care. On the next job, you can have any driver you want. But we gotta pick our battles -- or there's not gonna be a next job.

*

Vanowen gestures, "fine." But the discussion is by no means finished.

EXT. CHECKPOINT - DAY [MORNING]

A line of trucks and cars wait along a two-lane highway to enter the customs compound.

**SILOPI/HABUR CHECKPOINT
TURKEY-IRAQ BORDER**

MCGINTY,

with TWO TURKISH CUSTOMS POLICEMEN in tow, trots up to the cab and climbs in. The CP's beckon the truck and HUMVEE out of line, giving them special VIP treatment.

EXT. CUSTOMS CHECKOUT - DAY

IRAQI CUSTOMS POLICEMEN swarm over the inside of the truck and Humvee while Vanowen and the crew stand by.

The Humvee holds a veritable arsenal: machine guns, RPG launcher. The CP's inspect each item with interest.

Through an open office doorway, we SEE McGinty in intense discussion with Iraqi OFFICIALS over paperwork. It looks complicated.

VANOWEN AND DARKO

have nothing to do but watch and wait. Darko chews gum.

DARKO

You used to work for S.O.S., right?

VANOWEN

Used to work a lot of places.

DARKO

I remember them from ten years ago. Croatia, after the war.

VANOWEN

Oh yeah?

DARKO

They were real busy with the reconstruction. Lotta girls from my high school went to work for them. You know what I mean?

Darko's eyes meet Vanowen's.

VANOWEN

I don't work for S.O.S. any more.

INT. CUSTOMS OFFICE - DAY

The unsmiling CAPTAIN flips through a copy of Stuff magazine. He slowly turns page after page.

McGinty stands with day-hire Hareth, who looks down, chastened.

CAPTAIN

This... cannot enter the country.

MCGINTY

I understand completely. On behalf of myself, Mr. Hareth, and my employer, I sincerely apologize.

Trying to help out...

HARETH

(re: the magazine)

They don't show any bush.

The Captain's expression remains completely flat. McGinty suppresses his instinct to strangle Hareth, and just smiles, ready for the next round of apologies.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The truck and Humvee rocket through the desert. The OIL PIPELINE runs parallel to the highway.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK - DAY - MOVING

Darko and Vanowen, ROARING down the Iraq highway. Vanowen uses the walkie...

VANOWEN

How much did the magazine cost us?

INT. HUMVEE - DAY - MOVING

McGinty rides shotgun, Salim driving, Hareth on lookout. *

MCGINTY

(on walkie)

Five thousand dinar fine.

INTERCUT MCGINTY / VANOWEN

VANOWEN

You paid him five thousand dinars?!

MCGINTY
Vanowen! That's like, four bucks!

VANOWEN
You sure?

MCGINTY
Please leave the numbers to me.
How're we doing on gas?

VANOWEN
Gosh-golly, I can't read these here
fancy gauges. *

Suddenly, a loud CRACK shakes the cab.

VANOWEN (CONT'D)
What the...

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The truck and Humvee pull onto the shoulder. Open desert road as far as we can see.

EXT. TRUCK - DAY

The REFRIGERATION UNIT between the trailer and the cab has cracked and is leaking coolant.

Vanowen examines it. He wraps the unit with several turns of DUCT TAPE. McGinty, Salim and Hareth watch dubiously. Salim takes a hit on his asthma inhaler.

MCGINTY
(re: the duct tape)
Is that gonna hold?

VANOWEN
No. We'll have to fix it in Mosul.
You better ride in back, keep an
eye on it.

Fun as that sounds...

MCGINTY
Salim can do it.

VANOWEN
You know how to fire an RPG?

MCGINTY
(a beat)
Okay, so I'll ride in back.

EXT. TRUCK - DAY

As McGinty climbs into the back of the truck...

He glances up at the sky.

THE BLAZING SUN BEATS DOWN.

McGinty climbs in. Salim slides the door shut.

CUT TO:

THE DESERT SUN,

now at its zenith.

INT. BACK OF THE TRUCK - DAY - MOVING [AFTERNOON]

McGinty perches among the forty crates of blood, keeping an anxious eye on the digital temperature readouts.

ONE READOUT: It ticks up from 2.3 to 2.4 degrees.

McGinty's gaze swivels to...

ANOTHER READOUT: It ticks up from 2.4 to 2.5.

INT. CAB OF THE TRUCK - DAY - MOVING

McGinty's face appears through the gap window.

MCGINTY

We need to bump up the compressor a little.

*

VANOWEN

We'll burn too much gas. At this rate we'll just make it to Mosul.

MCGINTY

(pointing out window)

That's an oil pipeline. Are you saying there's not one gas station between here and Mosul?

VANOWEN

No. I'm saying there's not one that I know of.

MCGINTY

This blood hits four degrees, it's not gonna be a hell of a lot of use to anyone.

VANOWEN

I know!

Darko and McGinty stare at Vanowen -- what's eating him?

Lacking another outlet for his rage, Vanowen cranks the A/C compressor to full.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The truck and Humvee shoot past.

INT. CAB OF THE TRUCK - DAY

Darko, driving, glances at...

THE FUEL GAUGE

Hovering near empty. Darko and Vanowen exchange looks -- no words needed.

McGinty calls through the window --

MCGINTY

Three degrees!

DARKO

There's the bridge up ahead.

Vanowen is staring straight ahead. In the distance, a plume of SMOKE billows on the horizon.

VANOWEN

What the hell is that?

EXT. EDGE OF CANYON - DAY

The Humvee screeches up to the edge of a CANYON. Vanowen and McGinty jump out. There's a RAGING FIRE on the other side.

