

THE RED SHAWL

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A true story

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OVER BLACK: The perpetual WOOSH of wind turbines fade in.

EXT. ONNEN ASYLUM CAMP - ONNEN, NETHERLANDS - EARLY EVENING

Wind turbines scatter across a field of green under a purple Dutch sunset. Rows of trailer homes checker the distance.

SUPER: Onnen Refugee Asylum Camp - Onnen, Netherlands.
August 2014.

AMER SHANATI (27), long curly hair and a dark beard, has his eyes fixated on the thrusting propellers. He's handsome though gaunt. A RED SHAWL drapes around his neck.

DUTCH SOLDIER
(english) Hello...sir...SIR!

Amer comes-to and steps up to a receiving booth. Inside, two armed DUTCH SOLDIERS.

AMER
(e) I, am, sorry.

Amer hands them his documents. They look him up and down.

DUTCH SOLDIER
Amer. Amer Shanati. Where did you come from Amer? Where are you from?

AMER
My from, is, Syria.

DUTCH SOLDIER
How did you get here?

Amer takes a second to translate. The Soldier articulates.

DUTCH SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Amer, how did you get here?

Amer's gaze is lost in the answer to that question. The WOOSH of the turbines swell louder and louder. DRUMS begin to fade in and match the blades' rhythm. It gets louder as we:

CUT TO:

INT. PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP GYMNASIUM, HOMS, SYRIA - DAY

Mallets and hands bang drums as several TEEN DRUMMERS keep a fast tempo. Twenty TEEN MUSICIANS join in with a variety of instruments. They play with passion and skill. PARENTS sing and dance along as they pack the large open space.

The Musicians trade eye contact as the music crescendos, then a final HIT on the last note. A breath of silence, then the crowd erupts. The Teens finally gleam with smiles. Beside the stage stands Amer with a huge smile and hard applause. The Teens wave him up onto the stage and he obliges.

SUPER: Palestinian refugee camp - Homs, Syria. 5 months earlier.

AMER

(Arabic, English subtitles) Thank you. Thank you. (pause) In 1948 my grandfather was forced out of Palestine. He walked with hundreds of people to Syria thinking okay, I'll stay two, three weeks. He didn't know he would spend the rest of his life at this camp. My father was born here. My mother too, they were married at this camp. I grew up right across the street. This place has become Palestine for me by what's in the heart of all it's people. This place feels like Palestine, and that travels with me wherever I can go. People ask me, Amer are you Syrian? Are you Palestinian? I say no. I am from the world. These children, are from the world. No label, no borders. When you share music, you share peace. And peace can not be told where to live. (to the kids) So, keep playing! (back) And parents I thank you for allowing me to do so with your children. Thank you.

A big applause. Amer conducts the kids to stand and they soak in the praise. Amer shakes hands with students and parents on his way off of the stage and out the door.

EXT. PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP/HOMS STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Amer steps outside onto the bustling, run-down camp-city streets. The buildings are brown and dusty, just like the road below. Apartments stack high over lively shops and pedestrians move swiftly about the crowd. Amer walks along, shaking hands with friends and neighbors. He walks through a large gate and he waves familiarly to TWO GUARDS.

Walking on towards a busy roadway, Amer zigs and ducks through the stop-and-go traffic.

He walks down the opposite side of the street, and as he crosses each intersection the blocks behind him alternate from being well-maintained, to completely destructed piles of rubble. People carry on with their day, children play football in the streets. Amer walks on into a small storefront: "Jaffra Music School".

INT. JAFFRA MUSIC SCHOOL, LARGE ROOM - LATER

Twenty YOUNG CHILDREN with a variety of instruments pack the room and play an Arabic classic. Amer conducts the tempo with one hand and he films with the other. Some kids puff up and play to the camera, others laugh it away. The violins miss a cue and Amer cuts them all off.

AMER

No no, what happened? Violins,
count your melody!

Amer sings the melody with counts. He cues the young violinists and they begin to catch on. He cuts them off.

AMER (CONT'D)

You see? But why were they thrown off? What did we lose?

SOME CHILDREN

Tempo.

AMER

What?

CHILDREN

TEMPO!

AMER

Again and again and again!
Percussion, you can not rush!

The kids nod - they're fully engaged. They're ready to go again, though Amer senses the fatigue in their little faces. He checks the time, then turns to RAHM (10).

AMER (CONT'D)

How about Rahm, how is his tempo?

RAHM

I'm the drummer! I am the tempo!

The kids laugh.

AMER

Rahm, isn't something special
happening this weekend?

RAHM

(he pauses, thinks) My birthday? My
birthday!

The kids cheer! Amer gives an encouraging look as the kids scatter around to set up - they've done this before.

AMER

Instruments away, go get the
tables.

LATER

The kids sit along the edge of folding tables. They eat, they laugh, they play. Amer cuts slices of birthday cake and hands a piece to Rahm. He engorges.

RAHM

(eating) I love my birthday!

STUDENT 2

I love your birthday too.

STUDENT 3

I love everybody's birthday! I love
cake!

The kids laugh, sing, celebrate.

INT. JAFFRA MUSIC SCHOOL, FRONT ROOM/OFFICE - LATER

Amer's desk sits in the corner, surrounded by walls decorated with instruments, photos of Amer performing, magazine features, etc. Amer says goodbye to some students as they get their things together and leave the school. About ten remain, who don't look much like going.

RAHM

Amer do we have to go?

STUDENT 3

Yeah, can we stay again today?

STUDENT 2

Can we play more music?

Some more encouraging yeahs. Amer goes into a desk cabinet and grabs a ream of white paper and some crayons and markers. He lays them out amongst the coffee table.

STUDENT 1
I thought we were doing music?

AMER
This is music. I want you to color.

RAHM
Color what?

AMER
Anything! Your life. Your home.
Your family. Draw a picture that
represents you!

STUDENT 1
How is this music?

AMER
Where do you think music comes
from? I want to see your life, your
creativity. Quick don't think!

The kids still unsure.

AMER (CONT'D)
Go!

The kids dive in with gusto and begin to color.

LATER

The room is now empty and the kids are gone. Scattered crayons and a stack of artwork remains. Amer sits alone at his computer and skims through today's performance video, now up on Youtube. He scrolls through older videos, checking their views and statistics. He's scouring the comments when - RING RING - it's Mom. *Shit.* He grabs his things off of his desk - books, sheet music, the kid's artwork, his laptop - throws it all in his bag and rushes out.

INT. SHANATI HOME - MINUTES LATER

Amer hurriedly enters his home and heads into the dining room. A hello CHEER from his family - MOTHER (60), SISTER (13), BROTHER (32), his pregnant SISTER-IN-LAW (32). They move back and forth from the kitchen to the dining room setting down plates of delicious food. Amer's FATHER (60) walks in, ushering in his GRANDMOTHER (85) to her seat.

GRANDMOTHER
Well look who decided to join us.

BROTHER
Just in time to eat.

Amer steals and eats a piece of meat from the tray his Brother carries. Amer overexaggerates his dislike. A playful slap from his Mother.

MOTHER
Always a critic, never a cook.

AMER
How could I cook? I can't put these hands at risk. They're the money makers.

FATHER
Don't listen to them Amer.

Amer and his Father kiss hello with their matching smiles.

MOTHER
Amer what's in your hair?

Amer checks the culprit strands - he smells it. Tastes it. He offers it over to his giggling little sister.

SISTER Ew!
AMER It's cake! It was Rahm's birthday.

BROTHER
It's always somebody's birthday.

AMER
Yes. It is always somebody's birthday. And every single one of them gets to be celebrated.

Amer squats down to his Sister-in-Law's pregnant belly.

AMER (CONT'D)
And soon we will celebrate yours!

GRANDMOTHER
Amer your hair is too long.

AMER
I think it's handsome.

GRANDMOTHER
It's forbidden in the Koran!

AMER
Where is that in the Koran?

GRANDMOTHER
It's in there!

Grandmother looks at his Father for validation. He shrugs.

FATHER
What? My boy is handsome.

RING RING! Amer looks at his ringing phone.

BROTHER
He comes in late, dirty, never
helps to cook, thinks he's so impor-

AMER
I'm a busy man!

Amer answers his phone walking into the next room.

AMER (CONT'D)
Hello? Yes this is Amer...

INT. AMER'S BEDROOM - LATER

Amer and his father trade speedy, calculated moves on the backgammon board. Their faces show no tells, no emotion.

FATHER
They didn't give you any idea?

AMER
Not really. Maybe I was recommended
to teach? A concert maybe?

Father's tense play expresses his concerns. A lingering silence. Amer feels it.

FATHER
Amer, you know that University is
just a shell for the regime. You
have to be careful what you say--

AMER
Why? Why should I be careful?

Amer makes a smart move, which makes his father hesitate. Amer smiles and begins to gloat.

POP POP POP! Distant gunfire rings outside the window. Amer looks towards the familiar sound, but Father's eyes stay glued to the board. Father makes a win-sealing move, then sits up to admire his work. Amer looks at the board, stumped.

FATHER
Don't be distracted Amer.

He lets this one sink in for Amer, then finally begins the formality of finishing up the game and tallying the score.

AMER
One more?

FATHER
One thousand more.

Amer and his Father reset the board, a hit of a smile arriving for each one.

EXT. SYRIAN UNIVERSITY - LATER

Amer enters the vast and empty lobby of the University.

INT. SYRIAN UNIVERSITY, OFFICE RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

Amer sits in a fancy, overly decorated office. Regal governmental photos scatter the walls.

RECEPTIONIST
You can go in now, Mr. Shanati.

Amer stands with some confidence and walks in to:

INT. SYRIAN UNIVERSITY, OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A long conference table seats several SUITED MEN. Four armed SYRIAN SOLDIERS line the walls. At the head of the table stands MR. AL-DIN; stoic, tall, fine posture, late 50s. He flashes Amer a welcoming grin.

MR. AL-DIN
Mr. Shanati, thank you for coming.
Please have a seat.

Amer smiles kindly and sits.

AMER
Thank you. How can I help you?

MR. AL-DIN
To the point. I like it! A mature young man. How old are you again?

AMER
26.

MR. AL-DIN

26! I think I've seen you on TV before. One of Syria's brightest musicians. The Oud, right? You've written books! How many books?

AMER

Three.

MR. AL-DIN

Three books! At 26. Amazing.

Mr. Al-din's pacing comes to a halt.

MR. AL-DIN (CONT'D)

But you do know, we are at a time of war. And at 26, you should be a man who is fighting for his country. For his family.

He paces again.

MR. AL-DIN (CONT'D)

I have a son. He's 23, almost like you. He fights in our Army, Syria's Army. His friends do too.

Mr. Al-Din is handed a folder. He skims its contents.

MR. AL-DIN (CONT'D)

But you - that's 8 years of deferment of your required service. That's the maximum amount. A lot of money you paid. I guess, as a famous musician. And teacher! With your schools. And all of those children! (beat) So what happens next year?

He looks sharply at Amer, who is speechless and unsure if he's expected to answer--

MR. AL-DIN (CONT'D)

Do you hear that? Do you hear something? (beat) I don't hear anything. Nothing, not even music. Because Mr. Shanati, nobody is playing music. There are no concerts. Nobody is teaching music to children. Nobody, but you.

Mr Al-Din comes in close to Amer and speaks sternly.

MR. AL-DIN (CONT'D)

We are at a time of war. My son,
the sons of Syria are fighting for
their country with their life. But
not you. You just defer away to
play music. (long beat) And we like
it.

He smiles. Gently paces the other way.

AMER

I don't understand--

MR. AL-DIN

We want YOU to be the musician for
the regime! We want you to play on
behalf of this country. Your
country. Our country!

Mr. Al-Din describes it like he's pitching a Broadway hit.

MR. AL-DIN (CONT'D)

The President has personally
selected you. Your skill, your
passion. You're exactly what this
country needs! Think of it - Amer
Shanati, all over TV, the musician
of Syria! The Musician of the war.
Someone to lead us in song, to
represent our people and our
interests. You'll be a hero.
Imagine more fans, more schools.
Imagine the women.

The charade is over. He stares earnestly at Amer.

MR. AL-DIN (CONT'D)

The world is against us Amer, we
need your help. Your music will be
the weapon to fight against these
rebels. To win this war!

Mr. Al-Din holds his pose, then nods to his cronies. They all
file out. Mr. Al-Din places his hand on Amer's Shawl covered
shoulder and leans in a little too closely.

MR. AL-DIN (CONT'D)

This is precisely what he wants.
Give your life some value. We'll be
in touch.

Al-Din flashes a smile and then walks out the door.

EXT. HOMS STREET - LATER

Amer's eyes are locked forward as he walks through a busy, run down street. A looping CHANT grows louder and louder as Amer cuts through a LARGE CROWD protesting in front of a government building. *FREEDOM!* Three big claps. *FREEDOM!* Three more claps. Over and over they shout into the face of the ARMED SYRIAN GUARDS. Amer pays the commotion no mind.

POP POP POP! Amer jolts from his daze. The Crowd scatters and disseminates as a group begins to circle around a bleeding SHOT MAN. The Soldiers retreat and head into the building. The protesters tend to Shot Man's wound and shout for help. A pick-up truck pulls up as Amer joins a group to help lift the victim. The halo of men shuffle the heavy body to the truck and push and pull and lift him onto it. Amer gets caught in the chaos and is bumped and falls onto the Shot Man's body. He hops right back up, just in time as the truck speeds away. People run with it, cars follow, spectators disappear. Amer is quickly deserted in a falling cloud of dust and stands alone on the blood stained road.

INT. AMER'S BEDROOM - LATER

Amer falls onto his bed. He closes his eyes and takes a breath. A long moment.

Amer takes off his bag and empties its contents. He comes upon the kids' artwork the day before. Written atop the first drawing reads: "My Life!". Below, a house, a family, trees, dogs, bombs, dead bodies. He flips to the next one: flowers, cats, a football, a bloody arm, a gun, a violin. Next. Each one as daintily horrific as the one prior. The colors are dark, dull, the occasional blue, the frequent blood red. Amer notices the red color has bled onto his fingertips. He notices it's sticky. *Wait - this isn't marker.* He checks his bags and finds a wet stain of real blood from the Fallen Man.

INT. SHANATI HOME, BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Water runs onto the bag as Amer scrubs out the blood. Hard. Amer's Mother and Father pop their heads from the hallway.

FATHER
Amer! How was the meeting?

They both notice the bloody river flowing down the drain.

MOTHER
Amer--

AMER

I'm okay. I was helping some man.

He walks back into his bedroom and his parents follow.

INT. AMER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

FATHER

What happened to the man-

AMER

He was shot.

Amer shrugs; *what else is new?* He begins to tidy his room.

AMER (CONT'D)

A protest, people chanting. He was
shot for no reason.

MOTHER

By the army?

AMER

Of course by the army. They think
everyone's a rebel, everybody's
looking for a fight. (beat)
And look at this!

He hands his parents the pile and they look through.

AMER (CONT'D)

I wanted to give them something
light, something fun to do. I asked
them draw a picture about their
life. A simple drawing! Your life.
Your day. And I get this.

FATHER

Amer, how was the meeting?
(nothing) Amer--

AMER

They asked me to play music on
behalf of the government. Hand
selected! To play on TV like a
puppet. The theme songs of the war.

MOTHER

Did you accept?

AMER

Of course I didn't.

MOTHER

Amer! You have to do what he they say, this could be life or death!

AMER

I'm dead anyway. If I decline they kill me, and if I do it and support them, then I die on the inside.

FATHER

Amer-

AMER

Dad! What I'm trying to teach these kids...they play with nothing but love. My music is not for war.

A stalemate. Amer's mother walks out. His father sighs, then gives up and walks over to sit at the backgammon board. He takes a moment to collect his thoughts, then begins to set up a new game. Amer considers, then joins him. In silence they begin; no words, just the rolling of dice and the snapping of wooden game-pieces. They occasionally look at one another, though the game is a continued distraction. Their ripe frustration begins to resurface and then eventually...

AMER (CONT'D)

I think I have to go.

FATHER

Amer-

AMER

Dad I don't have a choice. They know the power of my music, if they can't control it they'll just want to get rid of it.

FATHER

Your mother will-

AMER

I know. For a little bit. But not forever.

FATHER

That's what everybody says.

AMER

Well not everybody is me. What I give these children is bigger than the war, bigger than Syria. Imagine what that peace could do for the rest of the world?

(MORE)

AMER (CONT'D)
If I have to stop doing that, then
what's the point of any of this?

His father takes a long pause.

FATHER
Inshallah.

The ROAR of a plane makes Amer and his Father reactively duck. The sound flies further away. *Safe*. Then...a muted boom. Amer goes to look out the window.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Amer!

He sticks his head out to see smoke and flames in the distance. Distant gunfire POPS! Bullets PING and ricochet.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Amer get away from there.

AMER
Dad it's--

PING! A bullet scrapes off the edge of the window by Amer's head and into the wall. He dives to the floor - *just a stray*. Amer's father shouts into the hallway.

FATHER
Get away from the windows!

The echo of the bullets ring in the distance. As they lay on the floor, Amer's Father now shares Amer's determined gaze.

EXT. JAFFRA MUSIC SCHOOL - DAY

Amer carries several large shopping bags to Jaffra School. STUDENTS wait out front. They light up when Amer arrives.

AMER
Come with me! Around the back.

EXT. JAFFRA MUSIC SCHOOL ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Amer finds the right spot and stops.

RAHM
What are we doing?

Amer empties the bags - canisters of brightly colored paint and brushes. Rollers, pans - plenty of ammunition. Amer gestures to the sandy white wall aside Jaffra's school.

AMER
Go make some music.

The kids go at it. Neon colors streak across the wall. Flowers, animals, smiling faces. Amer's grin gets speckled with some paint. He grabs a brush and joins in. The kids color and play and we bask in the orchestra of laughter.

INT. SHANATI HOME - LATER

Amer enters his house wearing streaks of paint across his grin. He walks in on his parents mid-conversation. When he catches his Mother's eyes, her tears well up even more. He knows exactly why. She hugs him and buries her weeps into his shoulder. Father comes over to comfort as well. We give them their moment.

INT. AMER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amer scours Facebook looking through photos of friends on their migrant journey - at camps, safe-houses, throughout Europe. Amer sends some messages and does his research.

INT. JAFFRA MUSIC SCHOOL, LARGE ROOM - DAY

In a nostalgic daze, Amer conducts his STUDENT VIOLINISTS.

EXT. HOMS STREETS - DAY

Walking home, Amer is stopped by two SYRIAN SOLDIERS. They hand him an envelope and walk off. He opens it, reads it, is chilled by its contents.

INT. AMER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amer counts and organizes cash from a small private box.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Amer is handed a NEWBORN BABY from his Brother. The entire family is gathered around. Amer and the baby lock eyes and share a smile. Unnoticed through the windows behind them, sporadic mortars light up the distant sky.

INT. SHANATI HOME - NIGHT

Amer's leans over the sewing machine, lovingly watching his mother make him a special shirt with hidden pockets.

