

Mi'raj*

Nisha Abdulla

CHARACTERS

TARIQ	20 year old boy
IJAZ	Tariq's best friend. Also 20 years old
SHIFA	Tariq's mother. Mid 40s
ALAM	Tariq's father. Mid 40s
FAIZ	Mosque administrator. Late 30s
AMIT	MEA Investigation Officer Late 30s
ZUHAIR	Daesh Member. Mid 30s
RABIA	Mystic
BURAQ	Tariq's steed
MOURNERS	
PROTESTORS	
CAPTIVES	

ACT I

SCENE 1

Recitation of mourning verses from the Quran heard. Lights. Mourners are gathered around a body. IJAZ sits with them. Enter TARIQ and SHIFA. SHIFA goes over to sit by the women mourners. TARIQ goes over to IJAZ and sits down next to him in silence for a while. Finally, TARIQ speaks softly.

TARIQ	How did this happen?
IJAZ	We got a call from the station... last night... They're saying he hung himself in the cell.
TARIQ Shafi.	I can't believe he would do it ... Someone else maybe... but not
IJAZ	He didn't do it. He knows it's the worst sin. How did you know?
TARIQ	Faiz Bhai called Ammi.
IJAZ	He's been with us throughout... he visited Shafi every day in the station since they took him.
TARIQ	I'm sorry I couldn't come earlier.
IJAZ	Football?
TARIQ	<i>(nods)</i> Coach was asking about you. Actually... he's been asking everyday this last week. He's worried about the finals... our defence is a mess without you... <i>(Speaks excitedly. SHIFA shushes him)</i>

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Of course, he doesn't know about all this... and I wasn't sure how much to tell him...

Beat.

IJAZ It's like he's smiling... look.

TARIQ Was he... I mean... when you saw him for the rituals... did he have...

IJAZ You mean was he tortured? I cleaned him myself... the marks... the blood...
(He raises his voice)
They did this... They killed him! Just pulled him out of his home at midnight and tortured him! For forwarding a bloody video?

*The mourners are disturbed by IJAZ's shouting.
SHIFA signals to TARIQ who pulls IJAZ away to the side.*

TARIQ Ijaz... you'll just upset them more.

IJAZ *(staring at Shafi's body, unable to look away even as TARIQ tries to make him)*
He was like my brother. How many more will there be? Who will speak for us?

TARIQ Did you know the police are outside? They're holding people back. Ammi had to get Faiz Bhai to step in.

IJAZ What?
(Goes to the window to check. Gets agitated on seeing them)
Dogs... all of them. Now they'll stop our own people from seeing him?

SHIFA comes over.

SHIFA Ijaz... You're upsetting his mother. You must stay calm.

IJAZ Why should I? Last year they said Khaled was part of a sleeper and took him the same way. No one came to question that... He came out of police custody with both his legs broken and he still can't walk straight... and then the university riots... so many names were identified, but it's only our boys still stuck in jail...

TARIQ The police are saying they won't allow us to leave for the mosque until the crowd has dispersed!

IJAZ Let's see who stops us *(He rushes out, TARIQ stops him forcibly)*

TARIQ You're not going anywhere!

IJAZ They know they've gone too far this time... they're scared... That's why they are here... they're afraid of what we can do...

SHIFA Ijaz, please just calm down. You need to... There's so much to do here... Who else is here right now?

TARIQ Listen, this is beyond us now...

IJAZ They can't even respect our dead!

TARIQ You really can't get into all this now. If they were to take you next, then what about college? We're flying out in 2 weeks!

IJAZ'S body language changes abruptly. Gives TARIQ a cold stare.

IJAZ Shafi is dead! They killed him! Do you understand that? And you're thinking of your bloody college?

TARIQ All I'm saying is don't do anything stupid...

IJAZ *(Cuts him)* Like demand answers? For my brother? For all the others? Is that what you don't want me to do? I don't know why I expect you to understand...

TARIQ What is that supposed to mean?

IJAZ You call yourself my brother but when was the last time you stepped into this house... It isn't fancy enough for you, right? When did you last sit in my room?

TARIQ Stop talking nonsense.

IJAZ This is my world, Tariq. You don't understand any of this... You can still go on playing football and thinking of your American college. What will you do after we bury my brother? Will you stay with me? No... You don't have to deal with this shit. You get to escape.

TARIQ You're being an idiot.

SHIFA Stop it! Both of you! Have some respect, boys! This is a house of mourning.

IJAZ Tariq, come with me. We'll fight for Shafi. Out there...

SHIFA Ijaz!

IJAZ ... We have to respond to them blow for blow... we'll fight for Khaled, and everyone else like them...

SHIFA You're doing no such thing! Don't forget, Shafi's ammi has no one else to rely on... Don't start a scene outside. Just let Faiz and the rest handle it with the police

Exit SHIFA to go with the mourners.



SCENE 2

A group of protesters sit at the mosque grounds in peaceful protest. They hold placards ('Justice for Shafi', 'Shafi was murdered' etc.) There is loud sloganeering. IJAZ, TARIQ are in the group.

FAIZ steps up to the crowd who have become louder with their sloganeering. He addresses the crowd.

FAIZ Brothers! You raise your voice today not for mere land. Or comforts. No, you raise your voice today for dignity. Dignity for our brother Shafi who died at the hands of the ones who're meant to protect us. Dignity for us and our families. I suffer with you... I mourn with you. Your anger is real, your anger is justified. No one will dare deny that.

And, right now.... right now is the time to demand answers. Right now you need to put your own differences aside and come together. Come together to question the people who do this to our children. We must not let anger control us. The law is on our side, we have people who will fight for us here and in the corridors of power. We only need to stay calm and make sure we keep demanding answers ... we only need to make sure that they don't get away with these deaths. The time for fists is not now. That will come... later.

Brothers, let me remind you of the words of our Rasool - Salallahu allayihi Wasallam. Even if people don't give you due respect, for Allah you are priceless and invaluable. No matter what indignities you suffer here, know that Allah watches over you, his precious.

Allah tells us to create a community who are guided by the Truth and act according to it. The truth is on our side and we will fight for it! Inshallah! We will win this fight! Khuda Hafiz.

The crowd echoes the call.

Sound of police van driving up and a bullhorn announcement to disperse. The group is in confusion but rally together. The police soon lathi charge them. Mini stampede, much confusion. In this both TARIQ and IJAZ get injured. In trying to escape TARIQ and IJAZ run, and in this act, get separated.

SCENE 3

Transitions into the living room of the Rizvi home. SHIFA is agitatedly searching for her phone. Just as she finds it and begins dialling, TARIQ walks in with FAIZ.

SHIFA Tariq! I can't believe you went for the protests. Have you gone mad? I told you to come home straight from football. Alhamdulillah Faiz! At least you brought him home... Please sit.

FAIZ Shifaji... it was just a small gathering, that's all...

SHIFA I don't want you involved in all this nonsense...

TARIQ I thought you would understand why I went

FAIZ Tariq, just go and change... Shifaji, see...

SHIFA sees scrapes on TARIQ'S arm and cuts him off.

SHIFA What's this? This happened at the protest?

FAIZ Nothing to worry Shifaji... this is just a small bruise...

TARIQ That's Ijaz and his life. You know everything and still you call it nonsense.

SHIFA Ya Allah... put some sense into him... Fighting on the street like this!

FAIZ No no... it was completely peaceful.

TARIQ We weren't fighting on the street! We were demanding answers to what happened to Shafi. The police had no right to lathi charge us!

SHIFA I am sick and tired of hearing this! If Abbu were to find out!

TARIQ Ammi... I thought you would understand... You know so many of them in that colony... you help so many of them with the work you do. You're always saying that I have a responsibility to help because of everything Allah has given me... How Allah says that when our own brothers and sisters are unhappy there is no reward for us in heaven?

SHIFA All I'm saying is there are other ways to deal with all this...

TARIQ I never realised how little power we have to change things... It's scary, Ammi.

SHIFA Remember Allah stands by those who feel helpless, and he gives them his strength.