Vanowen looks back toward the highway. A LINE OF CARS AND TRUCKS, including theirs, wait to cross the bridge, which the fire has obviously rendered impassable.

MCGINTY

How long you think it'll take them to put that out?

VANOWEN

Oil fire... Maybe a day or two.

On McGinty's horrified face --

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. HIGHWAY / BRIDGE - DAY [AFTERNOON]

The line of stopped cars and trucks isn't going anywhere. The occupants -- a cross-section of IRAQIS, foreign CONTRACTORS, and U.S. MILITARY -- loiter in the shade of their vehicles, killing time.

We SEE the distant figures of McGinty and Vanowen arguing by the Humvee, a hundred yards away. We can't hear the words, but they're having one hell of an argument.

A group of Iraqis playing chess watch with idle interest as the two Americans pile back into the Humvee.

THE TRUCK

PULLS OUT of line and strikes out across the desert, following the Humvee.

The Iraqis shake their heads: Those guys are crazy.

INT. HUMVEE - DAY [MOVING]

Jouncing along a pothole-strewn minor road, Vanowen at the wheel, McGinty juggling a map and GPS --

MCGINTY

The next bridge is an hour away.

Vanowen makes no response, just drives. He's pissed.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

Not enough gas. Right?

VANOWEN

You're the boss.

MCGINTY

No. I'm not the boss. We're partners. We agreed we'd try to save the blood.

VANOWEN

Whatever you say.

McGinty gives up. Pores over the map.

MCGINTY

Here's a town that's closer.
Bassul. Ever heard of it?

*

McGinty turns around, yells to the Iraqi gunner in back --

MCGINTY (CONT'D)
Hareth! What do you know about
Bassul?

Hareth spreads both hands helplessly.

HARETH
I am from Basra! In the south!

McGinty looks at Vanowen for help. He knows what's coming --

VANOWEN
You're the boss.

EXT. DESERT INTERSECTION - DAY

The Humvee and truck TURN off the minor road onto an even smaller road, and disappear in a cloud of dust.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRAQI TOWN (BASSUL) - DAY [AFTERNOON]

The town is empty and silent.

Then...

THE TRUCK AND HUMVEE appear in the distance, coming closer.

AN IRAQI WOMAN sweeping her doorstep speaks sharply to her CHILDREN playing outside. They come reluctantly. She shoves them inside and SHUTS the door.

INT. HUMVEE - DAY - MOVING

Vanowen driving with McGinty and Hareth. The truck follows behind.

MCGINTY'S POV: The streets seem deserted. But there are sidewalks, power lines and some fairly substantial buildings.

Vanowen is silent. He doesn't like it.

MCGINTY'S POV: The few Iraqis they see, beat a hasty retreat indoors at the sight of them. It's like the Old West, when the gunslingers come to town.

MCGINTY

Don't see any soldiers. Shouldn't there have been, like, a checkpoint coming into town?

He catches an uneasy glance from Hareth. This is not good.

Spotting an OLD MAN in the street --

MCGINTY (IN ARABIC) (CONT'D)

Hospital! Where is hospital?

The old man scurries inside.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

Friendly.

Suddenly the PASSENGER DOOR OPENS -- On edge, Vanowen and Hareth turn with their WEAPONS -- But it's just an IRAQI KID who's hopped into the Humvee with them.

IRAQI KID (IN ARABIC)

Hospital! Go straight, I take you!

As they drive --

MCGINTY (IN ARABIC)

Why does everyone run away?

IRAQI KID (IN ARABIC)

They're afraid of Al-Thalab. Turn left here!

VANOWEN

What's he saying?

MCGINTY

(mystified)

He says they're afraid... of something.

HARETH

A wolf.

VANOWEN

Ask him where Coalition headquarters is.

MCGINTY

Uh... American soldiers? Police station?

IRAQI KID

All gone! No soldiers! No police! Only Al-Thalab!

MCGINTY
 (translating)
 They all left. No more soldiers.
 No police. Only wolf.

*

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

The truck pulls up in front of the hospital -- a concrete building, partially fortified, with an extra half-built wall around the perimeter.

Vanowen and the two Iraqis stand watch, scanning for trouble, while McGinty runs around to the back of the truck.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

McGinty climbs in, checks the temperature readouts.

HIS POV - JUMPING FROM ONE READOUT TO THE NEXT: 3.5...
 3.6... 3.6.

MCGINTY
 Right.
 (loud)
 Salim, Hareth! Let's get this baby
 unloaded!

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

McGinty, Salim and Hareth CARRY the crates in from the truck (parked outside) and stack them in the emergency room. The injured and ill Iraqi PATIENTS awaiting medical attention watch with remote disinterest.

MCGINTY
 Stack 'em over here.

*

As he gestures, McGinty notices an elderly PATIENT slumped on a bench with his family. His pallor is startling; he might almost be dead. His sobbing WIFE and CHILDREN seem uncommonly upset.

Curious, McGinty's eyes travel down... to the man's hands. Or rather, where his hands should be. The arms are stumps, wrapped in blood-soaked rags.

HADIJA (O.S.)
 What are you doing?!

Startled, McGinty turns to see --

DR. HADIJA AL-DAHEEN (40), an Iraqi woman in a long white coat, striding down the hallway, dark eyes flashing angrily. She's beautiful -- not that it matters, at this moment.

HADIJA (CONT'D)

You can't unload here. This is an emergency room.

MCGINTY

Look, I need to see the hospital director on Coalition business. Could you find him for me?

HADIJA

I am the hospital director.

McGinty doesn't even blink. He puts out his hand.