EXT. PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

Amer leads a large group of YOUNG MUSICIANS down the street during a small parade. The city is crowded and alive. Amer's smile barely exists, his eyes absorbing as much as he can.

INT. AMER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amer wears his home-made shirt and hides a stack of bills in its secret pocket. He wraps on his Red Shawl. grabs his small bag, straps on his Oud. He stares himself down in the mirror.

INT. AMER'S SISTER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amer enters and sits at the edge of his Sister's bed. She barely wakes up from her angelic sleep and gives him a sweet smile. Just as Amer's eyes begin to get glassy, his Sister wraps her arms around him. She squeezes tightly as he lets some out into her shoulder.

SISTER

Just go.

She smiles at him with encouragement. He kisses her forehead.

INT. SHANATI HOME HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Amer steps up to his Mother's bedroom door. He pauses, then opens it and walks in. We briefly see her sitting on her bed before the door closes shut. We wait in the hallway. It lasts, it lingers. We wait. The faint echo of a wail, a cry.

Amer opens the door and walks off. As the door swings closed, we catch a brief glimpse of his empty and defeated mother.

INT. SHANATI HOME - CONTINUOUS

The orange glow of the street lamps shine through the window and illuminate Amer's Father. Amer enters.

FATHER

The taxi is out front.

AMER
Thank you.

They lock eyes. His Father's about to speak but hugs Amer instead and lets out a few reserved tears.

AMER (CONT'D)
Tell mom this isn't forever. Tell her this will all be better. We will be together again. Okay?!

Amer's father nods, wiping his eyes. He takes a heavy breath, reaches over and grabs a small box.

FATHER
A few of these have come through the shop over the years. It has lifelong value.

He opens the box and pulls out a beautiful gold watch.

FATHER (CONT'D)
It's Swiss made. I have one for each of you. This one was to be yours. Wear it, enjoy it, but if you ever need the money-

AMER
Dad- FATHER (CONT'D)
Sell it. It's just a watch.

Amer takes a moment, then puts on the watch.

FATHER (CONT'D)
I have no advice to give you, I can not save you any longer. Only, do what you feel is good for you.

Amer nods, then walks out the door.

INT/EXT. TAXI - MOMENTS LATER

Amer walks directly into the taxi and sits in the back seat. His eyes stay fixated out the window.

TAXI DRIVER
No more bags?

AMER
(beat) Just go.

The clutch goes into gear and they're off.

SUPER: DAY 1

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE, TER APEL RESETTLEMENT CAMP, NETHERLANDS - DUSK

Amer, now more bearded and gaunt, sits in a boring office. He gaze is fixed out the window to the setting Dutch sun. A DUTCH GUARD and TRANSLATOR enter and sit across from him.

DUTCH GUARD
Dutch? English?

Amer shakes his head no. The Translator speaks.

TRANSLATOR
(arabic) Okay. The good news is
you're eligible for resettlement.
But. It's still a lengthy process.

His VOICEOVER continues into:

EXT. TER APEL RESETTLEMENT CAMP - LATER

Amer and a line of REFUGEES load a bus just as an identical new bus of NEW REFUGEES comes in.

TRANSLATOR (V.O.)
You'll be moved to a new camp. And
probably to another after that.

INT. ARNHEM DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

A doctor examines Amer from top to bottom.

TRANSLATOR (V.O.)
This is not a prison, you can come
and go as you please.

INT. ARNHEM CAMP BUNK / BATHROOM - LATER

In a bunk fit for 12, Amer sets sheets and pillow on a bare mattress. LATER, Amer takes a shower.

TRANSLATOR (V.O.)
It doesn't serve you to leave, as
we'll offer you accommodations,
meals, further assistance, and get
you back on your feet.

INT. ARNHEM CAFETERIA - DAY

Amer shuffles through a line to receive lunch. As he looks for a seat, a group of WELCOMING MEN wave him to their table.

TRANSLATOR (V.O.)

We recommend you network, make friends. Many of your neighbors will settle in nearby communities.

EXT. ARNHEM PARK - DAY

Amer walks through a park. PARENTS play with their CHILDREN.

TRANSLATOR (V.O.)

Communicate with us, follow the rules, you should be just fine.

INT. ARNHEM CAMP BUNK - NIGHT

Amer's bunk is now more dressed up and lived in. He looks out of his window onto the vast country.

TRANSLATOR (V.O.)

We hope to get you resettled as soon as possible.

CUT TO:

INT. TER APEL RESETTLEMENT CAMP OFFICE - NIGHT

We're back in the office.

TRANSLATOR

(a) Any questions?

Amer shakes his head no. They give him a warm smile.

DUTCH GUARD

(Dutch) Welcome to the Netherlands.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. TAXI - SYRIAN/LEBANESE BORDER - SUNRISE

Countryside dust puffs up under the feet of the entering Syrians. Amer's taxi sits in a queue at the congested Lebanese border. They're close to the front.

SUPER: Syrian/Lebanese Border

They pull up to the BORDER AGENT and the Taxi Driver rolls down Amer's window. The Border Agent looks in curiously at Amer.

AMER

(to the agent) Hello. I'm on the way to Beirut University, on a teaching tour. I'm a music teacher.

The Agent looks Amer up and down; his ponytail now slick and neat, his shawl tucked tight. The Agent peers at the Oud case, then back to Amer. Amer slips some cash into his breast pocket with a smile.

That'll do. On they go.

EXT. APARTMENT STREET. BEIRUT, LEBANON - NOON

The taxi drives though a beat up Beirut street and pulls up to a rundown apartment. The Driver turns and offers his hand.

AMER

I thought I paid everything?

The Driver shakes his head and reasserts his hand. Amer realizes, and they shake hands. Amer exits the taxi and walks into the building.

SUPER: Beirut, Lebanon.

INT. NIDAL'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Amer knocks and NIDAL (30) opens the door with a smile. Cheers and strong hugs abound. Amer walks in.

NIDAL

Good to see you bro!

AMER

Good to see you Nidal, how are you?

Nidal shrugs with some unease, but moves on.

NIDAL

Come, come in let me get you settled. Good timing I was just about to leave for work.

They stand a the small living room. Pivoting in a circle, Nidal gives Amer a pointing tour.

NIDAL (CONT'D)

Bathroom is over there. Kitchen
there, eat whatever you want.
Computer if you need, wifi. And
that's you right there.

He points to neat pile of pillows and linens on the couch.

NIDAL (CONT'D)

I'm working until late, here's an
extra key. Anything else you need,
consider this your home.

AMER

I can't thank you enough. I'm not
sure how long I'll need but please
let me give you some money--

Nidal is disgusted.

NIDAL

Are you kidding? You come in to a
Palestinian man's home, you are
taken care of. No discussion!
Welcome to Lebanon.

Nidal shares a big smile as he walks out. Amer sits on the couch, connects his wifi and makes a call. One ring.

MOTHER

(on speaker) Amer?

AMER

Mom. I'm here.

MOTHER

Oh Amer! It's so good to hear your
voice I miss you I miss you.

AMER

I miss you too mom. I'm going to
get settled in but I just wanted to
check in. Is dad there. (long
pause) Mom?

MOTHER

Your father...he can't talk right
now.

AMER

What, is he mad?

MOTHER

No of course he's not mad...you
know how your father gets. He's a
weepy mess. He said he'll be able
to you soon.

A blow to Amer's gut. He swallows it.

AMER

Okay mom. I love you.

MOTHER

I love you Amer.

LATER, ON THE COMPUTER

Amer rifles through Facebook messages. He Googles
resettlement in Germany, Turkey, Italy, Greece. He lands on
some Netherlands information. He takes some notes.

LATER, IN THE KITCHEN

Amer opens the fridge - not much beyond condiments. He grabs
some hummus and some bread.,

The stove burner chars Amer's bread. He rips a corner off and
with it attacks the hummus. He pulls a paper towel off the
roll and sees it's the last one.

INT. CURRENCY EXCHANGE - LATER

Amer slides over several thousand Syrian Pounds to the AGENT.
She judges him and his currency. Amer stares right back.

INT. BEIRUT GROCERY STORE - LATER

Amer strolls the tiny aisles filling a basket with some food.
He grabs toilet paper, paper towels.

Amer places his items at the counter. Two CLERKS have their
eyes glued to the TV - coverage of the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

CLERK 1

No way Spain wins again.

CLERK 2

They have a strong group, The
Netherlands are tough. They're well
built

Amer pulls out his cash, a mix of Lebanese and Syrian Pounds.
Clerk 1 rings him up with an air of disdain.

AMER
Netherlands should do well.

The Clerks are judgemental and skeptical of the foreigner.

AMER (CONT'D)
And the women. Have you seen their
supporters?

A pause of judgement, but then they laugh.

CLERK 2
I told you they're well built!

CLERK 1
I thought you meant the team!

Idiotic laughter. Amer grabs his stuff and gets out of there.

INT. NIDAL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Amer sets down the last of a variety of small plates. Nidal enters the apartment.

NIDAL
Amer! You didn't have to cook!

Amer throws a pile of take out containers into the trash.

AMER
Don't worry, I didn't.

The duo dig in to the lavish spread. Amer opens a fresh roll of paper towel and rips off 2 segments.

NIDAL
You bought paper towels? My man.

AMER
You told me you were giving me a home. This is how I treat my home.

Nidal offers a fist and Amer pounds it.

AMER (CONT'D)
I do really appreciate it.

NIDAL
As long as you need. And if you think about staying in Beirut--

AMER
I'm not.

NIDAL
But if you do.

AMER (CONT'D)
I'm not.

NIDAL
Then what's the plan?

AMER
I didn't have time to think or to
have a plan. It was, just go.

NIDAL
Well, as long as you don't say
you're Palestinian, Beirut's a good
place to make a plan. Or hide out.

AMER
I'm not looking to hide. What I was
doing in Syria, teaching kids,
playing music...I need to continue
that. Make it bigger. No hiding.

Nidal starts a slow clap.

AMER (CONT'D)
I'm serious!

NIDAL
I know you are! I know you are.

AMER
So what have you heard? Where do
people go.

NIDAL
Germany and Netherlands are
probably your best options.

AMER
Why didn't you go?

NIDAL
I'm here. I'm okay with hiding.
It's so tough to get into Europe
and be resettled, let alone how
dangerous and far it is.

AMER
Italy?

NIDAL
You crazy? The Mediterranean is the
most dangerous. If you want Europe,
you need to go through to Greece.
(MORE)

NIDAL (CONT'D)
And the safest and shortest way to
Greece is through Turkey.

AMER
How do I do that?

Nidal shrugs.

NIDAL
I just came here. That's as far as
my journey went. You could go back
through Syria, but that Turkish
border is dangerous. They're just
rifling people down. And if you're
caught on the way, that's no good.

AMER
By the government?

NIDAL
Yeah, or Isis. If you're lucky.

An unsettling beat for both of them. Light bulb Nidal.

NIDAL (CONT'D)
I know a guy who went to a
University in Turkey on a student
visa. Maybe you can study?

AMER
Or teach?

Nidal points to Amer as his gears begin to turn.

NIDAL
Yes. Yes!

Nidal grabs his phone and sends a long text. He shrugs.

NIDAL (CONT'D)
Fuck it. We'll see what he says.

He grabs his beer and raises it to Amer. Clink! Swig.

INT. NIDAL'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

Amer wakes up on the couch.

SUPER: Day 2

Amer peeks into Nidal's bedroom - he's gone. A half pot of coffee sits on the burner, and an empty mug beside it.

LATER, AT THE COMPUTER

A freshly showered Amer sits at the computer with his coffee. He clicks through applications of different universities, reading up on student visas and visiting teachers. He furiously dives into some applications - forms, essays, documents, coffee, cigarettes, more coffee.

"SUBMIT". Click! Satisfied, Amer finishes his cigarette. He looks around, absorbs the waiting. *What now?*

INT. NIDAL'S APARTMENT - DAYS LATER

Amer wakes up on the couch, more bearded and less confident.

SUPER: Day 14

Amer, wet hair, is back at the computer. A new email: "Congratulations! You have been accepted..." His eyes light up! Amer prints out papers, documents, emails.

INT. TURKISH EMBASSY - BEIRUT LEBANON

Amer is frisked as he enters the Turkish Embassy.

INT. TURKISH EMBASSY OFFICE - LATER

Amer sits across from an hardened VISA LADY. She's looking through his paperwork and his documents.

VISA LADY
You're from Syria--

AMER
I followed everything on the checklist. Please.

She takes her time looking into his pleading eyes.

VISA LADY
Okay. We'll review it. (beat) Would you like to pay cash or credit?

AMER
I paid the application fee.

VISA LADY
Great. This is a visa fee.

AMER
But I haven't even been accepted!

VISA LADY
You don't have to be.

Amer reluctantly pulls out cash.

INT. NIDAL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Amer wakes up on the couch, more bearded, drained.

SUPER: Day 17

INT. BEIRUT GROCERY STORE - DAY

Amer eats and watches the World Cup coverage with the Clerks.

SUPER: Day 20

INT. NIDAL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Amer's smokes and Googles some refugee routes. BING! A new email - photos of his newborn baby Niece.

SUPER: Day 24

RING! Amer picks up his cell. He's quickly infuriated.

AMER
Hello?...What? No, that's bull--

INT. TURKISH EMBASSY OFFICE - LATER

Amer storms in to Visa Lady's office.

AMER
That's it? Decline and that's it?

VISA LADY
I'm sorry, it can't be accepted.

AMER
What? Why?

VISA LADY
Your citizenship.

AMER
It said I could be Syrian.

VISA LADY
You can...

AMER

I added my references, my degree--

VISA LADY

They won't approve Palestinians.

AMER

What?!

VISA LADY

I'm sorry.

AMER

What if I apply as a teacher--

VISA LADY

It doesn't matter. Listen, I'm just the messenger. They don't want Palestinians in Turkey, they even just banned Palestinians from coming here. There's no real paperwork. No citizenship. They'd rather not deal with it.

Amer deflates. He wants to say more, but he has nothing else.

INT. NIDAL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nidal and Amer sit at the table for dinner. Amer swigs a beer as he types on Nidal's laptop. Nidal is the only one eating.

Super: Day 29

NIDAL

Come on man put that away for a minute. Give your brain a rest.

Amer's eyes stayed locked in as he takes a bite.

NIDAL (CONT'D)

You're going to make me eat all by myself?

Nothing. Nidal digs in and enjoys the food alone.

AMER

You know if I go straight through to Turkey and get across, I can get on a boat to Cyprus. Those boats seem bigger than the ones to Greece. Maybe safer too.

NIDAL

The boat sinking has nothing to do with size.

This gets Amer's attention.

NIDAL (CONT'D)

Those boats sink because people get excited when they see a ship, or land, or really anything. They all run to the edge of the boat then...

He mimes with his hand the boat flipping over.

NIDAL (CONT'D)

Or sometimes people from the lower decks come up. The boat loses buoyancy, and then...

Again he flips his capsizing hand. He shrugs and goes back to his meal.

AMER

How do you know all of this?

NIDAL

From people who sank. And made it back.

This resonates for a moment. BING! Nidal checks his text and Amer goes back to the laptop. Nidal is intrigued by the message, then looks over at mopey Amer searching the web.

NIDAL (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's go.

INT. BEIRUT NIGHTCLUB - LATER

Amer, Nidal, and NIDAL'S FRIENDS dance hard on the dark and packed dance floor. Amer drinks fast and dances hard. He tries to blend in and mimic Nidal and his friends, soaking in the lights and crowd energy, but he can't. He looks around at all the young, carefree DANCERS. His buzz begins to sour. *How are they having so much fun? What am I doing here?* He looks up towards the heavens.

AMER

WHAT DID I DO!? WHAT THE FUCK DID I DO!

INT. NIDAL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Amer lays awake on the couch hung over, defeated, out of options. He looks at the time his gold watch. *Time to get up.*

INT. NIDAL'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Amer knocks on the open door and the comatose Nidal wakes up. He's confused seeing Amer dressed, Oud packed and ready to go, but then he realizes. *Fuck.* He nods. He understands.

INT/EXT. TAXI - LEBANON - MINUTES LATER

Amer's taxi rides through the crowded streets of Beirut and into the countryside. It zooms past a sign: "Syria 140km".

SUPER: Day 30

EXT. LEBANON/SYRIA BORDER - LATER

The taxi drives as close to the border as it can. Amer gets out walks over towards the gate - no line going back in. Amer steps up to the BORDER GUARD and shows his ID.

BORDER GUARD
You know they banned all
Palestinians from entering Lebanon.
You can't come back in.

AMER
I'll be back. You'll see.

The Border Guard lets him through. Amer walks by the crowded line of his wilted countrymen. He slips into a new taxi.

INT. SYRIAN TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Amer sits in the back. He offers a good wad of Syrian Pounds.

AMER
Go north. Towards Idlib.

INT/EXT. SYRIAN TAXI/COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Amer's taxi drives through the serene Syrian country side. Herders and farmers trek about. A freeway exit says 'Homs'. Amer watches the exit come and go as the just drive by.

INT/EXT. SYRIAN TAXI - AFTERNOON

The taxi comes upon a checkpoint. A few cars are in queue.

SUPER: Northwestern Syria, near Turkish border.

AMER
Goats?

DRIVER
Checkpoint.

AMER
Isis?

DRIVER
Maybe Turkish.

They queue moves up. The Driver gets a better look.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
Syrian Army.

AMER
Fuck.

They come to a stop at the checkpoint. A massive, clean cut SYRIAN SOLDIER walks to the window, finger on the trigger of his AK-47. The Driver rolls down the window down.

SOLDIER
Where the fuck do you think you're going? Paperwork.

They oblige and pass their IDs. The Soldier is displeased.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
You're from Homs? What the fuck are you doing up here?

He points his gun at the driver, then to Amer.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
What are you, Freedom Army? Daesh?
What the fuck is that Red Shawl,
who are you with?

He sees the Oud in it's case

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Woah, what's in the--

AMER
It's alright.

Amer opens the door with his hands raised.

SOLDIER
Get the fuck back! What's in that case? Open it up!

AMER
It's an Oud.

SOLDIER
A what?!

AMER
An Oud. It's an instrument.

Amer slowly reaches into the backseat of the car. The Soldier stiffens his rifle. ZZZZZIP! Amer opens the soft music case and gently pulls out his Oud and holds it up, ready to play.

Amer stands tall with his Oud, neck pointing at the Soldier, mirroring the assault rifle pointed back at him. Weapons up, Amer catches the man's eyes and they have a long stand off.

Amer slowly moves his fingers to a string as the barrel of the rifle follows along with it. Amer plucks the string, then another, then a chord. The Soldier lowers his weapon.

SOLDIER
I know this. Like...Munir Bashar.

AMER
Munir Bashir.

Ah...right, the Soldier nods. Amer plays a bit, as the Soldier admires.

AMER (CONT'D)
I perform, but I also teach children to play. Many instruments. My friend here is my driver. I am on a teaching tour.