Enter ALAM. He looks at FAIZ first.

FAIZ Salamalaikum, Rizvi Sahab.

ALAM ignores FAIZ completely.

ALAM You went for the protest didn't you? I knew you wouldn't have listened. I came straight over when I heard about the lathi charge...

TARIQ The police were brutal, Abba. We can't even carry out a peaceful march?

ALAM Was it all peaceful? I heard speeches were made...
(gestures to FAIZ as he says this) That too In front of the police...

FAIZ Rizvi Sahab, you heard right. The people have a right to demand answers.

TARIQ There wasn't anything wrong in what he was saying... It's the truth! We can't be asked to keep quiet when boys are taken and tortured without proof... without trial.

ALAM *(To Tariq)* Don't believe everything you hear. It's easy to play the role of the victim.

FAIZ Are you saying that we've been lying?

ALAM I'm speaking to my son. If your business here is done, you may leave.

SHIFA Alam, Faiz is the one who brought Tariq over.

ALAM He's also the one who probably got Tariq to lie to us and go for the protests in the first place.

TARIQ What rubbish, Abba... I can decide for myself... You think I can't see what is happening around me?

FAIZ I only brought him over myself because Shifaji requested me to.
(*To Shifa*) I think it's best I see you at the mosque. Salamalaikum.
(*To Tariq*) Thank you for coming today. You stood with us for Shafi, we won't forget it.

ALAM Don't expect him to come back.

FAIZ ignores this and leaves the home.

TARIQ You didn't have to treat him so badly.

ALAM You don't know these types, Tariq.

SHIFA There was really no need for all that, Alam. He came because I insisted that Tariq must not have to come back alone. Now how will I face him again? As it is everyone's always saying Rizvi Sahab has no time for anything other than his business...

ALAM Don't expect me to ever make time for the likes of him. He's just one of the many cartoons that live off the mosque and its funds.

TARIQ Abba, you don't know the whole story... The press, they've been only been telling half of it. They completely ignore the police and their brutality when it comes to us!

ALAM Us? Don't talk nonsense. And don't get too excited about all of this. You're flying out in 2 weeks... Focus on that.

TARIQ What's gotten into you, Abba? How can you purposely blind yourself to what's happening right in front of you?

ALAM This has nothing to do with us. We didn't raise you to be involved with these types... so many of them are bearded fanatics... Allah alone knows what they're up to! There are things you don't understand, Tariq. They're looking for naïve boys like you...

TARIQ I'm not being naïve! It's happening to Ijaz today... Tomorrow it could easily be me!

ALAM Never, Tariq. You need to understand this. No matter how far anyone dreams of going, they'll be limited by their background... their family... their culture... They can only aspire for what's reasonable. Can Ijaz as defender ever hope to score a goal? You understand? He can't seem to see beyond his reality... even though we gave him that chance... even though it would have been smarter to. If I were him, I would quietly get out of here. Leave all this behind. Give people a chance to forget that my name was dragged into this mess.

They're interrupted by TARIQ's phone ringing.

TARIQ Faiz Bhai... What happened?
(Reacts sharply) I'm coming!

SHIFA What happened? *(Stops him from rushing out)*

TARIQ They've arrested Ijaz, Ahmed and some of the others...

ALAM Why the hell did he call you? You're not going anywhere.

TARIQ Abba, please don't do this. I have to go.

SHIFA Go there and do what exactly?

TARIQ Ijaz has been arrested. We need to do something.

ALAM Tariq, please listen to me. If anything were to happen, the university can cancel your admission...

TARIQ What about Ijaz, Abba? He got admission too.

ALAM Yes, and this is how he pays me back for all the money I've supported him with... The only reason he has this chance is because of us... and just look at how he takes it for granted.

TARIQ They murdered Shafi! And all you can think about is college.

SHIFA We can postpone the admission to next semester also right? Maybe now is not the best time? Yes, that's what we should be considering...

ALAM *(cuts her)* Nothing is going to get postponed.

SHIFA Alam, I think we should at least be discussing the option!

ALAM Stop it Shifa, don't be foolish. This is settled.

TARIQ Ammi is right... I never said I wanted to go... You simply gave me these options and said apply.

ALAM So now that's the problem? That I gave you the best options? Do you know what options I had? This packaging business that we all live on didn't build itself... I began working when I was 15.

TARIQ Don't keep throwing that emotional shit at me.

SHIFA Tariq! Watch what you're saying.

TARIQ And what is he saying?

Beat.

Goes over to Alam and squats beside him as a peace offering.



- TARIQ Abba... You can do so much to help here... just call the commissioner and tell him it's all a mistake. That's all. Or Minister Kishore? You could call him too...
- ALAM *(sighs)* It's not that simple. I don't want them thinking I'm a supporter of all this violent stuff. It's bad for business.
- SHIFA There must be something we can do which could help Ijaz...
- TARIQ Abba please... For me. Please. Do it for me.
- ALAM You're being unfair, Tariq. You're asking me to do something I don't want to do because it suits your purpose...
- TARIQ I need you to do this one thing.
- ALAM And I need you to go off to college as planned next week. For me, Tariq... I don't want you to be involved in all this.
- TARIQ is silent. ALAM places his hand on TARIQ'S head.*
- ALAM Do this for me, please.
- Beat.*
- TARIQ Fine. I'll leave next week as planned. You just get Ijaz out and convince him to join me in the next batch... you'll do that?
- ALAM gets up and pulls TARIQ into an excited hug.*
- ALAM I'll take care of everything... Trust me.

SCENE 4

*TARIQ is slumped at his desk, excitedly rings IJAZ.
IJAZ is packing his bag. Picks up phone in anger.*

IJAZ What do you want?

TARIQ Ijaz? It's me... I'm calling from Michigan. Ammi said they let you go! I'm so relieved
Ijaz... I've been so worried!

IJAZ Yes. There were people around who cared after all.

TARIQ Abba told me he would take care of things. He promised me before I left.

IJAZ *(laughs)* Of course he did. He would have wanted his precious little boy out of here.

Beat.

TARIQ Have you met him? He said he'll help you figure out the winter admissions.

IJAZ Mashallah... you can be so clueless. I need to go, Tariq. Salamalaikum.

TARIQ Wait... Wait! What's with you? What do you mean clueless?

IJAZ What do you think? I waited for your Abba to do something... Abbu kept telling me Alam Bhai promised he'll figure something out. Bull shit. He did nothing. Faiz Bhai and Abbu ran around getting me out.

TARIQ No no... I spoke to him before he left. He said everything was discussed with the commissioner. He even made sure no official records remain... He took care of everything, Ijaz.

They're face to face now.

IJAZ I don't have time for these illusions of yours.

TARIQ Are you telling me he did nothing?

IJAZ *(laughs)* Of course you don't believe me.
Why would the great Alam Rizvi lie to his son?

Enter ALAM.

(Chronologically, this is a conversation TARIQ and ALAM has after Tariq has spoken to IJAZ.)

ALAM What do mean by that question? Look, Tariq... I did what I could.

TARIQ *(To Alam)* You did nothing!
(To Ijaz) I'm sorry Ijaz... I trusted him to do it. I had no idea.

IJAZ I need to go *(Begins packing)*

TARIQ *(To Alam)* He was supposed to be here with me!
(To Ijaz) You're coming for the next semester, right?

IJAZ Are you mad? You think I'll take your dad's charity after all this? I swear by Allah... one day I will throw all that money he gave me back on his face!

ALAM And he can. I'll still sponsor him because it means so much to you. But have you asked him what he wants? He hasn't bothered to come speak to me about college. I'm told he hangs around with those mosque types now...

IJAZ Stop forcing this to happen... I don't fit into your world

TARIQ You spent half your life in my house!

IJAZ That's exactly my point. I was fooling myself... I kept thinking I was better than my own people...

ALAM You must understand, these things change people. Ijaz has been through a lot... Maybe someday he'll be fine. You please focus on your classes, Tariq. Please.

Exit ALAM.

TARIQ Are you going to let this one thing change your entire life? Just let it go, Ijaz.