MCGINTY

Joe McGinty, Falcon International Security. Pleased to meet you, Doctor...

Hadija stares at the hand until McGinty withdraws it.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

Doctor. We've got two thousand units of type O blood headed for Coalition headquarters in Kirkuk. We need to get it into a fridge ASAP.

HADIJA

(incredulously)
Kirkuk?

MCGINTY

They have major casualties. If this blood doesn't get there, people will die.

HADIJA

Mr. McGinty, do you have any idea what's **happening** here in Bassul?

*

MCGINTY

I know the town is being run by 'Al-Thalab.' I assume that's an insurgent group.

He's bluffing a bit.

HADIJA

Yes. And for the last forty-eight hours we've been expecting an assault from Coalition forces. So you see, we have problems of our own. If you'll excuse me...

MCGINTY

Doctor, would it help you with your problems if we were to misplace, say, two crates of blood here in Bassul?

Hadija takes a long beat, appraising him.

HADIJA

Ten.

MCGINTY

I'm sorry?

HADIJA

Ten crates, or no deal.

McGinty sizes her up with new respect. Here's a woman after his own heart.

MCGINTY

We had to ship this from Ukraine. I told you, they have major casualties in Kirkuk.

HADIJA

We will have casualties. Civilian casualties. Women, children.

MCGINTY

Two crates is the best I can do.

HADIJA

Six.

MCGINTY

Three.

HADIJA

Done.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Vanowen looks bemused as A DOZEN IRAQIS pitch in helping to carry the crates inside. McGinty joins him.

MCGINTY

Guess what?

VANOWEN

That dot on the map is actually a giant bull's-eye?

MCGINTY

Sooner you can fix the A/C and get us out of here, the happier I'll be.

VANOWEN

Already on it. The kid who helped us says his uncle's a mechanic.

MCGINTY

Oh, great, I'm sure he's the best in town.

Salim comes out the door. Hurries to McGinty --

SALIM

Boss, we got a problem.

McGinty reacts: big surprise.

INT. HOSPITAL STORAGE ROOM - DAY

McGinty and Salim hurry down the corridor. Hadija is waiting for them outside the blood refrigeration unit. SIX CRATES sit in the corridor.

HADIJA

(re: the refrigerator)

It simply won't hold any more.

MCGINTY

Can we unpack the crates to make more room?

HADIJA

Already done.

McGinty kneels down to check the temperature stickers: 3.7. Then he looks up, a new thought...

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Twelve Iraqis run down the street, carrying six crates of blood. Hadija pedals alongside on her BICYCLE, McGinty perched behind her.

MCGINTY'S POV - MOVING

Bystanders stare back at us, grim and unsmiling.

A young woman in the crowd catches McGinty's eye. Because she's beautiful, and looking straight at him. And because she has no hands.

MCGINTY

(to Hadija)

That's the second person I've seen today with no hands.

HADIJA

Al-Thalab. That's how he punishes collaborators -- those who help the Americans. Kill them, and people forget. This way people remember.

Hadija SHOUTS to the crate-carriers in Arabic, directing them where to stop.

HADIJA (CONT'D)

(to McGinty; pointing)

This is Dr. Aziz' house. He has a refrigerator.

DOWN THE STREET

FOUR YOUNG IRAQI MEN, slow-cruising in a Toyota, watch McGinty enter the house with Hadija. The LEADER says something to the others. We sense it isn't good.

INT. DR. AZIZ'S APARTMENT - DAY

DR. AZIZ (60's) argues with Hadija while the crate-carriers in his kitchen crack open a crate of blood bags. His VOICE RISES in pitch as he sees them emptying his fridge of food, which they pile indiscriminately on the kitchen counter.

HADIJA

(to McGinty)

Two hundred.

MCGINTY

What?!

HADIJA

Two hundred dollars. That's the best I could do. Take it or not!

McGinty pulls out a money clip, peels off four fifties and hands them to Dr. Aziz, who shakes his head and never stops COMPLAINING as he counts and pockets the money.

The carriers are already loading the blood bags into the fridge. Hadija pushes McGinty along.

HADIJA (CONT'D)
We'll try Mr. Al-Obeida next.

As they push out the front door --

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

McGinty is GRABBED and THROWN flat on the sidewalk, an automatic RIFLE to his head -- Hadija and the crate-carriers SHOUTING in angry protest, the four young men SHOUTING back with equal anger and threatening them with their weapons --

McGinty cringes, fully expecting to be shot --

Suddenly the argument subsides. McGinty looks up, sees white tennis shoes walking away.

The four gang-bangers get back in their car. The one who was about to shoot McGinty pauses for a last look, flaunting his weapon as if to say: You got lucky this time, but... And gets in the car, which PEELS OUT.

McGinty gets to his knees, shaky. Hadija helps him up.

MCGINTY
Al-Thalab?

HADIJA
Now you can go back home and say you've met the Iraqi insurgency. Congratulations.

MCGINTY
(amazed he's still alive)
What did you say to them?

HADIJA
They know who I am. I asked who's going to patch them up when the fighting's over. Also, I told them you were Red Cross.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF IRAQI KITCHENS

Variations on the scene played out in Dr. Aziz's apartment, linked by JUMP CUTS: McGinty doling out money to a diverse sequence of IRAQI NEIGHBORS, while the crate-carriers load their fridges with blood.

EXT. LAST DOORWAY - DAY

As McGinty and Hadija exit, a CROWD OF NEIGHBORS awaits them in the street, CLAMORING in Arabic for McGinty's attention: "I have a fridge... I have a fridge!"

McGinty turns to Hadija...

