

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

BY

H. KNOX THAMES

BASED ON TRUE EVENTS

2122 NATAHOA COURT
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22043
703-380-1462
KNOXTHAMES@OUTLOOK.COM

Copyright Registration Number
PAu 4-119-591
January 20, 2022

ACT I

FROM BLACK

Wind chimes heard JINGLING in the breeze--

TEXT SCREEN:

Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 5, Verse 9

The pleasant chimes gradually transitions to the CLANKING of bullet casings striking the ground. The breeze changes to the ROAR of helicopter blades passing from right to left. The noise of fast, repetitive BOOMING from an Apache helicopter firing its cannon. As the noise intensifies, the words fade, with "Blessed are the Peacemakers" fading last.

CUT TO:

TEXT SCREEN:

Inspired by True Events

CUT TO:

EXT - BAGHDAD STREET - DAY

IMAM ABBAS, a 50 year old Sunni cleric in flowing black and white robes and wearing a white keffiyeh scarf with a gold band, moves forward, picking his way around a garbage strewn street. He looks up from a Baghdad alley to see the Apache zoom ahead, firing its cannon at an unknown target. The alley shows all the signs of years of a bitter insurgency - pock-marked walls, crumbling buildings, Arabic posters showing Muqtada al-Sadr.

Imam Abbas moves forward cautiously, staying in the shadows. He moves past a row of stores, some closed, others pried open and looted. The crackle of small arms fire can be heard in the distance. He turns a corner and sees a mosque ahead with a crowd of men gathered. Some of them are armed with AK-47s. He pulls out a Nokia cell phone from his robes and makes a call.

IMAM ABBAS

I'm here.

His friend KARIM emerges from the crowd and walks hurriedly toward him, his ankle-length robe skirting the road.

KARIM

Imam Abbas. Thank God. They arrived an hour ago.

He kisses the cheeks of Imam Abbas.

IMAM ABBAS

I would have been here sooner, but the American roadblocks-

Imam Abbas breaks off. Karim nods understandingly.

KARIM

They took over the mosque, on Zawahiri's orders. They're recruiting for Al-Qaeda!

IMAM ABBAS

I will talk to them. They're just boys-

KARIM

(interrupting)
Boys with guns.

IMAM ABBAS

But they respect Sheikh Latif - and know I represent him.

KARIM

These infidels only respect power.

INT - MOSQUE - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Imam Abbas and Karim slip into the back of the mosque unnoticed. The interior is warmly lit by old chandeliers, with the floor covered in an array of colorful but dusty carpets. All eyes are on a YOUNG JIHADI yelling wildly from the pulpit about the crusading Americans. He sees Imam Abbas, stutters momentarily, then continues.

YOUNG JIHADI

Allah calls you to war against the infidels! There is no mercy for his enemies! Jihad is the path to heaven!

Imam Abbas slowly walks forward, his eyes never leaving the Jihadi. His gravitas causes the crowd to part.

IMAM ABBAS

Son, it's time to go home. Darkness

falls, and the streets aren't safe.

YOUNG JIHADI

We are not afraid of death! This isn't your mosque anymore! You were one of Saddam's dogs!

The YOUNG JIHADI's eyes are wild with rage and passion.

IMAM ABBAS

If that were so, would the Americans have imprisoned and interrogated me?

Imam Abbas steps up next to the Jihadi and calmly turns to the audience.

IMAM ABBAS

It is haram to kill civilians. Allah forbids it. We are in difficult times, yes, but suicide is not the way to paradise.

YOUNG JIHADI

We are the army of Allah! We must fight!

IMAM ABBAS

We must fight *justly*. The holy Quran says whoever kills an innocent, it is as though he killed all mankind.

The Jihadi, unable to match the Imam's Quranic knowledge, grows frustrated.

YOUNG JIHADI

There are no innocents in this war!

The Jihadi nods to his GOON SQUAD, who surge forward. Imam Abbas and Karim are manhandled and dragged through crowd.

KARIM

This is how you treat your elders?! Do our customs mean nothing?!

CUT TO:

EXT - THE MOSQUE - DAY

The GOON SQUAD shoves them to their knees.

GOON SQUAD MEMBER
Iranian dog! American scum!

He shoulders his AK-47 and pumps Karim with several rounds. IMAM ABBAS looks on in terror as the Jihadi comes outside.

IMAM ABBAS
For God's sake, no!

The GOON SQUAD MEMBER turns the rifle towards Imam Abbas. The Jihadi snatches the rifle and smashes Imam Abbas's face with the stock. Imam Abbas hits the ground next to a dying Karim.

YOUNG JIHADI
Because of who you are, Imam Abbas, we will let you live. For now. But if you keep opposing us, we will kill you. And your family.

The Jihadi spits on him and reenters the mosque, the Goon Squad following. Imam Abbas crawls to Karim, whose mouth slowly moves but says nothing. Then Karim's light fade from his eyes. Imam Abbas staggers up, wiping blood from the gash on his forehead. He limps around the corner, then collapses on the ground. His brow furrows. His eyes narrow, then close.

CUT TO:

INT - AIRFORCE C-141 STARLIFTER JET - DAY

CU of CHAPLAIN HOYT, early 50s but in fine form and wearing the insignia of a Colonel, along with a cross, on his fatigues. His brow is furrowed, eyes closed. He dons his helmet, opening his eyes to adjust the strap and fiddle with his body armor. The constant roar of jet engines is deafening.

PILOT (O.S.)
Cockpit speaking. Beginning descent.
Spiral approach to evade ground fire.
Stay strapped. And if you get sick...

SOLDIERS in body armor tighten seatbelts and fold their arms across their flack vests. The jet tilts to the right, sending all passengers into a sharp lean.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
(with eyes closed)
Lord be with me.

Hoyt sits in a sea of other soldiers.

CUT TO:

EXT - AIRPORT TARMAC - DAY

Chaplain Hoyt walks down the back-ramp of the C-141 into the unrelenting Baghdad sun. He lifts his heavy ruck sack up from a pile on the tarmac. As other SOLDIERS hustle off, LT. COL. ROGERS approaches Hoyt and salutes.

LT. COL. ROGERS
Welcome to hell, Chaplain.

Hoyt sharply returns the salute, while the ROAR of other airplanes landing and taking off is heard all around. Then the two men shake hands, pulling into a bro-hug.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Which circle is it this time, Bill?

They approach a row of Humvees with roof gunners. All painted tan, their thick bullet proof windows are covered in a layer of dust, as is everything in Iraq.

LT. COL. ROGERS
If Bosnia was the second, this is the 5th.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
That bad, huh?

LT. COL. ROGERS
You'll see soon enough. Got the keys for your hooch in the truck.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Roger that.

LT. COL. ROGERS
Ready for another bumpy ride?

Chaplain Hoyt climbs in the second Humvee. PRIVATE SCHULMAN, early 20s but already aged by battle, is driving.

INT - HUMVEE - DAY

They barrel away from the tarmac, zigging and zagging down the highway. Signs and lamp posts wiz by with increasing speed.

LT. COL. ROGERS
 (holding up a plastic bottle)
 Water?

PRIVATE SCHULMAN
 Hang on!

They swerve around a large pothole but do not slow. Hoyt shakes his head at Rogers as he reaches for the roof.

LT. COL. ROGERS
 Speed is our only friend on IED alley.
 Snipers and bombs are everywhere.

PRIVATE SCHULMAN
 And those haji insurgents like to use
 us for God damn target practice.

Lt. Col. Rogers's eyes narrow at Schulman's language.

LT. COL. ROGERS
 Watch it private. This is Colonel
 Hoyt, highest-ranking chaplain here.

PRIVATE SCHULMAN
 (glancing at Hoyt)
 Yes sir. My apologies sir.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
 Apology accepted. How long you been
 here, soldier?

PRIVATE SCHULMAN
 Eight months sir.

Schulman wrenches the Humvee around another pothole.

PRIVATE SCHULMAN
 Begging your pardon, sir, but I saw
 your AIRBORNE wings.

Chaplain gives a nod, encouraging Schulman to continue.

PRIVATE SCHULMAN
 Didn't know chaplains fought.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
 They don't. That was my prior life.

LT. COL. ROGERS
 (bragging on Hoyt's behalf)
 Airborne and Ranger qualified. With
 200 jumps.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
 Something like that. Hard tour,
 private?

PRIVATE SCHULMAN
 Yes sir. We fight and we die. Mostly
 die...

Schulman trails off, wanting to say more but unsure. Hoyt
 looks at him expectantly. Schulman swallows and continues.

PRIVATE SCHULMAN
 No one knows the mission anymore.
 Morale sucks. This place *is* hell.

LT. COL. ROGERS
 It sure ain't no Garden of Eden.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
 At least not anymore.

The men are lost to their own thoughts, Hoyt looking out the
 narrow window as the Baghdad skyline looms in the distance.

EXT - AIRIAL VIEW OF BAGHDAD - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: BAGHDAD, JUNE 2006

The view pulls out showing a Bagdad cityscape with pockets of
 smoke rising from different areas. Helicopters fly over the
 city.

MONTAGE

News clips of fighting are shown: the Samarra Mosque being
 bombed; People running in terror; Just two minarets left
 standing; Iraqi politicians giving speeches.

ELISA AGUIRRE (V.O.)
 This is ELISA AGUIRRE with CNN
 reporting from Baghdad. In February,
 when Al-Qaeda destroyed the golden-
 domed Samarra Mosque, sacred to Shia
 Muslims, it triggered a Sunni-Shia
 civil war. Yet the Bush Administration
 continues to dismiss reports of

increasing violence and remains adamant that its strategy can bring about a political solution.

EXT - AIRIAL VIEW OF BAGHDAD - DAY

Arial view starts to zoom in on the Green Zone, along the Tigris River in the center of Baghdad.

ELISA AGUIRRE (V.O. CONT'D)
But Prime Minister Maliki, elected in April as the third prime minister since the invasion three years ago, is beholden to-

CUT TO:

EXT - SHIPPING CONTAINER ROWS - DAY

Hoyt weaves through long rows of tan, weather-beaten shipping containers converted into dorm rooms, hunting for his.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
1473-B.

INT - CHAPLAIN HOYT'S SHIPPING CONTAINER ROOM - DAY

Hoyt enters and drops his rucksack in the Spartan living quarters: Standard army bunk, with a fold up table and chair. Footlocker. Sterile florescent lighting.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Home sweet home.

He quickly unpacks a small picture of his wife and older children. He sets a worn Bible with tabs hanging out the sides on the desk too. There is a knock at the door. Hoyt reacts with surprise, then crosses to the door and opens it to face a young African American female soldier, Sergeant Major EDDIE BROWN. She wears her cap low, with her dark hair pulled back in a bun. She salutes as she addresses him.

BROWN
Chaplain Hoyt, I'm Sergeant Major Eddie Brown, your Chaplain's Assistant. General Casey's waiting for you.

Brown spins on her heel and heads off. Hoyt rushes to follow.

CUT TO:

INT - COMBATTANT COMMAND FOR MNF-I - DAY

Hoyt follows Brown through the opulent hallways of one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces. The palace has been jerry-rigged for military purposes: duct taped signs on the walls, wires strung down the hallways from the ceiling. Hoyt and Brown squeeze between MEN and WOMEN (some in uniform, some in suits, others in business casual) scurrying in different directions. ENLISTED MEN and JUNIOR OFFICERS salute Chaplain Hoyt. Chaplain Hoyt returns the gesture.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sergeant Major, how'd a lady like you get a name like Eddie?

BROWN

Pop really wanted a son. The good Lord had other plans.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

The good Lord's like that. (beat)
What's the sit rep?

BROWN

200 chaplains deployed but we need more. What these soldiers face-

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Especially since Samarra.

Rogers joins them. The three approach a door.

BROWN

Got that right. These groups like *for real* hate each other.

LT. COL. ROGERS

Local Al-Qaeda franchise kills Shia, they retaliate against the Sunnis with backing from Sadr and Iran.

BROWN

Everybody's killin' everybody. News don't change. All bad, all the time.

Hoyt opens the door and motions Brown through before him, then Rodgers.

INT - BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The room is poorly lit with many computer workstations. A

large map of Iraq projected on the screen highlights attacks over the past 24 hours. There are many red dots. Hoyt sees his boss GENERAL GEORGE CASEY, early 60s wearing rimless glasses and with short-cropped salt-and-pepper hair. Casey is in charge of all U.S. and multinational forces in Iraq and under immense pressure to succeed in a no-win situation. CASEY's chief of staff COLONEL MANSOOR, late 40s and equally stressed as Casey, leads the briefing.

COLONEL MANSOOR

Al-Qaeda fighters from outside Iraq are flooding in, ramping up the violence. Suicide bombings are through the roof. Colonel Johnson requests permission to enter Sadr City.

GENERAL CASEY

(peevied by the request)

Negative. Maliki's made that a "no go" for coalition forces. He's in charge. Besides, we don't have the manpower. Reinforcements would mean more options. But for now...

Casey breaks off and Mansoor nods resignedly.

MANSOOR

Yes sir. (beat) Before continuing, sir, I'd to welcome Colonel Mike Hoyt, our new Command Chaplain.

CASEY

(turning around)

Hi Mike. Good to meet you. When did you arrive?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Earlier today, sir. Straight from European Command.

CASEY

Glad to have a man of your experience.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'll do whatever I can to lighten the load mentally, physically, and spiritually for our warriors.