IJAZ 42 days. 42. Can you imagine what it was like? It felt like a few years. It felt like...hell. Like... being in a coffin. There were walls all around me. I couldn't even stretch my hands fully. And not one speck of light. Do you know what it's like to stare with your eyes open in pitch darkness. For days... just stare. Every moment I was awake I felt as though the walls would just collapse on me and I would die screaming in pain.

Beat.

TARIQ I... I'm sorry... I should have been there...

IJAZ It was hell, Tariq. Every minute I was praying... It is some kind of miracle that I'm here, talking to you... so many others are still inside.

Beat

I really must go now, Tariq. There are things I need to do. I'm leaving in 2 days.

TARIQ Where are you going?

IJAZ Tariq, things have to change. They need to fear what we can do. Fear us.

TARIQ You're not making any sense.

Ijaz is silent.

TARIQ Ijaz? Where are you going?

IJAZ Someone came to see me the day I was let out. I have people who'll support me now... people who have plans for how to help us...

TARIQ Where are you going, Ijaz?

IJAZ Mosul.

TARIQ What? What do you mean?

TARIQ What?

BURQA Oh alright... I'm here to take you on a journey!

TARIQ I'm not going anywhere with you.

BURQA But you're here already...

TARIQ No No... I must get back. I'm all set to go meet Ijaz.

BURQA You're thinking of joining him on his journey.

TARIQ No! I mean...

BURQA Why are you confused?

TARIQ It is wrong what they do to us. It makes me want to fight back. It makes me want to protect those I love.

BURQA It also makes you want to feel protected?

Beat.

TARIQ Yes. Allah can protect me... my brother... my family.

BURQA That is good eh?

TARIQ Maybe. But it's difficult. I've been praying for protection, I've been reading, learning. There is so much to learn.

BURQA Yes. Much to learn and not many teachers. Who is teaching you?

TARIQ The Holy Book, of course.

BURQA Ah. It's complicated... The Book of Revelation reveals itself only to those who seek to question it.

TARIQ No No... I can only learn from it. I am not allowed to question it!

BURQA How will you learn if you do not question?

TARIQ It is God's word. To question it would be sin.

BURQA Is it? Or is it just something we're taught to believe?

TARIQ How would you know?

BURQA Ah... you mock me! I have met many who seek to question it.

TARIQ Are there really many to seek to question?

BURQA Many! I have helped them begin...

TARIQ Is that why you're here?

BURQA That depends on you.

TARIQ But why me?

BURQA Why not you? I am the winged vehicle of all seekers. I can take you as far as my eye can see...

TARIQ You said there are many like me... Who are these seekers?

BURQA You will find them as you journey on...

TARIQ Journey How? And where?

BURQA Patience, young one. Think of this as a journey similar to the one you were about to begin...

TARIQ I don't understand.

BURQA You will soon. But it is important that you begin now.

TARIQ But where do I begin?

BURQA One usually begins at the beginning (*silly laugh*)

TARIQ What?

BURQA Just go on... Don't be afraid. I'm right beside you...

TARIQ begins his journey.

Eventually, finds SHIFA. She is playing the oud.

TARIQ Ammi! I didn't think I would find you here.

SHIFA 'Here' is what you make of it, Taru.

TARIQ I didn't know you played.

SHIFA I'm still learning. (*Pause*)
Your naani used to teach me... long back.

TARIQ I didn't know she played! (*Pause*)
But I remember she loved to sing...

SHIFA You remember that?

TARIQ I wish I could remember more... Naani left too soon, Ammi. I wish she was still around.

SHIFA Yes... Come... There's somewhere you should be.

They jump into a memory. TARIQ is around 8 years old now.

TARIQ Ammi, my chance! I want to play now!

SHIFA tosses a pebble to TARIQ, and he begins to play. His foot comes down accidentally, but he sneaks a glance at SHIFA and continues to play. SHIFA sees this and begins to laugh.

SHIFA I saw that, you little cheater.

TARIQ Saw what, Ammi?

SHIFA Your foot! *(Tries to run and catch him)*

TARIQ I thought you didn't see!

SHIFA Even if I didn't see you, Allah would have. He is everywhere, remember. And the angel sitting here... on your left shoulder... he would have written it down in your books of bad deeds.

TARIQ No No... I want the angel on my this shoulder to write.

SHIFA But that angel writes only the good things you do...

TARIQ *(Sits in prayer position)* I'm sorry, Allah. I won't cheat again. Please ask Left Angel to stop writing. Ok thank you.

Beat

TARIQ Is he really everywhere?

SHIFA Yes, of course.

TARIQ Is he in this garden?

SHIFA Yes

TARIQ And in this pebble?

SHIFA Yes...

TARIQ In this fish?

SHIFA Yes yes...

They jump back into 'Now'. TARIQ continues to look back at the memory for a while.

TARIQ Memories are strange things, Ammi. They alter their meaning each time.

SHIFA As they should. What good are they if we cannot look back and learn from them?

TARIQ Will you teach me, Ammi? How to learn from my memories?

SHIFA It's easy, Taru. It's like playing this oud. You only need to know where to place your fingers.

TARIQ *(Sits. Placing a finger on the oud)* So this finger here?

SHIFA *(helping him)* Yes, and your thumb here.

TARIQ tries to play, but he finds it hard.

TARIQ This is more difficult than it looks. Memories slip away so easily.

SHIFA Yes, but you must keep trying. Some memories are worth the effort.

TARIQ tries again. SHIFA guides him.

TARIQ Ammi... I know where to go next! Come!

TARIQ grabs SHIFA's hands and quickly jumps into another memory. TARIQ is about 15.

SHIFA How could you Tariq?

TARIQ I told you I get bored there! They're just reciting one Surah after another

SHIFA So you play video games instead? At the mosque?

TARIQ What else do you expect me to do? I told you I don't want to come.

SHIFA You never come these days... at least during this Ramzan month, you must!

TARIQ Ammi, you're strange sometimes... You always say I should ask myself 'Why' when I do something. Why should I come to the mosque and listen to surahs I don't understand. How does that help me in any way?

SHIFA Unless you read them for yourself or at least listen to them, how would you know?
You're just being lazy, Taru.

TARIQ You can't force me like this... I'm not a child, Ammi.

SHIFA Only a child would play video games in the mosque! You want to be treated like an adult, start behaving like one.

TARIQ takes SHIFA's hands and jumps back in the Now.

SHIFA I'm surprised you chose that memory... it's not very pleasant.

TARIQ Ammi... I want you to know I'm trying to understand what Allah expects of me. These past few months have taught me so much. I feel lost sometimes but I also feel his words guiding me.

SHIFA Remember, these words you read in the Holy Book - they're only the beginning of your conversations with him. You must continue to talk to him.

TARIQ I don't know how to do that...

SHIFA *(looks at Rabia at a distance)* There are those who can show you... That is Rabia - she is one of our greatest teachers. She wrote beautiful poems to speak directly to Allah.

TARIQ Can't all this be simpler?

SHIFA It's not that difficult is it? When we say our prayers, isn't our surahs poetry? I must leave now... And you must continue on your journey.

TARIQ Will you come back?
SHIFA Only when you want me to.
Exit Shifa.

SCENE 6

ALAM and SHIFA sit in a guesthouse used by the MEA. They're both anxious. There are 2 cups of tea and some biscuits before them. Enter AMIT with some files and a tablet.

AMIT Mr and Mrs Rizvi... I'm Amit. Thank you both for coming in today.

ALAM smiles uneasily. SHIFA doesn't respond.

AMIT You haven't had your tea? It's Darjeeling Tea... your client!
Shifaji, please you seem uncomfortable. Nothing to get hassled about.

ALAM Officer Amit, if I may ask, what is this about?

AMIT Just some routine checks. I'm sorry I had to get official summons and all... thing is I couldn't get through your office at all Mr. Rizvi. They kept telling me you're travelling.

ALAM Yes. I've been busy.

AMIT Of course. So where were you?

ALAM Just some visits ... some new clients.

AMIT Of course. So where were you... exactly?