MCGINTY

That was my last hundred.

Hadija looks at the crate-carriers, waiting patiently with the last two crates. She sighs.

HADIJA

We'll go to my apartment.

INT. HADIJA'S APARTMENT - DAY

McGinty sneaks a quick glance around as he follows Hadija and the crate-carriers in. He's surprised to see an abundance of Simpsons merchandise: tapes, posters, inflatable Bart doll.

MCGINTY

You have kids?

HADIJA

No.

Realizing that he's looking at all the Simpsons stuff, she's embarrassed. *

HADIJA (CONT'D)

I just like the program.

She starts unloading food from her fridge to make room. McGinty checks the crate readout: 3.9.

Hadija isn't emptying the fridge fast enough for McGinty. He pitches in, trying to help.

HADIJA (CONT'D)

Do you mind?!

She grabs a chicken from McGinty's hands. Puts it back in the fridge. *

MCGINTY

You're Lisa Simpson, aren't you? *

He starts carrying blood bags to the fridge before Hadija's finished making space. *

HADIJA

My life is not a cartoon.

It's a small kitchen, too many people, McGinty loading at the same time Hadija is unloading. In this situation an accident is bound to happen -- and one does:

Hadija pulls out a crisper drawer just as McGinty's thrusting in a blood bag. The plastic SNAGS on its sharp corner.

Appalled, they both assess the damage. Crouched on the kitchen floor, so close their heads almost touch...

HADIJA (CONT'D)

Did it tear?

MCGINTY

It's not leaking. I think it's just the outer bag.

He rubs it with his fingers; seems okay. As he puts the bag in the fridge --

HADIJA

What's that?

McGinty notices it too -- a chalky powder.

MCGINTY

Flour?

Hadija takes the bag from his hands, examines it. Indeed, the powder is coming from the rip in the bag.

McGinty's baffled. Hadija gives him an odd, searching look -- then RIPS the bag right down the middle.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

Hey!

POWDER, the color of sand, spills onto the kitchen floor.

There's no blood in the bag at all. It's filled with powder.

Hadija backs away from McGinty, staring at him in horror.

McGinty dips a finger in it. Tastes it. His expression changes. No sense hiding what she's already guessed --

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

It's heroin.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HOSPITAL STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Under Hadija's eye, McGinty painstakingly checks the contents of the crates, squishing each bag to see if it feels more like liquid, or powder.

HADIJA

I trusted you! I risked my life!

MCGINTY

This one's blood.
(tests next bag)
This one too.

HADIJA

It could be contaminated, infected,
you don't know!

MCGINTY

And the heroin could be glucose and
quinine. But considering our
client is spending a hundred
thousand dollars to deliver it, I'm
betting this is real blood and
that's real heroin.

He gestures to the nearby pile of blood bags designated "heroin" -- about ten kilos' worth.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

Which still leaves nineteen hundred
units of blood that, whatever you
think of the shipping arrangements,
can save a lot of lives.

HADIJA

So the ends justify the means?

MCGINTY

You can have four crates, 200
units... if you'll keep quiet about
the heroin till we get the truck
fixed.

HADIJA

Six crates.

MCGINTY

Four.

HADIJA
 You should know, the penalty in
 Iraq for drug smuggling is death.

McGinty takes a beat to register this.

MCGINTY
 Five crates.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

The streetlights are on, but it's still in the 90's.

Sweat streams down Vanowen's face as he toils to repair the
 A/C unit with local mechanic AHMED (burly, thick glasses). *

Darko loiters in the shade. Ahmed's nephew and a dozen other
 IRAQI CHILDREN hang around, watching the repair job. Arabic
 RAP MUSIC blares from a boom box.

VANOWEN
 We need caulk. *
 (explaining) *
 Sealing compound. *

Ahmed speaks sharply in Arabic to his nephew.

Vanowen waits...

Moments later, Ahmed produces a whitish, sticky GLOB.

VANOWEN (CONT'D)
 What is this?

AHMED
 Gum.

Vanowen turns his head to look at the children. They grin
 back at him.

Just then, Vanowen's SATT PHONE rings. He picks up.

VANOWEN
 Yeah.

Vanowen listens for a moment. His expression doesn't change.
 He glances over at...

Darko, who's trying not to look like he's eavesdropping.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Darko SCREAMS OUT in pain. He's on his knees, facing away from Vanowen, who is bending back his fingers to the verge of snapping.

DARKO
I didn't know about the drugs! I
swear!

We hear a POP. Darko screams out, a whole new kind of agony.

Vanowen bends down, closer to Darko's ear; asks again --

VANOWEN
Who's the buyer?

Darko winces as Vanowen squeezes down again.

DARKO
I don't know! Voltov just had me
mark the crates.

VANOWEN
Who were you marking them for?
Who's the pickup?

DARKO
All I know is deliver to Coalition
supply unit in Kirkuk. You broke
my finger!

VANOWEN
The blood. Is it real?

DARKO
Yes! I think so.

Vanowen SNAPS another one. Darko screams.

DARKO (CONT'D)
I'm telling you the truth!

Vanowen drops Darko's hands, pushes him aside.

VANOWEN
Good. Now tell me again. From the
beginning.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Silence from within. Ahmed, Salim and Hareth exchange uneasy glances.

Vanowen emerges, alone. Wipes sweat from his face.

HARETH
Everything okay, boss?

VANOWEN
Peachy. Let's wrap this up.

He pushes past Ahmed to the truck. Preparing to cut a length of copper piping, Vanowen switches on a POWER SAW.

Salim and Hareth look back uneasily toward the garage.