CASEY

I know you will.

Casey begins to turn back around.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sir, I caught Colonel Mansoor's briefing. I think I could help.

Casey turns back.

CASEY

How? As a chaplain, you can't even carry a gun. Force is what these people respect.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Right about the gun sir. However, several of us chaplains had success in Afghanistan and Bosnia engaging religious leaders. Helped commanders get a sense of the religious landscape.

CASEY

Maybe there, won't work here. Force works. (beat) Sounds like Petraeus's counterinsurgency fad. Do you know Petraeus?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

No sir. But I've seen the benefits of engaging Muslim leaders to break the cycle of violence. Built friendships from our shared commitment to faith.

Casey is getting frustrated, clearly skeptical of Hoyt.

CASEY

Mike, you haven't been here long enough to know but we need more guns, not prayers. The Iraqi government doesn't exist. No courts, no police. Security comes from mafias and militias.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Well sir...

CASEY

Since the Samarra Mosque bombing, Iraq is on fire and hanging by a thread. And the damn thread is burning.

The two men are staring directly at each other.

CASEY

I need you to take care of our soldiers. Pray with 'em. Preach at 'em. Whatever you do. But leave the war fighting to those who are here to fight.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Yes sir.

Chaplain Hoyt's face is calm, but his jaw is set.

CASEY

(Voice softening)

Things aren't going well. We've lost too many. The White House and Rumsfeld don't get it. It's going backwards.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sir, I believe if we find religious leaders brave enough to speak out, it can undercut Al-Qaeada's message.

CASEY

We don't have time for this Mike. We can't risk getting into this religious stuff.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

But we already are, whether we mean to or not.

Casey looks down at his papers, wanting to get on to things he feels are more important.

CASEY

(Looking exhausted)

Maybe. (beat) But you haven't been lied to as many times as I have. I'm not signing up for this or funding anything.

Casey turns back. Hoyt heads to the exit.

CUT TO:

EXT - ST. GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL IN BAGHDAD - DAY

The tired exterior of the sandstone church is surrounded by concrete T-walls topped with razor wire. Iraqi soldiers patrol outside. Not a typical church scene, as it looks more like a hardened military base or prison.

CUT TO:

INT - ST. GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL SANCTUARY - DAY

Fans spin in the rafters above a packed sanctuary of the stifflingly hot church. The congregation is overwhelmingly female and old. CANON ANDREW WHITE, a tall and barrel chested British Anglican priest in his early 40s, stands behind a simple lectern preaching his Sunday sermon. White's cross of nails dangles from his neck over his vestments. A faded picture of Jesus Christ behind him, slightly askew. An Arabic interpreter named SAMIR stands next to White, translating as he speaks. They are sweating in the heat as they speak.

CANON WHITE

My children, the Lord is here, his Spirit is with us. We must persevere. As Saint Paul wrote to a church oppressed in a different time and place, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

Suddenly, a distant BOOM is heard. Everyone in the sanctuary looks towards the noise of bomb detonated a mile away. White doesn't flinch or pause.

CANON WHITE

And as we prepare to part, lets us recite the benediction together: Go with peace into the world. Have courage and hold on to the good. Strengthen the fainthearted and help the suffering.

Another BOOM rattles the church and the congregation. A woman muffles a scream.

CANON WHITE

Love and serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

A cacophony of English and Arabic praying rises through the sanctuary. Many cross themselves in the Catholic tradition, while others cross themselves in the opposite manner, indicating they are Orthodox.

CANON WHITE

And as you leave, my children, let me introduce Paul Matias, who has just arrived from America.

PAUL MATIAS, a young, fresh-faced man sitting in the front pew stands up. Tall and GQ, he gives a quick nod and smile.

MATIAS

Hello. Suh-lam.
(He does not speak Arabic.)

CANON WHITE

Paul is here to assist our peacemaking efforts. Please greet him as you go.

The service concludes. White and Samir walk down the center isle with the congregation following into the burning midday sun. White's limp is noticeable.

EXT - ST. GEORGE'S COURTYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

White and Samir visit with parishioners in the dusty courtyard of St. George's under tarps hung to provide shade. Black smoke rises in the distance. White looks towards the smoke as he passes out fliers about food distribution.

WHITE

Food deliveries are delayed again. But we will give out what we have.

He hands a flier to small boy.

WHITE

Give this to your mum. That's a good lad.

As parishioners leave, the Christian women cover their hair as they weave their way around the blast wall and through the Iraqi military checkpoint that guards the church. White watches them go.

WHITE

We'd best open the clinic now. There will be casualties coming.

SAMIR

Yes Canon White. (beat) But you should leave now. You will need the extra time-

WHITE

Yes. Quite right.

White turns to Matias.

WHITE

Paul, fancy a visit to the Green Zone?

Paul looks at him uncertainly. White heads towards the exit, speaking over his shoulder to Samir.

WHITE

Samir, please remind the American embassy that we are coming. Everyone is too trigger-happy these days...

White, with Paul in his wake, disappears out of sight. Samir looks puzzled.

SAMIR

What is a happy trigger?

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE GREEN ZONE - LATE AFTERNOON

The Green Zone fortress's pock-marked and graffitied concrete T-walls loom 20 feet high. The outer layers are surrounded by Iraqi army checkpoints behind sandbags. AK-47s, razor wire, and barriers are everywhere. White and Matias walk forward, leaving their Iraqi army BODYGUARDS behind.

EXT - BLACKWATER CHECK POINT - LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Having come through several layers of security, White and Matias approach the final check point. BLACKWATER CONTRACTORS sit motionlessly behind their Oakley sunglasses, watching them approach. White and Matias enter a small building, with bullet proof glass and metal detectors inside.

INT - BLACKWATER CHECK POINT - LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

CONTRACTOR 1 stands inside the door, while CONTRACTOR 2 sits on top of a metal table behind the metal detector. They don't smile.

CONTRACTOR 1
 (Bored to death)
 Name and purpose of business.

Matias, nervous, fumbles with putting his items through the x-ray machine. Drops his American passport on the floor.

PAUL MATIAS
 (Straining to pick it up)
 I'm Paul Matias. Canon White and I-

CONTRACTOR 2 jumps off the table and rushes up to them in an intimidating manner.

CONTRACTOR 2
 Cannon! Holy fuck!

CONTRACTOR 1
 You some fucking comedian?

PAUL MATIAS
 No, no. Canon, er, Reverend White is the priest at St. George. He's conducting this afternoon's service.

CONTRACTOR 2
 A priest named after a weapon?

CONTRACTOR 1
 Christ!

WHITE
 (Confident yet peeved)
 My dear chap, no need to swear. My title may be "canon", but spelled "C-A-N-O-N." One-n canons serve the Church of England, of which her majesty the Queen is the head. You are always welcome at St. George's. (beat) Just give us advanced notice, so our guards don't shoot you.

The Contractors stare.

CONTRACTOR 2
 Ah. Right. Maybe. I don't know. (beat) Take off your jacket, watch, belt, and empty your pockets of all items.

Contractor 2 goes back to sitting on the table, looking away. White and Matias proceed through security.

CUT TO:

EXT - IN ROUTE TO THE SERVICE - LATE AFTERNOON

White and Matias are met outside the guardhouse by WILL CASSIDY, a 30-something bookish State Department diplomat in a rumpled suit.

CASSIDY

Your Reverence, great to see you!

WHITE

And you, Mr. Cassidy. How are things?

CASSIDY

Same as always. Bombings and bad news.

The group walks and talks as they head towards another one of Saddam's palaces. Matias soaks in his first visit to the GREEN ZONE. They pass an American-style mailbox. A sign for BURGER KING. Cassidy and White take no notice, but Matias looks incredulous.

WHITE

Mr. Wil Cassidy, may I introduce Paul Matias. From your "neck of the woods". He is here to assist our mission.

MATIAS

Nice to meet you.

WHITE

Mr. Cassidy has been here - going on one year?

CASSIDY

That's right. (To Matias) The Reverend has already heard my "sermon," but I must advise you to leave. Kidnappings have skyrocketed. Americans are the top target.

MATIAS

I understand the dangers.

CASSIDY

Respectfully, no, you don't. I don't know if the Reverend is crazy or courageous, living outside the Green Zone, but you should go home. The violence is apocalyptic.

WHITE

These are dark times, but there is always hope.

CASSIDY

Oh, by the way, the new command chaplain might attend tonight.

WHITE

Do you know him?

Cassidy approaches the door to a large building, flashing his badge to the Marine guard looking out through bulletproof glass. White and Matias show their guest badges.

INT - PALACE BUILDING - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Buzz and click. Cassidy heaves open the heavy door. The building is not as busy as the command center, but still bustles. The group continues towards the meeting room.

CASSIDY

No, but there's a rumor going around they're gonna assign a chaplain to the political section of the embassy. Help us worldly diplo-geeks understand religion.

Cassidy smiles as he insults himself.

WHITE

If you want to understand religion, get to know its people.

CASSIDY

I am! (winks at Canon White)

WHITE

How green is the new chaplain?

The group approaches the door of a conference room. Service members and civilians are seen entering.

CASSIDY

Very, I think. I'll meet you here after.

EXT - MAKESHIFT CHAPEL IN THE GREEN ZONE - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

White and Matias enter the small room, which is half full and

holds about 50 mismatched chairs. White walks forward, his limp more pronounced after a long day.

CUT TO:

EXT - BAGHDAD MOSQUE - NIGHT

Older IRAQI MEN file through a door into a mosque somewhere in Baghdad. A muddy creek of wastewater snakes across the dirt street. A busy market hums with activity nearby.

INT - BAGHDAD MOSQUE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Imam Abbas argues against Al-Qaeda's theology. His face still bears a wound from the rifle strike. The environment is tense. A few ceiling fans try to cool the stale, hot air.

IMAM ABBAS

Brothers listen to me. This is not the way of Allah. Mob violence and killing other Muslims? No!

FIRST MAN

But God is blessing them with success! They are punishing the Americans.

IMAM ABBAS

But it will only lead to more death!

SECOND MAN

We must fight for ourselves. No one else will. Al-Qaeda is on our side!

Crosstalk as the men in the room loudly voice their opinions.

IMAM ABBAS

Al-Qaeda is on no one's side but its own! They'd as soon slit my throat as an American's.

The room nods in agreement.

THIRD MAN

(Speaking over the cacophony)
Al-Qaeda may not be orthodox, but at least they oppose Maliki and the Americans.

FIRST MAN

We are caught between them!

IMAM ABBAS

We must trust in Allah. He is greater.

Il hum dill Allah (Praise God) is heard throughout the room.

FIRST MAN

But will he save us?

The room erupts into arguments. The matter is far from settled.

CUT TO:

EXT - NEAR SADRIYAH MARKET, DOWNTOWN BAGDAD - NIGHT

Two MENACING MEN lurk in the dark doorway of a decrepit apartment building across from the mosque. They talk discretely into cell phones, glancing out at shoppers and parents with children. Imam Abbas leaves the mosque with his disciples, walking towards the street market.

The Menacing Men see Imam Abbas and hang up simultaneously. They make eye contact and look down the alley away from the mosque. An old car turns the corner out of the shadows, rolling noticeably low to the ground. The men walk towards the car. One leans into the driver's window and says something inaudible. The two men quickly jog off around the same corner. The car accelerates towards the market.

CUT TO:

INT - MAKESHIFT CHAPEL IN THE GREEN ZONE - NIGHT

The service over, participants file out while chatting. White and Matias bring up the rear, approaching Cassidy who waits in the doorway. Cassidy sees Chaplain Hoyt in the line.

CASSIDY

Chaplain Hoyt? Wil Cassidy, political section chief. Welcome to Iraq.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Nice to be here.

Cassidy gives him a dubious look, then waves White over.

CASSIDY

Sir, let me introduce you to Canon Andrew White. He visits emerald city regularly. The one local celebrity who hasn't killed anyone.

INT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The group slowly moves down the hallway.

WHITE

But still with a bounty on my head!

CASSIDY

He's our window into what's going on outside these blast walls.

WHITE

Your embassy is the nicest prison in the world!

CASSIDY

It's true. His Reverence has been here 10 years. Knows everyone. Even knew Saddam.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Impressive. I have lots of questions.

WHITE

Iraq may be dangerous, but miracles still happen here.

Cassidy's Blackberry buzzes. His face darkens as he reads. The others glance at a TV showing burning cars and a destroyed market.

CASSIDY

Suicide bomber. Shit. (Reading from phone) "Car bomb destroyed the Sadriyah market. Families were buying food before the evening curfew; suicide bomber intended maximum casualties."

WHITE

Oh Lord no.

CASSIDY

Hate to cut this short, but I gotta get to my desk. (To Chaplain Hoyt) Can you walk and talk?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sure.

CUT TO:

EXT - IN ROUTE TO THE GATE - EVENING

Cassidy walks briskly while sending emails on his Blackberry. Chaplain Hoyt and White follow. White's limp slows their pace. Matias follows, listening.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

How did you survive both Saddam and the invasion?

WHITE

By God's grace.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Seems suicidal to stay.

WHITE

Jesus gave up His life for me. I am following Him. Christianity is part of Iraq's historic tapestry.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

A tapestry being torn apart.

WHITE

Indeed. The American liberation only liberated Iraq's demons. Al-Qaeda has perverted Islam to justify unthinkable violence - against Shi'a, but also secular Sunnis, Christians. Really anyone who thinks differently.