Driver, frozen in fear, gives a smile and a thumbs up. The Soldier moves in closer to Amer.

SYRIAN GUARD
Hey do you have anything online?
I'd like to learn the drums.

AMER
I do.

SYRIAN GUARD

How about for my kids, do you do
Skype lessons? (pause) Can I add
you on Facebook?

INT/EXT. SYRIAN TAXI - MOMENTS LATER

Amer and the Driver zoom off.

EXT. AZMARIN, SYRIAN/TURKISH BORDER - AFTERNOON

Amer steps out of the taxi in a silent, eerie border town.

Bullets riddle many of the single story clay structures. A random pedestrian, a chicken, some boys with a football.

Amer opens a text from DENIZ TURKEY: reads "DIRECTIONS FROM AZMARIN". Amer plays the subsequent voice memos.

DENIZ (O.S.)

Hey. Okay. Once you're in Azmarin,
head west to the forest.

Amer walks towards the trees.

EXT. SYRIAN/TURKISH BORDER FOREST - AFTERNOON

Amer carefully steps through the thicket. He follows the sound of water and comes upon a river. The river is 30 meters wide with a tall hill on the other side leading up to Turkey.

DENIZ (O.S.)

Walk until you come to a river.
Follow it north 5, 10km. You'll
find the crossing.

EXT. BORDER FOREST RIVER - DUSK

The sun sets as Amer's pace drags. He finally comes to a clearing with a group of 10 WAITING MEN. They sit by a big tree with a rope mechanism stretching to the other side.

DENIZ (O.S.)

Once you're there, wait. The boat
leaves around midnight. It will
take you across the river to a
tractor. That tractor takes you
into town. I'll pick you up there.
Don't miss the boat, don't be late.

Amer and the Waiting Men share nods. Amer looks out to the river - a perfect mirror for the orange sunset. He pulls out his phone, and takes a photo of himself in front of it.

EXT. ORONTES RIVER - NIGHT

Amer's watch reads 1:00am as he impatiently dials Deniz - no signal. He tries again. Nothing. *Fuck!* He closes his eyes and tries to breathe. The sound of night begins to slowly drift him off...to...slee--

CRUNCH! Amer's eyes open to the sound of snapping branches under the feet 50 PEOPLE marching towards him. His watch says 2:30am. Amer congregates with the rest of the Waiting Men.

Down by the river, 4 BOAT MEN are rigging up a boat. The Large Group stops, and a BOAT CAPTAIN steps up to Amer.

BOAT CAPTAIN
You arrived today?

AMER
Yeah, we've been waiting all--

BOAT CAPTAIN
Everybody from yesterday goes today. Everyone from today, goes tomorrow.

AMER
Wait. I have to--

BOAT CAPTAIN
You wait. Until tomorrow. I'll be back with details.

The Waiting Men step aside and complain. KFFT! Boat Captain's walkie goes off. He listens in, and begins to lead the Large Group to the boat. Amer scans the lay of the land, and sees up the river a bend that turns into darkness. The Large Group quickly begins to board the boat. Decision time. Amer straps on his Oud, ties his Shawl tight, and sprints off.

Amer cuts through some dense forest and gets lost in the darkness. He re-emerges from some bushes far away from the boat group, on the edge of the river out of sight from all. He tiptoes the river bank back towards the boat, now loading it's final passengers. Amer cuts to the side of the embarking line. Boat Captain is trying to lift an OLD MAN onto the boat. Amer hides under the Old Man's butt and pushes him up, and climbs on the boat after him. He curls his body, hides low.

The Old Man's cane nearly drops off the boat but Amer catches it before does. The Boat Captain sees Amer and notices his familiar face and holds a long stare.

WALKIE (O.C.)
Depart in 30 seconds.

Boat Captain swallows his frustration; there's no time to battle. He absolves Amer and speaks to the boat.

BOAT CAPTAIN
Okay the tanks are on patrol, we have a small window. Once we get to the other side, climb up that hill as fast as you can, and the tractor-

The boat ROCKS into motion as it's pulled across the river. The boat moves slowly, silently. Everyone stares ahead to the moonlit Turkish shore as it becomes closer and closer. We wait. We float. We get close until THUD! The boat hits the shore.

BOAT CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Go go go!

Everyone jumps off the edge of the boat and climbs and claws their way up the steep hill. Some serious slips and falls, but the vortex towards freedom sucks them up. From the rear, Amer hops off the boat and climbs. A few feet up he stops and looks back and sees the Old Man still struggling to get off the boat. Amer looks up the hill, then back to the Old Man. Fuck. He jumps down and helps lift the man up and over.

AMER
Go!

The man hobbles to the hill as Amer pushes him up from behind and they climb. GUNSHOTS and SHOUTS get louder as they climb higher. They finally crest and see the chaos of people running and tanks closing in. They run straight for the lone remaining tractor. They're welcomed by a sea of arms helping pull up the Old Man. Tanks close in from both sides and the tractor takes off. Amer is left by himself.

BANG! A SOLDIER snipes some stragglers in the distance. The lights of the tanks close in on Amer and all he can do is run straight ahead. He enters some dense bushes and immediately, SLICE! Thorns tear up his arms. His SCREAMS are covered by his bloody hand. He slows down, but continues through the brush. He covers his face with his Shawl and uses is Oud case like a shield. He pushes on.

Finally, a clearing. The breeze on his skin is new life. He looks out onto moonlit landscape - a lone set of headlights snakes down the winding road. It's the tractor. Amer races down the hill and adjusts his path to intercept. He jumps down and comes to a full sprint. The tractor makes a slow turn and Amer jumps onto the tractor. Familiar arms pull him in. Amer finally sits. Next to him, a MOTHERLY WOMAN sobs.

MOTHERLY WOMAN

My son, where is he? I didn't see
him get on a tractor? Where's my
son, where's my son!?

AMER

I'm sure your son is fine.

MOTHERLY WOMAN

I know he's fine. He has our money,
our documents, our mobile! I have
nothing if I can't find--

AMER

Shh.

A comforting shh. Amer reaches in his shirt and gives the women some cash. She's confused, but he insists. They share a smile, then turn away. The tractor's engine is peppered with weeps and sobs. Amer closes his eyes and begins to softly sing. He's quiet, respectful, heart wide open. Others join in. A brief moment of community.

BING! Amer's phone, now with service, shows new voice memos.

DENIZ TURKEY (O.C.)

Where are you bro? / I'm waiting /
Have to go to work. Go to Antakya
bus station. My shop's next door.

Fuck! Amer deflates as the tractor drives off into the night.

SUPER: Southern Turkey

EXT. TURKISH BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

Amer waits in line to get onto a bus. A BUS EMPLOYEE takes cash as each passenger gets on. In front of Amer is an IMPATIENT MAN, who begins to get loud and argue with the Bus Employee about prices. Those surrounding take notice. They bicker back and forth until Amer pulls out some more cash.

AMER

Here. For both of us.

The employee takes it, and nods them onto the bus.

INT. TURKISH CITY BUS - NIGHT

Amer sleeps in the moving bus. SCREECH! It stops.

BUS EMPLOYEE
Antakya!

EXT. ANTAKYA BUS STOP, ANTOCHIA TURKEY - CONTINUOUS

Amer steps off the bus. Halos of street lamps light the quiet, dusty road. Amer stands alone, looks around. Suddenly, an engine REVS from behind, and before Amer can turn he's SMACKED in the back of the head. A VAN drives by with a DICKHEAD DRIVER and his FRIEND leaning out of the windows.

DICKHEAD DRIVER
Siktir git Suriye, geri dön pislik!

DICKHEAD FRIEND
Evet! Siktir git!

Amer is still gathering his bearings as he sees the van make a U-turn and face him. The van revs its engine once, twice, then drives right at him at full speed! Amer looks around him and then looks down - an enormous rock. The van is closing in on him fast - *fuck it*. He grabs the rock, launches it at the van and SMASH! The windshield shatters and the van swerves away. Amer puffs his chest for a brief moment, but then the van begins to come back towards him. *Time to run.*

Amer drops his Oud and bolts into the dark town with the van at his heels. He zig-zags in and out of alleys trying to lose the tail. When he steps back onto the main road he sees the van speed off away from him into the distance.

AMER
Yeah!! A-ha!

He picks up his Oud and raises it up celebration.

DENIZ
Amer?

Deniz stands behind Amer, right in front of his metal shop.

AMER
Deniz!

Amer goes and gives him a hug.

DENIZ

You're late. What the hell just happened?

AMER

They think they can fuck with a Palestinian?! We know a thing or two about throwing rocks.

DENIZ

Shh! Come on inside man.

SUPER: Antakya, Turkey

INT. METAL SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Deniz leads Amer up into a small loft space. A cot in the corner, a small night stand and a tiny loveseat.

DENIZ

Feel free take the bed until I'm done with work, then you can go to the sofa. Bathroom's downstairs, and uh...I guess you're pretty tired I'm sure your trip was crazy.

AMER

Thank you, I really appreciate it.

DENIZ

Yeah. Yeah, cool no worries.

He begins down the ladder, but then comes back up.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

Hey can I have the money for that taxi? I came to get you and and I know I didn't pick you up but--

AMER

Yeah. Sure.

DENIZ

Cool. Well. Tomorrow.

Deniz goes down the ladder. Amer is put off, but is too tired to care. He turns off the light, but it does nothing with the bright glow from the metal shop below. He finally lays in the bed, closes his eyes, slowly drifts off..to..sleep-

BZZZZ!! BANG!! Every cut and hammer and clang of metal wakes Amer. The machinery grinds, a random SMASH. Amer looks at his watch - 5:30am. *Have I even slept?*

He closes his eyes tries again....BANG! Amer's opens Facebook and scans new messages. Some new travel advice. A few make mention of 'Izmir'.

Amer's turns off his phone. Rubs his tired eyes. He looks over at the tiny sofa. *Fuck this place.* Amer lays some cash on the counter, grabs his bag and leaves.

INT/EXT. TURKISH CITY BUS - DAWN

A bus drives off from the Antakya bus stop into the Turkish dawn. In the bus, Amer smiles at the rising sun. His eyes close, and his head finally drifts off..to..sleep-

CUT TO:

INT. ARNHEM CAMP BUNK, ARNHEM NETHERLANDS - AFTERNOON

KNOCK KNOCK! Amer's eyes wake open as he lays in his Arnhem cot. More KNOCKS. Amer runs to the front door and opens it. His eyes light up at the sight of a DELIVERY MAN.

DELIVERY GUY
Amer Shanati?

Amer excitedly nods. The Delivery Guy collects his signature and hands him a big box. Amer closes the door and runs to his bed. He rips the box open and there she is - his Oud in it's well-weathered case. A sticky note on top: "Kept her safe for you. Welcome to the Netherlands!". Amer zips open the case, and his rushed enthusiasm turns into delicate handling as he lifts his lady. The wood glimmers in the light.

EXT. ARNHEM COUNTRYSIDE FARM - AFTERNOON

Small fences create borders between the sprawling green farms. Amer walks out to the field, Oud in hand, and sits on the roots of a large tree. He plucks his Oud and savors the sound. From behind walks over a GUITAR MAN - young like Amer, a guitar in tow. They smile, nod. Guitar Man chimes in with chords of his own. Amer playfully responds. Some more back and forth until they lead into a classic song. They laugh, they play, then - MOOOOO! A COW has come over to listen to the music. They smile and continue on, both men playing with their hearts wide open. The Cow stands and stares. They play on to a beautiful, cohesive ending.

AMER
Finally!

Amer looks at the Cow.

AMER (CONT'D)
Somebody is listening!

Amer looks and SHOUTS to the sky.

AMER (CONT'D)
Somebody is listening!

Amer pets and kisses the cow's head. He and Guitar Man share some laughs, smiles.

GUITAR MAN
Inshallah.

AMER
Inshallah.

The duo play on to their audience.

INT. IZMIR HOTEL, TURKEY - DAY

Amer wakes up in bed snuggling his Oud. The room is small, but clean. Amer's tired face glistens with sweat.

SUPER: Izmir, Turkey. Day 42

EXT. IZMIR STREETS - LATER

Amer walks through the lively Izmir streets with his Oud strapped to his back. Shops and food carts line the streets, folks haggle and chat in indiscernible Turkish. Clusters of refugees smoke in the shade. A smattering of orange LIFE JACKETS fill the storefronts displays on adult and child mannequins. Amer walks into a Cash Exchange.

INT. IZMIR CASH EXCHANGE - CONTINUOUS

Amer walks up to the counter and hands over all of his cash. The CASHIER deals out the mix of currency and sneers at Amer for the Syrain bills.

CASH TAKER
Lira? Euro?

Amer nods. She lays out his bills - 1 thousand, 2, 3, 4?

AMER
Four thousand Euro that's it?

The Cash Taker shrugs. *Fuck.* Amer takes his cash and leaves.

INT. IZMIR ELECTRONICS SHOP - LATER

Amer walks into an overstocked electronics store. The EMPLOYEE at the counter watches World Cup coverage.

AMER
Mobile? Sim?

Amer pops out his phone's SIM card and holds it up. The Employee grabs a few options from the wall.

AMER (CONT'D)
How much?

Amer rubs his fingers together but man doesn't understand. Amer puts some cash onto a counter and points to a 10GB card. The man shakes his head and gives him a 5GB card.

EXT. IZMIR STREETS - LATER

Amer walks to a small food shop. A VENDOR pops her head out.

VENDOR
Selam, ne istersin?

Amer's pauses. She yaps some more Turkish. He points to rotating mountain of meat behind her.

AMER
Shawarma?

VENDOR
Shawarma?

Yes! Amer nods. The vendor yells into the kitchen.

EXT. IZMIR STREET - LATER

Amer walks through the busy streets. He scans the eyes of the SMUGGLERS scattered about, spewing their pitches of European destinations. Amer turns onto a back alley and sits on the shaded sidewalk. He's amongst sea of ARABIC MEN sitting, smoking, waiting all the same. Amer installs his new SIM. He opens up a text chain with "Nabeel Netherlands" and records a voice memo.

AMER
Hey bro. Can you send me your address? I want to mail my Oud to you in Netherlands so you can keep her safe until I get there.

Sent. Amer finally engulfs his juicy shawarma. A MAN approaches him.

MAN
Hollanda'ya gitmek istemisin
arkadas?

Amer stands, looks at the man in the eyes. The Man is fixated on Amer's watch.

MAN (CONT'D)
Eger kolundaki saat'i verirsen,
sana iyi bir rakam uyarlariz.

The Man grabs Amer's wrist to get a closer look, but Amer chuck's his arm back and walks off.

INT. IZMIR SHIPPING STORE - LATER

A LONG BOX lays on the check out counter. Amer transfers an address from his phone onto the box. The POSTAL WORKER applies the final label and stickers. Amer hugs the box.

AMER
I'll see you soon.

Amer kisses the box goodbye. The Postal Worker is confused.

EXT. IZMIR STREET - LATER

Amer tries to light his cigarette, but his lighter's busted. He catches eyes with a SMOKING MAN who offers his own.

AMER
Thank you.

SMOKING MAN
(arabic) Syrian?

Amer eyes a *how do you know*, as he drags his cigarette.

SMOKING MAN (CONT'D)
The way you wrap your shawl. Dev.

The Smoking Man offers his hand with a smile. They shake.

AMER
Amer. Are you Syrian?

DEV
No, I work with them. You close by?

Amer points to a his hotel across the way. Dev nods.

DEV (CONT'D)
Haven't found the right person yet?

AMER
The right what?

DEV
Come on. You're not on vacation.
Where do you wanna go, Greece?

Amer takes a scan of his eyes, senses a bit of trust.

AMER
Netherlands.

DEV
Ha! (beat) I'm sorry, I
just...crawl before you walk.

AMER
Okay.

Amer finishes his cigarette, tosses it, and walks away.

DEV
Wait wait wait, fine.

AMER
Greece. How much?

DEV
3000 Euro.

AMER
You fucking with me?

DEV
Ask anybody. Greece, 3000. But how
many of them speak Arabic. And give
a shit to light your cigarette?
You give the broker 3000 up front
and we're good to go.

AMER
Broker?

DEV
Yeah. A middle man. Once the deal's
done on both sides, the broker
calls me and everybody gets paid.
And you're living in Greece.

AMER
Netherlands.

DEV
Greece first.

AMER
Why should I trust you?

DEV
You don't have to. But I want more customers. I want your friends, your family. What good would it do to if I fucked you? My business is to make sure you're safe.

AMER
Your business is to exploit people to have to pay for their lives.

DEV
Hey man I'd rather be somewhere else too.

AMER
There's nothing cheaper?

DEV
Cheaper? You're paying for your life. Cheaper means Italy. The Mediterranean, the Libyan desert. Too dangerous. Greece is the spot. We run like a machine.

Amer gives his eyes one more long scan.

AMER
Okay.

Dev whistles to his BROKER who walks over. Dev and the Broker chat back and forth in Turkish. They nod.

DEV
3000.

AMER
Now?

DEV
You have it?

Amer skeptically takes out his cash and counts the majority into the Broker's hand. The broker hands Amer a business card with a unique handwritten number on it.

DEV (CONT'D)
Text that phone number. You'll get
a call when we're ready.

INT. IZMIR HOTEL - DAYS LATER

Amer wakes up in his bed. He checks his phone. Nothing new.

SUPER: Day 48

DEV (V.O.)
It could be three days. Could be
three weeks.

EXT. IZMIR STREET - DAY

Amer drinks tea while on Facetime his family.

SUPER: Day 52

DEV (V.O.)
Once you get a call you'll have 2
hours to meet, so be ready to go.

INT. IZMIR PUB - NIGHT

Amer is stuffed in a crowd of FOOTBALL FANS watching the
World Cup. A GOAL by the NETHERLANDS.

SUPER: Day 58

DEV (V.O.)
Bide your time. Try not to spend
too much money. We'll talk soon.

INT. IZMIR HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Amer argues with the Turkish speaking HOTEL MANAGER.
Frustrated, he slaps more cash on top of his bill.

SUPER: Day 64

INT. IZMIR HOTEL - NIGHT

Amer sits up in his bed, counting what little money he has
left. He gets to a business card, and stares at the number.

DEV (V.O.)
If things change, call that number.

Amer contemplates his limited cash stack. He makes a call.

AMER

Hi. Mom? Hey..Yeah I'm good. Can I talk to dad? Mom, I haven't heard his voice since--No I don't want you to force him. That's fine. Just, tell him I called.

Amer hangs up. He decides to make the other call.

AMER (CONT'D)

Dev? It's Amer. (beat) Syrian Amer, with the Red Shawl...What's up? It's been more than three weeks--I can't..I'm almost out of money. I need my 3000 back...Yes.

EXT. IZMIR STREETS, BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Amer waits in an alley, smoking a cigarette.

DEV

Amer.

Amer turns to see Dev and the Broker. The broker hands Amer an envelope of his cash back. They turn and walk away.

AMER

That's it, you're done?

DEV

That's it man.

AMER

You have no cheaper options?