Just then...

The POWER SAW DIES in Vanowen's hand.

Simultaneously, THE STREETLIGHTS FLICKER AND GO OUT.

Everyone looks up as the town goes dark. This isn't good.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A great mechanical SIGH as the refrigeration unit SHUTS DOWN. In the shadowy half-light, McGinty tries not to panic.

MCGINTY
What just happened?

HADIJA
The insurgents control the power station. They black us out when they're expecting a night attack.

MCGINTY
You have a backup generator?

HADIJA
Of course. But it runs on gasoline, and we don't have any.

MCGINTY
This is Iraq. This is where gasoline comes from. How can you not have any?

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Vanowen drives up in the Humvee. McGinty is waiting for him. It's eerily dark, just moonlight overhead.

MCGINTY

Please tell me the truck's ready,
and we can get the hell out of
here.

VANOWEN

Ever try cutting quarter-inch pipe
with a hand saw? Best case, we'll
be on the road by dawn.

MCGINTY

The blood's not gonna last that
long without refrigeration.

VANOWEN

Maybe we can find ice somewhere.
How much we have left in the Happy
Arab fund?

MCGINTY

We spent it all renting fridges.
We got nothing.

A new thought strikes him...

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

Maybe we do.

VANOWEN

What?

MCGINTY

The insurgents turned the power
off, right? That means they can
turn it back on.

VANOWEN

And why would they do that?

MCGINTY

We'll pay 'em.

VANOWEN

With what? You said we're flat
out.

MCGINTY

How much is ten kilos of heroin
worth?

Vanowen looks at him like he's just sprouted antlers.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

(suddenly reversing)

You're right. It's insane.

(MORE)

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

I mean, at the end of the day, it's just a blood shipment. It's not worth dying for. I'm sure those soldiers waiting for transfusions will understand, we did the best we could.

Vanowen doesn't rise to his bait. We can see his anger building. McGinty's trying to set him off.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)

Of course, we probably won't get another job with CPA, and the business will go under, but them's the breaks, right? Maybe you could move in with your sister. I think her couch folds out.

VANOWEN

I am not cutting a deal with insurgents!

MCGINTY

Yeah, you'll kill 'em, but you won't talk to them.

VANOWEN

Don't push me.

He's serious. He's about ready to knock McGinty's head off.

MCGINTY

Vanowen, stop thinking like a Marine. You are not a soldier; we are not the Coalition. We are just two guys who have to get the power back on or else a bunch of people are going to die.

Vanowen looks away, disgusted by the thought. But nor does he have a better alternative. Finally...

VANOWEN

How would we even find them?

CUT TO:

INT. HUMVEE - NIGHT - MOVING

The streets of Bassul are quiet at night. Bicyclists whiz by, nearly invisible in the dark.

VANOWEN

This is a bad idea.

MCGINTY

I know. I told you that.

Just then, a KID runs in front of the headlights, nearly getting clipped. Vanowen SLAMS on the brakes.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

A group of Iraqi STREET URCHINS play stickball in the dark. They make a point of ignoring the stopped Humvee, whose headlights provide the only illumination.

McGinty SHOUTS in Arabic to get out of the way. The kids pay him no attention.

INT. HUMVEE - NIGHT

Vanowen's never seen such macho 10-year-olds. They're blocking the street.

TWO CARS ARRIVE

at the end of the street. It takes them a while to close the distance.

MCGINTY

34-11-23. That's the combination to the safe.

VANOWEN

What safe?

MCGINTY

The one in my office. *

VANOWEN

What's in the safe?

MCGINTY

If I die, you'll find out.

A dozen YOUNG MEN get out, aiming automatic rifles at the Humvee. They SHOUT orders in Arabic.

VANOWEN

No, I won't find out. They kill one of us, they're gonna kill both of us. Tell me what's in the safe. *

The gang-bangers motion for them to get out.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

McGinty and Vanowen are KNOCKED to the ground, rifles to their heads.

MCGINTY
(in Arabic)
Al-Thalab! I need to talk to Al-
Thalab!

McGinty motions to his jacket pocket. No one seems to be getting his intention, so he starts to reach into it.

The men with rifles flip out, SHOUTING at him in Arabic to freeze -- Vanowen SHOUTING too --

McGinty pulls out the blood bag. Offers it up to the senior Gang-Banger.

GANG-BANGER
(Arabic equivalent)
What the hell is this?

He snatches it. The gang-bangers crowd around to look at the sandy POWDER spilling from the torn bag onto the ground.

They all turn to look at the prostrate captives they'd assumed were contractors -- but are what, drug smugglers?!

MCGINTY
(in Arabic)
For Al-Thalab. There's more.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

Hands tied and blindfolded, Vanowen and McGinty are marched at rifle-point down a narrow alley lit only by HEADLIGHTS.

A new set of INSURGENTS wait for them. Older and tougher than the gang-bangers, these men are seasoned guerrillas.

No words are exchanged that the prisoners might overhear. Taking over, the second group pushes McGinty and Vanowen into a waiting CAR, which DRIVES OFF.

INT. SAFE HOUSE / COURTYARD - NIGHT

Dark because there's no electricity. An elderly AIDE meets the insurgents arriving with the prisoners. He gestures: This one goes upstairs -- that one stays.

McGinty, halfway up the stairs, turns back blindfolded --

MCGINTY

Vanowen?

And gets a rifle-butt in the kidney, with an order to "shut up." Vanowen calls back, as he's hustled away --

VANOWEN

I'm all right, McGinty, you take care of yourself!

The men push Vanowen through another doorway and that's the last we see of him.