CASSIDY

(Interjecting but not looking up from his phone)

When religion goes wrong, it goes *wrong*.

WHITE

But it can be a force for reconciliation.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

As the Baptists say, "Amen brother."

Suddenly a siren sounds for incoming mortars or rockets.

LOUDSPEAKER

Incoming fire. Take cover. Take Cover.

CASSIDY
 (Yelling over the siren)
 Follow me!

Scores of civilians and military personnel sprint for cover to various concrete bunkers stationed every 50 yards.

CUT TO:

INT - PILL BOX - EVENING

The four find themselves in a cramped, dark bunker with an unknown civilian and a soldier.

WHITE
 Rockets?

A BOOM is heard followed by crackling.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
 No. Mortars.

MATIAS
 Oh Lord, oh Lord.

CASSIDY
 They do this nightly, to make sure we don't sleep.

The siren continues to wail. Another boom, closer, shrapnel is heard hitting the pill box roof.

MATIAS
 (Crumpling against the wall)
 Oh God. Oh God.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
 (Kneeling down)
 Paul, need to get away from the wall.
 Shock wave could hurt.

CASSIDY
 I told you-

WHITE
 Mr. Cassidy, not now, please.

CASSIDY
 Sorry. But Iraq isn't for tourists.

WHITE

Reconciliation is the only way to stop this madness. Sunni and Shi'a must come together. I know most of the key clergy. But they're afraid.

MATIAS

Is that it?

Then BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

MATIAS

(Crumpling back down)

Oh! Oh shit, shit, shit.

CASSIDY

The "Voice of God" will give us the all-clear when it's safe.

White and Hoyt continue talking as if nothing is happening.

WHITE

The Iraqi government says it is supportive but delays. Tony is interested-

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Tony?

WHITE

Tony Blair, our Prime Minister. Lovely fellow, despite being Labor.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

So what's the idea?

WHITE

If we could get the key leaders to England, away from attacks like this, they might issue a fatwa against violence. Say it's un-Islamic.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

(Pulling Matias back up)

So Sunni and Shi'a come together to challenge Al-Qaeda's false theology. It's about faith, not politics.

WHITE

Exactly! By jove, you're the first American to understand.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Stakes couldn't be higher. If Iraq
fails, the Middle East implodes.

CASSIDY
This is risky....

WHITE
If it were safe, it would have been
done. So we must have faith.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Sure. But Iraqis gotta own it.

BOOOOOM. The pill box shakes, more dirt heard falling on top.
The WOOSH of rockets is heard. Matias is a mess of emotions.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
They're bracketing. (Peering out) But
counter battery fire commencing. (To
WHITE) How can I help?

WHITE
As providence would have it, I'm
meeting with the Prime Minister's
national security adviser later this
week. Could you join us?

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Not sure. I'm the new kid on the block
and General Casey is skeptical of
religion. And Iraqis.

The SIREN stops.

LOUDSPEAKER
All-clear. Repeat, all-clear.

CASSIDY
There it is. Let's go.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Get me the details for the meeting and
I will ask.

WHITE
With pleasure.

CUT TO:

EXT - IN ROUTE TO THE GATE - EVENING

Emerging from the bomb shelter, Cassidy, Chaplain Hoyt, White, and Matias resume their walk towards the gate, White with his limp and Chaplain Hoyt with his strait-laced military bearing. Matias looks skyward in apprehension.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE GATE - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

The group arrives at the gate.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
(Shaking hands)
Stay safe, Canon.

WHITE
(Holding Chaplain Hoyt's hand)
As I like to say, "don't take care,
take risks."

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Amen again, brother.

WHITE
(Turning to CASSIDY)
Thank you. Mr. Cassidy.

Chaplain Hoyt heaves the heavy door open and White and Matias disappear through it. Cassidy holsters his Blackberry and hurries away. Hoyt stands alone outside the gate.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Here we go.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE GREEN ZONE - NIGHT

White and Matias exit through a door in the 20-foot T-walls outside the last ring of security of the GREEN ZONE. It's dark. Iraqi soldiers wearing secondhand American fatigues sleepily stand guard. A beat-up car sent from the church arrives and White and Matias get in, with SARGENT AHMED's soldiers following in a truck. In the shadows across the intersection, the Young Jihadi lurks. He menacingly watches White and make a phone call on a cell phone.

ACT II

CUT TO:

EXT - PRIME MINISTER'S PALACE - NIGHT

Another former Saddam palace inside the Green Zone but guarded exclusively by Iraqi soldiers. Their uniforms are haphazard and their mood depressed. Hoyt, Rogers, White, and Matias snake their way through the security outside the Prime Minister's office and walk towards its gilded doors. Hoyt and Rogers are wearing helmets and body armor. No one is armed. White has his clerical collar and a cane. Matias in a suit. It's around midnight.

WHITE

(in a low voice)

These "soldiers" are really Maliki's personal Shi'a militia. Not the brightest bunch.

Chaplain Hoyt gives a slight nod. As they approach, the group must walk through a crowd of sullen young men in front of the building. The youth's hard stares are not welcoming.

WHITE

(In low tones)

These chaps are with Sadr. He's got them all over town. Just keep walking.

Chaplain Hoyt does as he is told.

WHITE

I've known Al-Rubaie for years. Neurologist by training. Smart man. And an Iraqi nationalist.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Does he always meet at midnight?

WHITE

It's when he meets me. Nocturnal crew.

CUT TO:

INT - NSA'S OUTER OFFICE - NIGHT

The delegation enters a tackily furnished outer room. Hoyt and Rogers have removed their helmet and body armor. Large couches line the walls. A group of Iraqis are smoking cigarettes or hookahs. Hoyt, Rogers, White, and Matias nod at

these unknown functionaries and hangers on. Suddenly a rumpled assistant bursts in from the main office.

ASSISTANT

Mes-ter White. Come, come. Every bodies. Come, come. Welcome.

WHITE

Thank you very much indeed.

ASSISTANT

Afwan, afwan. Welcomes every bodies.

INT - NATIONAL SECURITY ADVIER'S OFFICE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The delegation walks from the outer room into an office once fit for a king, now looking a bit tired. AL-RUBAIE, an urbane Iraqi man in his 60s with glasses, suit and trim beard rises from a large desk. With his upper crust British training, he walks briskly towards WHITE, smiling.

AL-RUBAIE

Andrew, lovely to see you, my friend.

White and Al-Rubaie kiss each other on the checks three times, a sign of friendship.

WHITE

You as well, dear chap. You look strong.

AL-RUBAIE

Thank you. God helps me. (turning to Hoyt) Welcome sir. This is the first time I've met an American cleric.

WHITE

Al-Rubaie, this is Colonel Michael Hoyt, Command Chaplain. And Lt. Col. Rogers.

Al-Rubaie shakes hands with Hoyt, then Rogers.

WHITE

And this is my new assistant, Paul.

AL-RUBAIE

Sit, sit.

Al-Rubaie picks up what looks like a garage door opener and clicks it repeatedly. A doorbell is heard faintly in the

other room. The rumpled ASSISTANT rushes into the office.

AL-RUBAIE

Mohammed, chai. Shookran.

The Assistant nods and exits while Al-Rubaie lights a cigarette. The group sits on an overstuffed couch with gilded arms. They are forced to lean forward or be lost in the cushions. It also reflects their urgency.

AL-RUBAIE

So, what's the urgent business? The Prime Minister has many demands-

WHITE

Concerning the conference for Iraqi leaders. The United States wants to help.

White looks at Hoyt, who speaks up.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We support bringing Sunni and Shi'a clerics together to denounce terrorism.

AL-RUBAIE

Easy to say. Harder to do.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Canon White and I believe we can convene such a conference in London, with the support of Prime Minister Blair and President Bush.

AL-RUBAIE

(stiffens, long draw on cigarette)

If you want to heal the Sunni - Shi'a schism, you will need more than President Bush's support. This goes back centuries.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We have a saying in English - "The enemy of my enemy is my friend". Al-Qaeda is an enemy to Sunni and Shia alike. They just need a safe place to join forces.

Hoyt falls silent, waiting for Al-Rubaie's response. Smoke hangs in the air as an eerie halo. The Assistant bustles in

with a tray of tea and sweets, set it down, then leaves.

AL-RUBAIE

(drawing on his cigarette)

I believe the Prime Minister will support this. But why London? Why not here?

WHITE

A meeting in Baghdad would be too easy a target for Al-Qaeda or the Sadrists.

AL-RUBAIE

(Snapping)

I can keep Mutadar's militias in line. He's nothing but a street preacher with a gang. Al-Qaeda and their Sunni dogs are the real problem.

WHITE

London is safer. Speaking against Al-Qaeda could be a death sentence.

AL-RUBAIE

The conference should be here. Baghdad is the center of the Islamic world.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We can't provide adequate security here. And a free trip to London might help increase attendance.

AL-RUBAIE

We won't approve an international meeting.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

General Casey won't approve a local meeting.

AL-RUBAIE

Certainly, he will. Do it here.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

(Beat)

It's London or not at all, sir.

AL-RUBAIE

I see.

(Drawing again on his cigarette)

We will support this in London. Islam

can bring peace. We must show this to the world.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Thank you, sir.

AL-RUABIE

You must meet with Sheikh Fatah. He will be sympathetic. If he comes, other Shia will attend.

WHITE

Brilliant. I know Mr. Fatah.

AL-RUBAIE

The Sunnis will resist. Sheikh Latif is key. He was Saddam's personal imam. Every major Sunni mosque looks to him. Many Shia see them as terrorists. (Pointing out the window with his cigarette) He hides in Jordan.

WHITE

I know the man who can help. Imam Abbas. Al Qaeda hates him.

AL-RUBAIE

The enemy of my enemy...

CHAPLAIN HOYT

There are still Sunnis who love Iraq.

AL-RUBAIE

Yes, but they hate the Shia!

WHITE

Not all. This is what we must address.

AL-RUBAIE

I hope so. I hope so. (Grinding out his cigarette in the ash tray) I wish you luck, gentlemen. And keep me informed.

Everyone stands and shakes hands. As they exit the office into the antechamber, Hoyt glances at White.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

He gets it.

WHITE

Indeed!

CUT TO:

INT - GREEN ZONE U.S. EMBASSY BUILDING - DAY

Hoyt, Brown, and White brief Cassidy in one of Saddam's former palaces. The group sits around a small table with a conference phone and secure phone in the middle. American and Iraqi flags hang limply in the corner.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

AL-RUBAIE is on board. And he gave us the name of a key Shiite cleric. CIA says he has clout but not a terrorist.

CASSIDY

Do you think they really know?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Canon White says he's got influence and Sadr wants him dead.

CASSIDY

I trust the Reverend's opinion more than the Agency's.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'm going to meet him this week.

WHITE

And here is my list of key Sunni clerics.

CASSIDY

Impressive. You've done a lot in two months. We've had zero success bringing Sunni and Shia political leaders together.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

That's why this is important. The religious leaders can create space for the politicians.

CASSIDY

But will the Sunnis come?

WHITE

Some, yes. But the most influential

ones are staying in Jordan with Sheikh Latif. Too much hate and fear.

CASSIDY

Hopefully the ones who come will be enough.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

In another miracle, I was able to get some State Department funds. Thanks for the tip, Cassidy.

CASSIDY

Hey, it was about to expire. Might as well put it to use.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Hopefully General Casey won't mind.

CASSIDY

If it works, he won't. But no second chance if this blows up - literally or figuratively.

WHITE

That's why London. How are the arrangements coming, Sargent Brown?

BROWN

Plane tickets and hotel rooms all booked. Everything paid in advance.

WHITE

Then all is set.

CASSIDY

May be too little too late.

WHITE

But we must try.

CASSIDY

Chaplain Hoyt, the new deputy ambassador arrived yesterday, so you'll need to brief her.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

You let me know when.

CASSIDY

Soon. She's in, I'm out.

WHITE

Out?

CASSIDY

Yup. Leaving for DC next week. Gonna be Senior Director for Iraq at NSC.

WHITE

I will miss you, Mr. Cassidy. You've been a friend to our work.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Give us your number before you go. I'm sure we'll get in trouble at some point.

CASSIDY

Don't hesitate to call. I'll do what I can.

The meeting breaks and all stand up.

CASSIDY

I may be a skeptic, but God bless you for what you're doing. You sure as hell need his help.

Recognizing the a-religious diplomat's self-effacing attempt at piety and dedication, they warmly shake hands.

CUT TO:

DAY - EMBASSY WAITING ROOM - DAY

HOYT is in the waiting room outside the deputy ambassador's office in the embassy. Nicely furnished, two secretaries sit out front, focused intently on their computers. The office door opens, and Ambassador Suzanne SMITH, a polished and poised career diplomat, comes out.

SMITH

Chaplain Hoyt? Suzanne Smith. I've heard a lot about you from Wil.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

It's a pleasure to meet you. Wil's been a great ally.

SMITH

Please come in.

INT - SMITH'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Hoyt enters a tastefully decorated office with pictures of Ambassador Smith shaking hands with various Arab dignitaries. She gestures for him to take a seat on her couch, while she sits in a leather chair to his left.

SMITH

Would you like coffee or tea?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

No thank you. I just wanted to brief you on our upcoming Sunni and Shi'a conference in London.

SMITH

(Briskly interjecting)

Will has told me all about it. Certainly unexpected.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

It's been a pleasant surprise, how well things have come together.