DEV

Cheaper options? The cheaper you go, the more you risk your life. I don't do risky.

AMER

Risky? You're a fucking smuggler. I don't have the luxury for safety right now.

DEV

You want cheaper, go to Istanbul.

AMER

Who do I talk to? You have someone?

DEV
My business is me bro. You don't want my it, I got nothin' for you.

Dev and the Broker walk away. Amer is left alone. Stuck.

EXT. BUS STOP. ISTANBUL, TURKEY - DAWN

The sun rises over a dense and vast Istanbul. A Turkish bus pulls up to a dusty bus stop. Amer steps off.

SUPER: Istanbul, Turkey. Day 66

INT. ISTANBUL SHIT HOTEL - LATER

Amer walks into a shit, closet-sized room. The paint is peeling and the dust is thick. He runs the sink water - murky. Amer looks out the window to the endless city. A moment of scenic beauty. He pulls out his phone, takes a phoot. He links wifi, then makes a Facetime Call.

AMER
Hello...hello mother!

He waves to his camera. She waves back, but the connection is choppy and broken.

MOTHER
Am--Amer. Amer where ar--?

AMER
Istanbul. Everything is okay.

MOTHER
Istanbul?

She's choppy again. It's all stop-and-go. Frustrating.

AMER
I'll explain later, this connection sucks I just wanted to tell you I'm safe. (long beat) Is dad there?

Amer's Mother looks to the side, clearly talking to Father.

AMER (CONT'D)
He's right there, I can hear him.

MOTHER
He can't said he's not ready yet.

AMER
Mom it's been 2 months!

She shrugs, it freezes. The audio still runs and some sounds of tears from Amer's Father then - CALL FAILED. An abrupt silence. Amer exhales some pent up stress. His face scrunches as he holds back for a moment...but then he hides his face in his Shawl and lets go.

EXT. ISTANBUL STREETS - LATER

A composed and pony-tailed Amer walks on the busy streets. Istanbul is much like Izmir, with familiar groups of migrants all just smoking and waiting. Amer's eyes zone in on the scattered SMUGGLERS. He listens more closely this time to the Turkish babble as he tries to discern their offers. Suddenly he stops short. His eyes light up. *What's that sound?*

The beautiful sound of a violin begins to get louder as Amer searches for it's maker. He spots it - a YOUNG VIOLINIST playing in a courtyard playground. She plays passionately as her TWO FRIENDS watch on. Amer is magnetized.

The Violinist plays a quick riff and makes a mistake. She tries slower, same mistake. With a warm smile, Amer walks over and puts out his hands. *Let me show you.* Hesitantly, she passes him the instrument.

A few notes to get a feel, and then Amer goes into the song - he plays it with ease. He plays the riff slowly and sings the melody. He slowly exaggerates the fingering, and then hands the instrument back. She plays along with Amer's humming and nails it. She plays it again, faster and faster and then on with the song. Amer smiles, and walks off down the street.

LARGE MAN (O.S.)
Hey! Kirmizi sali, nereye?

A LARGE MAN is running towards Amer. Amer walks faster.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
Hey! Ne yaptin?

Amer turns, ready to fight. The Large Man analyzes Amer.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)
(Arabic) Can I help you? (beat) You
were talking to my kids, from the
children's center. I saw you--

AMER
I just showed her the right way to
play it.

LARGE MAN

No it's okay, I saw. She's glowing,
she's happy. Are you a musician?
Syrian?

AMER

Yes.

LARGE MAN

That's great. That's amazing. Wow,
look - I'm sorry I frightened you.
I'm just very protective of these
kids. I run the children's center
here. Most are passing through from
Syria. You live here?

AMER

No, just passing through myself.

LARGE MAN

Ah, well. It'd be great to have a
music teacher in the mix. We're
barely funded and I can't pay, but
if you're ever free--

AMER

I'll do it.

LARGE MAN

Really? You're serious.

AMER

I'd love to.

KAMAL

That's amazing! Thank you. I'm
Kamal.

AMER

Amer.

KAMAL

It's good to meet you brother Amer.

INT. CHILDREN'S CENTER OFFICE - LATER

Amer strolls into a large but cluttered office. Surrounding Kamal's desk are piles of boxes, toys, snacks, and other donations. Amer drifts to a pile of second-hand instruments. He examines a worn down Oud.

KAMAL

Some are donated, some were salvaged. We've been hoping to fix them up.

Amer and his big smile are already well distracted tuning and playing the Oud. Kamal checks some text messages, and comes over to Amer.

KAMAL (CONT'D)

Come on. There's someone else I think you should meet.

EXT. CHILDREN'S CENTER COURTYARD - MINUTES LATER

Kamal leads Amer to a group of KIDS surrounding their English teacher, AUSTIN (30s, white, bearded). The kids color worksheets as Austin steps to Amer and Kamal.

KAMAL

Amer I want you to meet Austin. He helps around here. Austin, Amer. Amer's a musician, from Syria.

Austin and Amer shake.

AUSTIN

(arabic) It's great to meet you.

AMER

Good to meet you. Where are you from, Jordan?

AUSTIN

Chicago. But I lived in the Middle East for several years, I learned in Palestine.

AMER

Come on! Palestine? I am Palestinian!

Austin looks at Kamal, very pleased.

KAMAL

He's the one.

AMER

I'm sorry?

An ALARM goes off on Kamal's phone.

KAMAL

Shit. Snack time. You guys chat,
I'll see you later.

Kamal walks off and rallies the kids for snacks.

AUSTIN

You hungry?

EXT. ISTANBUL STREETS - LATER

Amer and Austin stroll down the street.

AMER

How do you know Kamal?

AUSTIN

We worked together in Palestine.
I'm a journalist and a filmmaker.
I've been looking to document the
journey of a refugee from Syria. Of
an artist, I hoped. I've been in
Istanbul for a while to meet the
right person.

Amer and Austin walk through Smugglers' hustle and pitching.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

I want to document the whole
journey, film along the way, go on
the boat to Greece--

AMER

Only an American can be so free to
voluntarily take that journey. And
I'm not going to Greece.

AUSTIN

Why not, isn't that the fastest?

They walk up to a food cart with two VENDORS. Amer points to
the picture of a shawarma and holds up two fingers. The
Vendors prepare the food.

AMER

I can't afford quick and safe. My
money's draining. I need cheap.
Italy.

AUSTIN

Italy? You're fucking crazy.

AMER

I don't have a choice.

The eavesdropping Vendors peer at Amer and Austin. Vendor 2 whistles at Amer and signals for him to follow. He steps away from the cart, and Austin and Amer follow.

VENDOR 2

(arabic) How many do you have, how many in your family?

AMER

It's just me.

Vendor 2 purses his lips, thinks. He nods over a MAN from across the street. The Man walks up to them and Vendor 2 goes back to his Food Cart. The Man offers his hand.

BURAQ

You can call me Buraq.

They all shake.

BURAQ (CONT'D)

Both of you?

AMER

Only me. He's just a friend.

BURAQ

Why are you here then friend?

AUSTIN

I'm a journalist. I'm documenting his story.

Buraq takes a long look into Austin's eyes and the camera bag around his shoulder..

BURAQ

Okay. Okay. What do you need?

AMER

I was in Izmir, waiting to go to Greece. But it's too expensive.

BURAQ

It's safe.

AMER

I don't have enough money. I was told it'd be cheaper here.

Buraq thinks.

BURAQ

Italy's cheaper. But too dangerous.
You'd have to go on a boat from
Libya. Let me see your passport.

AMER

It's not a passport, it's just ID.

Amer hands Buraq his ID and he examines it closely.

BURAQ

You can't get into Libya as a
Palestinian.

AMER

I can't get into Libya? You're
smuggling me that's your whole job--

BURAQ

You don't just walk in. They have
laws. They have their own civil
war, their own militias. And they
just don't accept Palestinians.

AMER

What about a fake passport-

BURAQ

If you can't afford Greece, you
can't afford a passport. Your
dialect, your look - you're
Palestinian. I can't fly you there.
(beat) I can get you to Algeria.

AMER

Algeria!?

BURAQ

Yes, Algeria. Then into Libya. Then
over to Italy. Look, I don't know
what you think this is. I tell you
where and what works, and you can
take it or leave it. I have a
forger, and he can make you an ID
card. I'll be honest, it's not the
most successful ID card, they see a
lot of these at the airport. But
it's your best chance.

AMER

What are my chances?

BURAQ

Ten, fifteen percent?

AMER

Ten or fifteen percent?! What happens if I get caught?

BURAQ

Nothing. A few days of jail and you'll be out. Then you can try again.

AMER

Try again? With what money?

BURAQ

I don't know but that watch looks pretty nice.

Amer doesn't like that.

BURAQ (CONT'D)

It is what it is. If I was trying to fuck you I'd say it was all good. This is the reality for you. I can get you into Algeria. And if you decide to stop, it's a good place to hide.

AMER

I'm not looking to hide. I'm going to the Netherlands.

Buraq think its a joke, but then is impressed by the moxie.

BURAQ

Alright. I'll get you to Algeria.

AMER

How much?

BURAQ

3000 total--

AMER

3000? I thought this was cheaper--

BURAQ

Well you thought wrong. This all the way through to Italy.

Amer contemplates his finances, and the decision as a whole. He looks deep into Buraq's eyes.

AMER

Fine. I can have it. Tomorrow.

BURAQ

Noon tomorrow. I'll bring my broker. You can bring your friend. But no fucking cameras okay?

They shake.

EXT. ISTANBUL SHIT HOTEL - LATER

Austin and Amer walk up to his apartment.

AMER

This is me.

AUSTIN

Cheap?

AMER

A shithole. I'll have my own place soon, make it how I want.

The dream fades quickly. Amer looks around at his environment. His situation. Then to Austin.

AMER (CONT'D)

I'll do your story.

AUSTIN

Really? You're cool with this?

AMER

What the fuck why not. Can my family see it?

AUSTIN

Of course.

They shake.

AMER

See you tomorrow?

AUSTIN

See you tomorrow.

Amer goes inside.

INT. ISTANBUL SHIT HOTEL - LATER

Amer sits down on his bed and looks around the bare, wilting room. He takes off his shirt and pulls his stack of cash from his secret pocket - it's thin, and not enough.

With stressed breath Amer puts his head into his hands. He takes a breath, takes a moment. He pulls out his phone and begins to search the web; "Jobs in Istanbul" "Music teacher Istanbul" "refugee work Istanbul".

He searches, searches and searches through the night.

INT. ISTANBUL SHIT HOTEL - MORNING

Amer wakes up in his bed with his phone at his chest. As he comes-to, he can hear an argument through the wall; a MAN trying to convince his WIFE to take the family on a boat.

SUPER: Day 67

Amer sits up. A long exhale. He takes off his watch and lays it on the bed. He looks at it long and hard. He stands up and paces...then he reluctantly opens Facetime to call Mom.

MOTHER

Amer how are you?

AMER

I'm okay mom, how are y--

MOTHER

Are you still in Istanbul?

SISTER

Hi Amer!

He waves to his Sister who pops on the screen. She waves back. Amer's mother smells his stress.

MOTHER

Amer what's wrong?

AMER

Nothing's wrong.

MOTHER

What's wrong?

He looks away, then back at her.

AMER

I need a little more money. It's temporary, to get me to Italy.

MOTHER

Italy?

MOM. AMER MOTHER (CONT'D)
How much.

AMER
1000 Euro. 240,000 pounds. I know nobody's working and savings are low, but this is it, I promise I'll pay it back--

MOTHER
Amer! (beat) Amer.

The phone rustles and on comes Amer's Father.

FATHER Amer.

Dad-- AMER

FATHER
Amer do you have the watch? Sell
the watch. This is what it's for.

Dad. I can't sell the watch.

They look eye to eye. Father sees the glint. He understands.

FATHER
Amer I'm old. I have some years left but death becomes more real every day. I'll send you the 1000 Euro, but the money is not mine. This is your brother's child's money. This is your future child's money. Make sure you do good with it and pay them back.

Mother takes the phone back.

MOTHER
Amer those boats are dangerous, why
can't you just stay in Istanbul?
Amer what if you die?

AMER

Amer holds gaze with his mother. In the room next door, a muffled shout and weep as a result of the same conversation.

INT. ISTANBUL WESTERN UNION - DAY

Amer signs a slip of paper and collects his stack of cash.

EXT. ISTANBUL STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Austin films Amer with his small Nikon as he exits the store.

AMER

So you're just going to follow me
with that thing?

AUSTIN

Something like that. Don't make it
obvious though.

AMER

You don't make it obvious.

They walk on up to the Food Cart from the day before. Austin sets to the side, filming an artistic shot of Amer's smoking amongst the other migrants. Amer sees this and laughs.

AMER (CONT'D)

What is this, fucking art bro?

Buraq walks up with his BROKER beside him. Buraq and Amer shake hands, and Buraq looks at Austin aggressively.

BURAQ

What the fuck is he doing? What are
you doing?

Austin quickly realizes and then puts the camera away.

AUSTIN

I'm sorry it's for the documentary.

BURAQ

No fucking cameras around me man.
(to Amer) 2400 to us. 600 goes to
the forger.

Amer hands the money to the Broker. He gives him a business card with a hand-written number on it.

BROKER

Text that number now and keep the
card safe. Once you get to Algeria--

AMER

I know, I've heard this all before.

BURAQ

This is the forger's phone number,
Call him. Today.

AMER

How long until--

BURAQ

Could be a week, maybe more. But,
we'll call you when we're ready.
And be ready. The window is brief.

All the men nod and then break off. Amer pulls out his phone
and calls the number on the card. Austin rolls his camera.

EXT. ISTANBUL HOSPITAL - LATER

Austin films Amer as he walks up to a run down hospital.

AMER

Maybe you wait here.

Austin nods and films Amer entering the building.

INT. ISTANBUL HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Amer walks through the overcrowded and dimly lit hallway. He
finds the room he's looking for and walks in.

INT. ISTANBUL HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the small room, an ELDERLY MAN lays hooked up to machines.

AMER

Turan?

Sitting next to the bed is TURAN, who stands. He's ragged,
dingy, but has a kind smile. Amer reaches and they shake.

AMER (CONT'D)

Amer. Speak arabic?

Turan nods.

TURAN

Buraq called. Told me which ID you
needed. Syrian. Not Palestinian.

AMER

Yes. Should I pay you now?

TURAN
300 now. 300 on pickup.

Amer gets the money. The Elderly Man COUGHS hard. Turan holds his handkerchief to the Elderly Man's mouth and he COUGHS out some blood. Turin comforts him back to sleep.

TURAN (CONT'D)
Sorun degil baba, sorun degil.

Turn steps up and Amer hands him the money.

TURAN (CONT'D)
Thank you. Go stand by that wall
over there, I need your picture.

Amer stands against the wall.

TURAN (CONT'D)
Put your hair up. It's less
threatening.

Amer does so. Turan holds up his digital camera.

AMER
How long should this take?

TURAN
A few days.

AMER
What if I get called before then?

TURAN
You won't. Trust me. (beat) Smile.

Yeah right. Click.

EXT. CHILDREN'S CENTER COURTYARD - DAY

Amer teaches young DRUMMERS. Austin films from behind.

Super: Day 69

EXT. ISTANBUL CAFE, CITY CENTER - DAY

Austin is teaching Amer English. The camera rolls on them.

Super: Day 74

INT. ISTANBUL SHIT HOTEL - NIGHT

A HARD RAIN pours outside. Amer's smile is lit only by the video on his phone; his baby niece, laughing and squirming.

AMER
(English) Baby. Ba-by.

BZZZZ his video is interrupted by a call.

AMER (CONT'D)
Hello?

EXT. ISTANBUL HOSPITAL - LATER

Amer runs through the rain with his shawl covering his head.

INT. ISTANBUL HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The hallway lights flicker as Amer knocks onto Turan's open door. Turan welcomes him in, and hands Amer his new ID.

TURAN
You are Basel now. Basel Mohammed.
Get used to it. The spelling, the
sound of it.

AMER
Basel Mohammed?

TURAN
Basel Mohammed. Act natural, and
all will be right.

AMER
I am Basel Mohammed! How long am I
Basel Mohammed?

TURAN
Once you get that stamp at the
airport, you'll have no trouble
getting into Algeria. Once you're
out of Libya, bye bye Basel.

Turan smiles. His Father COUGHS and Turan attends to it. Amer pulls out his cash, counts 300, but then makes it 500.

AMER
Here.

TURAN
It's only 300--

AMER
Please.

TURAN
You have a long journey ahead.

AMER
As do you.

A long beat. Turan offers his hand.

TURAN
Good luck.

The men shake as the rain pours. Music bridges in as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. ARNHEM CAMP COURTYARD, NETHERLANDS - AFTERNOON

Amer is jamming with a GROUP OF MUSICIANS in the courtyard. Guitar Man plays his guitar, Amer on the Oud - an array of residents gather around them enjoying the impromptu show.

Amer cues the big finish, then comes the applause.

AMER
Thank you everybody!

Everybody begins to disband and head to lunch. One of the DUTCH GUARDS comes up to Amer.

DUTCH GUARD
(arabic) You're very, very good.

AMER
Thank you! Your Arabic is good.

DUTCH GUARD
Moroccan mother.

AMER
Ah! Of course.

DUTCH GUARD
I've heard you play several times now, it's wonderful. I wanted to ask you...my cousin books many different artists in Den Haag Centraal. I mentioned your talents to her and she said she would be pleased to have you perform there. What they do is...

As he goes on, Amer for once finds a genuine smile.

INT. DUTCH TRAIN - MORNING

Amer, his Shawl, and his Oud ride to Den Haag. He studies his 'Arabic/English' and 'Arabic/Dutch' books.

EXT. DEN HAAG STREETS - LATER

Amer walks the busy streets, practicing his introduction over and over again.

EXT. DEN HAAG CENTRAAL - LATER

On the stage of a busy square, Amer sits in front of a mic and adjusts it's height. The crowd shops and eats and pays him little mind. He clears his throat into the mic. Nothing.

AMER

Hallo. Ik. ben. Amer Shanati. (e)
Hello guys. Am I Amer. Shanati.

No attention. *Fuck it.* He closes his eyes and strums through the awkwardness. The strings ring loud through the speakers. A fancy intro, and then he goes into a song. When he opes his eyes, a static crowd has started to form. He picks up the tempo and encourages some claps. Like a virus the crowd begins to bounce and claps along. He's got them.

LATER

Amer puts away his Oud. PEOPLE walk by and offer him Dutch compliments. A BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN taps him from behind.

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN
(english) Hello, hello. You were so
fantastic, I loved it. (beat)
English?

Amer holds up his fingers, a little bit. She acts it out.

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN (CONT'D)
(e) Okay. My husband. A painter.
Has an art gallery opening tonight.

Amer's a bit lost. She smiles.

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN (CONT'D)
(e) We have an event. No musician.
She is sick. Musician, sick.

She mimes playing guitar and coughing. Then she points to Amer. He nods his head. We're getting somewhere.

