

RULE NUMBER ONE

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--10 PAGES--

FADE IN:

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - KABUL - EARLY MORNING

A red carpet. Flimsy bunk beds. A dust-filled sheet over a small window. We're OVER THE SHOULDER of KHALED SHAH, 32, Afghan, no beard, knockoff blue Polo shirt.

Khaled HOVERS over his son FARJAD, 9, gray perahan tunban (typical Afghan garb), sandals, who crouches on the floor.

KHALED

It is time. Let's go.

We notice KINAAZ, 6, Khaled's daughter, on the TOP BUNK, staring at the ceiling, trance-like. Neither kid moves.

KHALED

(shouting)

Meharbani!

Fearing their father, the kids scramble to their feet.

INT. APARTMENT - KABUL - CONTINUOUS

Khaled walks into the main room which serves as family room, dining room, and kitchen. All TIDY, but DESPERATELY POOR: sink with no counter, one sponge with a tiny soap bottle.

Four HULKING SUITCASES await at the door.

MAHDIA, 25, emerald headscarf, long dress, is Khaled's wife. She SCRUBS the ash inside their metal woodstove.

KHALED

Don't bother.

A cell phone rings. Mahdia answers it.

MAHDIA

Maman!

Mahdia WEEPS into the phone. The children cower, HORRIFIED.

EXT. KABUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

The family waits in a CHAOTIC line at a SECURITY CHECKPOINT. Khaled FIGHTS to get their bags into the x-ray machine.

An entourage of WESTERN DIPLOMATS barges up alongside them. A AIDE, 30s, white, blonde, confronts an Afghan GUARD.

AIDE

No, this is not for us! We need to

(MORE)

AIDE (CONT'D)

get through!

GUARD

All bags, ma'am.

AIDE

Fine. Quickly though!

The Diplomats ELBOW their way in front of Khaled.

INT. KABUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - LATER

The boarding area is sparse and dark. Lines of torn-black vinyl seats. Mahdia QUIVERS.

KHALED

When we are there, we won't be
scared anymore.

Khaled leads his family down the jetbridge. Each looks back at the WORLD THEY'RE LEAVING BEHIND.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DUBAI

White walls, no windows. Khaled at a table. His wife and kids on chairs behind him.

Two GUARDS IN UNIFORM, machine guns over their shoulders, stare at nothing. An OFFICER, 50s, interrogates Khaled.

OFFICER

(in Arabic, subtitles)

These papers are not sufficient.

KHALED

(in English)

I don't speak Arabic. English?

OFFICER

(in English, angrily)

Who taught you to speak English?
Afghanistan...

KHALED

It took a long time.

OFFICER

(studying the papers)

What is this, are you a spy? You
are working for the CIA!

Khaled's daughter Kinaaz begins to CRY.

KHALED

Please, I beg you. Our flight is in two hours. I do not have money to purchase another ticket. Please.

The Officer makes a spiteful look at the child, leaves.

We HOLD ON Mahdia glaring suspiciously at her husband.

INT. JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

TRAVELERS happy to be home traipse past American flags heading for the Immigration lines. Khaled and his family walk with uneasiness, even dread.

Suddenly, TWO IMMIGRATION OFFICERS appear out of nowhere. One GRABS Khaled by the shoulder.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1

Excuse me, sir.

That officer PULLS Khaled BACK DOWN the hallway. The other officer CORRALS Mahdia and the two kids.

MAHDIA

Khaled, *lotfan!*

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1

(to Khaled)

Keep quiet. Keep calm. Follow my instructions.

MAHDIA

(yelling)

Wadrega! Wadrega!

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NEW YORK

Not unlike the room in Dubai, only much DARKER. And there is a long ONE-WAY MIRROR. Khaled sits, ALONE.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NEW YORK - LATER

Khaled's HAVING TROUBLE BREATHING. He CLUTCHES his chest, doubles over and puts his HEAD BETWEEN HIS KNEES.

He gets his composure back, and the door opens -- the Immigration Officer enters.

KHALED

Where is my family?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1

Why have you come here?

KHALED
Where are they?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1
From Afghanistan...

KHALED
I completed all of the forms. I got
the approvals. You have the
approvals. You have them.

Pain SHOOTS THROUGH Khaled's chest -- he CLUTCHES his arm.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1
(ignoring his pain)
Where is your final destination?