ALAM Bombay... I was in Bombay.

AMIT What about your son, Tariq? Where is he... exactly?

ALAM He is in Michigan. Studying.

AMIT That's right. Michigan. You speak to him everyday?

ALAM Whenever I can yes.

AMIT What about you Mrz Rizvi?

SHIFA stares at AMIT unable to answer.

ALAM We generally speak to him together.

AMIT Mrs Rizvi, when was the last time you spoke to Tariq?

SHIFA stares at AMIT unable to answer.

ALAM I think about a week ago.

AMIT I'm sure Mrs Rizvi can answer me herself.

SHIFA Like Alam said... About a week ago.

AMIT That's interesting. These are your call records - both your numbers. No incoming or outgoing to a US number for a while now. In fact, the last call made to a US number was Mrs Rizvi's about 7 weeks ago. Is that Tariq's number, Mrs Rizvi?

Both are quiet.

If you're wondering why I have your call records... The university reported him missing, Mr Rizvi. Yes, that's right.

SHIFA What do you mean missing?

AMIT Meaning he hasn't been reporting in to his classes. And the local police saw these Istanbul flight records and panicked. They reported the case to homeland security which means now the MEA is involved.

SHIFA Istanbul?

AMIT Funnily enough, there are some data calls here on your number which can be tracked to Mosul.

SHIFA reacts sharply

SHIFA Mosul?

AMIT Ah. So Mr Rizvi hasn't told you has he? Your son is now in Mosul, which is in Iraq. That is ISIS territory, Mrs. Rizvi. And we are aware of at least 2 calls he made to Mr. Rizvi.

SHIFA *(To Alam)* You said everything was alright! You said you were speaking to him... that he only lost his phone!

ALAM Shifa... I was trying to figure things out. Trying to get him to come back... I didn't want you to panic.

SHIFA How did he get there? I don't understand.

AMIT Ijaz Basheer is there too.

SHIFA What? His parents said he got a job in Kuwait.

AMIT Lies, Mrs Rizvi. They're both in Mosul.
SHIFA Alam, I don't understand... why would he...

AMIT Look, that's exactly why I'm involved. I need you to cooperate with us... both of you. There might be people Tariq met, or communicated with...

(Gets a call)

Yes, send him in.

Enter FAIZ.

AMIT Faiz Sahab, thank you for coming in today. I'm Officer Amit.

FAIZ I didn't know that I could refuse to.

FAIZ is shocked to find ALAM and SHIFA. They both remain quiet. FAIZ is confused.

AMIT I understand you're the mosque administrator

FAIZ That's right.

AMIT What exactly do you do there, Faiz Sahab?

FAIZ I handle daily affairs at the mosque... funds, charities, madrasa... things like that. What is this about exactly, Officer?

AMIT I'll come straight to the point, Faiz Sahab. What do you know about Tariq and Ijaz's disappearance?

FAIZ What? I don't understand... what do you mean disappearance?

AMIT I will repeat. What do you know about Tariq and Ijaz's disappearance?

FAIZ I don't know anything!

AMIT You know nothing?

FAIZ Why would I? They're not my sons.

AMIT You were in close contact with both of them. Ijaz has always helped out at the mosque and I understand Tariq became involved after that Shafi death case.

ALAM He got Tariq involved!

FAIZ So what if they were involved? We were demanding answers to what happened to Shafi. What does that have to do with this?

AMIT You made some passionate speeches, Faiz Sahab.

FAIZ I was appealing for calm. That's all.

AMIT If I may quote you "The time for fists is not now. That will come... later."

FAIZ You chose to pick the one line of my entire speech and twist it out of context. There was so little damage that day because our boys stayed calm ... even when you lathi charged us, we didn't go mad.

AMIT Clearly, something happened in the days after. You ran around getting Ijaz Basheer out of jail too...

FAIZ And why shouldn't I? His parents didn't have anyone else to turn to. (*looks pointedly at ALAM*) That boy was innocent. And so are all the others... some of them are still locked up!

AMIT Ijaz Basheer is in Iraq now, Faiz Sahab. Not so innocent now. Tariq Rizvi is with him too. We suspect both to have joined the ISIS.

SHIFA Faiz Bhai, did you have anything to do with this? Did you do this?

FAIZ Shifaji, what nonsense! You know exactly how I feel about all this... those devils there don't have anything to do with us!

AMIT Faiz, it would be better for all of us, and for those boys, if you would come to the truth quickly.

FAIZ You make me sick. You go by my beard and my job at the mosque and you accuse me of such sick things? You too, Shifaji?

AMIT No one is accusing any one right now. But if you know anything at all... if anyone has ever approached you with any kind of request, demand... now is the time to tell us.

FAIZ Whether I was approached or not is not the point here. The point is how you look at things, Officer Amit. Your sight itself is unreliable. All you people in uniforms ... the same everywhere! I know how you think! You cannot put this on me. I had nothing to do with any of this!

AMIT Don't get righteous with me, Faiz Sahab. We've had our eye on you for a while now. Your funds have been on the radar. Where it comes from and where it's going.

FAIZ Wherever it is going I'll answer you for that separately. You accuse me of being involved in this ISIS nonsense. Have you gone mad officer? Do you understand what you accuse me of? Without proof?

AMIT Faiz Sahab, It's only a matter of time before we find out who's involved in what.

ALAM Officer Amit, I think we're jumping to conclusions here. Yes, I admit Tariq called me... he told me he's in Iraq. But please... I'm so close to convincing him to come back. Please just give me a few more days... he'll come back and we can just forget this ever happened.

AMIT I don't believe you, Mr. Rizvi. You haven't spoken to him in at least 20 days... but in the meantime we found this.
(Opens his tablet and points to it)

 This is a video that has been doing the rounds in mosques and madrasas. A recruitment video from the ISIS... and it clearly shows both Ijaz and Tariq in training gear.

FAIZ watches the video. ALAM and SHIFA are too shocked to speak.

SCENE 7

*Mosul Training Camp.
Enter ZUHAIR.*

ZUHAIR Brothers, I have good news! We take possession of more weapons tonight.

Everyone - Inshallah.

 You leave after Asr prayers... it will take 6 hours to get there. Masood will go with you. And you must return by sunrise.
(Pointing to the map) Here, this is the town we go to.

TARIQ That's a border town?

ZUHAIR Yes. But few people live there now. The airstrikes have ruined them... like so many others.

TARIQ The Turkis of course...

ZUHAIR The Turkis bomb us now because they do not realise how much we can hurt them... They choose to side with the Americans!
(Pause)
Americans! They go to any country they want to... do whatever they want and it is our brothers and sisters who die to take their plans forward! But now we have a way to stop them. Inshallah. Thousands join us every month, my brothers...

IJAZ Inshallah! They will join us back home too. You have given us a way.

ZUHAIR It is our duty, my brother. A duty given by God to protect the lives and dignity of our fellow brothers. Look at what happened whenever we did not rise to protect our own in the years past... the infidels came and carved us up into pieces that suited them. Now many don't have a place in their own country. I know what that feels like.

IJAZ When Saddam lost power in Iraq?

ZUHAIR Yes. Those were strange times... No one knew what was happening... no one knew who wanted what... The new Shia government were of course American puppets... they came after us who were part of the Iraqi army. I had to escape overnight with Sheikh and some of the others.

IJAZ Brothers killing brothers... I will never understand this.

ZUHAIR You must! The Khilafat is the Sunni right. This is the strongest we have been for centuries. Us sunnis, we must stamp our authority on the Shias. If we do not, we risk losing everything to the real enemies, the oil hungry imperialists.

IJAZ It is not the same for us, Zuhair Bhai. Back home, our numbers are smaller. We cannot be divided. Sunni or Shia... we must come together in our fight.

TARIQ And we cannot ever hope to overthrow... like you did here... or in Raqqa.

ZUHAIR You don't worry about all that. Sheikh is very focused on your base. Our support to you is complete, my brothers. Fear not. We will celebrate our first victory in India soon, Inshallah!

IJAZ When will we get to meet Sheikh?