BLONCE DUTCH WOMAN

(e) Can you play? Tonight. You.

AMER

(e) Me? Tonight? A, concert?

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN

(e) Well, yes. Art gallery. A show.
Tonight. 7pm. Ten minutes you play?

Amer pulls out a pencil and a moleskin notebook from his bag. He writes as he speaks, checking with her along the way.

AMER

(e) Tonight. Today. Seven clock. I
play. 10 minute. 2, uh, 2 song?

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN

(e) Yes! Perfect. Thank you.

She takes the pencil and write an address.

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN (CONT'D)

(e) Tonight.

AMER

(e) 7.

She walks off. Amer looks at his watch - he some has time.

EXT. DEN HAAG STREETS, PEACE PALACE - LATER

Amer snaps tourist photos as he strolls the streets of Den Haag. He turns a corner to see a large, majestic parliamentary building. Amer leans on its front gates and stares across the long courtyard. IMPORTANT PEOPLE walk in and out the security structure. Amer stops one, and points.

AMER

(e) Hello, what this?

DUTCH MAN

Peace Palace.

AMER

You take photo of me?

Amer hands him his phone and he snaps a photo.

EXT. DUTCH OFFICE SUPPLY STORE - LATER

Amer confirms a storefront address from his phone, and then walks into an OFFICE SUPPLY STORE.

EXT. DEN HAAG PARK - LATER

At a picnic table, Amer pulls from a shopping bag some paper, pens, a ruler, scissors. He lines the paper into grids and writes his name and info in each box. He cuts out each little business card. A moment of admiration.

The light roar of a plane flies overhead and Amer reactively ducks. He pauses, notices his surroundings, and then eases up. *Remnants*. Onto more business cards.

EXT. DEN HAAG GALLERY - NIGHT

Amer walks to the gallery practicing his English and Dutch.

INT. DEN HAAG GALLERY - EVENING

Amer enters the swanky white-walled gallery. Smiley white DUTCH COUPLES roam in fancy suits and gowns. Servers mull about with hors d'oeuvre and Amer takes one. Two. Three.

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN (O.C.)

(e) There you are!

Amer turns and they shake hands. She looks at her watch.

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN (CONT'D)

(e) You ready? We'll begin soon.

Unsure, Amer nods.

INT. DEN HAAG GALLERY - 10 MINUTES LATER

Blonde Dutch Lady steps up to the lone mic in the dim light.

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN

Hallo. Hallo iedereen.

Everybody quiets down.

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN (CONT'D)

Hartelijk bedankt dat je hier bent,
voor Hans' galley van nieuwe
werken.

(MORE)

BLONDE DUTCH WOMAN (CONT'D)
 Voordat we beginnen, hebben we een
 speciale muzikale traktatie.
 Helemaal uit Syrië, Amer Shanati!

Sporadic claps turn into applause. Amer steps up to the mic.

AMER
 Hallo. Ik. ben. Amer Shanati.

All eyes on him. Amer smiles; he's got them already...

INT. DEN HAAG GALLERY - LATER

Amer packs up his Oud and sets it aside.

MAN (O.S.)
 (english, dutch accent) You're
 quite the player.

Amer turns to see the man, the ARTIST husband. He senses the translation gap and slows down.

ARTIST
 Thank you for coming. My wife told
 me she watched you play in the
 street. You're from Syria?

Amer nods.

ARTIST (CONT'D)
 My goodness. Wow. Very talented.

He hands Amer an envelope. Amer peeks inside to see 200 Euro.

AMER
 (e) No, I can not take. Not because
 I am Syrian, I will not.

SUITED MAN
 What? No, not because you're
 Syrian. This is because my wife say
 "give money to Amer". This is your
 job, take the money!

Amer looks earnestly at the man then breaks. Laughs.

AMER
 Thank you.

SUITED MAN
 You're welcome. And, nice watch.

The man nods and walks off. Amer hides the envelope in his pocket and then pulls out a stack of paper business cards. He practices his shpeal, then approaches a COUPLE.

AMER
(bad dutch, english subtitles)
Hello! Sorry to bother. I am teacher and player. Amer.

They shake hands as Amer hands them business cards

RANDOM WOMAN
Je was fantastisch!

He appeases and nods. *Phew.* Next one...

AMER
Hallo! Sorry dat ik stoor...

He puts on his smile and does his magic. A playful VIOLIN TRIO plays us through...

EXT. ARNHEM CAMP COURTYARD - LATER

Amer studying his English and Dutch language books.

INT. ARNHEM CAMP BUNK BATHROOM

Amer washes his shirts by hand. He hangs up his clothes to dry. He answers his RINGING PHONE and it's some good news.

EXT. DUTCH TRAIN STATION - MORNING

Amer exits a train at a rural stop.

EXT. FANCY ESTATE BIRTHDAY - LATER

Socialites mingle at a fancy soiree at a large estate. Amer plays to many admirers. Amer is handed an envelope.

EXT. ARNHEM CAMP COURTYARD - DAY

Amer teaches a music workshop to REFUGEE CHILDREN.

EXT. DUTCH TRAIN STATION - LATER

Amer puts cash into a machine to refill his train card.

INT. DUTCH HOME - DAY

Amer teaches a young student the violin. Amer gets paid.

INT. DUTCH TRAIN - DAY

Amer falling asleep on the train while reading his books.

EXT. DUTCH PARK - DAY

Amer plays at a park festival to a large crowd. He schmoozes and passes out his card. He's slipped an envelope and a tip.

LATER

Sitting on a bench, Amer takes the cash out of the envelope, combines it with his own - 1200 Euro. Amer splits it in half.

INT. DUTCH WESTERN UNION - DAY

Amer sends off 600 Euro to Mom and Dad.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

Amer meets a NEWSPAPER JOURNALIST and is interviewed.

INT. CONCERT HALL - DAY

Amer rehearses amongst a big orchestra of MUSICIANS.

INT. DUTCH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Amer conducts while his DUTCH STUDENTS play violin. The kids play with such passion and it feeds Amer. He closes his eyes, his smile grows, and it lifts him into:

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDREN'S CENTER COURTYARD, ISTANBUL TURKEY - DAY

Amer's eyes are closed as the violin score continues, now DIAGETIC. He's weathered and drained. The song comes to an end and he cuts them off. His eyes open.

AMER
Beautiful.

SUPER: Day 98

Across from him are a group of THREE YOUNG STUDENTS, smiling with their violins. Austin is filming from the side.

AMER (CONT'D)

Now, at the very end (he sings the melody), make sure the E chord--

KAMAL

Kids! Snacks!

Kamal holds out a box of meat sticks and each kid takes one. They eat and chat amongst themselves. Kamal hands a snack to Amer one, who gestures "no".

KAMAL (CONT'D)

Come on, there's plenty.

He tosses it to Amer, then one to Austin.

KAMAL (CONT'D)

Plenty.

AMER

Thank you.

KAMAL

Thank you? Come on. Let me hear the English you've been working on!

Amer looks at Austin, who is laughing.

AMER

(english) THANK YOU! Thank you! You are welcome! America!

They all laugh. Kamal begins to walk off to the kids.

KAMAL

Amazing!

AUSTIN

I told you it's getting better!

AMER

It sounds terrible.

Austin's camera zooms in on Amer who gives the middle finger.

AMER (CONT'D)

(english) Bad English.

AUSTIN

(e) Very American.

RING! Amer picks up his phone call from "Unknown".

AMER

Hello? Yes. Okay...See you then.

He hangs up.

AMER (CONT'D)

It was Buraq. He said to meet him back in 2 hours and be ready to go.

AUSTIN

Fuck! We better get going!

INT. CHILDREN'S CENTER OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Amer steps into Kamal's office. Shawl wrapped, ready to go.

KAMAL

Amer! Basel! What's up? Come in.

AMER

I actually have to go.

KAMAL

Oh. Okay. Will I see you--

AMER

No, I have to go.

KAMAL

Oh. Oh! Shit...Well, I was going to wait until it was official, but I guess I should tell you now. We're getting a little bit of funding, something to hold us over.

You've been so amazing for the kids, I wanted to offer you an official position here. The pay is barely anything but we can help house you, you can eat here--

AMER

I appreciate it.

KAMAL

I know, you can think about it--

AMER

Kamal I appreciate it, I truly do.
But I can't change the world from
here. I need to go to Netherlands.

KAMAL

It's not that easy.

AMER

I know.

KAMAL

There are a lot of steps--

AMER

I know.

KAMAL

And even if-- I know.

AMER (CONT'D)

Kamal sees his determination. He nods.

KAMAL

Get em, kid.

EXT. ISTANBUL STREET CORNER - DAY

Amer and Austin wait by the familiar Food Vendor. A WHITE VAN pulls up. Buraq shouts from the driver's side.

BURAQ

Just you, not your friend.

AUSTIN

I know. (to Amer) See you at the
airport?

AMER

You don't have to.

AUSTIN

Come on. It's what I do.

AMER

I'll keep you posted.

Amer gets in the van and it takes off.

EXT. ISTANBUL SUBURBS - AFTERNOON, THEN SUNSET.

The van goes through the city and into the countryside. As the sun sets, the van pulls onto a dusty road.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE - SUNSET

The van comes to a stop. Amer steps out with Buraq, who opens the back doors and 5 OTHER PEOPLE exit as well. They all walk into the drab, rectangular structure.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

It's an open room, some old low furniture and bare mattresses. A bathroom off to the side. 11 PEOPLE share the room with Amer, all scattered and leaning on their own wall space. Buraq walks into the glow of a hanging light. His BIG HOMIES stand behind him.

BURAQ

Alright. So the next time you leave here will be to Istanbul Airport. You all can't go at once, your documents are similar so we have to spread you out. It could be a day, or two, or four. Be ready.

Buraq and his Homies leave. Amer sits beside a MAN and they catch eyes. They share a long moment of recognition, then they look away. Amer finally starts to drift off..to..sleep-

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAWN

BURAQ

AMER!

Amer JUMPS UP from his mattress.

BURAQ (CONT'D)

Let's go.

SUPER: Day 99

INT/EXT. VAN, ISTANBUL AIRPORT - DAY

Buraq pulls up to passenger loading and puts the car in park.

BURAQ

This is you.

Buraq hands him his plane ticket.

BURAQ (CONT'D)

Don't forget your number. Very important when you arrive.

AMER

Got it.

BURAQ

Alright?

AMER

Alright. (genuinely) Thank you.

BURAQ

I shouldn't say this, but I put you first because that gives you the best odds of your ID getting through. I want you to finish your movie with your friend. It's important you go on. Good luck.

AMER

(with a smile) I don't need it.

INT. ISTANBUL AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Amer walks into the main terminal and is swallowed by the vast sea of steel and people. He looks for the big board.

VOICE (O.S.)

Basel...Basel!

Amer looks around and spots Austin, camera rolling in hand.

AMER

You didn't have to come.

AUSTIN

I'm not staying for long.

Austin shows Amer his ticket.

AMER

What? You're going to Italy?

AUSTIN

I told you I wanted to catch the journey. I couldn't take the boat so this is the next best thing.

Austin hands Amer a large Camera Phone from his bag.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Since I can't come, you have to be the filmmaker. There's a huge memory card in there so shoot away.

(MORE)

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Keep it safe, keep it dry! My boss
 paid for that.

AMER
 I'll try not to sink.

They stand as mirrors of one another, holding their tickets and IDs in hand. Same destination, vastly different journeys.

AMER (CONT'D)
 I'll see you in Italy.

AUSTIN
 I'll see you in Italy.

They hug and walk off. Amer's faces succumbs to his nerves.

LATER AT SECURITY

The scanner ROARS around Amer. He steps out. An AIRPORT SECURITY GUARD walks up to him.

AIRPORT SECURITY
 Kollarını kaldırın.

He lifts Amer's arms and gives him a whole body pat down. It lingers a bit longer and is stronger than it should be.

LATER AT PASSPORT CHECKPOINT

Amer gets in the back of a long, moving line. As it snakes through, Amer's breath gets short and his eyes more jittery. He scans down the different lines, passengers, documents. The line drags him closer. His forehead glistens and our score builds with his stress. *Fuck! This ID won't work. No, it's fine!* The line moves a bit more, stop-and-go. He looks at the passengers around him. *Are they looking at me? Is security? I should go.* He shuffles more. *NEXT! Almost there.*

PASSPORT GUARDS stand behind the bulletproof checkpoint windows. Amer tries to scan their faces - *who looks the kindest? Who can I charm?* STAMP! A passenger goes through. STAMP STAMP! More movement. NEXT! Amer is 3 back. He focuses on the Passport Guard's eyes, their faces. *2 back. What the fuck am I doing?!* The score builds. 1 back. Amer looks for an exit. His heart speeds. Our sound convolutes. From window #3:

PASSPORT GUARD
 Siradaki! Siradaki!

The Guard waves in Amer but he's frozen, not moving. People behind Amer tap and shout at him to go to the window. Amer takes his Shawl and wipes the sweat and fear from his face. When he reappears, he has new eyes. He is Basel.

He walks to Window 3 and slides his ID book to the Guard. Amer looks to his right - A TURKISH MAN steps up to WINDOW 4, passes his papers through, and leans on the window ledge. Amer decides to mirror him. Hands. Mannerisms. Head. Feet.

PASSPORT GUARD (CONT'D)
Isim? (e) Name?

BASEL
Sorry. Only Arabic. Basel Mohammed.
Basel Mohammed.

PASSPORT GUARD
Türkçe yada Ingilizcen var mı?

BASEL
Arabic.

As the Guard looks through his ID, Amer goes back to his Turkish Mirror. *Yawn. Stand tall. Wipe my forehead.* The Guard STOPS on the page with his ticket and visa and looks closer. Amer freezes. Our score brings us through as Amer closes his eyes and the audible stress is broken by - CHU-CHOO! The stamp slowly lifts up off of Amer's ID.

PASSPORT GUARD
Güvenli seyahatler, Basel.

Amer, or Basel, whoever he is, nods and then glides thorough.

LATER AT THE GATE

Amer herds with the line as he steps up to the final ticket scan. The FLIGHT ATTENDANT curiously looks at his documents. She pulls him aside to the computer and she types. And types.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Bir seyi kontrol etmeliyim.

She looks at Amer, then back down. He swallows the stress.

MAN (O.S)
Affedersin! Annemin yardımına
ihtiyacı var!

A MAN is pushing his MOTHER in a wheel chair. The Flight Attendant looks up at the man, looks at Amer.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Bir dakika efendim, hemen
dönecegim.

She grabs the transfer wheelchair and walks over to help the Man. The last passengers are walking onto the jetway.

Amer looks around - the coast is clear. He snatches his documents and slips to the end of the line and shuffles in.

INT. PLANE - MINUTES LATER

Amer sits in his seat, eyes out the window on the tarmac. His heart beats fast as we QUICKLY CUT through his impatience; sweat; passengers seated; plane door shuts; announcements; *Can we fucking take off?*; engines roar; SCORE RISING, then--

Sound DROPS OUT to only the soft float of the plane through the sky. Amer stares out the window onto the clouds. He snaps back to consciousness and looks around the plane. On the TV headset in front of him, we see the moving map - an arc of travel from Istanbul to Algiers. *We're in the air? We're in the air!* The release of stress is physical. He smiles uncontrollably and tries to tame his laughter. He closes his eyes, and leans his head against the window. An exhale...

INT. PASSPORT CONTROL, ALGERIA AIRPORT - HOURS LATER

A sleepy Amer walks through a line in the terminal. He steps up to a PASSPORT AGENT sitting at an open desk. She looks up at him. Okay. Stamp.

PASSPORT AGENT
(a) Welcome to Algeria. Next!

INT. ARRIVAL HALL, ALGERIA AIRPORT - HOURS LATER

Still dazed, Amer walks aimlessly towards the exit.

VOICE
Basel...Basel Mohammed!

Shit that's me! Amer turns to the voice. A YOUNG SMUGGLER holds up "Basel Mohammed" sign.

AMER
I am Basel. Basel Mohammed?

The man checks his documents.

YOUNG SMUGGLER
Okay. Let's go.

Cold. They walk towards the exit.

EXT. SEEDY AIRPORT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The Smuggler and Amer get into a BLACK MERCEDES.

SUPER: Algiers, Algeria.

INT/EXT. BLACK MERCEDES - LATER

Young Smuggler chats on his phone as Amer pulls out his Camera Phone to film the night lights of Algiers.

EXT. ALGIERS HOTEL - LATER

The car stops at a fancy valet. Young Smuggler leads Amer out of the van and into the hotel, shaking hands and greasing SECURITY GUARDS along the way.

INT. ALGIERS HOTEL - LATER

Amer waits as Young Smuggler schmoozes the concierge. He finishes, hands Amer his documents and his room key.

YOUNG SMUGGLER

You'll be here at least 2-3 days,
so hang tight. Get some sleep. I'll
call you the night before we leave.

AMER

Do you think it's okay I see my
uncle? He lives here and--

YOUNG SMUGGLER

You can do what you want, you have
a few days. But when we call you to
meet, you better be there.

Amer nods. The Young Smuggler walks away.

INT. ALGIERS HOTEL, AMER'S ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Amer walks into the small room and sits on the armchair. Not too bad. Sits on the bed, and immediately his eyelids get heavy. He WAKES himself and dials from his phone.

AMER

Uncle Emad? It's Amer....Yes, of
course! I'll text you the address.

Amer hangs up, texts, done. His eyes weigh. He drifts in and out of sleep until...RRRRRING! Amer's cell wakes him up.

AMER (CONT'D)
Hello? What? (beat)
Basel! I am Basel!

Amer pops up and runs for the door.

INT. ALGIERS HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Amer speed walks through the lobby and sees UNCLE EMAD having an argument with the Security Guards and Concierge.

AMER
Uncle Emad!

Amer offers out his arms for a hug. The staff eases up.

UNCLE EMAD
Basel! So good to see you.

They hug. Amer gives a fake Basel smile.

AMER
Shall we go?

Amer leads him out the door.

EXT. ALGIERS HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Uncle Emad and Amer get into to a shitty Toyota.

INT. SHITTY TOYOTA - CONTINUOUS

Amer in the back, Uncle Emad in the passenger's seat. Another man, MAHMOUD, is the driver. They take off.

UNCLE EMAD
This is my friend, Mahmoud.
Mahmoud, my nephew Amer. Or, Basel.

AMER
Basel for now. But Amer's okay too.

UNCLE EMAD
I don't have a car, but Mahmoud offered to come drive.

AMER
Thank you Mahmoud. Let me pay you for petrol--

MAHMOUD

Please. You come into a Palestinian man's car and you pay for nothing. Your Uncle is a very good friend to me. I consider his family my own.

UNCLE EMAD

We've got some time until we get there. You should rest.

Uncle Emad turns around, and they all settle quietly on the dark drive. Faint arabic music plays on the radio.

AMER

Can you turn the music up a bit?

The song puts a smile on Amer's face as he drifts off, to...

INT/EXT. SHITTY TOYOTA, UNCLE EMAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SCREEECH! The car brakes to a stop. Amer's UP! Uncle Emad reaches over to Mahmoud, they shake and hug.