SMITH

I must say, I am worried.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We chose London because it is safer. We have confidence in our security.

SMITH

It's not the location that worries me. It's the topic. We're better off leaving these religion issues alone.

Smith drops a bomb but remains coolly distant. Hoyt repositions in his chair.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

But everything in Iraq is viewed through a religious lens. We must meet them where they are, understand-

SMITH

Chaplain, I've spent my entire career in the region. Egypt. Syria. People talk God, but rarely mean it. Religious leaders are just like politicians - looking for power.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

If faith leaders were irrelevant, Al-Qaeda wouldn't waste bullets on them.

SMITH

Chaplain, you are out of your lane.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Not for Army chaplains. And as a person of faith myself, I understand how religion frames everything-

SMITH

This is the State Department. We don't do religion. (beat) Besides,, I don't have manpower to spare.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

What, *no* support?

SMITH

Sorry. You're on your own for this.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

But-

SMITH

You're playing with fire. We won't get burned. (beat) Good day chaplain.

Smith stands up and offers her hand. Hoyt shakes it. Smith remains cool and calm, never raising her voice. Hoyt nods and exits.

CUT TO:

EXT - ST. GEORGE'S MEDICAL CLINIC - AFTERNOON

The waiting room is packed with old men, women in hijabs, children and babies. Constant crying and moaning. One fan beats slowly from the ceiling, while two fluorescent lights cast an eerie glow. A YOUNG MAN sits in the back alone and with no apparent injuries. White, dressed in his black shirt and his clerical collar, shows Matias their work.

WHITE

This is the largest clinic in Iraq. Doctors, dentists, x-ray. Here we are the healing hands of Christ. (beat)

White spots Imam Abbas seated in the crowd.

WHITE

Imam Abbas?

Imam Abbas sits anxiously next to a young girl with a bandaged head. He stands, eyes frantic.

IMAM ABBAS

Canon White, my granddaughter-

WHITE

My friend, what has happened?

IMAM ABBAS

Another car bomb. So many killed.
Thanks be Allah, she was not one.

WHITE

Al-Qaeda?

IMAM ABBAS

(whispering)

I am certain. We are pushing back. But
they are too strong.

WHITE

I commend your courage.

Imam Abbas scans the room while he talks. He makes eye contact with the YOUNG MAN, who has been staring.

IMAM ABBAS

Courage isn't enough to win.

WHITE

But there is strength in numbers. I'm
working with the Americans to gather
faith leaders for a peace summit. We
need a Sunni ally. Would you join us?

IMAM ABBAS

(Watching the young man)

We should not talk here.

WHITE

Of course. Come.

They walk over to a bed in the corner. White motions to Matias to pull a medical divider curtain around them.

ABBAS

(whispering)

I've heard about your conference. But with the Americans? (beat) No. This hell is their doing.

(Anger heard in his voice)

WHITE

Only they are strong enough.

Imam Abbas's face is etched with anger and pain. He is clearly skeptical, but looks at his granddaughter. White follows his gaze.

WHITE

Think about it. Your leadership would make the difference.

CUT TO:

INT - CHAPLAIN HOYT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Hoyt, Rogers, and Brown are working late again. The violence and the paperwork never end. Maps hang with pins representing various bases. Also seen are plans for the London conference and invitation list.

ROGERS

Chappy, with your permission, I gotta head out.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Of course. Good work today, Bill.

ROGERS

Thank you, sir. See ya, Eddie.

BROWN

Good night, sir.

Rogers exits.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Eddie, let's set the memorial service for 0900 hours at Camp Victory. Especially for Forward Operating Base Cooke, they took a big hit.

BROWN

They sure did.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Chaplain Shearin's your POC out there.

BROWN
Got it, sir.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
We can brief General Casey tomorrow
and update him on London.

BROWN
Yes sir. (Phone rings) Chaplain's
Command Office. Yes, one moment.
(Motioning HOYT to the phone) Sir,
Canon White for you.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Canon White, we were just discussing
London! Though State support is hard
to replace, I think we'll be fine
without it... (beat) What?

CUT TO:

INT - WHITE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

WHITE
I'm sorry, Chaplain Hoyt. Sheikh
Latif's group won't come, and the
Prime Minister himself has banned
meetings on foreign soil.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (O.S.)
But we couldn't go to Jordan to meet
Latif. The US views his supporters as
terrorists.

WHITE
Maliki doesn't care, my friend.

CUT TO:

INT - CHAPLAIN HOYT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Hoyt's face darkens. He takes a deep breath, then decides.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Eddie, call the airlines and hotels in
London. See if you can get our money
back.

BROWN

On it.

WHITE (O.S.)

This is a setback, but all is not lost

CHAPLAIN HOYT

It is if I can't get that money back.

Suddenly, a BOOM is heard. Not distant but close, shaking the room.

WHITE (O.S.)

What was that?

A siren begins to wail. The loudspeaker barks instructions.

LOUDSPEAKER

Shelter in place. Shelter in place.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Nothing good. Will have to call you back, Reverend.

WHITE (O.S.)

I'll be praying.

Hoyt hangs up and rushes to the door.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Lord Jesus, let everyone be ok.

CUT TO:

INT - BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

General Casey is receiving another briefing. PowerPoint slides show escalating statistics - attacks, deaths, civilian casualties, IEDs.

BRIEFER

At 2135, an Al-Qaeda suicide bomber penetrated the outer layer of Green Zone defenses with help from Iraqi soldiers assigned here. Six service members and 15 Iraqis killed.

Hoyt sits in the back of the room. Eyes red.

BRIEFER (CONT'D)

We are working with Al-Rubaie to re-

vet Iraqi soldiers at our perimeter.
 Coordinating a follow up operation.
 Task Force 88 has the lead along with
 SOCOM. Thank you.

Meeting breaks. The mood is angry and grim. Casey sits in the front row with a 1000-year stare towards the screen. Hoyt knows he has more bad news to deliver.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sir, may I-

CASEY

Sorry about Rogers. That's a tough loss.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

(swallowing hard)

Thank you, sir. I just spoke to Bill's wife. Tragic.

CASEY

This is damn hard work.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

May I update you on our Sunni-Shia peacemaking efforts?

Casey just stares at the map of Iraq and the video feed

CASEY

Go ahead.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Well sir, Maliki canceled the meeting. No foreign gatherings.

CASEY

Not surprised. I was skeptical from the start.

Hoyt bites his lip and looks away.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Yes sir. One more thing, sir?

CASEY

Yes?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We tapped use-or-lose funds from State

for the conference. All reservations
were made before Maliki decided.
(beat) No refunds.

Casey finally looks at Hoyt, with his countenance a mix of
sadness and disappointment.

CASEY

How much?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

\$160K.

Casey sighs and turns back to the map.

CASEY

Unbelievable. The comptroller's going
to have questions. From here on out,
just do your God damn job. No side
hustles.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I am making the rounds, sir. The
conference has been on the margins.

Casey pivots towards Hoyt and stares.

CASEY

\$160,000 is hardly marginal. If you
could carry a gun, I'd order you into
the field.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sir-

CASEY

We're at war, chaplain, not some kum-
bay-yah vacation Bible school.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Iraqis are a religious people-

CASEY

They aren't your concern. The troops
are. Focus on them. Christmas is
coming on the battlefield.

Casey walks away. Hoyt turns and exits.

CUT TO:

INT - CHAPLAIN HOYT'S SHIPPING CONTAINER ROOM - NIGHT

Hoyt is in his spartan quarters, hands clasped on his desk with his head resting on his arms. Only the desk lamp is on. His Bible sits open on the desk.

HOYT

Why Rogers, God? Of all men! Bill?!

Wiping tears, he flips the Bible closed and pushes it away. An index card falls out.

HOYT

Melissa and the kids...

He picks up the card. It reads, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28" He tosses it on top of his Bible.

HOYT

I don't know, Lord. I just don't know.

CUT TO:

EXT - AERIAL VIEW OF FORWARD OPERATING BASE CROSSBOW - DUSK

SUPERIMPOSE: CHRISTMAS 2006

Aerial view of a forward operating base somewhere in northern Iraq. A Blackhawk helicopter circles as it approaches the Landing Zone. The landscape below is brown and colorless. Hoyt looks out the open side door. He's wearing fatigues, helmet, sunglasses, flak jacket with a cross velcroed to the front.

EXT - FORWARD OPERATING BASE - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

On the ground, outside a large tent a sign reads "Memorial Ceremony - 1800 hrs." It is caked with dirt, dust, and grime.

INT - FOB MESS HALL - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

Inside rows of folding chairs sit under sterile florescent lights. A sad, fake Christmas tree stands in the corner; half of the lights blink while the other half are steady. Four pairs of boots are placed in front of four rifles, nose down with a helmet sitting on each stock.

Hoyt meets with CAPTAIN VINSON, whose arm is in a sling. The conversation is inaudible, but the emotions are visible on

Vinson's face. Hoyt holds the soldier's good shoulder while he prays. The soldier recovers his composure and nods. The room starts to fill. Hoyt moves to stand behind a makeshift podium.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Welcome, everyone. (beat) A few more seats up front. (beat) We gather today to honor four brave, selfless souls, willing to pay the ultimate price.

The room is silent. All eyes are focused on the chaplain, listening for hope. Faces of hurt and discouragement. Hoyt pauses while he surveys the room.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We ask God to comfort those left behind, grieving the loss of a spouse, a parent, a child. And as our fallen friends go home, we ask God to give us strength for the task here.

CUT AWAY:

Montage of Hoyt visiting other forward operating bases, ministering to soldiers, praying with them, hearing their concerns. Lastly, he is with 30 flag draped caskets being loaded into a C-141. He stands and salutes as the back ramp slowly closes shut.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O. CONT'D)

These are tough times. We're battling fatigue. The elements. Heavy demands and long days. And we're battling our own doubts.

CUT TO:

INT - FOB MESS HALL - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

Back at the memorial service, all eyes are locked on him. Vinson is on the front row. Some soldiers hold their head in their hands, while others wipe tears away.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O. CONT'D)

But we stand by our brothers and sisters and remember the sacrifice of these soldiers. (beat) It's easy to forget Christmas out here.

He pauses and scans the room. He's preaching to himself as

much as to the soldiers.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (CONT'D)

It's supposed to be merry and bright.
But the first Christmas was hard too.
A crazy King tried to kill a single
child by exterminating all boys under
2. Jesus escaped to Egypt as a
refugee. And 33 years later, after he
was crucified, darkness descended for
6 hours at the height of daylight.

His tempo picks up. The soldiers are transfixed.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (CONT'D)

God understands tragedy and suffering.
And when Jesus was laid in the tomb,
no one believed he would rise again
... but he did. Evil won for a day.
But good triumphed for eternity. It's
Friday in Iraq. But Sunday is coming.

CUT AWAY:

Montage of Hoyt making more battlefield rounds. Riding in
convoys in his body armor. Riding in a helicopter, looking
out over the brown moonscape of Iraq. Meeting with soldiers.
Laughing with them. Being with them. A soldier's pastor
ministering to soldiers.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

We are pressed but not crushed. God is
faithful. And as soldiers, we want to
be as well.

CUT TO:

INT - FOB MESS HALL - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

Hoyt begins to wrap up his sermon. His voice strengthens. He
steps away from the podium. The mood improves.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (CONT'D)

We are discouraged but we are not
forsaken. God is with the downtrodden.
We face hardships but we will
overcome. God is Immanuel, God with us
now and forever.

The sermon over, Hoyt moves from the podium into the sea of
service members. Listening. Loving. Believing.

CUT TO:

EXT - TV CLIPS OF THE SURGE

Montage of President Bush announcing The Surge in State of the Union. Clips from the televised address of President Bush talking about the challenges. General Casey is out, and David Petraeus is the new U.S. commander.

CUT TO:

EXT - AERIAL VIEW OF BAGHDAD - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: JANUARY 2007

Smoke rises from all around Baghdad, much more than seen earlier. Different types of helicopters buzz over the city.

ELISA AGUIRRE (V.O.)

-violence is reaching catastrophic levels, as Iraq slips into full scale civil war. President Bush is surging American forces to quell the violence and create space for a political solution. General Petraeus plans to push U.S. forces into contested areas held by Al-Qaeda and Shia militants. Democrats and Republicans alike believe it may be too little, too late...

CUT TO:

EXT - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: WASHINGTON, DC

SUBURBAN PARENTS and CHILDREN stream into an elementary school in suburban Washington. It's parent-teacher night.

INT - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The halls are packed with parents and kids of all ages. A kaleidoscope of ethnicities - white, black, Asian, Hispanic. The noise is deafening. Cassidy and his wife JESSICA walk in with their son, KYLER.

GREETER

Welcome to Haycock Elementary. Please find your child's classroom and take a seat.

Will and Jessica talk as they dodge other families.

JESSICA

I'm so glad you're here. Last year
without you was rough.

A family, led by FATHER, walks past looking for their class.

FATHER

Hey Will! You're back. Welcome home!

WILL

Ah, thanks! (Turning back to his wife)
Who's that?

KYLER

Here's my room dad! (To a friend) Hi
Gabe!

BUZZ, BUZZ from Will's Blackberry.

WILL

Damn.

Kyler, oblivious to the call, pulls Will's hand.

KYLER

Dad, I want to show you the picture I
made.

WILL

One sec. I'll be right there.

Jessica grimaces as she leads Kyler into the room. Will
answers the phone in the hall, straining to hear.