INT. SAFE HOUSE / INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

McGinty is SHOVED face down onto the concrete floor. His blindfold is ripped off.

INTERROGATOR (O.S.)

Who are you working for?

MCGINTY

We're transporting blood for the CPA --

A vicious KICK makes him wince.

INTERROGATOR (O.S.)

(in the same neutral tone)

Who are you working for?

MCGINTY

Our client is Trans Medical Network Group, based in Ukraine.

More KICKS. McGinty, unused to physical abuse, is amazed how much it hurts.

INTERROGATOR (O.S.)

Who are you working for?

MCGINTY

Trans Medical Network Group...

More KICKS. This will never end.

INT. SAFE HOUSE / INTERROGATION ROOM - [LATER THAT] NIGHT

McGinty lies half-delirious, his cheek against the cool cement, dried blood on his face.

A DOOR OPENS. A DOOR CLOSES. There's light, then there isn't. He's long since stopped keeping track.

VOICE (O.S.)
So where is this blood of yours?

It's a new voice: mild, young, more curious than hostile.

MCGINTY
(each word costs effort)
Hospital... Refrigerator. Rotting.

VOICE (O.S.)
And you think if I turn on the
power, this will save it?

McGinty registers the personal pronoun. He lifts his eyes, sees...

A MAN sitting in a chair, in such deep shadow that we don't see his face. Insurgents stand around with machine guns. This can only be AL-THALAB.

MCGINTY
Where's my partner?

GUARD (IN ARABIC)
Answer the question!

He lifts his rifle-butt to punish McGinty. Al-Thalab holds up a hand, stopping him. Giving McGinty another chance to answer.

MCGINTY
We have something to trade. Ten
kilos of heroin.

AL-THALAB
No, you don't. We do.

McGinty stares. He didn't tell them where it was. That means...

AL-THALAB (CONT'D)
Your partner told us where to find
it. In exchange for your life.

McGinty closes his eyes. Their only bargaining chip is gone.

AL-THALAB (CONT'D)
You hoped to trade it. For
electricity.

MCGINTY
Yes.

AL-THALAB

Tell me something. Why didn't you just sell the heroin in Kirkuk or Baghdad, and keep the money?

MCGINTY

We're not drug dealers. Or thieves. The job was the blood, that's all.

*
*

Al-Thalab appraises him a moment. Then he stands, SPEAKS quietly to one of the other men in Arabic.

AL-THALAB

You're men of your word. So am I.

As he exits, we get our first real look at his face.

Al-Thalab is barely 20 years old.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

McGinty, blindfolded, is PUSHED out of a car. Rolls in the dust, as the car SPEEDS OFF.

Scrambling to his feet, he RIPS off the blindfold. He's been dropped pretty close to where the insurgents picked him up.

MCGINTY

Vanowen?

He looks around. He's alone in the blacked-out street.

Suddenly...

THE STREET LIGHTS COME ON.

INT. HOSPITAL STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

By flashlight, Dr. Hadija searches through medicines. She looks up as the LIGHTS flicker on. The refrigeration unit STARTS UP.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Ahmed is working on the A/C unit by the light of a KEROSENE LAMP. Suddenly the POWER SAW, lying on the ground near his feet, ROARS to life, SPINNING wildly.

Ahmed jumps for it, manages to corral it before it cuts off his ankles.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

As McGinty looks around, a VOICE spins him --

VANOWEN (O.S.)
McGinty. Over here.

Vanowen, silhouetted by the light, staggers slightly as he approaches McGinty. He got roughed up, too.

VANOWEN (CONT'D)
What's in the safe? *

McGinty LAUGHS. It hurts.

MCGINTY
The loan papers. Birth certificate. Wedding ring. *

VANOWEN
Still holding onto it? *

McGinty nods. *

VANOWEN (CONT'D)
Yeah. I held onto mine, too. *

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. GARAGE - PRE-DAWN

A battered-looking Vanowen fires up the truck's compressor, which GROANS and HISSES.

PAN the faces of Ahmed, Hareth and Salim, all praying this works... to McGinty and Darko, whose fingers are bandaged.

Vanowen holds his hand up to the refrigeration coils, feeling the cold. Nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAWN

Hareth, Salim, Vanowen and their HELPERS load the crates onto the truck.

McGinty, Hadija and Darko sit on a bench nearby. Darko WINCES as Hadija unwinds the bandage from his hand and examines it.

HADIJA

Two broken fingers. How did that happen?

Darko and McGinty exchange looks.

HADIJA (CONT'D)

It should be splinted properly.

VANOWEN

(intervening)

No time. We're ready to go.

McGinty and Hadija look at each other. This is goodbye.

As Hareth ties down the last load in the truck --

We hear the PIERCING WHINE of artillery fire.

Suddenly, three EXPLOSIONS rock the street. Everyone scatters, running for cover.

CLOSE ON Vanowen.

VANOWEN (CONT'D)

Crap. Here comes the cavalry.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAWN

A cacaphony of CAR ALARMS.

VANOWEN
Get inside!

McGinty and everyone else scramble into the building. A MORTAR hits nearby, shaking the walls.

INT. BACK OF THE TRUCK - DAWN

Hareth flattens himself down between the crates of blood. The entire truck sways from a nearby EXPLOSION.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAWN

Hadija barks orders to her panicked STAFF:

HADIJA (IN ARABIC)
Move the beds away from the windows! Take the children to the kitchen.

MCGINTY
Doctor...

HADIJA
You've done your job. Let me do mine.

Furious, she heads off to see to her patients. Another BLAST rocks the building.

MCGINTY
Why are they targeting the hospital?!