ZUHAIR Next week, Inshallah! Sheikh is a great teacher. You will learn much from him.

IJAZ It is complicated... this politics of war. I feel I must think ten steps ahead of the other side ...

ZUHAIR *(laughs)* It is worse than it sounds! You are my fellow brothers in arms. There is no shame in admitting that we are tested. These are long and difficult battles. Some things go wrong, but Allah is kind... You see there are things we must take upon ourselves to do... no matter how complicated or unpleasant the task is. In Gods path alone there is glory... It's only a matter of time.

ZUHAIR gets a call.

ZUHAIR What? No... No... we need that consignment! Hold your fire till we reach. We will all leave right now.

(To the group) Brothers, we leave now. Our weapons consignment has been captured! Come on!

SCENE 8

TARIQ, ZUHAIR and IJAZ drag the captives and line them up.

ZUHAIR Bloody Pigs! You dare to mess with our weapons!
(Spits) Kufr!
Your name! Quick! Tell me!

CAPTIVE 1 Hamdan

TARIQ You!

CAPTIVE 2 Saqeef

ZUHAIR *(Sniggering)* You're Hassan aren't you?

CAPTIVE 3 No! No! I'm Ahmed

ZUHAIR *(spits at them)* Dogs!

CAPTIVE 1 We just wanted the money... I swear... we thought we'll sell these...

ZUHAIR You were going to attack us with our own weapons!

CAPTIVE 2 No no... we haven't fed our families... we just needed the money.

ZUHAIR Filthy Kufr!

Captive 3 By Allah and his Prophet, we're Sunni. All of us.

ZUHAIR *(hits him with his assault rifle)* Liars!

IJAZ Zuhair Bhai, Is this necessary?

ZUHAIR It is very important to show these lying pigs their place. There is no place for their likes here.

TARIQ You think you can fool us?

CAPTIVE 1 I swear... we're sunni... we made a mistake... We were just trying to survive...

ZUHAIR *(Laughs gleefully)* So you're Sunni? Tell me then, how do you pray? Show me how.

TARIQ *(Laughs)* Yes, show us how!

The captives all continue to kneel, but now put their hands down on their stomach in prayer position.

TARIQ My brother is kind to you! Tell me how many times do you kneel for Maghrib?

ZUHAIR *(Laughs)* Yes, how many times?
IJAZ Aren't we going to take them to base?
TARIQ This is how you teach these Kufrs a lesson. Come on... tell me!
CAPTIVE 1 *(appeals to IJAZ)* By Allah and his Prophet, we are Sunni.
CAPTIVE 2 By Allah... We're just like you...
TARIQ Like us? You're filth! Tell me... quick! How many times?
CAPTIVE 3 *(Tries to feign calm)* 3

ZUHAIR and TARIQ both snigger.

CAPTIVE 2 4. It's 4 times for Maghrib.
TARIQ One says 3 and the other says 4? Are you sure it's not 5?
CAPTIVE 1 5! It's 5!
TARIQ And for Isha? How many then?

ZUHAIR and TARIQ continue to snigger.

*TARIQ takes out his phone, switches on the videocam, hands it to ZUHAIR.
TARIQ walks up to Captive3*

TARIQ Allah says - Fight against them as they fight against you.

Captive 3 I ask you in the name of Allah, spare our lives.

TARIQ I will be rewarded for killing you well. The Rasool, Salallahu Alayhi wasallam, he says 'when you kill, kill well, and when you slaughter, slaughter well'

Captive 3 Ya allah! Forgive them... they do not know what they say. They stain your memory with the blood of innocents - Nabi, Sallallahu alayhi wasallam, he said that of animal slaughter - 'When you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters'

TARIQ Animal is right! *(spits on him)* You want to teach me?

IJAZ Zuhair Bhai, they are people of the book too.

ZUHAIR They are people who've strayed from the Rasool and his most trusted ones!

IJAZ *(To Tariq)* If this was back home, I would have fought for them too... when we're beaten up and tortured no one asks us who is sunni and who is shia.
(To ZUHAIR) We do Eid namaz together with our Shia brothers every year. When we sacrifice our meat we share it with them.

ZUHAIR Ah.. he's playing with them! To give them hope when they least expect it... that was good my brother!

IJAZ is about to answer but TARIQ wants to stop him. He moves in front of Captive 1 and shoots him without warning.

TARIQ Allahu-Akbar!

This shocks IJAZ enough to stop talking.

ZUHAIR laughs, walks up to the Captive 2 and shoots him in the head too, while taking a video.

ZUHAIR Allahu-Akbar!

*TARIQ and ZUHAIR celebrate.
CAPTIVE 3 flinches but looks ahead stone faced.
TARIQ walks over to IJAZ.*

TARIQ Go on. This one is specially for you. You played with the pig... now send him to Shaitaan himself.

*IJAZ doesn't make eye contact with TARIQ.
ZUHAIR is still taking the video.
Finally, IJAZ walks over to CAPTIVE 3. He struggles to keep a stony face.*

IJAZ You are a believer. The Quran demands that I ask you your last wishes.

CAPTIVE 3 I see you, brother. Like I see myself. Please spare me. I have 2 beautiful children.

IJAZ I won't ask again.

Captive 3 Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raaji'un. We belong to God and to him we shall return. I only ask that you forgive yourself for what you will do now.

IJAZ raises his arm with reluctance, closes his eyes, and shoots Captive 3.

IJAZ Allahu-Akbar!

ZUHAIR and TARIQ come over and thump him on the shoulder.



SCENE 9

TARIQ's parallel journey continues.

RABIA I expected you to visit much earlier.

TARIQ You knew I would come?

RABIA Yes.

TARIQ I'm sorry I kept you waiting, Rabia. I think I was afraid.

RABIA Of me?

TARIQ Of what you could be.

RABIA "Have wings that feared ever touched the Sun, I was born when all I feared once I could love". You understand, don't you?

TARIQ I'm not sure I do.

RABIA You will soon, young one.

TARIQ How did you know I would come?

RABIA You're Tariq - the one who knocks. I knew you would come knocking on the door of your truth.

TARIQ Did you go knocking too?

RABIA Yes.

TARIQ To whom?

RABIA Oh but I didn't need a anyone... I didn't need a mosque or men... Prayer brought me to this altar that you now seek... an altar with no walls or names. I didn't know it then. But it was inside me... inside the words that came pouring out of me - "In my soul there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque, a church.... that dissolve in God."

TARIQ I don't understand... to dissolve in God?

RABIA To become his.

TARIQ To dissolve
(Pause)
It must be wonderful to be able to give in so completely. To immerse yourself in the love of one greater than yourself.

RABIA No one else but you and him.

TARIQ I doubt if I can do it. I feel as though there are too many things in the way... There are words from the holy book and there are voices of the ones who speak for it...

RABIA I didn't say it would be easy

TARIQ But it is. He gave us his words in a book. They were written to be obeyed. I fear his anger if I don't.

RABIA Reach out to your God with love, not fear. You must trust that He will reach out with love too.

TARIQ You confuse me with one more way to him. I must leave.

RABIA These questions are important. Ask those you trust.

TARIQ There is no one else to ask.

RABIA Not even your father?

TARIQ Abba would never understand! He doesn't believe enough.

RABIA Oh but he is the true believer. He swam back from the dark seas of disbelief. Only those who know those dark seas understand why it is important to swim there.

TARIQ I will not swim in the dark seas of disbelief. I will only move ahead.

RABIA Then I have nothing further to teach you.

*Exit RABIA.
TARIQ and BURAQ are about to continue.
He turns to leave but finds ZUHAIR.*

ZUHAIR You are such a find, Tariq! So sharp. So much passion.

TARIQ No ... I feel unprepared for all this.

ZUHAIR You must not hesitate.

TARIQ I've been reading, listening... learning... But it never seems enough. No matter what I do, I will disappoint in some way.

ZUHAIR You make it difficult for yourself. It's easier to let others tell you the truth.

Enter ALAM. ALAM and ZUHAIR cannot see each other.

ALAM Do not disappoint me, Tariq.