KHALED
San Antonio.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1
What will you do in San Antonio?

KHALED
Live?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1
(nasty)
How about a job?

KHALED
I have friends there.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1
I'm sure.

KHALED
They are very close to me!

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 1
Do you know how many men just like
you try to come here every year,
and they want to cause problems?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NEW YORK - LATER

Khaled's alone again. A FEMALE IMMIGRATION OFFICER, 40s,
enters, puts a bottle of water and TWO SLICES OF BREAD on
the table.

KHALED
My family, where is my family?

The Officer leaves.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NEW YORK - LATER

Khaled's head is DOWN ON THE DESK. He's SLEEPING.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NEW YORK - LATER

Khaled, up on his feet, PACING and HUFFING angrily.

KHALED

(to himself)

This isn't... I won't let... No.

He stops, stares up at the ONE-WAY MIRROR.

KHALED (CONT'D)

(to the mirror)

You. Do you think I am a terrorist?

(louder)

Is that why you keep me locked in here like an animal? Why for no reason you take my family away!?

He SMASHES HIS FIST on the mirror.

KHALED (CONT'D)

I fought with you! I saved your soldiers' lives! I served your country! That is why I am here!

(beat)

I am giving my life to you!

INT. IMMIGRATIONS COUNTER - JOHN F. KENNEDY AIRPORT - NIGHT

Khaled, unshaven, bedraggled, stares at yet another IMMIGRATION OFFICER, 40s, Italian-American, perfect haircut.

Mahdia, Farjad, and Kinaaz, confused, tired, stand behind Khaled -- gaze wearily up at the man behind the tall desk.

ITALIAN-AMERICAN IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Khaled Hossein Mada?

KHALED

Yes.

The Officer sets down Khaled's passport, and with a THUNDEROUS PUMMELING, POUNDS HIS FIST, STAMPS THE PASSPORT.

ITALIAN-AMERICAN IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Welcome to the United States.

SMASH TO BLACK

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INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

We're HIGH OVER an OPERATING TABLE where a patient's CHEST IS WIDE OPEN -- metal clamps tug back a draping, to expose a blood-and-flesh BEATING HEART.

All we heard are the deliviate CLINKS of stainless steel surgical instruments. And steady PINGS from the EKG machine.

The OR is a study in shades of AQUA -- tiles on the walls, surgical gowns and face masks that hide the identities of an ANESTHESIOLOGIST, and a PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT and an ASSISTING SURGEON

They work methodically, almost robotically, and we SETTLE on the intense gaze of the lead surgeon: DR. HOPE PELLEY.

HOPE

Don't harm the artery.

She hands a CLAMP off to the Assisting Surgeon.

HOPE

Fine, proceed.

The EKG ACCELERATES.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

Heart rate seventy-two.

HOPE

Under control?

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

Adjusting.

The pings from the EKG keep GETTING FASTER.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

Rate over 80. Pressure 148 over 80.
Doctor?

HOPE

Doctor?

The Anesthesiologist SWEATS, fingers SHAKE at his keyboard.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

Rate and pressure still climbing.

ASSISTING SURGEON

(to Hope)

(MORE)

ASSISTING SURGEON (CONT'D)

Pause?

The HEART, exposed to the open air, beats HARDER, FASTER.
The Anesthesiologist YANKS on the patient's oxygen mask.

HOPE

Stand back from the patient,
Doctor.

The Anesthesiologist keeps PANICKING.

HOPE (CONT'D)

(with hushed, visceral
intensity)

Stand back, or you're going to harm
the patient, Doctor!

Her stone-hard tone STUNS, FREEZES everyone in the room.

HOPE (CONT'D)

(calm)

Now, raise your level back up
briefly.

The Anesthesiologist, BREATHING HEAVILY, works his keyboard.
We hear the EKG going OFF THE CHARTS!

HOPE (CONT'D)

Now this time you're going to back
off your levels *slowly*. Let his
rhythms keep pace with the change.

The Anesthesiologist SLOWLY TAPS A KEY. As he does, the EKG
DESCENDS from its manic pace.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

Rate 70 and falling. 135 over 70,
back down.

HOPE

(to other Surgeon)

Left Anterior Descending artery.
Let's go.

A LOOK from the Assisting Surgeon, and they're back to work.