CASSIDY

Will Cassidy.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (ON PHONE)

Will, this is Hoyt.

CASSIDY

Who?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Chaplain Hoyt, from-

CASSIDY

Oh yeah, hey Chaplain. Been a while.
How's the sandbox?

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Not an easy place to play.

CASSIDY
You're telling me. Hated to hear
Maliki killed your London gig.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (ON PHONE)
Well, I want to resurrect it.

CASSIDY
Sorry, Chaplain, having trouble
hearing you. Back to school night -
like an underage riot.

INTERCUT

CHAPLAIN HOYT
I want to try again.

CASSIDY
What?!

CHAPLAIN HOYT
I want to bring Shia and Sunni mullahs
together, get them to issue a fatwa
against violence, and get the Iraqi
government to support it.

CASSIDY
You're joking. It'll cost you your
career.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
I'll risk it. Canon White's still with
me.

CASSIDY
The dynamic duo.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Petraeus says he wants new ideas. I'm
taking him up on that.

CASSIDY
Your idea's been tried once. It'll be
DOA.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Maybe not. Think the White House would
back it?

CASSIDY

Who knows. They're desperate enough.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

What about the NSC? Can you provide some cover?

CASSIDY

I'll look into it. Any cable traffic on the high side?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

No. We'e not that organized.

WILL

Send me an email?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Roger that.

INTERCUT

INT - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The PA system crackles telling parents everyone should go to the auditorium to hear Principal Hamilton.

CASSIDY

Gotta go. Riot's heating up.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (ON PHONE)

Thanks.

CASSIDY

Don't thank me yet. This is the biggest hail mary I've ever seen.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (ON PHONE)

Too much at stake not to try.

Cassidy hangs up just as parents and kids pour out of the classroom. Kyler's disappointment is evident; Jessica tries to mask hers, for Kyler's sake.

KYLER

You missed it again, dad.

JESSICA

Look at what Kyler made for you.

Jessica motions for Kyler to hand him his drawing, titled

"What My Dad Loves".

WILL

(Reading slowly to decipher a 2nd grader's handwriting.)

"My dad loves helping people in Iraq."

Suddenly Will chokes up. He looks at Jessica who is teary eyed and then down at Kyler.

WILL

You're right, son. I want the kids in Iraq to enjoy school and art just like you do.

Will hugs his family close, then they continue down the hallway. They pass another FAMILY.

FATHER 2

Will! Good to see you.

(Holding up his 2nd grader's picture)

My kid says I love beer. Can you believe it?

Kyler takes Will's hand and leads him down the hall.

CUT TO:

INT - WAITING ROOM OF PETREAEUS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Hoyt and Brown are standing in the outer chamber of David PETREAEUS' office in a former palace. Several assistants in uniform sit typing at computers. The door to Petreaus's office opens. Mansoor appears.

MANSOOR

Mike. The General will see you now.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Thanks Tom.

INT - WAITING ROOM OF PETREAEUS' OFFICE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Hoyt and Brown follow Mansoor into Petreaus's office. The General walks up and warmly shakes Hoyt's hand.

PETRAEUS

Chaplain, how are the troops?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

They're hanging in, sir. Morale is improving. More than 300 chaplains are deployed across the country. And your letter meant a lot. "Difficult is not impossible." That preaches.

PETRAEUS

Thank you. (Smiling) Now what's on your mind, Chaplain?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

The Surge. And how I can contribute. With all due respect, the plan's missing a key component.

Hoyt pauses to see how the General takes this notion. He doesn't seem offended but interested in hearing more.

PETRAEUS

Go on.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We need a show of Sunni-Shia religious unity. A joint call against violence. With Maliki's support...

Petraeus sits sphinx like, without any expression on his face. Hoyt isn't sure if he's winning or losing.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (CONT'D)

As you've said, sir, influential voices must be included. From all sides. When imams speak out for peace, it undermines Al-Qaeda's message. And gives politicians space to negotiate.

Petraeus remains silent and stoic. Hoyt makes one last pitch.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

There are no silver bullets to fix this situation. But Iraq's religious leaders must be part of the solution. One bullet in the ammunition belt.

PETRAEUS

What are you asking for?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Permission, sir. To approach the key Sunni figures in Jordan. Not sure who

they hate more, America or the Shia.
And then convene them here.

PETRAEUS
(Interrupting)
Okay.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Okay?

Hoyt sitting across from Petraeus double blinks. After months of frustration, he's unsure what this means.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Ok. Um, I will write up a formal
request with expenditures-

PETRAEUS
No need. It's too urgent. Just move
forward, and quick.

Petraeus stands up, causing Hoyt, Mansoor and Brown to stand as well. Petraeus shakes Hoyt's hand.

PETRAEUS
Keep Tom updated. He'll report to me.

Hoyt nods, shell-shocked by the rapidity of the approval. Petraeus returns to his desk. Mansoor walks them to the office door.

MANSOOR
Not sure if I should congratulate you.
Just don't get yourself killed.

As Hoyt returns to the waiting room and the door closes behind him, he and Brown stare at each other.

CUT TO:

INT - CHAPLAIN HOYT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Hoyt and Brown return to his cramped office. White and Matias are there, squeezed in around a small table, waiting to hear about the meeting.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Got the green light.

WHITE
Brilliant!

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'll head to Jordan as soon as everything's set. Can you get me a meeting with Sheikh Latif?

WHITE

Absolutely. We'll arrange everything.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I can't fly commercial or go in uniform.

WHITE

Sounds very 007. How will you get there?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'll take MIL AIR to a private airfield. Brown will send you the coordinates to pick me up.

WHITE

We will be waiting.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'll be in civies.

WHITE

Hmm, as the Occupier's Chaplain, you should look the part.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Baptists don't have a uniform.

WHITE

I'll get you a nice Anglican collar. An ambassador for Christ!

CHAPLAIN HOYT

How will you find the Sheikh?

WHITE

Imam Abbas. He's a dear friend, a man of peace. And a very brave Sunni.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Brave men of peace are hard to come by.

CUT TO:

EXT - AIRFIELD - NIGHT

The lights from inside a shabby office shine onto an airfield outside Baghdad, with several V-2 Osprey's and an assortment of helicopters parked nearby.

INT - AIRFIELD OFFICE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Hoyt, uncomfortably dressed in a priest's collar, talks to a CIA CONTROL OFFICER in business casual. The Officer holds his hand out.

CIA CONTROL OFFICER
Your military IDs.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Really?

CIA CONTROL OFFICER
This is strictly off the record. These guys are too close to the insurgency.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Understood.

CIA CONTROL OFFICER
If something happens over there, we're not coming after you. No cavalry.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
I'll be fine.
(Trying to convince himself)

CIA CONTROL OFFICER
And you *must* be back to the rendezvous point by 0500.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Not much time.

HOYT fidgets with the priestly collar.

CIA CONTROL OFFICER
The plane won't wait.

A plane is engine is heard throttling up in the background.

CIA CONTROL OFFICER (CONT'D)
Locked and loaded. Let's go.

INT - INSIDE V-22 OSPREY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Hoyt follows the CIA CONTROL OFFICER up the back ramp of the Osprey. A squad of 12 SPECIAL FORCES soldiers sits on either side dressed in full gear, no names or flags on their uniforms. Many are bearded, looking like insurgents themselves. They stare slack-jawed as a priest walks in.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

(Nodding to the group)

Men.

SQUAD LEADER

Uh ... (beat) make room for the padre.

The men scoot around. Hoyt squeezes in next to the burley SQUAD LEADER. It is an odd sight - a collared priest between the most lethal warriors in the world. The ramp closes and the plane starts to taxi. Hoyt latches himself in and puts on a headset so he can talk over the roar of the engines. A red light bathes the interior.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Thanks for the ride.

SQUAD LEADER

Not sure you should thank me. We're going hajji hunting. (beat) What's a priest doing here, anyway?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'm an Army chaplain. (beat) It's complicated.

SQUAD LEADER 2

(Sitting opposite) No shit, padre. Sorry.

SQUAD LEADER

We've all seen a lot of fighting and dying.

SQUAD LEADER 2

These Muslims are all terrorists! It's fuckin... er, really intense. (beat)

As they gain altitude, they bounce around in the turbulence. The entire squad observes the conversation, headsets on.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Well, remember hundreds of Muslim

civilians die each day in terrorist attacks. At the hands of their own countrymen. Fellow Muslims. Fathers and mothers and children. They hate this insurgency as much as we do. Maybe more.

Squad Leader 2 snorts.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
You got family, solider?

SQUAD LEADER 2
Yea. Two boys. Haven't seen them much these last few years. Not sure they'd recognize me now. War changes people, don't it reverend? Or would you know?

CHAPLAIN HOYT
I saw combat before becoming a chaplain. Lost friends. You can't not be changed.

SQUAD LEADER 2
But our country doesn't understand that. They barely remember we're here!

Hoyt notices all are watching them and listening. Their steely eyes above their thick beards piercing the red darkness.

SQUAD LEADER
Hey padre, how about a prayer?

Hoyt pauses and looks at all of them. Nods.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
I'm always praying for you.

CUT TO:

EXT - LANDING STRIP OUTSIDE OF AMMAN - NIGHT

A beat-up Toyota Camry covered in dust sits alone. White and Matias are inside, with Samir in the driver's seat.

INT - INSIDE CAMRY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

WHITE
Not your usual international arrivals terminal, I dare say.

MATIAS

Is this the right place? No airplane
can land here.

WHITE

This is where Mike said.

Suddenly the air starts to swirl as an alien-looking craft
begins to vertically lower out of the sky.

SAMIR

Canon, look up!!

WHITE

What on earth...?

EXT - LANDING STRIP OUTSIDE OF AMMAN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Osprey descends in helicopter mode, its twin blades
kicking up much dust. Simultaneously, two trucks tear across
the desert, heading right for White and Matias.

MATIAS (O.S.)

Should we get out of here?!

Matias must shout over the noise of the Osprey, the car
rocking in the wind.

WHITE (O.S.)

No!

Two trucks speed toward the LANDING ZONE, stopping at the
other side of the landing strip. They aren't coming for them,
but to pick up the Special Forces unit. As the dust clears,
the rear ramp lowers. Through the dust, the red light inside
the cargo bay shines outward, casting a strange glow over the
field. As the ramp hits the ground, 12 soldiers rush out in
two rows, heading for their trucks.

Standing in the center of the cargo hull is a shadow. The red
light shining obscures his features, but it gives his figure
a mysterious quality. As he slowly walks down the ramp, the
white of his collar starts to emerge. It's Hoyt. He sees
White's car and jogs quickly over and gets in the back seat.

INT - CAMRY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

WHITE

That was quite an entrance.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Am I glad to see you!

WHITE
A real commando for Christ, aren't
you?

Hoyt gives a wry smile.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Clock's ticking. We gotta go.

WHITE
Roger! (To SAMIR) Samir, please drive
with purpose.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Do you have directions?

SAMIR
No need. Most of my family fled to
Jordan years ago. I know it well.

WHITE
Slight change of plans. Samir will
take us to a rendezvous point, where
we will transfer into our hosts' cars.

Samir pulls onto a small road. They bounce along in the
cramped car.

CHAPLAIN HOYT
So we'll be completely at their mercy.

WHITE
Sheikh Latif we can trust. It's the
Al-Qaeda cells in Jordan to worry
about....

CHAPLAIN HOYT
Let's hope they don't know we're here.

EXT - STREETS OF AMMAN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Camry stops occasionally at street corners as Samir tries
to find a street sign. Seeing the way, their car turns a
corner. A group of men standing around three SUVs is seen up
ahead.

SAMIR (O.S.)
There they are.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (O.S.)
God be with us.

WHITE (O.S.)
Amen.

The four exit their car. They are greeted by a host of menacing men. They get into the SUV. Black hoods are roughly placed over their heads.

CUT TO:

EXT - STREETS OF AMMAN - AIRIAL VIEW - NIGHT

The convoy of SUVs drives down quiet, empty streets in a rundown section of greater Amman. Removed from war, the streets are clean and have streetlights. No people are out at this hour to notice the unusual caravan. The SUVs turn into a dark alley and wind back among mid-level high rises. Then they turn right and approach a dark building, with lights coming out of the top floor windows.

EXT - STREETS OF AMMAN - STREET VIEW - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The convoy pulls into an underground parking garage deep in the underbelly of the apartment building. Men with discreetly held rifles watch from nearby balconies, talking into cell phones.

INT - PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In the dimly lit parking area, Hoyt, White, Matias, and Samir are taken out of the SUV. The hoods ripped off, their eyes are slow to adjust. Men with guns quickly approach out of the shadows. Samir introduces them in Arabic. The bodyguards roughly pat them down. They signal to follow them into a small elevator. The group and two bodyguards all load in.

INT - ELEVATOR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The elevator is comically small. The six men are squeezed together, uncomfortably close. They all stare at each other, saying nothing, separated by language and culture. Hoyt and White smile at the bodyguards. The smile isn't returned.

INT - 12[TH] FLOOR LOBBY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The elevator doors open into a lobby, with more men in both business suits and track suits. Samir and Matias are searched again, but not Hoyt and White. They are taken through a dimly lit lobby into a conference room.