UNCLE EMAD

Thank you, my friend.

MAHMOUD

You're very welcome.

Mahmoud offers his hand to Amer, and they shake.

MAHMOUD (CONT'D)

Very best of luck on your journey.

AMER

Thank you.

They get out of the car and Mahmoud drives off.

AMER (CONT'D)

How far does he live?

UNCLE EMAD

Maybe, 3 hours away?

Amer's eyes gaze with gratitude as the taillights disappear into the night. The stars highlight the rural vista.

UNCLE EMAD (CONT'D)

Come on. You must be hungry.

EXT. UNCLE EMAD'S HOUSE - LATER

A small patio with two chairs facing out into the night desert. Amer has his feet up, smoking and ashing his cigarette. Camera Phone out, he films his surroundings.

Uncle Emad enters and sets on the table a large tray of small plates and two beers.

AMER

Uncle Emad, you didn't have to.

UNCLE EMAD

My famous nephew comes to visit me
me because I'm conveniently on his
smuggling route? I'm honored!

Uncle Emad goes back inside and comes out with gifts.

UNCLE EMAD (CONT'D)

Here. It'll be hot.

Uncle Emad hands him shorts. Then a stupid bucket hat.

UNCLE EMAD (CONT'D)

And this for the sun.

AMER

Uncle Emad, I am okay.

UNCLE EMAD

Are you kidding me? I know this
desert. Wear the ugly hat.

AMER

Thank you.

He hands Amer a beer and holds up his own for a toast.

UNCLE EMAD

To my nephew. That his journey is
successful, and he eventually eases
the worries of my dear sister.

The share a smile and a nod. A CLINK of bottles, and then RRRRING! Amer looks down to his phone, answers it..

AMER

Hello...WHAT?! You said 2 or 3 ...I
(long pause). Yeah okay.

Amer listens closely, looks at his watch. His face goes sour.

AMER (CONT'D)
Okay I'll be there.

Amer hangs up. Uncle Emad puts down his beer.

AMER (CONT'D)
I have to be at the Downtown
Algiers bus station in 2 hours.

UNCLE EMAD
Two hours?! It's 11 o'clock now, it
takes 90 minutes to get there...we
need to find a car!

Uncle Emad pulls out his phone and dials. Waits. Nothing.

UNCLE EMAD (CONT'D)
Fucking desert. Mahmoud probably
has no service. I can call...eat!

AMER
I'm not that hungr--

UNCLE EMAD
Eat!

Amer eats. Emad thinks to himself, then calls someone else.

UNCLE EMAD (CONT'D)
Hello! Hani!...I need your help.

He paces inside. Amer leans back, and tries to breathe. He looks his watch TICK - 11:02pm. Uncle Emad returns.

UNCLE EMAD (CONT'D)
Okay, my friend Hani, he has a car.
He can drive us there.

AMER
How far away is he?

Uncle Emad does the mental math and it doesn't look good.

EXT. UNCLE EMAD'S HOUSE - LATER

HEADLIGHTS race to us from the distance and cut through the sleepy starlit village. Amer and Emad share a cigarette out front as the vehicle's engine gets louder and louder. Amer's watch reads 11:58. He sucks his cigarette hard. We wait with them as the car grows louder, the lights closer, and closer, and it finally pulls up with a hard SCREECH!

INT/EXT. HANI'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

HANI drives like a madman.

HANI
Seat belts!

UNCLE EMAD
Hani thank you for coming.

HANI
You kidding? Anything for you.

The car's headlights ROCKET through the dark countryside.

LATER

Hani is focused on the road. The roar of the engine fan the flames of Amer's stress. He reads the car's clock "12:40am". Amer sits back, closes his eyes, breathes. *Fuck*.

LATER

The car drives through the dark country, and in the distance we finally see a glow of light that is Algiers.

LATER

Amer's head leans forward against the passenger's headrest. He sits back, takes another drag of his cigarette. Fidgets. Looks at the speedometer - over 200km/h. He closes his eyes.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ALGIERS BUS STATION - NIGHT

Hani's shitbox screeches to a halt. They all hop out and Amer peers through the crowd and catches eyes with Young Smuggler, checking and loading passengers onto a BUS. Amer waves.

YOUNG SMUGGLER
Cutting it close. We leave in 5.

Amer exhales, and Young Smuggler goes back to his business. Amer walks back to Uncle Emad.

AMER
Thank you.

He hugs his Uncle as tight as his fatigued body can.

UNCLE EMAD
Of course.

Hani comes back to them.

HANI

I checked those guys out - seem
legit. Give em hell Amer.

Hani beats his chest, points to Amer, and gets in the car.

AMER

Please, thank him again for me.

UNCLE EMAD

We got it done.

YOUNG SMUGGLER

Basel Mohammed, let's go.

UNCLE EMAD

Basel...

Amer takes a sarcastic bow and then walks to the bus.

INT/EXT. ALGERIAN BUS - LATER

The bus cuts through a dark city road. Amer sits in the middle of the packed, sweaty vehicle. He tries to relax and settle in. Just about when he drifts off...to...slee--

INT/EXT. ALGERIAN BUS - MORNING

CLUNK! Amer's head snaps back as the bus makes a sharp turn. The city is long gone; only vast desert circles all around. The bus turns off the road and onto the hilly desert dunes.

As they drive on, something far in the distance catches Amer's eye. As they get closer, he notices a MAN standing alone. He wears all black. The bus begins to make its way towards the man and more people notice. *What is this?* The bus drives right up to him and stops. The man is still.

Young Smuggler stands up from the front of the bus.

YOUNG SMUGGLER

Okay, listen up. Ismail al-Faruqi,
Mohamed Ali al-Nasiri, Moustapha al-
Nasiri, Hala Tayback, Sabah Fakhri,
Basel Mohammed.

Amer looks up.

YOUNG SMUGGLER (CONT'D)

All of you. Off the bus. NOW!

He aggressively reads the names again and everyone moves. Amer follows the group towards the exit.

EXT. ALGERIAN SAHARA DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Amer steps off as the sun reflects off of the bright sand

YOUNG SMUGGLER
(from the bus) Just wait here.

Amer's eyes finally dilate as the door closes and the bus drives off. *Where're you going?!* The group looks to the MAN IN BLACK for answers. He stands tall with a shiny Glock pistol in his right hip. They look out onto the desert, lost.

SUPER: Day 100

HALA, a motherly woman, mutters obscenities as she shoves her duffel bag into the sand and sits on it. Two OTHER MEN mutter off. Amer stands with TWO BROTHERS. Big, burly, solid men.

Amer takes out the Camera Phone to film his surroundings. He drops it back into his bag and notices the stupid hat. He puts the thing on, and it covers him quite well. Amer lights his cigarette, as one of the brothers longingly looks on. Amer rolls him a cigarette of his own shares a drag.

MOUSTAPHA
Thank you.

He offers his big paw. The shake.

MOUSTAPHA (CONT'D)
Moustapha al-Nasiri. This is my
brother Mohammad..

MOHAMMED waves. They all share nods, look away. As they savor their tobacco a HUM grows loud from the distance. Amer pulls down the bill of his hat to see; a black pick up truck comes towards them. It pulls up close, stops. Out comes the DRIVER IN BLACK. He walks to the woman.

DRIVER IN BLACK
Hala?

She nods.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)
Come with me sister.

He picks up her bag and patiently guides her to the passenger's side of the truck. She's in, the door closes.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)
 The rest of you, get in the back.
 (beat) Get in the back!

The Driver's Glock glares just as well. Amer and the other men hop in the back of the flat bed. BANG! They all clunk on the blazing hot fiberglass and they quickly speed off.

The truck ZOOMS at an incredible speed. It rides up a dune and then BUMP! The Men crash down BANG in the flat bed. Moans and groans, then another BUMP and BANG. They all scramble for an edge to hold on to. Amer hangs on tight. BANG! Amer's hand slices on a rivet. The engine drowns out his scream. He grabs tighter, digs his heels. BANG! Now he's lodged in. The ride gets a tad smoother as they enter a straightaway. The sun blazes hot from behind as they ride into the desert.

LATER

The sun is at high noon. Amer is in a dehydrated daze as the sun burns his neck. He readjusts the hat but it's no use. The truck rattles and vibrates as the driver speeds on.

LATER

The sun is lower in the sky and the ride is finally manageable. Amer checks his hands - palms bloodied and bruised. They all remove their grip for a moment, stretch hands, rub faces. Amer tries to run his hands through his hair but the embedded sand traps his fingers. It's quieter, and even a moment of beauty peaks as they look far across the desert plane. Amer films with his Camera Phone.

A small village begins to appear; life, vehicles, a sea of tiny structures. The van picks up speed. Amer and his truck mates begin to perk up a bit. The van veers towards the village on a straight road. As the village gets closer, a rumble begins to grow loud. Amer's eyes follow the increasing sound and he looks up to the sky - it's a HELICOPTER. It's some distance away, but it follows their same path. As the truck speeds up, the helicopter keeps pace.

The truck comes to a screeching halt. Only the rhythm of the helicopter blades remain. The Driver steps out of the vehicle and through binoculars looks at aircraft.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)
 Everybody Run! Get the fuck out!

The Men jump from the truck and scatter on their wobbly legs.

MOHAMMED
 Where?

DRIVER IN BLACK
Anywhere just go! RUN!

Amer and the men sprint towards some greenery and abandoned structures. They sprint harder, faster, the helicopter's blades begin to scream LOUDER. Amer runs and runs and slides behind a covering of concrete and trees. One of the other Truck Men slides beside him. They stare at one another, mirroring each other's silence. The rotor of the helicopter hovers. Floats. Lingers. Then...gone.

They keep the stare and agree to get up and peek their heads out - nothing. The silence is broken by the Truck's HONK. The al-Nasiri brothers unearth as well. HONK HONK! Driver waves them in. They all jog back towards the truck and hop in the back. As Driver calls roll, nervous laughs become contagious as their adrenaline drops.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)
Welcome to Libya.

He enters the car with a smirk. They head towards the city.

SUPER: GHADAMES, LIBYA

EXT. OLD FARM - A BIT LATER

The truck comes to a stop at a dilapidated stable. Farm equipment is strewn about and ANIMALS roam the open fields. Everybody gets out of the vehicle and truck bed.

DRIVER IN BLACK
We're here for the night. You can't leave, you don't want to leave. Do not leave. (to Hali) Over there sister, that is for you.

Man in Black walks her over to a small cot in its own corner.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)
Men stay on this side, your toilet is over there.

Driver In Black walks off. The Men look around at the stacks of hay and the piles of shit. They all savor their final drags of tobacco. Amer walks over to a bed-worthy hay stack. SQUISH! Amer steps in some shit but pays it no mind as rest becomes so near. SQUISH! More shit. He falls on to the hay stack with a huge smile. He balls up his shawl as a pillow. The sky melts into a dark orange as Amer closes his eyes. A big exhale and a smile, and Amer finally drifts off to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. DE VROLIJKHEID CAMP OFFICES, NETHERLANDS - DAY

Amer's face is skinny, his beard neat. He watches a video on his phone; his larger Baby Niece laughs and plays with her tiny shoe. Amer laughs with her and plays it again.

Into the office walks the CAMP DIRECTOR. She and Amer shake hands and both sit. She lays some paperwork on the desk.

CAMP DIRECTOR

(e) Thank you for waiting. We have news! Your asylum has been approved and you'll be resettled. Some things to sign and information about what comes next.

She slides over the paperwork. Amer reads and looks confused.

CAMP DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Someting wrong?

AMER

(e) It says to live in Bladel?

Camp Director enthusiastically nods.

AMER (CONT'D)

I can not live in Bladel. It is too far from Den Haag! I have students and work! I just had concert and many rehearsal in the city.

CAMP DIRECTOR

We can help you find work in Bladel, maybe construction, or a cleaner. A real job!

AMER

I have real job! I can not travel, 3 hours to Den Haag each day? I am teacher! I performed with Dutch National Orchestra. Look!

Amer pulls out his phone shows her a YOUTUBE VIDEO: a TV broadcast of the NBE Orchestra in front of a crowd of thousands. Focus goes onto Amer's solo as he leads the massive orchestra.

CAMP DIRECTOR

Amer I understand. This is wonderful, but we just don't have housing in Den Haag. It's one of the finest cities in the world it's too expensive--

AMER

Look!

Amer shows her more: slide by slide photos of him in newspapers, magazines, with students.

CAMP DIRECTOR

Amer the government can assist you with 1000 Euro per month. That includes rent and anything else you need. Your housing is in Bladel. You can't live in Den Haag.

AMER

I can.

CAMP DIRECTOR

Amer Bladel is your only option. It will help you restart life. Isn't that what you want?

AMER

What I want is freedom.

CAMP DIRECTOR

Well how do you define freedom?

AMER

Freedom means I can eat what I want, when I want to eat it. No more camp, no more meal times. I buy it and cook myself! That is freedom. (beat) Freedom to teach, to perform. I will open my schools. I will open my foundation. And I will live in Den Haag.

CAMP DIRECTOR

If you want to live in Den Haag you have to find housing yourself. Pay for yourself. You have two weeks to submit this paperwork. If you can't, then Bladel is it.

An ALERT goes off on Amer's phone. He stands up to leave.

AMER

I have important meeting in Den Haag. I have to take long train to get there so I must leave now.

Amer's eyes are fired up as he walks out.

INT. TRAIN CAR - LATER

Amer's searches on his phone for apartments. He writes notes, emails, scrolls maps, and finds unsatisfactory prices.

EXT. PEACE PALACE - DAY

Amer arrives back at the large parliamentary building in Den Haag - the Peace Palace. This time he goes through the gates.

INT. PEACE PALACE - LATER

Amer enters the main chamber of the Peace Palace. A woman, LENA, greets him.

LENA

(e) Amer! Lena.

AMER

(e) Very good to meet you.

LENA

I've heard such wonderful things about you. Your music, your story. It's incredible.

AMER

Just normal. This, this place is incredible. Amazing. I walk by here few months back, and I think wow. And now I am here.

LENA

And now you are here. Come...

Lena leads Amer off.

INT. PEACE PALACE - LATER

Lena shows Amer around the Peace Palace. They walk by busts of GHANDI, MLK. They explore the donated art and fine design. They walk through the gardens, the International Court of Justice. Lena introduces Amer to COLLEAGUES.

As Lena leads Amer out through the main door, he breathes in one look of the main hall.

EXT. PEACE PALACE FRONT GARDENS - MOMENTS LATER

Lena and Amer look out onto the vast manicured gardens.

LENA

Ever since Andrew Carnegie invested in building the Peace Palace, it has remained one of the most important institutions housing and promote missions of peace and justice throughout the world. The Hague represents that, and we continue to work our best to sustain that.

AMER

For very long time, my work with the children finding peace through music in the war in Syria, I felt like I was alone. Like nobody hear me. It is very nice to feel like finally someone hears me.

The share a reciprocal smile.

LENA

We have a speaker series here, as well as some events coming in June. We would really love it if you played, maybe told your story.

AMER

Really? You would accept me?

LENA

Absolutely. Your message of peace is one we reflect. It would be our honor. The Peace Palace is not here to decide to accept or change you. The Peace Palace is for everyone, to promote you. We need artists, thinkers, creative people. We need perspective to come in and elevate what we do and what we stand for. You make us better.

AMER

It would be my honor.

EXT. PEACE PALACE/DEN HAAG STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Amer steps out of the security check and onto the street. He is enamored with the city. The smile he shared with Lena still lingers. He walks by a street pole and does a double take, and then walks back to read a sign posted: "Appartement te huur". A photo of a small apartment and some details are below. Amer calls the number and walks off.

EXT. DEN HAAG STREETS - LATER

Amer steps off the tram and walks to an address on his map. He knocks and peeks into the open door

AMER

(e) Hello?

INT. ZACHARAIS APARTMENT - DAY

A tiny, run-down apartment. A LANDLADY welcomes him.

LANDLADY

Hallo! Kom binnen! Amer?

AMER

(e) Yes! English?

She gestures her hand - *not so much.*

LANDLADY

(e) I will show you.

She smiles wide with enthusiasm, but only has to pivot in a circle to show the studio apartment

LANDLADY (CONT'D)

This is the living area. Here's the Kitchen. And behind there is space for a bed.

She takes him towards a side door.

LANDLADY (CONT'D)

And this, the best part.

EXT. ZACHARAIS APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The walk out onto a disheveled yet charming wooden patio. Amer inhales the fresh air, the free sky. He draws out plans in his mind. She scans his face for his thoughts.

AMER

It's very nice, and I like the price. Very good for me. Can I get you money in 3 week time?

LANDLADY

3 weeks? 3 days. March 1st. That's when lease begins.

AMER

1 March? No, can be 1 April?

LANDLADY

Oh no, the sign said. We'd like
this rented immediately--

AMER

Please. This apartment would be
perfect for me. It's perfect price.

LANDLADY

I know it is, and March 1 I can get
that price.

AMER

I can work and fix garden, fix
apartment. I am at a camp now, I
will be ready to move in April 1.

LANDLADY

Camp? From where?

AMER

From Syria. They want put me far
away, but all my work is in Den
Haag. My students, schools. I am
musician! I am performing at Peace
Palace. Please.

She looks at Amer, looks around the space.

LANDLADY

Well, I have been wanting to redo
the floor. Paint.

She thinks, looks long at his pleading and honest eyes She
offers out her hand and a smile.

LANDLADY (CONT'D)

April first.

They shake.

AMER

Thank you so much!

INT. DE VROLIJKHEID CAMP OFFICES - DAY

Amer SLAMS the lease contract on Camp Director's desk. She
reads.

CAMP DIRECTOR

(e) What is this? In Den Haag? That price? My son can't even get an apartment in Den Haag!

Amer laughs, smiles, walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD FARM, LIBYA - DAWN

Amer, the Truck Guys, and Man in Black look out onto the desert distance and watch a pick up truck drive towards them. They sip the last of their coffee.

SUPER: Day 101

AMER

Thank you for the coffee.

The Man in Black looks at him, then back to the Truck. The vehicle pulls to a stop and Driver steps out.

DRIVER IN BLACK

Alright, same deal, in the back.

The men walk to the back of the truck and see 4 OTHER MEN already in the flatbed, along with a large rolled carpet.

AMER

Back Here?

DRIVER IN BLACK

Yes, get in!

Fuck. They hop in the back, all squeezing to fit. Amer chooses a corner with good leverage. He tries to extend his legs but the carpet is in the way. They take off.

EXT. LIBYAN SAHARA DESERT - DAY

And back to the bumpy terrain. Amer puts his hat on, and this time creates a hood around his head with his Shawl. BANG! A bump. BANG! Another. *Here we go again...*

LATER, HIGH NOON

The sun cooks from overhead as the truck moves at top speed. Amer and the Men wilt. SCREEECH! The truck stops.

Driver in Black pops out and looks through his binoculars. In the distance: a speck of black driving their same course.