TARIQ I have so many questions. Where do I begin?

ALAM You need to go back to where you came from.

ZUHAIR You've come so far. And you can see the power that lies ahead.

TARIQ I have a responsibility.

ALAM To the ones who love you, yes... to me and Ammi.

TARIQ Stop telling me what to do! I have the power to make a difference in the lives of so many around me! I'm finally finding out what's important to me.

ZUHAIR This journey that you are on has marked you for greatness. You will not fail in your chosen path.

TARIQ I choose to defend Allah and his world.

ALAM Allah needs no defence. It is your arrogance that makes you think you can defend him. You reduce him to your level of existence... to your need for validation.

TARIQ His greatest defender was The Rasool - his true messenger. 'And fight in the Way of Allah those who fight you'...

ALAM Bismillahi Rahmanir Raheem - Every sura in the Quran begins with this 'In the name of Allah, most gracious most merciful.' Yet you choose the verse that allows you to fight and kill. And for what?

TARIQ Why do you ignore that the Rasool took up the sword to defend Allah's people?

ALAM Ah yes... The great Warrior Prophet. The one who wielded the sword himself. And now thousands take it up in his name. I can assure you Allah will not live in your heart if you blindly use that as an excuse to kill.

ZUHAIR There are those who will pull you back to a belief of convenience, Tariq. Stay strong!

TARIQ This is a state of war we're in!

ALAM Today everything is viewed as a war on Allah! Everyone wants to become a martyr.

TARIQ What would you know about any of this? You've only ever lived for yourself! It is people like you who make us weak. People who choose a belief of convenience. And now you can't take the fact that I have chosen the path of truth.

ALAM Tariq, listen to me... Allah gave you the gift of choice. Allow yourself to doubt. These are mere words in a book... Ask yourself what is the truth. Don't let others define it for you. Right or wrong, at least it is your truth...

ZUHAIR Your intentions are pure. Trust them!

TARIQ Doubts make us weak. There's no place for it here.

ALAM Faith and doubt are brothers, Tariq... They both arise from the need to take your God with you. If your faith is true, you will always question.

ZUHAIR You have done well. You belong with us.

TARIQ *(To Alam)* I have made my choice. I'm ready to move ahead now.

ACT II
SCENE 10



ALAM finds SHIFA silently weeping in Tariq's room, surrounded by his clothes. He hesitates. Turns to leave. Stops. Turns around and watches her again. Finally...

ALAM Why do you do this to yourself?

SHIFA struggles to to regain her composure

ALAM It's been more than a year, Shifa. Why do you keep going to the madrasa?

SHIFA They're young, ALAM. There is so much they can do.

ALAM It's taking too much out of you, Shifa.

SHIFA I don't do much... I only show them the possibilities. All the ways in which they can find meaning in their lives... to be with family, to help the community...

ALAM You will never see it, will you?

SHIFA *(sighs)* ALAM, not today... please.

ALAM This stubborn refusal to look beyond our small worlds, that is the problem... We should be telling them to go out there... make friends with those who don't look like you, or eat like you... start a business together... like I did, with a Hindu partner.

SHIFA Your answer is always to change ourselves. Always us.

ALAM Why not us? So many people stuck in the past... We must live in the today!

SHIFA So we trade in 'who we are' for that? You have always found it easy to live in the middle... in some state of doubt... but

children need to know they can place their trust in something bigger than themselves - they can trust in God... in their Allah.

ALAM What did trust in God give us? Every time you teach them to work for a better future, Tariq's absence becomes more real. You can't take this burden on yourself.

Beat

SHIFA I replay everything we ever did with him... every little thing we ever said to him...that he said to us... something somewhere should make some sense right?

Pause.

But I might be able to stop others. Bright young boys and girls.

ALAM Why must they be stopped?

SHIFA What do you mean?

ALAM Why must they not destroy themselves? Why must they be allowed to live this life of hope when my son can't?

SHIFA Alam!

ALAM He took on their fight. He had everything and he threw it away for them. He threw us away for them.

SHIFA That's because you refused to step in!

ALAM Don't bring that up again. You know my hands were tied... what more could I have done?

SHIFA You cannot fool me, Alam. You did nothing! You watched while Tariq cried for his brother and you did nothing to save him!

ALAM I'm sorry... I keep telling you I'm sorry...

There's a knock on the door and AMIT's voice is heard.

AMIT Rizvi Sahab? Shifaji? Are you inside? I'm coming in...

ALAM tries to calm down. Goes to get AMIT.

ALAM SHIFA... We have...

AMIT *(Cuts ALAM)* Shifaji, I hope I'm not interrupting.
(Looks around)
Tariq's room looks exactly as I remember it... it's been more than a year.

SHIFA We haven't seen you in a while...

AMIT I needed some help from you Shifaji.
Rizvi Sahab, if that is ok with you.

ALAM nods curtly.

AMIT Thank you.
Shifaji... your work in the outreach program at the madrasa is very important. The children in the community know you, and respect you... they know Tariq's story and then they hear things from his mother. I cannot thank you enough.

ALAM She won't be doing it for long. It's too stressful.

SHIFA Please ignore him.

AMIT Of course, it is your choice... But today you must come with me... There's a boy. He's only 22. He was caught on his way to Turkey, we suspect he would have met people there to slip him into Syria. We need to know certain things... We have our ways of course... but I thought we could try a different approach. If you could maybe come and speak to him? Just a conversation that's all. I'll be with you all the time...

ALAM You think Tariq is involved in recruiting him? We haven't heard from him. It's been months. But you know that... You are of course listening in.

AMIT It's possible Ijaz or Tariq is involved, yes...

ALAM He's still out there. I know he is.

AMIT Yes. I'm sure he is.

ALAM He is still out there. Or I would have known.

AMIT Yes I'm sure... Wait... Are you still watching all those videos? Rizvi Sahab, you will drive yourself crazy... I'm warning you. Stay away from those websites. You'll find nothing pleasant in there. And certainly nothing pleasant about Tariq.

ALAM What else is there...

AMIT Focus on your business. Basheer tells me you barely go to the factory now?

ALAM I'm getting old... can't work that hard. There are others who can... let them do it. Tariq was supposed to take over... he would have been halfway through this post grad program by now... Maybe when he returns... Did you know they cancelled my club membership?

AMIT You could have fought it... you know that of course.

ALAM Why should I? I had stopped going months before they asked me.

Beat

AMIT Shifaji, would you be able to...

SHIFA *(cuts)* Our niece is getting married.

AMIT That's great...

SHIFA *(cuts him)* She's Tariq's age... Much too young to get married. But they won't listen to what we have to say now.

AMIT good. Even then, you must participate. Go... celebrate... it will do you good.

SHIFA We have been warned to stay away. They're right, of course. We're an embarrassment. We cannot celebrate. We must mourn... Mourn our own deaths... the living dead...

Pause.

He calls less and less now. But that's a good thing... I can't bear to talk to him. He sounds like my Taru... but that's all I recognise... just that voice. The way he speaks now... the words he says... they don't belong to him.

The last time he called, he asked me to throw his music collection. Says he knows better now. Imagine that, Alam. Taru... who had those things glued to his ears all day long.

SHIFA begins to take Tariq's clothes from piles in the room and goes on to fold them one by one.