CUT TO:

INT - 12[TH] FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

The brightly lit conference room contrasts starkly with the dim lobby and garage. The room is lined with plush couches and chairs where Sunni sheikhs, imams and tribal leaders are seated. The talking stops as Hoyt and White enter the room. Sheikh Latif sits in a large throne-like chair at the front of the room, with Imam Abbas to his right. Two empty chairs next to Sheikh Latif are to his left.

Sheikh Latif appears to be in his 70s. He wears sumptuous white robes, with a lightweight overcoat with gold sheen and gold trim. His keffiyeh does not have any band. His silver beard is well-trimmed and he has bright eyes. 10 scholars sit on either side of him, splendidly attired. White works the room greeting old friends. Hoyt lingers, unsure what to do. Samir and Matias stand by the door.

Imam Abbas rises and walks quickly across the large room. He smiles widely at White.

IMAM ABBAS

Andrew, my dear brother.

WHITE

How is your granddaughter?

The two men embrace and kiss each other on the cheeks.

IMAM ABBAS

She is well. Thank you.

WHITE

St. George's serves all.

Imam Abbas turns to Hoyt, forcing a smile.

IMAM ABBAS

And you must be the Occupier's Chaplain. Many of our brothers doubted you would make the trip.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Understandable. But I hope to prove trustworthy. (Bowing slightly) Thank you for arranging this meeting.

IMAM ABBAS

These sheikhs represent mosques all

over Iraq. Peace cannot be won without them.

WHITE

And this is Sheikh Latif.

IMAM ABBAS

I will introduce you, Chaplain. No need for your translator. The Sheikh understands English.

White looks back and nods for Matias and Samir to hang back against the wall. They stand uncomfortably next to the unsmiling men in track suits.

IMAM ABBAS

Sheikh, you know Rev. Canon Andrew White. He has been a friend for many years and serves all Iraqis.

WHITE

It is an honor to see you again, Sheikh Latif. Thank you for agreeing to this meeting. (Bowing)

Latif slightly smiles and nods back.

IMAM ABBAS

And this is the Occupier's Chaplain, Reverend...?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Michael Hoyt sir.

IMAM ABBAS

Chaplain Hoyt. (To Sheikh Latif) He works for General Petraeus. He is the senior religious leader for the Americans.

Latif nods again. Signals for the men to sit to his left, with Hoyt in the seat of honor next to Latif. Imam Abbas sits to the right of Latif. The room is silent as 100 eyes watch and listen.

IMAM ABBAS

Chaplain, the Sheikh wants to know why you are here. It is a great risk to meet like this.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sheikh Latif, you and your imams are the last few leaders Sunnis in Iraq listen to. Al-Qaeda is killing your people and killing your faith. And their violence pits American soldiers against Sunnis, when we want to help.

The crowd grumbles.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

The United States invites you to send representatives to Baghdad to work with Shia leaders to denounce the violence. Your voice can influence the Sunni response to the insurgency.

Latif looks nonplussed. More grumbling. Imam Abbas leans forward to talk across the Sheikh to Hoyt. Imam Abbas is no longer smiling. The tension is high and rising.

IMAM ABBAS

Chaplain, how can you ask our support? You invaded our country. You deposed our leader. Sheikh Latif was Saddam's imam. You let Sadr and his Shia henchmen kill Saddam like a dog.

More grumbling from the crowd.

IMAM ABBAS

It is America that should denounce violence first! You are the occupiers!

Some loud objections from the back are heard. Latif is not pleased with the outburst. He nods to the track suit bodyguards and they roughly remove two lower-level imams. Latif stares at Hoyt listening for his response.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We never intended to occupy but liberate. But Iraq was more fragile, more complicated than we understood.

IMAM ABBAS

You destroyed our country! (Voice rising and angrily pointing his finger, but then recovering) I am a man of peace, but America has brought only death and destruction. (Beat and turning to White) How can you expect

us to work with the Occupier's
Chaplain?

Latif raises his hand to signal Imam Abbas has said enough.

WHITE

Imam Abbas, Sheikh Latif, please.
Chaplain Hoyt is a man of peace like
you. We want to help Iraq. Your people
- my friends - are dying daily. Please
consider this.

More grumbling in the room. Latif and Imam Abbas speak
together in Arabic. Hoyt doesn't know what's being said, but
it's clear the meeting is going poorly. He glances at his
watch. Time is running out to get back to the airfield.

WHITE

You don't have to like the Americans,
but the hard truth is, peace can't be
achieved without them, either. I hope
you understand the gesture Chaplain
Hoyt has made, the risk he took, to
travel here unprotected, unarmed, to
speak with you.

Latif leans forward, speaking for the first time. He has an
accent and deep voice.

LATIF

Chaplain, your crusaders cannot help
Iraq.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sir, despite our differences, we have
much in common. Muslims and Christians
are both sons of Abraham.

LATIF

Yes.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We share common stories. We both
revere Jesus. We both know the story
of Jonah and the Whale.

LATIF

Indeed. Jonah was an Iraqi. He
disobeyed Allah's call to go to
Nineveh. He was judged for that.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

But as soon as Jonah was willing to lose everything and be dropped into the sea, the storm ceased.

LATIF

I understand losing everything.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I have been praying for this meeting. And I am praying right now that you will trust me. We have different views of God, but prayer is central to both our faiths.

Latif and Imam Abbas stare intently. Latif nods ever so slightly.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Politicians cannot save Iraq. Soldiers can't. Faith leadership is vital.

The room is quiet again. People are listening.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (CONT'D)

I have assurances from General Petraeus and Prime Minister Maliki that exiled Sunni religious leaders can reenter Iraq without fear of harm. (Looking to the other imams) If you come, the Shia clerics will too.

Looking to the entire room.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (CONT'D)

Jesus - Isa - said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." And you speak peace upon the name of Muhammed. Please, join us in seeking peace together. If Sunnis abandon the effort, Iraq is lost.

Hoyt sits back in his chair, waiting for a response. Imam Abbas and White look to Sheikh Latif.

LATIF

Iraq was a center of Islamic civilization when Europe couldn't even read. Yes, our country contains many important Shi'a religious sites, but it was the Abbasid Caliphate's Sunni scholars who brought the Golden Age of

Islam. When I was a boy, Iraq had the best hospitals in the world. But that is gone.

Latif leans forward to Hoyt, scanning his face. Hoyt looks back with weary but hopeful eyes. Latif looks at White and grins, turning to his scholars and the audience.

LATIF (CONT'D)

The Shia are in power because of America. But either we find a way to live together, or we will die together. As our holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "O you who have believed, enter into peacefulness."

Hoyt and White look at each other, daring to hope.

LATIF (CONT'D)

The holy Quran says, "if your enemies incline towards peace, then incline toward it also, and trust in God."

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Amen, sir.

LATIF

Tell the general we want peace and will attend your meeting. Imam Abbas shall be my personal representative and lead the delegation.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

(Placing his right hand on his heart)

Thank you, sir.

LATIF

But be warned - if the Shia don't stop killing our families, all the might of America will not keep us together.

Latif stands, leading everyone to rise. He shakes Hoyt's hand and kisses him on each cheek. They walk forward holding hands, in the Arab tradition. The pressure releases from the room. The men in track suits smile at Matias and Samir for the first time, showing their cigarette yellowed teeth. Matias and Samir smile back. They awkwardly hug. Latif walks Hoyt and White to the door and they exit.

EXT - STREETS OF AMMAN - NIGHT

CHAPLAIN HOYT

That went better than I expected.
Better than I prayed!

WHITE

God be praised. Imam Abbas and I will
work on the invitation list.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

And I'll try to figure out what we
just got ourselves into!

ACT III

CUT TO:

INT - PLANNING ROOM IN THE GREEN ZONE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: JUNE 2007

Planning is in high gear for the unprecedented meeting. Hoyt is talking through the logistics with soldiers and diplomats, along with White, Matias and Brown. All stand around a table with a rudimentary 3-D map of Baghdad made from paper cups and plastic utensils. Two plastic knives stuck in an upside-down bowl mimic the iconic Crossed Swords monument. Duct tape denotes roads, Post-it notes mark security forces, cans for buildings. Hoyt wears reading glasses as he leans over the table. Straightening up, he speaks to the group, using a billiard stick to point at three stacked cans.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

That's the AL RASHEED HOTEL, smack dab in the middle of the city.

BROWN

Used to be the nicest in the country. But now...

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Electricity comes and goes. And no air conditioning.

MATIAS

No AC? It'll be 110 degrees!

CUT AWAY:

EXT - GREEN ZONE - DAY

AERIAL VIEW of the Green Zone pans from the American Embassy to the pock-marked Al Rasheed Hotel.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

Colonel, how's security prep coming?

COLONEL (V.O.)

Gettin' there. We'll have a standing quick reaction force, with one Iraqi spec ops company, one U.S. Infantry Battalion, a counter battery fire section, and four Apache gunships. Plus a hardened perimeter with new

checkpoints.

CUT AWAY:

EXT - GREEN ZONE - DAY

Iraqi and American troops take up defensive positions around the hotel, positioning sandbags and machine guns. Angry looking Iraqi men in civilian clothing watch menacingly from the sidewalks, all talking on cell phones.

COLONEL (V.O.)

For medivac...

MATIAS (V.O.)

(interrupting worriedly)

Medivac?

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

This'll be the biggest bullseye in Baghdad. Both Al-Qaeda and Sadr will try to strike. They've hit the hotel before. Colonel?

COLONEL (V.O.)

We'll have evacuation assets on standby. Blackwater has charge of transit from the airport.

CUT AWAY:

EXT - BAGHDAD AIRPORT - DAY

Montage of VIPs descending airplane steps. Convoys speed from the airport through the city. Helicopters ferry VIPs to a nearby landing pad.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

This has to have an Iraqi face. We need to be as invisible as possible.

COLONEL (V.O.)

Iraqis will handle the security perimeter and first level screening. Blackwater will conduct a secondary screening at the hotel doors. We'll augment with canine searches every four hours. 24/7 drone overwatch.

CUT AWAY:

EXT - AL RASHEED HOTEL - DAY

Montage of delegates arriving in different dirt covered SUVs and banged up Japanese cars. Delegates walk through various levels of screening.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

We've coaxed, cajoled and begged, and we've got over fifty religious leaders and tribal reps coming, from every major region of the country.

WHITE (V.O.)

I've prayed so long for this day...

INT - PLANNING ROOM IN THE GREEN ZONE - DAY

Hoyt speaks to the group around the table.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

It's a miracle we made it this far. Many of these men have tried to kill each other. There will be a lot of distrust. A lot of anger.

COLONEL

Your guest list is like America's Most Wanted.

WHITE

Peace must be made between enemies. Otherwise nothing will change.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

This only works if we keep them safe. If they don't kill each other first, we can't let Al-Qaeda do the job.

COLONEL

Seniority doesn't matter here. *Every participant* must pass a thorough security screening and pat down.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

They'll be offended, but it sure as hell beats a bomb going off...

COLONEL

Agreed. And once in, no one will be allowed to leave the hotel.

WHITE

They will expect nicely appointed accommodations, but I will try to temper those expectations.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

There's no sugar coating it - the hotel's dismal. Locking them up together will either be a blessing or a curse.

MATIAS

And the big wigs will show up on the last day? General Petraeus, UN people, Iraqi officials?

CUT AWAY:

EXT - AL RASHEED HOTEL - DAY

Montage of Iraqi troops with ski masks checking under cars for bombs, others frisking guests as they step out. White and Matias make their way through security. The BLACKWATER GUARDS screen them as they enter the hotel.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

Yes, if there's good news. If not...

WHITE (V.O.)

Everyone attending is risking both their reputation as well as their lives.

MATIAS (V.O.)

And you think this going to work?

WHITE (V.O.)

I don't think it will. But I believe it could.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

We have to try.

WHITE (V.O.)

Keep praying, Chaplain.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

I've never stopped.

CUT TO:

INT - PLANNING ROOM IN THE GREEN ZONE - DAY

The briefing over, some of the soldiers exit while others continue to stand around a map of the city as the conversation shifts.

WHITE

Still no word from the Shia?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Hopefully tonight. Thanks to you, I've gotten to know Sheikh Fatah pretty well. He has a huge rolodex and direct access to Grand Ayatollah Sistani.

WHITE

Very good.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

He even knows some of Sadr's boys, although they want to kill him. I'll see him tonight.

MATIAS

Where?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

At his house.

BROWN

How are you getting there?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'll drive.

MATIAS

You'll *drive*?!

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Yep. A convoy draw too much attention.

Everyone is stunned. There is an awkward pause.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (CONT'D)

I'll be alone and unarmed in an unmarked civilian car driving into Sadr City at night. What could go wrong?

WHITE

Makes our trip to Jordan look like a

garden party. You're becoming a real Iraqi!

CUT TO:

EXT - SADR CITY - NIGHT

Hoyt is driving a dusty and beat up old Mercedes, missing three of four hubcaps. Wearing a helmet and body armor, he barely fits in the front seat. He alternates looking at a map in the passenger seat and what passes for street signs. He speaks to himself to help calm his nerves; it doesn't work.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Which is it?

Hoyt turns off the main road down an alley just wide enough for a car, slowly swerving around piles of garbage and large potholes.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Gemini, this is tight.

Children stand motionless and unsmiling in doorways as the car passes. Hoyt gives a feeble wave.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Salaam.

Hoyt strains to see out the dirty window, searching for the right door. Security men with rifles stare down from the rooftops above the alley.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I think this is it.

