

HEATHER

INT. RICHARD CLARKE'S OFFICE/WHITE HOUSE - EVENING

Clarke has just PICKED UP the SECURE PHONE on his desk -

CLARKE (ON PHONE)

John, what's up?

O'NEILL (OVER PHONE)

You gotta level with me. Is the Agency making a move in Tirana?

INTERCUT WITH: O'Neill in his OFFICE. Clarke hesitates.

O'NEILL (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Fitzgerald's about to get me an indictment on UBL. I've got a computer that belongs to his Sudan secretary that has passport photos of Mohammed al-Zawahiri. If something's going down in Tirana, I need an agent there.

On Clarke, at his desk, listening --

EXT. MOUSTACHE CAFE/BEDFORD ST./WEST VILLAGE - EVENING

SHOT FROM ACROSS THE STREET: We see Ali Soufan and a pretty, blond young woman, Heather, seated at a table by the window.

ALI

How're the kids? It's special ed students you teach, yeah?

HEATHER

Wait. How did you know that?

INT. MOUSTACHE CAFE - EVENING

A lovely Lebanese restaurant on a picturesque Village block. \*

ALI

FBI. I do a background check on anyone I go on a date with.

He's said this straight-faced. As Heather stares at him - \*

OMAR

Ali - !

The owner of Moustache is coming over with puffed-up pita bread, olive oil, olives, and a big smile on his face.

The Looming Tower

Start →

Listening  
Aly Ventman

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OMAR (CONT'D)

- You finally visit me again!  
(as he places the dishes on  
the table, to Heather:)  
He use to practically live here,  
now I cry every day because he  
don't come here no more.

ALI

Omar, I'm sorry I've been so busy  
at work -

\*

Omar hugs him roughly, more a friendly headlock than hug -

OMAR

No excuses -  
(then he's immediately gracious  
with a hand out to Heather)  
Welcome to Moustache, young lady,  
my name is Omar -

ALI

- I'm sorry, this --

OMAR

- too late. Let the lady speak.

HEATHER

(smiles)  
Hello, Omar. It's nice to meet you.  
I'm Heather. Anything else you need  
to know about me, though, ask him.  
He's got a whole dossier.

OMAR

Ah. He turn on the charms already,  
has he?  
(then)  
I bring wine. On the house. White?

HEATHER

That would be lovely. Thank you.

ALI

Thanks, Omar.

As Omar leaves, he gives Ali a cautionary "Don't fuck this  
up" look. Beat. Ali turns back to Heather.

HEATHER

He's nice.

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ALI

He is. He's been like a second father to me since I moved to New York.

(then, speaking too quickly)

Look, I didn't mean to freak you out. I was trying to make a joke. A bad joke. Jason told me about you when he gave me your number. And I really do appreciate you coming out tonight after I had to cancel the first time. Things have been crazy at work since I started on --

His WORK CELL PHONE RINGS. Beat. It RINGS AGAIN.

HEATHER

You gonna -

ALI

- I'm sorry -

Ali looks at the screen: it's John O'Neill.

ALI (CONT'D)

- I have to -

HEATHER

- Go ahead.

ALI (ON CELL)

Hi, boss.

O'NEILL (OVER PHONE)

You're going to Albania.

ALI (ON CELL)

(beat)

Okay... Uh - when?

O'NEILL (ON PHONE)

Now.

INTERCUT WITH O'NEILL ON THE PHONE IN HIS OFFICE -

O'NEILL (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

The next flight to Frankfurt - ninety minutes. You transfer from there to Tirana.

Ali glances at Heather. Crap.

O'NEILL (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

The Sisters are raiding Muhammed al-Zawahiri's cell there. Pack your 9mm. They'll give you a combat weapon when they pick you up.

(MORE)

*(cut)*

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O'NEILL (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Now listen to me - *this is the real deal*. Make sure you lay eyes on any evidence they seize. If it's in Arabic, I need you reading it. But most important: *be careful*. When you land, *do not go into the terminal building*. Stay on the tarmac. As long as it takes. You'll be picked up. You hear me?

ALI (ON CELL)

Yes, sir.

O'NEILL (ON PHONE)

*Stay on the tarmac*. Wait till they come for you.

O'Neill HANGS UP. Ali HANGS UP. He looks at Heather. Beat.

Continue →

ALI

Umm...

HEATHER

Don't tell me...

ALI

I am so sorry -

HEATHER

- You have to go. Okay, then.

They both stand.

ALI

I really --

Omar comes over with two glasses of wine.

ALI (CONT'D)

Omar, I apologize, I have to leave.

Heather starts to gather her things.

OMAR

Heather. Please, sit. We'll have some wine, yes? Then I get you a taxi. \*

HEATHER

(a moment; she takes a breath; then she nods)

All right. Thank you.

Omar turns to Ali. Serious -

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OMAR

Be safe. Come home soon, inshallah.

ALI

(nods; then, to Heather)

I apologize. I'll call you.

He rushes out and down the block. Omar sits across from Heather. Offers her the olives.

OMAR

Please...

(re the pita)

And the bread. Poke it and the steam come out.

She takes her fork and pops the puffed-up pita. Delicious-smelling steam escapes...

OMAR (CONT'D)

Yes?

HEATHER

(succumbing)

Beautiful.

OMAR

Ali Soufan is a good man. He come here alone four times each week the first year he live in New York. I believe he was looking for someplace to to feel more at home.

(then)

Please... consider giving him another chance.

\*

He holds up his glass to her.

OMAR (CONT'D)

Fee sahitkum. To your health.

Heather smiles and clinks his glass. They sip.

EXT. TARMAC/TIRANA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, ALBANIA - EVENING

Ali holds his small overnight bag on the tarmac, alone. He's ten or twenty yards from the moveable stairs still attached to the ADRIA AIRWAYS plane. All the rest of the passengers and flight crew have walked into the decrepit TERMINAL BUILDING, across the single runway. Several moments, then a STRAY DOG trots over behind him and starts barking.

end

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