VANOWEN
Maybe they don't know it's a hospital.

MCGINTY
They're gonna hit the truck. Can we get 'em on the radio, tell 'em we're here?

VANOWEN
Their radios are encrypted.

MCGINTY
Brilliant.

Vanowen silences him with a gesture -- LISTENING.

In the chaos of explosions and gunfire, Vanowen is like a musician hearing one wrong note amidst a full orchestra. Then we hear it too: the POP POP POP of shots from above.

VANOWEN
Snipers. On the roof. As long as they're shooting from the hospital, it's gonna be a target.

DARKO
So we take out the snipers.

Vanowen and McGinty exchange a glance. They don't trust him.

VANOWEN
(to Darko)
Can you shoot?

Darko loads-and-locks his assault rifle -- left-handed: "No problem." Vanowen looks at Salim, who nods: "I'm in."

MCGINTY
Gimme the satt phone. I have an idea.

Vanowen tosses it to him.

MCGINTY (CONT'D)
(re: Darko)
Watch your back.

Vanowen nods a brief farewell, then heads off toward the stairs with Salim and Darko.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT [WASHINGTON, D.C.]

In sharp contrast to the noise and chaos, this room is tranquil and dark.

A cell phone RINGS and VIBRATES on a nightstand. A nearby alarm clock reads 11:32 p.m.

Brooke answers her phone, sitting up in bed. She's used to calls in the middle of the night.

BROOKE

Hello?

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD - DAWN

McGinty has the phone pressed tight to his ear, plugging his other one so he can hear. Smoke is rising over the second story. (He's gone outside to get a signal.)

MCGINTY

It's me. I need a favor.

INTERCUT BROOKE / MCGINTY

She switches on the lamp.

BROOKE

Where are you? You sound like you're in a wind tunnel.

MCGINTY

I need the name of the 2nd Brigade commander of 4th Infantry. It's not classified. Just Google it.

On McGinty's side, a nearby EXPLOSION. He tries to muffle the phone, but Brooke heard it.

BROOKE

(accusingly)

Are you where I think you are?

MCGINTY

Could you just look it up, please?

Brooke gets down on the carpet, where her laptop sits open alongside a pile of work. She furiously taps the keyboard to get it to wake up.

A man in his late 40's looks over from the far side of the bed. His name is BILL HAYDEN. He's the junior senator from Maryland.

HAYDEN

Is that Phil?

Brooke shakes her head and motions "shh," but it's too late.

MCGINTY

Who was that?

Brooke carries her laptop into the BATHROOM, closes the door behind her.

BROOKE
Fourth division, second brigade?

MCGINTY
Was that the senator?

Brooke doesn't answer. Continues searching online.

BROOKE
Colonel Reyes, James. R-E-Y-E-S.

MCGINTY
Brooke, are you sleeping with your boss?

BROOKE
Joe, I'm not going to get into this with you now. You call me in the middle of the night...

Click, dial tone. McGinty's hung up.

Brooke sits on the bathroom floor, bewildered.

CUT TO:

THROUGH A SNIPER SCOPE

we see TWO U.S. SOLDIERS taking position inside a blown-out storefront. TWO SHOTS from the sniper's rifle blast through plaster, but miss their American targets.

EXT. ROOF OF HOSPITAL - DAY

The INSURGENT SNIPER ducks behind a wall as MORTAR FIRE shakes the hospital building.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A WINDOW shatters, blowing glass shrapnel across the room. PATIENTS huddled against the far wall SCREAM. Hadija's there, cradling two terrified SMALL CHILDREN.

EXT. ROOF OF HOSPITAL - DAY

The Insurgent Sniper reloads quickly. He's just putting his eye back to the scope when --

A SINGLE SHOT hits him in the back of the head.

REVERSE TO Vanowen, who fired. He gestures to Darko and Salim; they edge along the outside of the exposed stairwell. We FOLLOW Darko, REVEALING...

TWO MORE SNIPERS aiming off the far edge of the building, along with a FOURTH RIFLEMAN standing watch.

VANOWEN
Call out to them.

Salim nods. Keeping out of sight, he shouts as if he were the first dead sniper:

SALIM (IN ARABIC)
I need help here!

The Fourth Rifleman turns to the sound, suspicious.

FOURTH RIFLEMAN
Saeed?

SALIM (IN ARABIC)
Here!

FOURTH RIFLEMAN
(realizing it's a trick)
Hakeem! Adnaan!

He's calling out to the other two snipers. They scoot back from the edge of the building, alert for danger.

VANOWEN

knows it's gone wrong, but he can't see Salim and Darko from this angle.

CLOSE ON DARKO, flattened against the wall. He glances back in Vanowen's direction with a cold expression that might make Vanowen worry, if he'd seen it.

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD - DAY

McGinty climbs out onto a second story balcony. SHOTS ring out from the surrounding streets.

He bites off the corner of a blood bag. Using it like a can of spray paint, he writes in giant letters on the wall above:

REYES +1 480 554-6254

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOF OF HOSPITAL - DAY

The three insurgents look for the suspected intruder.

From his hiding place, Vanowen spots a long shadow sweeping across the tar paper. It's one of the gunmen, coming closer.

Salim ducks low, trouble breathing. Takes a slow hit on his inhaler, trying to keep it quiet.

Vanowen keeps his gun ready. He can hear the GRIT underneath the approaching insurgent's boots.

At just the right moment, Vanowen swings around the corner. A quick SHOT drops the lone gunman.

More GUNFIRE, from Darko's area. Vanowen closes the distance --

Swinging around the corner, Vanowen finds Darko standing, the last two insurgents dead at his feet.