He finds a large compound with a white townhouse behind a whitewashed concrete wall. He parks and gets out. Looking up and down the alley, he nods towards the children and armed men, who stare back in astonishment at an unarmed American soldier in their grimy alley. Hoyt knocks quietly on the steel door, not wanting to raise a ruckus but knowing he has to make his presence known. A slot in the door slides open, with a set of steely eyes behind.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Salaam. I'm here to see Sheikh Fatah.
Is this the right place?

The guard closes the slot. The metal doors creakily slide open. Hoyt enters the compound.

CUT TO:

EXT - FATAH'S COURTYARD - NIGHT

Hoyt stands alone in the center of the compound. The metal gates ominously close behind him. He looks around.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Hello?

Suddenly a door opens from the large house, and men spill out. Some in fatigues, some in track suits with sandals, some older in clerical robes, and some middle-aged wearing dark suits with ties. They surround Hoyt, staring menacingly.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Salaam.

Finally, another man emerges. It's Sheikh Fatah, a man in his early 50s with a neat beard. Unlike the Sunni sheikhs, he wears a black turban signaling his religious authority, with a flowing thin robe over a starched white shirt with a high collar. The crowd parts as he approaches.

FATAH

Chaplain Hoyt! Welcome.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Thank you, sir. Glad I found you.

(Covering his heart with his right hand)

FATAH

Of course, of course. You are welcome here, not as a soldier, but as a man of God. Please come and eat.

CUT TO:

INT - FATAH'S LIVING ROOM - LATE EVENING

HOYT, his body armor off, sits on the ground next to FATAH and 10 other men at a common table 18 inches off the floor. A modest home, pillows and tapestries give an "Arabian Nights" vibe. Generous heaps of food are piled on the table. Time has passed since dinner, but some men continue to dip their right hand in to the rice and lamb. Hoyt is talking to Fatah.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

The conference is for Iraqi leaders, to facilitate your own discussion

about peace. America is setting the table, but has no place at it.

Fatah gives Hoyt a wary look.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (CONT'D)

But it won't work without Ayatollah Sistani. He - or someone he designates - has to join. Iraq could be the first Islamic state to demonstrate that Sunnis and Shia can live together.

FATAH

That assumes we want to. The Shia lived for decades as slaves of the Sunnis. Saddam killed so many. Others were forced to flee. And then the Sunnis destroyed the Samara Mosque!

The men around the table stop eating and look at Hoyt and Fatah. The tension suddenly spikes in the room.

FATAH

They blew it up! Only the minarets left! (Pointing to before and after pictures on the wall) Those dogs murdered Shia while they were praying!

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I know, sir.

FATAH

How could Shia not fight back after such an atrocity?!

CHAPLAIN HOYT

But the violence has gone too far-

FATAH

Did you expect President Bush to have tea with Bin Laden after 9/11?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

No, but-

FATAH

Make no mistake, we are the government. (Thumping his chest) Who is Maliki? Maliki is nothing. The Shia in Iraq are finally empowered. We are taking our rightful place.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

The United States condemned the Samarra attack. We have offered aid to the victims-

FATAH

We don't want your "help." We thank you for ridding us of Saddam, but we have had only chaos since. Shia are the largest community in Iraq - the Sunnis must recognize us as the rightful rulers.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

If the Shia simply follow in the Sunnis' footsteps, Iraq will stay in a perpetual state of war.

FATAH

(Softening and now smiling)

We know. That is why Grand Ayatollah Sistani has decided I will represent him at the conference. I will sit with IMAM ABBAS to find peace.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Thank you, sir. (beat) You know Imam Abbas is coming?

FATAH

We know many things.

Chaplain Hoyt blinks, unsure how to respond. He opens his backpack. The men around him flinch and guards lean forward with hands on their weapons, but he pulls out a folder.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Please share these instructions with your delegation. They have to be followed exactly. Security is our foremost concern.

FATAH

(Scanning the documents) The Al Rasheed? I will come for the meetings but will sleep in my own home.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'm sorry, but that won't be possible. All delegates must stay at the hotel. No exceptions. It's the only way we

can keep you safe.

FATAH

Does it even have running water?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sometimes. I won't lie to you, the accommodations aren't great. But Sunnis won't come to the Green Zone. And neither side wants to meet at our embassy.

FATAH

(closing the folder with a sigh)
So be it.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Thank you, sir. One last request -would you be willing to co-chair the meeting with Imam Abbas? You will be the highest ranking Shia leader present. It would say a lot...

FATAH

It would be a death sentence. (beat, then laughter) But I am already a marked man! Yes, as the senior Shia in attendance, I accept the responsibility.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

It will send a powerful message. There is safety in number... I hope.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RAHEED HOTEL - DAY

The religious leaders, all men, file into a tired conference hall. Imam Abbas leads the Sunni group, followed by Sheikh Fatah and the Shia clerics with their black and white turbans. Christian clerics in their vestments come last. No one is talking. No one is smiling. There is a large rectangle, comprised of small tables covered with green tablecloths. Hoyt and White, in their priestly collars are against the back wall, along with Brown and Matias.

MATIAS (V.O.)

Who's who, Canon White?

WHITE (V.O.)

The Sunnis are in white or red keffiyehs. Do you see the checkered head scarves? Opposite them are the Shia representatives, in turbans. They're facing off. The Iraqi Christians are at the far end.

The delegates take their seats. Imam Abbas and Sheikh Fatah preside at the head of the table. The room is silent. Sheikh Fatah and Imam Abbas try to start a conversation.

SHEIKH FATAH

The Quran says "Help one another in righteousness and piety but help not one another in sin and aggression." Our religion urges us to be at peace with one another. Yes?

Silence. Just angry stares.

IMAM ABBAS

I agree with my Shia brother. We are all Muslims, all seeking to live as Allah has instructed us. But brothers, it seems we have lost our way.

Imam Abbas looks nervously at his Sunni group. He is met with stony silence and more angry stares.

IMAM ABBAS

Our country has been overrun with infidels who twist our religion to justify their barbarity and bloodshed. We gather here to find peace.

SHEIKH FATAH

Brothers, we have much to be angry about. But we must find another way...

Suddenly there begins a murmur from the Sunni side of the table.

ANGRY SUNNI IMAM

(Wearing a red keffiyeh) You say you want peace, but the Shia take away our jobs, our neighborhoods. Sadr's militias slaughter us in the streets!

A flood of competing complaints erupts.

ANGRY SHIA IMAM

(Wearing a white turban) Shia suffered worse under Saddam! And now your Al-Qaeda butchers attack our mosques, kill us while we pray!

ANGRY SUNNI IMAM

Baghdad has been the center of Sunni learning for centuries. You cannot deny that!

ANGRY SHIA IMAM

Neither can you deny that you destroyed our holy mosque! Your Al-Qaeda brothers blew up Samarra!

ANGRY SUNNI IMAM

Al-Qaeda are not our brothers! They kill us too!

CUT TO:

EXT BAGHDAD - NEAR HOTEL - DAY

The view pulls away from the exterior of the AL RASHEED, while a cacophony of yelling fades. The Young Jihadi menacingly peers off the balcony of a nearby apartment building. He talks into cell a phone. A helicopter roars overhead and he ducks inside. The view follows him into the apartment. Terrorists are assembling bombs. The apartment door opens, and two young men bring in a wooden box and gently set it down. A third opens it. It's a case of mortar rounds.

CUT TO:

INT - THE CONVERSATION STARTS AT THE AL RASHEED HOTEL - DAY

The picture fades back to a heated discussion in the same hall. On one side, Shias gesticulate wildly and point. On the other, Sunnis are angrily pointing back. White and Hoyt sit against the wall visibly worried about how the "discussion" is going. Imam Abbas and Sheikh Fatah struggle to maintain control.

IMAM ABBAS

Brothers, surely we can all agree that violence is not the answer? That it goes against the teachings of our holy book and our holy Prophet, peace be upon him?

SHEIKH FATAH

The government agrees. Prime Minister Maliki is committed to this.

ANGRY SUNNI IMAM

Committed to killing Sunnis maybe! You Shia must call off the Sadr brigades. Stop them from killing our women and children!

ANGRY SHIA IMAM

And you Sunni must stop your sons in Al-Qaeda from attacking our holy sites! After Samarra, how can we trust you?!

The room erupts into noise again. It is chaotic.

SHEIKH FATAH

Brothers, we've been arguing for hours and gotten nowhere. The heat is stifling. (Turning towards HOYT) Perhaps a change of scenery...?

Hoyt walks up to the table.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I'm afraid not. Security requires we stay inside to avoid snipers.

IMAM ABBAS

Can we at least take a short break?

The Shia delegates nod in agreement.

SHEIKH FATAH

I agree with my Sunni brother. We need some fresh air.

Hoyt holds up his finger and approaches BROWN. They whisper.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Ok. (Turning back to the table) Five minutes in the interior courtyard. Only one group of five at a time.

The ANGRY SUNNI IMAM points at Sheikh Fatah.

ANGRY SUNNI IMAM

Sunnis first! We've been here longer-

ANGRY SHIA IMAM
But Shia run the government now!

Imam Abbas interrupts, trying to prevent more shouting before it starts.

IMAM ABBAS
Brothers, please. This is a chance to reconcile.

More noise and disagreement.

SHEIKH FATAH
We must be able to talk to one another, or Iraq will crumble.

Suddenly the room goes dark. Gasps, then a hush. Another power outage.

SHEIKH FATAH
In the darkness, we all look the same.
We are all sons of Adam.

IMAM ABBAS
We have been in darkness far too long.
Let us ask Allah for his divine light
to guide the way.

Suddenly, small ghostly lights appear around the room. The imams and priests are turning on their cell phones. Men rise and slowly find their way out of the conference room, walking with their phones like individual candles.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED HOTEL LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Hoyt, White, Matias, Samir and Brown compare notes and debrief. The lights are flickering on and off.

MATIAS
Rough start. Is this is helping?

CHAPLAIN HOYT
It does feel like an "I hate you more" contest. But it's the first time they've sat together. That's something.

WHITE
The history here is deep. Tis to be

expected. Better they air their grievances here than in the streets.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Exactly.

WHITE

But we are behind schedule. If they never discuss anything concrete...

Suddenly an imam comes over, clearly upset. Samir translates. The imam is exasperated about something.

SAMIR

He says the water isn't working. No one can do their ritual washing. He says his delegation may leave!

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Out-standing. (To the imam, holding his hand over his heart) My apologies sir. (To Samir) Tell the imam we will fix this. (Looking to Brown) No time for a plumber, even if we could find one. What are our options?

BROWN

There are pallets of bottled water in the loading dock.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Great. (beat) No power, no elevator. We'll take the stairs.

BROWN

Ok. I'm on it.

MATIAS

Eddie, you can't carry those pallets up 10 stories.

BROWN

(Just stairs back with an arched eyebrow.)

MATIAS

That will take forever.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

She's strong. Rangers lead the way.

Hoyt strides off, Brown close behind. Matias grudgingly follows. Samir explains the plan to the imam who is placated but concerned.

CUT TO:

INT - STAIRWELL - AFTERNOON

Hoyt, Brown, Matias, and Samir haul boxes of bottled water up a dark and grimy stairway. Trash litters the corners. The group sweats profusely as they climb.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Eddie, you take this floor. (To Matias and Samir) You two take floors 8 and 9. I'll take the 10th.

Matias's face is flushed and he's out of breath.

MATIAS

Sure.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Well done, soldier. Two more trips should do it.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED DINING ROOM - NIGHT

After prayers, the delegates reconvene for dinner in a once grand dining room. They face each other once again at a long but narrow table, uncomfortably close. Hoyt and White sit at the center of the table, with an exhausted Sheikh Fatah and Imam Abbas on either side. Tacky pictures of landscapes adorn the walls and a chandelier with missing pieces hangs above. Dressed in a fresh clerical shirt and jacket, Hoyt stands to address the dinner.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Welcome back. Please find a seat.

As the delegates sit down, White struggles to stand, pushing up with his cane.

WHITE

Friends, it has been a long day, a heated day. But let us break bread together in friendship. We are on a holy mission to beat swords into plowshares. And as I like to say,

"when we meet, we eat."

Around the room the men nod in agreement. The food is brought out by a ragtag set of waiters.

MATIAS

(in a low voice)

Mike, the chicken is raw.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Kitchen problems. Just eat it and smile. You probably won't be sick until after the conference.

MATIAS

Okay.

Matias takes a bite and forces a smile. A Sunni delegate next to Imam Abbas pokes the chicken suspiciously.

SUNNI IMAM

Imam Abbas, the chicken is not cooked.

IMAM ABBAS

God has protected us this far...

Imam Abbas looks up and makes eye contact with Sheikh Fatah, who is clearing thinking the same thing. They smile simultaneously and each take a bite of chicken.

SHEIKH FATAH

(Loudly to the room)

Can the Americans make our *stomachs* bullet proof?!

There is a pause. Sunnis and Shias look across the table at each other, not knowing if they can share in the joke. All have slight smiles. You hear chuckling from both sides.

IMAM ABBAS

If Sadr doesn't kill us, this chicken might.

Another pause. More eye contact with smiles made across the table. Suddenly someone snorts, which triggers an outpouring of laughter. The tension is broken. Sunnis and Shias begin to talk to each other.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED LOBBY - NIGHT

It's late at the end of the first day. Security sweeps the premises with a bomb sniffing dog. The lobby is deserted, except for Hoyt and Brown talking with several armed U.S. ARMY SOLDIERS, while White, Matias, and Samir have a separate conversation several feet away.