- AMIT You couldn't have known. I have seen worse, Shifaji. You did everything right.
- ALAM Of course we did. That boy had to go ruin everything! He is responsible for what has become of my Tariq. It's my fault. I should have kept them where they belonged.
- SHIFA Who else should have known? I have failed in the one task I was given. I couldn't take care of my own son.
- AMIT Shifaji, would you be...
- ALAM *(cuts)* I've been reading... It's possible... They come back. They... may ... come back.
- AMIT Yes, of course... it is possible.
- ALAM But you people are there to make sure they won't, right?
- AMIT I don't understand...
- ALAM I've been talking to people.
- AMIT Oh? What have these "people" been telling you?
- ALAM You would rather let these boys rot there than get them back... back to their homes... Here, they can't be trusted. Security Risk. Right? What if the return is a ploy... to activate some kind of plan here? Isn't that right, Amitji?
- AMIT One mustn't believe everything one hears. There are things I cannot discuss...
- ALAM Yes yes... hide behind your uniform.
- AMIT Rizvi Sahab, this is unnecessary. We have policies yes... some of it is questionable... I don't have to justify them to you of all people. But we want these boys back... all of them...
- ALAM Yet, you haven't been able to bring them back...
- AMIT We always seem to be a few steps behind. But bringing them back is our best hope at cracking the sleepers. It is the best chance we've got. That's why it's important that Shifaji speaks to this boy.
- ALAM When you find him, will you give him back to me?
- AMIT There are consequences for what they've done. But Tariq is young... educated... If he comes back with information to trade in, there's much I can do. There's so many more like them... If

we can involve him in the rehabilitation program... I have hope that eventually he can get back to his life.

ALAM I don't believe it. Your kind would never allow it. Those boys were alright... they slipped through cracks that people like you made.

SHIFA has begun to weep softly into Tariq's clothes.

SHIFA We let him slip, Alam. Why blame them... they only chased out what we didn't hold on to.

AMIT Stop. Don't do this to yourselves.
Shifaji, if you could come with me... to the center. I think it would really help if you could speak to him.

SHIFA, still weeping, pulls a large suitcase from under the bed. She begins to put Tariq's folded clothes into them. ALAM and AMIT watch her cautiously.

ALAM What are you doing?

AMIT Oh you won't be needing those Shifaji... *(looks at ALAM in confusion)*

ALAM Shifa?

SHIFA There are some boys ... at the shelter... they could use these clothes... All of them with so little... this would make them happy.

ALAM Wait! We don't know yet. He's there... somewhere... he's still there...

SHIFA He's gone, Alam.... He's gone... and so I'm dead. I must mourn my son... I must show my soul and his where they need to go...

SHIFA covers the suitcase in white sheets, as one would a corpse.

ALAM Shifa... No...

ALAM tries to draw her away from the suitcase with the white sheets, but she continues.

He eventually gives up as well and kneels down beside her.

AMIT watches awkwardly and then exits hurriedly.

SCENE 11

TARIQ and IJAZ are in their room.

They've just returned back to camp and are cleaning themselves as they speak.

TARIQ What happened to that boy from Hyderabad you were chatting with?

IJAZ I need more time with him.

TARIQ More? I thought he was ready to join us?

IJAZ Yes almost.

TARIQ Zuhair says Sheikh is getting impatient.

IJAZ Soon. Inshallah.

Beat.

Do you ever think that Sheikh can be wrong?

TARIQ Sheikh? Why not... He's human after all. You know... Sheikh only gives Jiziya collection to his most trusted people... that's us!

IJAZ Tell me, Tariq... The Prophet was human too. Do you ever think that maybe it just became too much for him to handle? Do you think he ever doubted what he was doing?

TARIQ What is this talk about doubt? You talk like Abba... The Rasool didn't need to. He was blessed with Allah's guidance. That is his greatest assurance.

IJAZ But he did doubt. The first revelation left him fearful. And that fear continued. What if he took decisions that weren't perfect? That means we can too...

TARIQ Isn't it enough to just do as Allah wants us to? Don't bother me with your questions... I don't want to get mixed up in your doubts!

IJAZ I wish I could see all this as clearly as you, Tariq. I feel as though I will live in sin no matter what I do.

TARIQ You think too much these days. I worry about you. Focus on what you need to do. Allah will not desert you...

IJAZ This was not how it was supposed to be... We should have left long back.

TARIQ Have you forgotten how things were? Our pictures in the news... names everywhere... And then those people questioning everyone back home? This is Allah's plan for us, Ijaz... and we will live by it.

IJAZ I feel we will die here.

TARIQ There is no greater honour.

Beat

IJAZ I spoke to Abbu-Ammi last night. They wanted me to come back and stop Reham's wedding.

TARIQ You can have your pick of women here, Ijaz. You know that... Zuhair can make anything available.

IJAZ Have you...?

TARIQ You're stupid not to.

IJAZ Don't you think of how life would have been if you'd stayed in Michigan?
Of course you do. Could have been very different, right... girls, football, fun. If you knew before we came that we would have to stay for close to a year, would you still have taken that flight?

TARIQ This is the path that Allah has chosen for us. Don't be so weak...

IJAZ I'm not. But I've lost count. Until recently I had a count of those who died at my hands. Now it's just... too many. How many more will there be?

TARIQ Enough to reward you with eternal riches in the afterlife, my brother.

IJAZ What about this life?

TARIQ All in good time.

Enter ZUHAIR, excited.

ZUHAIR Tariq! Ijaz! Sheikh has taken a call on Ankara.

TARIQ Where?

ZUHAIR City Park. There is a peace march scheduled there ten days from now... We will strike under the guise of the Kurd Liberation Front - 2 high intensity bombs... The media will go mad. Keep the Kurds busy with the Turks and their front against us will weaken.

TARIQ When do we leave?

ZUHAIR You will leave for Ankara tomorrow. Hadi is already there. He will guide you.

TARIQ We will succeed. Inshallah!

ZUHAIR Inshallah. We take the fight to them now!

Exit ZUHAIR.

TARIQ senses IJAZ's discomfort. Seeks to draw him back.

TARIQ I have you to thank for this great honour. You brought me here.

IJAZ *(The realisation of this dawns on IJAZ, slowly)* Yes... Yes I did.

TARIQ You questioned everything that was wrong around you. And you never doubted that I could share this journey with you.

IJAZ I brought you here... yes.
Does that mean I get a greater reward for this than you?

TARIQ *(laughs)* I will whisper to the angel on my right that he slip this one to you!

IJAZ Or maybe it means I will get the curses of the ones we leave behind... your share too. Of the ones who have to pick up the pieces of their lives after we've shattered it with the death of their loved ones.

TARIQ Of course there will be consequences, Ijaz; we are at war after all.

IJAZ But whose. Whose war is this? If this were back home...

TARIQ Stop it, Ijaz! We're not back home! Don't start with your nonsense again. I don't want to be back home!

You need to stop with these questions. There will come a day when Zuhair will not be so easily fooled.

(As he prepares to sleep)

Now come on, we need to get some rest. We leave for Ankara tomorrow.

SCENE 12

TARIQ has a nightmare as he sleeps - Watching his parents get up and walk into the desert storm in his nightmare.

ALAM We're so close. He's here somewhere.

SHIFA No... We sent him away.

ALAM Just a bit more. Don't give up now.

SHIFA I can't do this anymore, Alam. He's gone.

*They struggle against the desert storm.
TARIQ's shadow falls on the wall. ALAM sees it. SHIFA doesn't.*

ALAM There! There he is! Tariq! Tariq!

SHIFA Alam, you're seeing things!

ALAM Tariq! Here... I'm here, Tariq!

A play of light such that a black box forms on the floor. It looks like the Kaabah.

SHIFA *(gasps)* Ya Allah... Alam, don't you realise where we are?

*She prostrates in front of it and touches her forehead to the ground.
ALAM is confused as he looks from TARIQ to the black box.*

ALAM Why don't you see him? He's there...

SHIFA That's the mirage you want to see, Alam.

ALAM No! I see him!

SHIFA sees Shaitaan's image in the shadows instead of Tariq.

SHIFA *(whispers)* That's not my son... that's Shaitan... That's Shaitan!

ALAM Tariq? Is that you?

SHIFA begins to pray.

SHIFA That's Shaitan! Stone him!

SHIFA begins to stone the shadow of Shaitan.

ALAM You ruined my son! You ruined him!

ALAM begins to stone the shadow of Shaitan too.

SHIFA Shaitan! Shaitan!

SHIFA and ALAM continue stoning the devil.

SHIFA collapses while reciting the FATIHA.

The stones thrown at the shadow of Shaitaan hurts TARIQ instead.

They continue shouting and stoning him until he collapses.

The sound of the trumpet is heard 3 times.

TARIQ wakes up jolted out of a nightmare. He is shaken. He tries to calm down.