DRIVER IN BLACK

Fuck. (to the flatbed) Alright, all
of you, get under the carpet.

A collective pause - *What?* The Driver pulls out his PISTOL and BANGS it on the car. The men begin to move.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)

Get under the carpet! Lay, like
fish! One then the other. NOW!

All the men pack in their sweaty body parts. They unroll the carpet on top of themselves and all grab hold of an edge. The truck zooms off and we stay in the dark. The flatbed vibrates hard under Amer's head. Wind begins to lift the carpet and they almost lose it. They reset their grips and pull harder. BANG! Another dune. They drive on...

LATER

Amer sweats hard and breathes harder. BANG. The men intertwine their bodies for more leverage. A man on the side tries to rest his hands, but quickly an edge blows up. Another man loses a grip, then suddenly WOOSH! The carpet flies away. Amer knocks on the window of the cab. Driver rolls down the window and fire a bullet out the window.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)

SHUT THE FUCK UP AND SIT DOWN!!

AMER

The carpet is gone.

DRIVER IN BLACK

What?

AMER

THE CARPET IS GONE!

Driver in Black adjusts his mirror to see.

DRIVER IN BLACK

Fuck. Get down! Squeeze down! Stay
under the line of sight, NOW!

TWO MORE GUNSHOTS! Amer relays the message to the truck-bed men. They sardine down, as low as they can. The truck speeds up more. Amer periscopes his Camera Phone and hits record. The car in the distance still follows them. He pans it to his surroundings and to the rest of the distraught men. They wait it out, pray, hope it all passes.

EXT. ZUWARA SAFEHOUSE, ZUWARA LIBYA - NIGHT

The Truck pulls up in front of single story structure. Amer and the Men unearth and creek and crack as they hop off the truck. A LARGE GUARD stands by the door with a finger on the trigger of his gun. He directs them in with the barrel.

INT. ZUWARA SAFEHOUSE, ZUWARA LIBYA - CONTINUOUS

75 REFUGEES are packed into a central room. Most are men, some women, a few children. The floor is scattered with piss and shit. Amer notices some children playing by the shit. He finds a water bucket with a rag and begins to clean the area. People scoff and laugh at him. He clears a small space for the child and then himself and then sits. Both al-Nasiri brothers sit beside him.

MOUSTAPHA

No point.

He points to a long queue at the toilet.

MOUSTAPHA (CONT'D)

There's a 2 hour wait for the
toilet.

AMER

There are children here.

MOUSTAPHA

No one gets to be a child in this.

They settle against the wall and try to rest their eyes.

INT. ZUWARA SAFEHOUSE - MORNING

Amer wakes up in the same position. The Brothers are gone but some sunlight shines in from the open roof.

SUPER: Day 102

Amer notices a basic buffet of food, coffee, and cigarettes. He pulls out the Camera Phone and films his surroundings. A few eyes of judgment give him the signal to stop filming.

Amer piles himself a plate of food. He pours a coffee, rolls himself a cigarette, sits on the floor and indulges.

INT. ZUWARA SAFEHOUSE - EVENING

THREE SALESMEN enter carrying large cardboard boxes.

DRIVER IN BLACK

Listen up! Those of you who don't have life jackets, you can buy them now. 50 Euro. Sim cards, 100 Euro.

The Salesmen sell around the safehouse. Amer walks up to a TALL MAN inserting his new Sim card.

AMER

Excuse me brother, can I use your phone for a moment? I have to just send one message.

TALL MAN

Yeah. 20 Euro.

AMER

I can go buy my own for 100.

TALL MAN

So then go buy your own for 100.

AMER

Come on. What good is my money when we sink?

The Tall Man shrugs. Amer reluctantly hands him a 20.

TALL MAN

Just one message.

AMER

Yeah, relax.

Amer types a number and records a voice memo into WhatsApp.

AMER (CONT'D)

Hi Austin. We should leave soon, a day or two. I don't know where to in Italy. But I heard the ride should take one day--

TALL MAN

Done?

Yeah, whatever. Amer hits send. The man snatches his phone back and walks away. Amer walks over to the LIFEJACKET SALESMAN, who is haggling with an ELDER MAN.

ELDER MAN

Please. I have no more money--

LIFEJACKET SALESMAN

I'm sorry it's not free--

ELDER MAN
Please! Help an old man.

Lifejacket Salesman looks at Amer.

LIFEJACKET SALESMAN
You need one?

Amer pulls out his money - a 100 note and a few straggling 5s remain. He takes a moment, then hands him the 100.

AMER
I'll take two.

Amer takes the jackets and hands one to the Elder Man, who kisses Amer's hands.

ELDER MAN
Thank you my son, thank you.

AMER
You are welcome. What good is my money when we sink anyway?

Amer smiles at the man, and sits back down. He forms his lifejacket into a pillow and nods out in the noisy room.

INT. ZUWARA SAFEHOUSE, ZUWARA LIBYA

BANG BANG! The door swing open and in walks Driver in Black and 5 ARMED MEN. ALL LIGHTS BLAST ON. Amer squints.

DRIVER IN BLACK
Everybody up! Where are the women?
(beat) Where are all the women?

All of the WOMEN come towards the front door. Driver in Black pulls out a phone and hands the FIRST WOMAN the phone.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)
Call your family.

FIRST WOMAN
Why?

DRIVER IN BLACK
Tell them to pray for you. (he looks at everyone) It's time to go.

People rustle and gather and wait, standing patiently in a sea of orange vests. They wait. A rustle of pebbles is heard out front. Driver in Black listens to his crackling walkie.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)

Okay. The first ten. Quietly!

They usher out. Silence. A long pause. Amer closes his eyes and looks down. His watch ticks. And ticks And ticks. A walkie crackles.

DRIVER IN BLACK (CONT'D)

Aright next 10, let's go! The children. Families.

The van loads quickly, the door closes, it's takes off. The crowd inside gets smaller. Amer stands in the mix, trying to stay patient. Tick. Tick. Prayers begin to be whispered, and Amer joins in.

I/E. BLACK VAN / ZUWARA STREETS - NIGHT

Amer's climbs in the last van as the last passenger. No seats, just knees to chest on the floor. The van door closes and takes off at a slow and steady pace.

The city of Zuwarra is quiet, dark. The moon and stars light the streets. The van cruises quietly when a WALKIE kicks in.

WALKIE

Stop, stop! Pull over!

The van pulls over and turns off it's lights. Amer pokes his head up to see out the windshield - nothing. Then...TWO POLICE VEHICLES drive by. A beat.

WALKIE (CONT'D)

Change course. Route three.

They make a sharp right and continue onto a side street.

A curious HISS fills the van. Smoke begins from the engine. The DRIVER and PASSENGER argue. POP! The engine smokes some more. They pull over and shut it down. POP!

DRIVER

Fuck!

Driver quietly mumbles into his walkie. He gets a reply, and places the walkie down. Silence. The sounds of the night begin to permeate the van. The men sweat onto each other. Someone coughs. SHHH! The men hang their heads and their hope. KFFT! The Driver brings the walkie to his ear.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Okay.

Headlights shine through the back of the van as a vehicle pulls up. The sound of someone getting out, walking towards them. Amer and the Van Men stiffen up as the back door OPENS - it's Young Smuggler.

YOUNG SMUGGLER
Don't be scared, I'm here to take
you to the boat.

A welcoming grin. Young Smuggler leads them out of the van.

YOUNG SMUGGLER (CONT'D)
Straight line. Not a sound.

They fall in a line with Amer at the lead. Young Smuggler briskly walks them through streets. They heel-toe every step as their silhouetted bodies cautiously float across the night village. They turn a corner and see some sparkles of light reflecting on the ocean. They're close.

They weave into alleys and out onto a main roads. They walk directly into two patrolling LIBYAN SOLDIERS and all stop short. Young Smuggler looks back and calmly shushes them. He walks up to the Soldiers, a quick familiar chat, a hand off of cash, and the Soldiers walk away. Young Smuggler waves them on and they continue.

EXT. ZUWARA BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

The group tiptoes through the sandy beach. They head towards the water line and Young Smuggler abruptly stops. He looks around, checks a map on his phone. He looks at Amer and nods.

Young Smuggler begins to march into the water. He pulls his phone out of his pocket and raises it over his head. All the men follow. Amer shoves everything into his small bag and raises it up. A few steps in and they're up to their ankles. They walk further and further - *where's the fucking boat??!* The water is now up to their waist. The small wake begins to engulf their chests. They walk further and their lungs submerge, adding extra weight to each breath. Amer's heart beats faster. Seaweed, sand, and trash float by the water. A shirt floats by. A hat. A baby's shoe.

Water now up to Amer's neck. Their life jackets beginning to take life as their heads bob in and out of water. The THROB of Amer's heart consumes us as his ears begin to dip under.

YOUNG SMUGGLER
Here!

Smuggler grabs a thick anchor rope attached to a zodiac raft. The men pile in, carrying and pulling each other up and over. Amer climbs in last.

ON THE RAFT

One last check - everybody is aboard. Anchor up, and Young Smuggler RIPS the engine into life. The loud blades go underwater and the boat slowly buzzes along. The coast becomes farther away as the fog sets in. Further along, the mist breaks and a LARGE BOAT appears in the distance. As we get closer, we see the boat jam packed with migrants. The raft floats up and links on, and Amer and the group hop in.

I/E. BOAT - NIGHT

The boat's engine starts and the anchor comes up. They begin to move into the starlit sea. Young Smuggler still captains the zodiac raft and rides alongside them. The two boats float on towards the peeking light of tomorrow.

I/E. BOAT - DAYBREAK

Amer wakes up. He's seated and pressed into a gaggle of legs and bodies. Amer begins to pulse with nausea. He quickly stands and vomits over the side of the boat. He looks over to see a YOUNG BOY doing the same. Another MAN pulls out his dick and pees. Amer sees Young Smuggler still riding beside them, keeping watch.

SUPER: DAY 103

Amer looks across the boat and now the sunlight shows an even bigger crowd than he thought. Arabic of all sorts. All faces gaunt, shoulders hunched. So. Fucking. Tired.

Amer dry heaves again. *Oh wait!* He goes into his bag and pulls a bottle of Dramamine! Stuck to it, a note from Mom: "For the boat". As he opens the bottle, he catches eyes with the vomiting Young Boy. Amer hands him a tablet.

WOMAN

Oh please, can I have one?

People notice and begin to reach in and crowd Amer. He SHOUTS! They freeze. Amer plucks off the note from his Mom.

AMER

Find the children first.

He hands the Woman the bottle and she distributes.

I/E. BOAT - HIGH NOON

The sun beats down on the wilting passengers. Amer notices a set of stairs leading below deck and he goes to explore. When he peek his head in, a TALL BLACK MAN emerges from below.

TALL BLACK MAN
 Abin da fuck? Inda ke da kyaftin?
 Kyaftin! Kyaftin.

AMER
 I don't know what you're saying.

The Man gets more aggressive and shouts on. Amer looks over the side of the boat for Young Smuggler - he's now gone. A MAN comes shuffling over trying to break them up.

MAN
 (arabic) Woah. What's the problem?

AMER
 I don't know. TALL BLACK MAN
 Ka da kyaftin?

MAN
 No. Shi ne abokina. Huta!

The Man offers the angry man his hand.

MAN (CONT'D)
 Roz.

They shake. The Tall Black Man nods and settles for a moment.

ROZ
 (to Amer, in Arabic) I am Roz. He's looking for the captain. What happened?

AMER
 Nothing, he just came up. Who are you?

ROZ
 I'm a friend of the captain.

TALL BLACK MAN
 Mutane suna da ciwon wahala numfashi saukar a nan. Muna bukatar mu zo up.

Roz is getting frustrated.

ROZ

Ba za mu iya yi da cewa. Za mu
nutse.

His hand mimics a boat. Then, he flips it upside down.

ROZ (CONT'D)

He said the guys down there are
having trouble breathing and they
want to come up.

AMER

What guys, down where?

ROZ

There's a whole group. Maybe 100.
They paid half price.

AMER

What? No, they can't come up.

ROZ

I know.

AMER (CONT'D)

Tell him they cant.

The three argue and cause a commotion. The al-Nasiri brothers push their way into the scuffle and get testy. Amer holds out his hand to halt the big men, and his control over them intimidates everyone.

AMER (CONT'D)

We can not. Tell him.

ROZ

Ba za mu iya yi da cewa. Mutane ba
za su zo up.

TALL BLACK MAN

Mutane na iya mutu.

ROZ

He says people may die.

Amer looks at the Tall Black Man, swallows, then commits.

AMER

2 or 3 may die, but not 200 or 300.

ROZ

2 ko 3, amma ba 200 ko 300.

The Tall Black Man reluctantly understands and goes back into the hull. The al-Nasiri brothers post up at the stairs. Everyone else goes back to their business.

Amer unwraps his shawl from his neck. He walks towards the edge of the boat for some air. Roz follows him.

ROZ (CONT'D)
Hey. Thank you.

Amer unenthusiastically nods in acknowledgment.

ROZ (CONT'D)
It's not space, it's buoyancy. The boat is weighted with them underneath. If they all come up--

AMER
I know. We capsize. I'll keep an eye on it.

Roz nods to Amer and heads back to the captain's console. Amer walks over to the al-Nasiri Brothers.

AMER (CONT'D)
Guard the stairs. If anyone comes up...put your boot on their head and push them down.

The Brothers nod and stand tall. Amer's own words unsettle him and he finds a place to sit. Around him, his deck-mates offer a constant chorus of cries and prayers into the sea.

I/E. BOAT - LATER AFTERNOON

Amer is awoken by his nudging NEIGHBOR passing along a bag. Amer reaches inside and pulls out a piece of bread. He passes the bag on. The deck has become quiet. Energy is scarce.

Some murmurs over by the stairs gets Amer's attention - the Tall Black Man has come back and is arguing with the defending al-Nasiri Brothers. Amer runs over.

AMER
Hey!

TALL BLACK MAN
Roz! Ina ya ke? Babu iska saukar da akwai!

He gestures his arms towards the stairs - look! Amer walks over and peers down deeper to sees a sea of gaunt BLACK FACES doing their best to breathe. Roz comes over.

ROZ
Mene ne matsalar?

TALL BLACK MAN

Idan ka ci gaba da kiyaye mana
 dukkan saukar a nan, Za mu zo up da
 kuma jefa kowane fari mutum kashe
 wannan jirgin ruwa.

ROZ

He said they're coming up and
 throwing everyone off this boat.

Amer argues back with Tall Black Man and a commotion erupts.
 OTHER BLACK MEN come up the stairs and posture up. PASSENGERS
 on the deck get heated and shout at Amer.

PASSENGER

You can't treat people that
 way!

PASSENGER 2

You think you're in charge of
 everyone?

The arguments turn to chaos. Passenger 2 stands up and shoves
 Amer and immediately Moustapha punches the man in the gut. He
 withers to the deck and everyone freezes.

AMER

This is not a choice! If they come
 up, this boat goes down. When we
 get to Italy, if you wanna fight
 me, if you want to kill me - if you
 think that will solve things? Fine.
 I'll be ready to die then. But, I
 am not ready to die today.

Everyone's quiet. Amer and the Tall Black Man communicate
 deeply with their eyes. Amer keeps the gaze but talks to Roz.

AMER (CONT'D)

Tell him we make a rotation. One
 man up, one minute for fresh air,
 and then they rotate.

Roz relays the information. Tall Black Man takes a long
 pause, but accepts and goes back down. Amer points up ahead.

AMER (CONT'D)

We'll find no success killing each
 other here. We stay calm, and we
 just go north. To Italy.

There's no more energy to argue. A BLACK MAN from down below
 comes up, sweating, and savors the fresh air. He eyes Amer
 with disdain. A few more cycles of breaths, and then back
 down. ANOTHER MAN comes up and the process repeats.

I/E. BOAT - LATER, SUNSET

The sun sits low in the western sky as Amer leans on the edge of the boat. A SEAGULL flies over and lands next to him. The bird jerks its head a few times and then holds a long gaze with Amer. A long stare at each other, then the bird flies away. Amer looks up to the bird from his shackles with envy.

A sudden wave of "Allah Akbar" and other passengers' prayers can be heard. The Captain and Roz begin to argue loudly and Amer heads over. Roz looks to him in fury.

ROZ
(to Amer) We are lost.

CAPTAIN
It's not my fault, this boat is shit!

ROZ
What the fuck were you thinking?

CAPTAIN
I didn't think it would be this complicated!

AMER
What's going on?

Roz looks to the Captain to speak up, but he's silent.

ROZ
He's never been on a boat in his life. They said he and I could go for free if he captains and I help communicate.

AMER
Are you fucking kidding me?

CAPTAIN
Stop complaining! What the fuck are we going to do? We're just floating in the middle of open sea!

Roz and Captain continue to bicker. More prayers grow as the passengers catch wind of the problem.

AMER
No praying, stop it! None of that.

The praying and arguing continues.

AMER (CONT'D)
Shut the fuck up!

PRAYER WOMAN
God needs to send us a captain!

AMER
No! God will not send us a captain.
God gave us a mind to think. So
think!

Amer looks out to the sun and he begins to measure. He scans the sea, the horizon, he looks deeply at his gold watch. His eyes come to life. He fixes his Shawl and steps up.

AMER (CONT'D)
Okay. It's 7:30. I'll take the front and follow the sky, line up the sun, find north. And we go.

CAPTAIN
We could be heading anywhere, the Italians might not find us.

AMER
Italy is north. Land is north.
We'll hit something. Anything!

CAPTAIN
But I am the Captain!

AMER
I am the captain now!

The Captain concedes the face off and grabs the wheel. Amer pushes his way to the front of the boat and aligns the sun to where he thinks north is.

AMER (CONT'D)
A little to the right.

The boat turns and then hits it's mark. Amer gives a thumbs up and the boat floats in a straight line.

AMER (CONT'D)
We'll just keep an eye on the stars, the moon. We go north, smooth, straight. Easy.

Amer stares down the sea ahead. Now it's all business.

I/E. BOAT - LATER, NIGHT

A storm RAGES under the vast map of stars with Amer still navigating at the helm. The boat rides up a wave and SLAMS back down onto the water. The sea sprays all on deck.

AMER
You're drifting! Pull right!

Another wave CRASHES onto the deck. People hang onto each other for stability, warmth, survival.

AMER (CONT'D)
Straight. North! To Italy!

From behind him a man shouts "To Italy!" A few others join in, chanting and shouting at the bitch of a storm. Amer leads the cheer defiantly at the bow.

I/E. BOAT - LATER, THE NEXT MORNING

The boat rides along a calm sea. Hopefully, north.

SUPER: DAY 104

Amer sits at the bow, eyes forward. His face salty and burnt. Everyone's sapped. Black men still cycle their rotation.

ROZ
Amer.

Roz waves him in to the Captain's console.

ROZ (CONT'D)
It's been 28 hours.

The Captain grabs a satellite phone and hands it to Roz.

ROZ (CONT'D)
You do it, you're the Captain.