Darko still has his rifle up, and could easily pop Vanowen. But he lowers his gun, with a nod.

ON VANOWEN, relieved and impressed.

Then, unexpectedly, Darko drops to his knees. Only now do we see the crimson bloom spreading across Darko's chest. He gives a short, bitter smile -- and falls.

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD - DAY

Hospital workers race past McGinty, who's trying to wipe the sticky blood from his hands. The satt phone RINGS. McGinty answers it.

MCGINTY

Joe McGinty.

(listens; interrupts)

Tell Colonel Reyes we're U.S. contractors, in a building you're attacking. The building is a hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL ROOF - DAY

Salim watches as Vanowen lowers Darko gently to the ground.

Vanowen looks up. The AUTOMATIC RIFLE FIRE, omnipresent until then, is starting to FALL OFF.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Hadija and the patients look up. The bombardment is STOPPING.

EXT. HOSPITAL ROOF - DAY

Vanowen stands. The machine gun fire FALLS OFF to a few final bursts... then silence.

Gunfire and explosions continue to reverberate from further away. But the hospital has been spared.

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. ARMY BASE - DAY

Held together by duct tape and dust, the little truck limps through the first of two gate checkpoints. Stars and stripes fly overhead.

COALITION COMMAND BASE, KIRKUK

EXT. LOADING AREA / BACK OF TRUCK - DAY [LATER]

While SOLDIERS unload the back of the truck, McGinty and Vanowen talk with STAFF SGT. WALTER KESSLER, hospital supply director. He's a good guy, if a little myopic about the larger world around him.

KESSLER

You had good luck with the roads, huh?

VANOWEN

What?

KESSLER

There's been a lot of insurgent activity on the Kirkuk highway. You guys were lucky.

McGinty senses Vanowen's temper simmering, steps in quickly --

MCGINTY

You should know, we lost five crates on the way. Spoilage.

KESSLER
 (understandingly)
 Hard to keep blood cool in a
 desert. We usually budget 25
 percent loss. 'Sides, we're
 running a three-month surplus at
 the moment.

McGinty stifles his reaction as Kessler signs the delivery papers.

MCGINTY
 I hope you'll put in a good word
 for us, and let the CPA know you
 feel we exceeded expectations.
 (handing him a business
 card)
 That's my cell phone, and that's
 our website.

KESSLER
 Don't need the website. We got a
 big fat contract with you guys.

MCGINTY
 Actually, this is our first job for
 the CPA. We're hoping to get more.

Confused, Kessler looks at the card.

KESSLER
 Aren't you guys S.O.S.?

MCGINTY
 No. Falcon International.

Suddenly it makes sense. We can see a 10-second timer
 ticking down behind Vanowen's eyes.

KESSLER
 (checking paperwork)
 Oh, here it is. They subcontracted
 out to you. That's the trouble
 with outsourcing a war. Never know
 who you're working for.

Kessler hands him the signed form.

CUT TO:

INT. ANKARA WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

BOOM! Voltov is SLAMMED against the garage door. Vanowen, as angry as we've seen him, pins him squirming like a worm on a hook. McGinty hovers behind.

VOLTOV

It was Barker! In Afghanistan, he wanted piece of my business. He told me to hire you.

VANOWEN

He wanted his hands clean, in case we got caught.

MCGINTY

That's why you were in Afghanistan, isn't it, Voltov? Buying heroin.

Voltov shrugs -- "what do you expect?"

VOLTOV

I see opportunity. I am businessman. Like you.

Vanowen's eyes narrow.

VANOWEN

I want you to pass along a message to Barker, okay? Are you ready?

Voltov nods.

Vanowen head-butts him, quite possibly breaking his nose. He lets Voltov drop to the floor.

MCGINTY

You know he's probably Russian mafia. *We're dead men in, like,* four countries.

*

Vanowen couldn't care less. He strides past McGinty toward the door.

INT. ISTANBUL AIRPORT - DAY

Carrying their passports and tickets, McGinty walks up to Vanowen, who's watching a cable news report on an overhead monitor.

MCGINTY

We're connecting through Munich.

Vanowen shushes him, points up to the screen.

ON THE MONITOR [VIDEO]

A MALE REPORTER (British) narrates footage of a familiar town: Bassul. (We intercut real news footage with our own.)

REPORTER (V.O.)

In the northern Iraqi town of Bassul this morning, calm. After a day and a half of heavy fighting, Coalition forces declared victory, having captured or driven back the remaining insurgents, who were threatening the vital oil pipeline.

VIDEO: The Reporter interviews Dr. Hadija. In the background, we see part of the "**REYES +1 480 554-6254**" written on the wall.

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The local hospital director, Dr. Hadija Al-Daheen, said the crisis was now humanitarian.

HADIJA

We have no water, no power. More people will die today than yesterday.

VIDEO: The familiar refrigerated truck drives into town.

REPORTER (V.O.)

By noon, new hope as a shipment of desperately needed blood reached the isolated town.

On Vanowen, shaking his head in amazement.

MCGINTY

They drove it right back.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Meanwhile, in an abandoned insurgent stronghold, a startling discovery:

VIDEO: The bags of heroin.

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Heroin. With an estimated street value of three million dollars, it appears to represent a major shift in insurgent funding.

VIDEO: Col. Reyes is interviewed.

COL. REYES

I think it's clear the insurgents
are using heroin to finance their
operation. It's not just a war on
terror; it's a war on drugs.

On McGinty and Vanowen.

VANOWEN

Yeah. It's business.

Vanowen plucks his ticket from McGinty's hand and walks off.

THE END