COLONEL RICHMOND

Chaplain, we're getting a lot of chatter about this meeting. Al-Qaeda knows something's up. We gotta wrap this up tomorrow.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

What? A day early?

COLONEL RICHMOND

Decision's been made.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

That's not possible. This takes time-

RICHMOND

Sorry. Intel says cut it short.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We can't create a coalition of the willing overnight. How long did the Anbar Awakening take?!

COLONEL RICHMOND

We can't guarantee security for more than another 24 hours. The noose is tightening.

Hoyt hangs his head as he sighs and nods.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Understood.

Colonel Richmond leaves. Hoyt is left to ponder what to do.

BROWN

Now what sir?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

We push ahead and pray.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED HOTEL ROOMS - EARLY MORNING

As the sun rises, the call to prayer can be heard outside the hotel. Hoyt and White are kneeling together, eyes tightly closed in silent prayer. Iraqi Christian clergy are with them. One floor below, Sheikh Fatah is leading his fellow Shia imams in morning prayers. They bow repeatedly towards Mecca as he says a prayer in Arabic. Another floor down, Imam Abbas is leading the same prayer with the Sunnis.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

As the men take their seats, Hoyt pulls Imam Abbas and Sheikh Fatah aside. They huddle near the wall.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Gentlemen, we can't stay here much longer. New security threats overnight. If an announcement's going to be made, it must be tomorrow.

Imam Abbas and Sheikh Fatah nod their understanding.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

The enemy is no longer across the table. Now the enemy is time.

CUT AWAY:

EXT - BAGHDAD - DAY

A montage of the Young Jihadi directing militants to set up a mortar fire base somewhere in Baghdad. Older women are seen crying over dead sons after an attack. Elsewhere, terrorists strap on suicide belts.

CHAPLAIN HOYT (V.O.)

Peace doesn't happen overnight but we can at least start a process.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Each of you select a few men to draft a statement of peace. While they work, the rest will tackle other issues.

CUT AWAY:

INT - AL RAHEED HOTEL - DAY

A montage shows debates occurring in the main conference room. In a side room, Imam Abbas and Sheikh Fatah focus on a document, with other imams in turbans and keffiyehs hovering around. White and Hoyt actively participate in both discussions.

IMAM ABBAS (V.O.)

We have come this far...

SHEIKH FATAH (V.O.)

God willing, we will make a breakthrough.

IMAM ABBAS (V.O.)

Allah, make us stronger than our enemies.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Amen.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED HOTEL LOBBY - EVENING

An exhausted Hoyt and White sit with Brown and Samir on worn couches in the dim lobby. A document sits on a table before them. Matias is asleep in a nearby chair. Sunnis with their keffiyehs, Shias with their turbans, and Christians in their vestments talk and laugh behind them. Progress has been made.

WHITE

The "Iraqi Inter-Religious Accords."
In all my years here, I never thought
I'd see Sunni and Shia join together
to denounce violence.

Hoyt leans over and puts his reading glasses on.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

(low whistle)

Boy howdy, this is big.

WHITE

And everyone signed it! I'm
gobsmacked.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

The press conference will be first
thing tomorrow morning. AL-RUBIE is
coming with Maliki's endorsement. EU
ambassadors will attend. Ambassador
Smith from our embassy.

WHITE

Ah, your State Department cheerleader.

Hearing White's sarcasm, Hoyt cracks a wry smile.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Sheikh Fatah and Imam Abbas will give
opening remarks. Let's pray they stay
on point. I'll keep out of the
picture, but Canon, you will stand
with the Christian clergy.

WHITE

It will be an honor.

CUT TO:

EXT - AL RASHEED HOTEL - MORNING

Scores of SUVs arrive to the hotel entrance. Heavily armed
U.S. soldiers with Oakleys and body armor ominously watch
over all the commotion next to Iraqi soldiers wearing ski
masks. Various security contractors frisk Westerners and
Arabs, searching their bags, using metal detector wands. The
noise of helicopters circling overhead is ever present.
Journalists lug microphones and cameras. Chaos.

CUT TO:

EXT - UNKNOWN LOCATION - MORNING

Young Arab men with scraggly beards run towards a rundown
one-story warehouse. The windows are broken, and the walls
are pocket marked from gun fire. A burned-out truck sits near
an open garage door, a broken heavy machine gun in its
flatbed pointing towards the ground. Two sinister looking men
stand over the garage door on the roof, carrying AK-47s. One
is on a cell phone. A man at the door with an AK slung over
his back nods as each young man enters.

INT - WAREHOUSE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

In the dimly lit bomb making factory, several tables are lined up in a row with deconstructed rockets and mortar rounds, wires, and batteries. The young men hustle past the tables to the far side of the warehouse, where two large delivery trucks are being carefully loaded with crates. The young men are handed AK-47s and climb into the back of the truck. The door is pulled down.

TERRORIST

Adhhab alan! Adhhab alan! (He waives the trucks forward, signaling for the trucks to pull out fast.) Allah akbar! Allah akbar! (Holds both hands up in the air in a kind of salute.)

The trucks speed out. In the distance sits a heavily damaged mosque with two minarets - the remnants of Samarra Mosque.

EXT - STREET OUTSIDE OF SAMARRA MOSQUE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

SUPERIMPOSE: SAMARRA, SOUTHERN IRAQ

The two trucks pull to the side of a large road and park in the shadows of a five-story apartment building a block from the damaged Samarra Mosque. The streets are quiet. In the distance, a group of Iraqi soldiers lazily mill around in front of a closed iron gate. They look sleepy and bored. Several begin to talk and look at their watches. It's time for the shift change, but the replacement guards have yet to arrive. Several just walk off, leaving only two. The trucks restart their engines and drive towards the gate.

EXT - SAMARRA MOSQUE GATE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

GUARD 1 sees the trucks approaching. He walks towards them, waiving his hands down, signaling them to stop. The second guard leans against the guardhouse, unconcerned.

GUARD 1

Tawaquf. Tawaquf. (Waiving down the driver.)

The trucks slow to a stop. GUARD 1 walks to the driver's side of the first truck while GUARD 2 continues to lean against the guard house on the passenger side. He's not paying attention. Both the truck driver and the passenger roll down their windows at the same time.

Before either guard can react, both are shot several times.

The passenger jumps out of the first truck and pushes the gate open. He doesn't move the bodies. The backs of both trucks open and a dozen men with AK-47s spill out. The trucks zoom ahead, each heading towards a different minaret. The terrorists fan out across the interior courtyard, shooting anyone they see.

CUT TO:

INT - AL RASHEED BALLROOM - MORNING

Dignitaries find their seats in the ballroom. A podium up front holds multiple news microphones. Television cameras are set up in the middle of the room. Photographers sit on the floor by the front row. Hoyt talks to people near the door on the side. NSA Al-Rubaie enters with a coterie of aids. He hugs Hoyt, kissing him on each cheek, before sitting on the front row. Smith enters with the several European ambassadors. A frozen smile on her face, she and Hoyt exchange nods. Ambassadors sit on the front row. Hoyt moves to the back of the room.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Everyone's here. (looking at his watch) Showtime.

From stage right, the imams file in, Sunnis first and then Shia. The audience goes quiet. The clicking of cameras and flashing of lights fills the room. Sunnis with their keffiyehs to the left and Shia with the turbans on the right. Canon White with his cane follows with Iraqi Christian clergy on the far edge of the group. Sheikh Fatah and Imam Abbas approach the podium together.

SHEIKH FATAH

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate, we are here -- Shias, Sunnis, and Christians -- to announce the road towards peace has been opened. Today we issue the Iraqi Inter-Religious Accords. As the Prophet said, peace be upon him, "Fight in the cause of God those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression."

IMAM ABBAS

We stand here with one voice to denounce violence. God instructs us in the holy Quran to "vie one with another in virtue," and to "repel evil

with the most beautiful goodness."

Suddenly, a U.S. diplomatic security agent rushes to the front to Smith. He whispers in her ear. She stands and he hurriedly escorts her to the door. While the crowd murmurs, cell phones throughout the conference room start buzzing. Imams on stage pull their phones out of their robes. They read messages and whisper to each other. Sheikh Fatah and Imam Abbas glance around in confusion. They each walk over to their respective groups. Hoyt in the back of the room pulls out his cell phone. His hand begins to tremble.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

Oh dear God no.

Sheikh Fatah and Imam Abbas have learned the horrible news - the rest of the Samarra Mosque was obliterated, and its two remaining minarets destroyed. They make eye contact. They come together in the space between the podium and in front of their imams. After sharing a few brief words, they look back to their imams. It is unclear if the good work will hold. This is a huge test, the worst-case scenario. They approach the podium together. Sheikh Fatah goes to the microphone. He speaks in a shaking voice, carefully choosing his words.

SHEIKH FATAH

As we have gathered here in peace, the holy mosque in Samarra was just bombed for a second time. Al-Qaeda terrorists destroyed the two remaining minarets of the holiest shrine in Shia Islam.

An audible gasp erupts from the audience. Loud murmuring heard. Imam Abbas steps forward to the microphone.

IMAM ABBAS

This is wrong. (beat) This is haram, a sin! I, with the support of my Sunni brothers behind me, denounce this act of terror! We say to Al-Qaeda you are not our religion! You are the kafirs, the apostates!

The SUNNI IMAMS behind him shake their head in agreement, the ANGRY SUNNI IMAM most vigorously. Sheikh Fatah steps back to the microphone.

SHEIKH FATAH

I call on my fellow Shias to take no action against Sunnis. Do not return violence with violence! It is not your

Sunni neighbors who did this. It is the apostates of Al-Qaeda! And they will answer to Allah for it!

The SHIA IMAMS now nod in agreement.

IMAM ABBAS

Peace is the only way to save our country. We must turn away from the apostasy of violence. I urge reconciliation between Shias, Sunnis, and the other religious minorities in Iraq!

With that, journalist hands shoot into the air, all yelling their questions. Sheikh Fatah and Imam Abbas answer together. White, with the Christian clerics, looks pleased. He catches Hoyt's eye and they share a smile across the room. As the press conference continues, Hoyt slips out. A JOURNALIST sees him and puts her microphone up to ask a question.

CHAPLAIN HOYT

(holding up his hand)

No comment. This is a day for Iraqis.

JOURNALIST

But the Samarra Mosque - do you have anything to say?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

What Al-Qaeda has done is evil. They are inciting Muslims against each other.

JOURNALIST

Will these Accords work?

CHAPLAIN HOYT

I pray they do. Peace is a fragile thing. (beat - looking at the imams) They've shown how the best of faith can defeat the worst of religion.

The view slowly pulls up out of the ballroom. The religious leaders continue to answer reporters' questions.

CUT TO:

EXT - BAGHDAD - DAY

An aerial view of Baghdad shows the tall AL RASHEED HOTEL

surrounded by security personnel everywhere, while smoke slowly rises in the distance and the hot morning sun beats down.

SUPERIMPOSE: AFTER THE ACCORDS AND MOSQUE BOMBING, GRAND AYATOLLAH AL-SISTANI AND FIREBRAND CLERIC MUQTADA AL-SADR ISSUED CALLS AGAINST REPRISALS. SUCH ATTACKS WERE 80% LOWER THAN IN PREVIOUS INCIDENTS. THOUSANDS OF LIVES WERE SAVED.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT - AL RASHEED HOTEL - DAY

The next day, conference over, the hotel is quiet. A few security guards lazily patrol the front of the hotel. Suddenly there is a shrieking sound and an explosion. Bodies are thrown everywhere.

SUPERIMPOSE: SECURITY THREATS TO THE CONFERENCE WERE CORRECT. THE DAY AFTER, A MORTAR ATTACK ON THE AL RASHEED HOTEL HIT THE ENTRANCE AND KILLED SEVERAL IRAQI SECURITY GUARDS.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT - SMALL MOSQUE IN BAGHDAD - DAY

The ANGRY SUNNI IMAM enters a small mosque with a group of imams. After the door closes, a huge explosion is heard inside, and the windows are blown out. Crying is heard from within. The JINGLE of broken glass hangs in the air.

SUPERIMPOSE: ONE WEEK LATER, SUNNI DELEGATES FROM THE CONFERENCE WERE ASSASSINATED BY AL-QAEDA WHEN SHARING ABOUT THE ACCORDS WITH OTHER IMAMS. A CEILING BOMB KILLED 13 LEADERS.

FADE TO BLACK

The sound of JINGLING broken glass transitions to wind CHIMES in the breeze--

SUPERIMPOSE: THE ACCORDS ESTABLISHED A FRAGILE PEACE BETWEEN SUNNIS AND SHIAS FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS. RECONCILIATION ENDED WHEN THE UNITED STATES WITHDREW AND PRIME MINISTER MALIKI ARRESTED KEY SUNNI LEADERS IN 2011. THE RISE OF ISIS IN 2014 AND THEIR OCCUPATION OF MUCH OF IRAQ DESTROYED WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE ACCORDS.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPERIMPOSE: CHAPLAIN HOYT LEFT IRAQ IN SEPTEMBER 2007 AND
RETIRED IN 2011 AS A FULL COLONEL. THE ARCHBISHOP OF
CANTERBURY ORDERED CANON WHITE OUT OF IRAQ IN 2014. HE
CONTINUES RECONCILIATION WORK FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM.

FADE OUT