CAPTAIN
You speak English!

ROZ
They're Italian!

Captain turns on the phone, highlights a number, and hits send. He hits send again. And again. He pushed hard on the button and it finally dials. He hands it to Roz, who waits...

ROZ (CONT'D)
Did you dial?

CAPTAIN
Yes I fucking dialed.

Roz holds the power button again - it turns on, then off. He tries again - nothing. Roz pulls his hand away and notices the phone dripping water from the seams.

ROZ
Aren't these things waterproof?

The Captain tries some more, but nothing. It's dead.

CAPTAIN
You've got to be fucking kidding--

AMER
How many more hours until we were supposed to intercept them?

CAPTAIN
About 4.

AMER
Then we keep going.

There's no other choice. Amer heads back to the bow and they float on. He takes out his Camera Phone and films the sea, the sun, the boat. He flips the camera and looks at himself on the screen - gaunt, dirty, aged. He hits end.

I/E. BOAT - LATER,

Amer's eyes follow a FLOCK OF SEAGULLS circling overhead, and then off into the distance...what is that? A squint and a hand visor, and he sees a BLACK BUMP on the horizon. He looks around the boat - nobody else notices. He contains his enthusiasm as he walks to Roz and Captain, takes their binoculars and looks to see - a LARGE SHIP! It's massive. He blinks his eyes and shakes his head. *Let me make sure...Yes!* Ever so slightly our score re-surfaced and begins to build us through. Amer whispers to Roz and the Captain. Amer stands at the head of the boat.

AMER
Everybody listen! We must stay seated no matter what. No standing, no rushing. Nothing to see. If you stand up, you will be hit. We don't want this boat to flip over.

The crowd murmurs, confused. The large al-Nasiri brothers stand tall and enforce the new rules.

CROWD WOMAN
Look! A boat!

Everyone looks - the Large Naval Ship is getting closer.

AMER
NOBODY STAND! Nobody moves.
Patient. (to Captain) Bear left,
head towards the boat.

The Ship moves closer, and then it STOPS. From the side, down repels a speed raft with two ITALIAN SAILORS. The raft races towards them and stops. Over the raft's megaphone:

ITALIAN SAILOR
Parlate Italiano? Inglese?

Roz comes to the edge of the boat and shouts.

ROZ
(in English) English.

The Italian Sailor peers onto the boat, scans the faces.

ITALIAN SAILOR
(e) Everybody Arabic?

ROZ
Yes!

Amer nudges Roz and nods towards the lower deck stairs.

ROZ (CONT'D)
(to Amer) They won't take us if
they're not Arabic. (to the
Italians) Yes!

ITALIAN SAILOR
(e) Okay. The ship's waves will
knock you over so we have to take
small boats. Anchor down and we'll
take the women and children first.
Slowly, be patient.

Roz translates to Amer, who addresses the boat.

AMER
Women and children come. Slowly.

The men help the women and children stand. The Raft settles beside them. One by one they begin to disembark. A raft of twenty buzzes away as another empty one circles it's way in. More women and children load. Another cycle of rafts full of orange vests. Amer looks around at the boat.

AMER (CONT'D)
Is that all? No more women or
children?

Everyone confirms. The first MAN walks to get off the boat but Amer holds him back. Amer heads to the stairs of the galley and calls the Black Men up. The Tall Black Man gets out first, adjusting his eyes to the sun. Other Black Men follow, aching their way out. Amer and the other men clear a path for their exit. The Black Men see the Naval Ship and new smiles are born. The Italians notice the darker colored passengers and look to Amer and Roz, who hold their stare. The process has already begun, and the Italians decide to let them continue. All begin to disembark

Rafts with Black Men buzz about, their smiles as bright as the sun. The deck clears quickly now, with the last loads buzzing off. A few men fill the final boat. On goes Roz, then the Captain, after a final check jumps in Amer.

I/E. RESCUE RAFT - CONTINUOUS

From behind, we move with the raft as it heads towards the Ship. Amer stands at the rear with his shawl and ponytail in the breeze. The Ship gets larger and larger as we move closer, and our score continues to build just as well. We take our time and continue on as Amer soaks in the speedy sea breeze.

I/E. ITALIAN NAVAL VESSEL - NIGHT

Amer smokes at the edge of the deck. It's quiet - no score, no moans. He looks up at the stars and smiles as they head North. He reaches into his bag and takes out his forged ID. One more glance at Basel, and then he tosses it overboard.

I/E. ITALIAN NAVAL VESSEL - THE NEXT DAY

Amer and his BOAT MATES eat some soup and bread on the deck. They smoke, have a few laughs. From a high tower an Italian Sailor shouts and points to a small boat of migrants floating in sea. The Italians send a raft and rescue the boat as Amer films. The newcomers are welcomed aboard and taken care of.

I/E. ITALIAN NAVAL VESSEL - SUNRISE

Amer sleeps on the crowded deck. SHOUTS and CHEERS wake him up. He looks out to see why - LAND! He rushes to the front side the Ship. The island of Sicily grows out of the horizon. Homes. People. Life.

Everyone crowds up and begin to applaud, shout, cry, cheer - louder and louder they get. Their celebration is overwhelming, their faces overjoyed.

SUPER: Palermo, Sicily, Italy. Day 106

EXT. SICILIAN PORT - LATER

The Ship docks. A flood of refugees fills a ramp down onto dry land.

I/E. ITALIAN NAVAL VESSEL DECK - CONTINUOUS

Amer shuffles forward with the herd.

VOICE (O.C.)

(e) Amer from Palestine? Amer from Palestine.

What? Amer rushes to the edge to see...Austin! He's waves from behind a tall fence with his camera in hand, filming away. Amer pulls out his own Camera Phone and films Austin back. They laugh and wave until Amer notices some suspicious Sailors approaching. Amer tries to hide amongst the crowd but can not. They grab him.

INT. BOAT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Amer is placed in an office chair. Grilling him from across the desk is an ITALIAN CAPTAIN and a TRANSLATOR SAILOR.

ITALIAN CAPTAIN

Sei un giornalista? (e) Are you a journalist? Police? Do you know that man?

Amer shrugs. Captain looks to the dark skinned Translator.

TRANSLATOR

(arabic) What were you filming, how do you know him?

AMER

I don't know him. I was just filming, for my family.

Translator relays it to his Captain, who shakes his head and gestures for him to continue on.

TRANSLATOR

Take off your clothes.

AMER
What? It's for my family.

Translator moves closer.

TRANSLATOR
I don't care. Give me your bag,
empty your pockets, and take off
your clothes.

Amer has no choice. He hands them his bag. Captain takes out and examines his phone. Amer takes off his shirt. The Translator stands and waits. *Fuck*. Amer drops his pants.

TRANSLATOR (CONT'D)
Bend over.

AMER
Come on.

Amer eyes his best *fuck you*, turns, and bends.

TRANSLATOR
Open.

A long pause. Amer humiliatingly spreads. Another long pause.

TRANSLATOR (CONT'D)
Okay.

Amer puts his clothes back on. The Italian Captain finishes looking at the phone. He pops out the memory card, drops it in his desk and hands the phone back to Amer.

AMER
Come on, please. How am I going to tell my story now?

Translator relays to his captain, who shrugs with a smirk.

ITALIAN CAPTAIN
I'm sure you'll figure it out.

EXT. SICILIAN DOCK - LATER

Amer walks from the docks onto the dusty ground. He stops, kneels, and kisses the Earth. He walks into a fenced-in holding area with Austin on the other side of the fence.

AUSTIN
What just happened?

Amer shakes his head.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Oh no. No!

AMER

They just grabbed me and took it!

AUSTIN

You should have stuck it in your
butt!

Amer shakes his head.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Oh boy. I'm sorry man.

AMER

How did you find me?

AUSTIN

I found out where the boats return
from rescues. I came every day
asking for Amer from Palestine. And
I found, Amer from Palestine!

They share a welcoming smile.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

So what's the plan now? You
register here and then go to the
Netherlands eventually?

AMER

No way. You can only find asylum in
the first EU country you enter.
There are a lot of people to
register. I have a little bit of
time.

AUSTIN

Why not just stay? You've come this
far.

AMER

Exactly, I've come this far.
Netherlands is so close now.

Austin looks down towards the camp - security is tight. He looks back at Amer and nods at the determination.

AUSTIN

Alright then. I'm here if you need
me.

They pound fists with the fence in between.

EXT. ITALIAN CAMP - NIGHT

A sea of white tents line the fenced-in dusty field. Amer sits and enjoys a cigarette away from the long lines. Italian Guards come by and take a new eager group in for processing.

EXT. ITALIAN CAMP - DAY

He strolls the perimeter of the camp and eyes for any flaws in the fence. He passes by a tent where refugees get fingerprinted, photographed, made official. Amer goes to make a cigarette, but his tobacco is low. He follows his nose towards other smokers and approaches a man.

AMER

Excuse me bro, can I have--

The man sighs, then nods over his shoulder to a guard booth. Two young ITALIAN GUARDS stand watch, but covertly exchange money for packs of cigarettes with their refugee customers.

Amer steps up to one of the Guards. He eyes him down aggressively. *Shit. Uh.* Amer mimes smoking, he opens his empty package of tobacco. The Guard looks around, then reaches into the guard booth for a brand new pack of tobacco. He gestures for money. Amer holds out his cash and the man pulls a bill. Amer doesn't even notice the amount as the new tobacco joys him.

AMER (CONT'D)

(e) Thank you.

The Italian Guard walks off to the Guard Booth. He bullshits with his other YOUNG GUARD. The Guards smoke, watch football highlights, have a laugh.

Amer scans the perimeter near their guard booth - it's not being watched. A few meters down the fence he sees a small opening at bottom. He pushes it with his toe and it's loose - a dog could easily pass through. *Hmm...*

EXT. ITALIAN CAMP - SUNSET

Amer smokes a cigarette near the same guard booth. The same young Guards stand watch. Two NEW GUARDS come by, and the foursome chat, smoke, watch football. Amer makes a call.

AMER

Austin. North most guard booth.
It's blue. There's an alley just
behind it...How? That's my problem.
Twenty minutes.

Amer hangs up. He stares at the Guards. He checks his watch. He waits. One of the Guards steps out and tosses his cigarette, then, GOOAL! He runs back into the booth and the Men cheer and watch the replay and Amer BOLTS to the fence.

EXT. ITALIAN STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Amer squirms, squeezes, and finally gets his body through the small hole. He tries to stand but is yanked by his neck. He un-sticks his Shawl, and then sprints into the dark street. A few SHOUTS from behind him but he doesn't look back.

He runs top speed and makes a turn into the alleyway and crouches beside a dumpster. Two Guards jog by. Amer looks at his watch. He closes his eyes. Waits. Waits. Tick. Tick.

A spotlight BLASTS Amer from behind. He almost runs away but then notices - they're headlights. He blocks the light and sees...Austin! He waves out the passenger side window with his camera rolling. His FRIEND waves from the driver's side.

EXT. ITALIAN STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

The car zooms the Italian streets and into the night.

EXT. SICILIAN FERRY - DAY

Amer, Austin, and his Friend sit on the hood of the car on a large ferry heading towards the Italian mainland.

SUPER: DAY 109

EXT. MILAN ITALIAN TRAIN STATION - EVENING

Austin hugs his Friend goodbye as he and Amer board a train.

INT. TRAIN CAR - LATER

Austin helps Amer study English. Two menacing TRAIN SOLDIERS patrol down the aisle. Amer wraps his Shawl up neatly and Austin begins to talk to Amer in English. Amer fabricates some laughter. The Soldiers walk by, judge Amer, walk on.

EXT. TRAIN - NIGHT

The train passes through the dark French country side.

SUPER: EAST FRANCE

EXT. GERMAN RENTAL STATION - SUNRISE

Amer and Austin get into a car and drive off.

SUPER: SOUTHWEST GERMANY

I/E. CAR/BELGIAN COUNTRY - MIDDAY

The bright noon sun SHINES on the car.

SUPER: NORTH BELGIUM

Amer dazes out the window as they drive on.

AUSTIN
(english) Amer.

Austin points out the window. Coming up is a sign "Welkom in Nederland". Amer sounds and mouths it out...light bulb!

AMER
Netherlands!

They both cheer and celebrate.

AUSTIN
You almost have your freedom.

EXT. ONNEN COUNTRYSIDE, NETHERLANDS - DUSK

The wide vista of green fields as wind turbines spin under the Dutch evening sky. Austin and Amer chat in front of their parked vehicle. They share a long hug, then Amer walks off.

EXT. ONNEN ASYLUM CAMP - ONNEN, NETHERLANDS - DUSK

Amer walks onto the complex. He walks over to an exterior receiving booth onto a queue and waits to check in. He stares at the massive propellers thrusting through the air. Their repetitive WOOSH swells in his ears.

SUPER: ONNEN, NETHERLANDS. Day 111

DUTCH SOLDIER
(english) Hello...sir...SIR!

Amer comes-to and steps up. Inside two armed DUTCH SOLDIERS.

AMER
(e) I, am, sorry.

Amer hands them his documents. They look him up and down.

DUTCH SOLDIER

Amer. Amer Shanati. Where did you come from Amer? Where are you from?

AMER

My from, is, Syria.

DUTCH SOLDIER

How did you get here?

Amer takes a second to translate. The Soldier articulates.

DUTCH SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Amer, how did you get here?

Amer's eyes get lost in the answer to that question. The WOOSH of the turbine swells louder and louder. As we move closer to Amer, his eyes close in a quiet moment of reflection. Closer we go and then...they open. Amer's withered face livens with a smile.

CUT TO:

INT. PEACE PALACE MAIN HALL. DEN HAAG, NETHERLANDS

Amer stands in thought and preparation in the vast hallway lined with busts of important figures. He's dressed very nicely, his Red Shawl wrapped just right.

VOICE (O.C.)

Mr. Shanati, it is time to begin.

Amer looks towards the voice then at his watch. *It must be.*

INT. PEACE PALACE MAIN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The main hall of the Peace Palace is set for a show. Finely dressed MEN and WOMEN take their seats. We move through the center aisle towards the deus; microphones are set in front of a single chair. Next to the chair rests a beautiful Oud on its stand. We arrive center stage just as Amer does too.

SUPER: Day 405

AMER

(english) Hello, good evening.
Thank you for being here with me
tonight. (pause) In 1948 my
grandfather was forced out of
Palestine.

(MORE)

AMER (CONT'D)

He walked with hundreds of people to Syria thinking okay, I'll stay two, three weeks. He didn't know he would spend the rest of his life at that refugee camp. My father was born at that camp, I grew up across the street from that camp. I was born refugee, and I became refugee again. But as refugee, it is hard to feel from anywhere. You have no passport, no borders. Just me, and my music. With music we have no border. With no border, we have always peace. My grandfather left in 1948 to make a better life for me, to make peace. Then, I leave, so I can make better life for my grandson. So when people ask me, Amer where you from? Syria? Palestine? I say no. I am a person. I am Amer Shanati, and I am from the world.

He pauses. An affirming smile.

AMER (CONT'D)

I practiced that very much, my English not so good.

The crowd laughs.

AMER (CONT'D)

Maybe I speak now in different way.

Amer sits down, picks up his Oud. He looks out, closes his eyes, he begins. As his fingers glide, his face mirrors the emotions of the strings. The sound fills the majestic hall. The audience is transfixed.

We hear the entire piece. Towards the end, a catchy melody plays and then repeats. Amer begins to join and sing the melody with a repeating "La". He offers the crowd to join in and they do. No Oud, just the melody of "La"s repeating over and over as more audience members join in. Amer's Oud joins back in for one more cycle, and then he strums his final chord. The echo dissipates slowly into the historic walls. An easing silence. Then, applause. It grows and grows. The crowd stands, Amer does as well. Finally some acceptance. Finally, somebody's listening.

From the crowd someone starts up again with the melody... "La la la, la la la, la la la, LA!....". The rest of the crowd joins in as their claps phase out. The chorus of La begins to echo in the vast chamber.

Amer smiles at the unison chorus of the audience, both on screen and off. The audience singing continues into:

INT. RECEPTION HALL - NIGHT

Lena leads a GROUP toasting Amer. Amer shakes hands and converses with IMPORTANT PEOPLE. The melody continues...

INT/EXT. BAR - LATER

Amer meets with a group of FRIENDS at a nearby bar. They laugh, drink, and dance. The melody continues...

EXT. DUTCH PARK - LATER

Light barely paints the new Dutch sky. Amer and his friends play music for the rising sun. The melody continues...

EXT. DUTCH STREET - SUNRISE

The sun now up, Amer walks through the streets with his Shawl and his smile. He takes in the smells and the sights. He shares familiar waves to neighbors on the street. The audience chorus fades out and we are left with our source sound, and some gentle reminiscent "La"s coming from Amer.

INT. ZACHARAIS APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The apartment is remodeled and furnished with the beginnings of a life. Amer sinks onto his couch. His stomach grumbles and he eyes his kitchen. He scans the ingredients in his cabinets and fridge. He checks the time, then sets his laptop to frame his kitchenette on Skype.

MOTHER

Amer! I thought you were calling
later, I thought you were sleeping!

AMER

No, I just got home--

FATHER

Hi Amer!

His father waves from behind, then his Sister.

AMER

Mom, you know that egg dish you
make with the peppers and stuff--

MOTHER

Yes.

AMER

With the spice, the zaatar--

MOTHER

So suddenly you want to cook.

AMER

Well I'm in the mood!

She peeks around her screen.

MOTHER

What do you have in there, do you
have enough olive oil?

The conversation begins to fade out and is replaced by the score; a simple Oud version of our "La" melody. Amer begins to cook as his mother directs. As he preps and chops, her shoulders finally settle and a true smile finally begins to form. Her boy, he's safe. We watch from afar as their conversation and cooking session continue. It's sweet, it's free; a moment to enjoy. And now we can begin.

SUPER: DAY 1

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER:

Since 2011, it is estimated that from a pre-war population of 22 million, 5 million Syrians are refugees outside Syria and another 6 million are internally displaced.

With conflicts and civil wars throughout the Middle East, Africa, and the rest of the globe, the UNHCR estimates that worldwide roughly 65 million people have been forcibly removed from their home, 23 million being refugees.

In 2017, approximately 1 in 70 people who attempted to cross the Mediterranean have died.

Six months after leaving the resettlement camps, Amer voluntarily ceased his government payments citing that those funds should be used to give someone else a chance. Amer consistently sends half of his income back to his family.

Amer has rebuilt his career performing throughout Europe and teaching students from around the world.

He speaks and works alongside NGOs and government organizations, helping to promote positive refugee integration, as well as developing and guiding overall missions of peace.

Amer's foundation was launched in 2017 with an aim of allowing children to learn peace through music and not allowing borders to get in the way.

He has since played at the Peace Palace 8 times.

Amer once stated "my one wish is to see my mother and father before they die".

OPEN ON: Actual footage of the REAL Amer greeting his Mother, Father, and 5 other family members at AMS airport.

FADE TO BLACK

CREDITS