SCENE 13

Ankara city square park in the middle of a peace march.

The atmosphere is charged with loud sloganeering and cheering.

TARIQ and IJAZ are both edgy.

TARIQ Time check – it's 5:30. We have 25 minutes. Remember we have to be within a 250 meter radius to trigger the bombs. After that we get 2 minutes to leave.

IJAZ Yes... Via the East Gate.

TARIQ North Gate! We've been through this a thousand times!

IJAZ Yes right. North Gate...

TARIQ We head straight for the North Gate, past the mosque. The warehouse is exactly 4 lanes behind. Our car will be there and we drive down to Mardin where ZUHAIR will be waiting to get us back to base.

IJAZ *(Watching the protesters)* Look at them... They're protesting for peace. For no more guns and blasts and bodies. Look around you, Tariq. Most of these people are just here to enjoy the day.

TARIQ We must remember the larger purpose we serve.

IJAZ Which is what?

TARIQ We're fighting in the name of all oppressed everywhere... For Allah's holy land

IJAZ Do you really believe that?

TARIQ Ijaz... we really don't have the...

He stops speaking.

He sees a kid playing hopscotch in the park with her mother and stares at them both.

IJAZ What? What is it?

TARIQ That girl... she's... playing ... that girl playing hopscotch...

IJAZ She's just playing with her mother.

TARIQ Can you see her?

IJAZ Of course... she's right there. I'm asking you something serious. Do you really believe this is the only way ahead?

TARIQ Ijaz... we're minutes away from triggering that blast... you think if I didn't believe...

Stops speaking again. This time turns around and stares.

TARIQ There's a man there... praying. Do you see him?

IJAZ Why wouldn't I, Tariq? Answer me now...

TARIQ stares at the girl and the praying man, one after the other... slowly, trying to make sense of the scene

TARIQ It's just a coincidence. Yes... just a coincidence.

IJAZ What are you muttering?

TARIQ I thought ... nothing...it's not important. We need do this this. Now. We don't have much time. *(begins to physically move Ijaz)*

IJAZ I don't know if...

TARIQ Ijaz, just go. Stick to the plan.

IJAZ resists him.

If Shafi's death meant anything to you... you must take this plan forward... maybe you don't see it now... but it will all work out soon. You'll see.

IJAZ becomes rather passive at the mention of Shafi.

Allah be with you brother. *(hugs Tariq)* Remember to walk away immediately. Do not run. Just walk. I will see you as I walk past the North Gate.

IJAZ Inshallah.

Exit IJAZ.

TARIQ continues to stare slowly between the girl and the praying man. He takes out his phone and calls ALAM.

ALAM Hello?

TARIQ I know what you're trying to do. You think I don't understand...

ALAM Tariq? I thought you'll never call again... I'm sorry I didn't speak to you that day... I wanted to. I didn't know what to say... and your ammi...

TARIQ Stop it! Stop talking about all that!

ALAM Tariq, are you ok? If you don't want to be there anymore, you can just leave. You know that... I will make everything ok. Just leave...

TARIQ You're doing it again! Always telling me what to do! You see what I can do, Abbu? I can make a difference. With one push of a trigger I can decide...

ALAM Tariq! What are you saying? Please you must stop. Think about what you're doing.

TARIQ No! I understand. I'm strong... I will not fall for all your tricks.
ALAM Tariq... how do I explain to you?
TARIQ You will explain things to me?
ALAM Your Ammi was right. You won't ever come back to us. You don't belong here anymore. Do what you must... Kill for what you believe or Die for it... I don't care anymore... You can't be my Tariq.
TARIQ Stop it! Don't you dare confuse me! I know my truth... I will stand for it even if no one else does!

TARIQ hangs up in a rush and stares at the phone. IJAZ comes rushing to him.

IJAZ Tariq! No!
TARIQ Ijaz... North Gate is that way!
IJAZ There's no need for that...
TARIQ *(interrupts him)* No need for what?
IJAZ I didn't hit the trigger, Tariq... I figured it out.
TARIQ What?!
IJAZ I saw it all wrong, Tariq... I was wrong... from the very beginning...
TARIQ What do you mean?
IJAZ How can Allah ask this of me? He is the one that gave me the strength to survive all that happened to me...
TARIQ Ijaz, there is a plan! Just stick to it!
IJAZ We need to put an end to this. We can escape... we'll make it work, Tariq.
TARIQ No! I need to do this... I chose this... I cannot go back.
(is about to hit the trigger)

IJAZ rushes to stop him. They begin jostling for the trigger trying not to attract attention.

IJAZ No... No Tariq... you can't. It's wrong... how do I explain it to you?
TARIQ You coward! You're ruining it!

Shoving IJAZ away tries to run. But IJAZ resists and wrestles TARIQ down

IJAZ No! I have to end this horrible mistake right now... I shouldn't have dragged you here with me... I have to end this...

IJAZ has pinned TARIQ down.

TARIQ Ijaz! Let go!
IJAZ If we die now it ends here...these sins we've made... it ends here!

TARIQ Ijaz! No! Let go!

TARIQ Stop it! Allahuakbar!

TARIQ shoves IJAZ and hits the trigger.

IJAZ No Tariq! Bomb! There's a bomb! Run!

People scream and run.

Explosion.

We hear chaos - people running and screaming, babies crying, police sirens....

The trumpet sounds thrice.

SCENE 14

TARIQ is trapped in the K'abah. He speaks to BURAQ from inside.

TARIQ Buraq! I heard the trumpets blow!

BURAQ Thrice?

TARIQ Yes!

BURAQ Ah... The angel Israfil tells us it is now time to face our judgement day.

TARIQ I panicked. I don't know if I made the right choice.

BURAQ That is not for me to decide. The choice was always yours. There are always forces inside you- one that lights your path, and the other that blinds you.

TARIQ I was afraid.

BURAQ Yes. It is a difficult choice.

TARIQ I fear the eternal fires of hell!

BURAQ Ah... fear takes root in the best of hearts.

TARIQ You've seen others... you've seen their choice. Did they all doubt when they reached the end?

BURAQ Ah... Faith and Doubt are brothers my friend.

TARIQ Buraq, you are not helping! If I question his words, do I not question his power? If I choose which of his words to live by, do I not choose a belief of convenience?

BURAQ So what if you do? If your faith in the spirit of his message is true you can always question his words.

Understood?

Understood?

TARIQ I lost too much to get here.

BURAQ For faith to run deep it cannot come easy, my friend.

TARIQ Why must he make this so difficult?
BURAQ You can ask Him now. Your journey isn't over.
TARIQ Wa jaaa'at- sakwatul-mawti bilhaqq-zaalika maa kunta minhu
 taheed.
 And the stupor of death will bring truth before my eyes.

Khatam Shud

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC ORIGIN TERMS

Allah

The Arabic word for God.

Used even in Pre-Islamic Arabia, and hence used by Arabic speakers across faiths in Middle Eastern culture.

Inshallah

'God willing' or 'If God wills'. Used by Arabic speakers across faiths.

Mashallah

'God has willed it'. Used to express joy, praise, gratitude or relief.

Alhamdulillah

'Praise be to God'. Used to give thanks in any and all situations.

Nabi, Rasul, Rasulallah

Nabi = The Prophet. Rasul = The Messenger. Rasulallah = The Messenger of God.

Refers to Prophet Mohammed. Although there are many prophets in the Islamic tradition, only Prophet Mohammed, the last Prophet, is considered the messenger of God since the Quran was revealed through him.

Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam

'Peace be upon him'. Often abbreviated in text to PBUH or SAW.

A prayer that is said soon after Prophet Mohammed's name is taken

Surah

'Chapter'. Refers to chapters of the Quran. Each verse in the Surah is called an *Ayat*.

CREDITS

Mi'raj was first staged on August 18th 2016 by Indian Ensemble Studio.

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Original Cast: Poorvi Sardar, Sanjeev Gadre, Abhitej Gupta, Ratneshwar Bannerjee, Vivek Vijaykumar, Sagnik Sinha, Amit Aggarwal

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