We go OVER the table, PUSHING DOWN and IN until we're TIGHT
where we HOLD ON the FLESH OF THE BEATING HEART.

INT. HOSPITAL NURSING STATION - LATER

NURSES and STAFF bustle around the nerve center of the
surgical center. Hope, still in scrubs, works on charts.

Her surgical mask is gone, so we see the woman: 47, classy rimless glasses, a beautiful face that's locked with a VEXED, INDIGNANT look.

A male SUREGON, 50s, scrubs, graying beard, passes through on the far side of the room. Hope SHOUTS at him.

HOPE
Never again with me!

Every head TURNS. The Surgeon STOMPS directly at Hope.

HOPE (CONT'D)
I won't have a gas passer lock up
like a tank in the sand in my OR!

The Surgeon, we're realizing, is the Anesthesiologist.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
Have you lost your mind?

HOPE
If what I'm saying isn't warranted,
then you're goddamned right I have.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST
Would you lower your voice!?

HOPE
(whispered threat)
No more of you. Not on my watch.

Hope SHOVES the computer and MARCHES out.

INT./EXT. HOPE'S CAR - SAN ANTONIO - LATE AFTERNOON

Hope's driving a shiny new Mercedes C300. She's wearing an ARMY UNIFORM, digital camouflage, patrol cap, the STITCHED BIRD of a COLONEL over her breastbone.

On her chest, a patch: "PELLEY"

EXT. HOPE'S HOUSE - ALAMO HEIGHTS - LATER

PULLS into the driveway of her UPSCALE, modern brick house.

HOPE
What the fuck, over?

A Dodge CHALLENGER sits parked in front of her.

INT. HOPE'S FAMILY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A big, open room -- family room, dining room, and a big

island sets off the kitchen.

CAPTAIN ROGER PELLEY, 25, hulking shoulders, buzz cut, Under Armour tank top that shows off his dozen impressive tattoos sits at the dining room table.

Roger thumbs through stacks of FILES and keeps hold on a bottle of TEQUILA. Does NOT TURN to his mother.

HOPE

I didn't know you were home?

ROGER

I didn't either.

(beat)

Got some interesting reading here.

Hope ignores him, and we follow her down the hallway.

INT. HOPE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Really big room. Bed is perfectly made -- she passes and STRAINS to avoid it, as if it's kryptonite.

The closet is METICULOUSLY arranged. Hope SHEDS her Army uniform, changes into JEANS, flowered BLOUSE, lets her LONG HAIR down.

ROGER (O.S.)

Damn interesting!

INT. HOPE'S FAMILY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hope struggles to cut the plastic seal off a VODKA bottle with a STEAKKNIFE. Roger turns on the STEREO.

HOPE

Turn that off, please!

Her hand SLIPS, the knife SLICES the back of her finger. Blood. She DOESN'T EVEN FLINCH. Scowls at it, SUCKS on it, and pours her drink: ice, and FOUR FINGERS of booze.

ROGER

Need that quiet time, huh ma?

HOPE

How long are you home for?

ROGER

Gonna take time to read all this.

(finally turns to face

Hope)

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

Four hundred and ninety seven
pages. Pictures too.

Hope takes a DEEP SIGH.

HOPE

How much is still classified?
Probably more redacted than there
is to read

ROGER

You oughta come over and get into
it.

She doesn't move.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Greg Ewing has been callin. Keeps
callin. And once I tell him I got
my hands on this, he'll be horny as
a 10-peckered owl to file the case.

Hope takes a HEAVY GULP. Heads out to the back porch.

HOPE

You can sleep in the guest room. If
you're staying over.

INT. HOPE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Her big mattresses and headboard are on one side of the
room. On the other, Hope's in pajamas, FOLDS TWO BLANKETS
with a pillow into a bed on the floor.

Lays down. Keeps her EYES OPEN.

INT. HOPE'S FAMILY ROOM - MORNING

Gorgeous sunshine. Birds and the WILDEST CRICKETS you've
ever heard are making a racket.

Hope sticks a plate and coffee cup in the dishwasher --
turns to what she's BEEN DREADING. LEAFS through the
report...

... "Review of Matters Related to the Death of Lt. General
Richard Pelley, U.S. Army" ...

A few pages later... "Our review found that our partners in
the Afghan Army failed to protect" ...

And a few more pages later... "Primarily responsible was an
Afghan interpreter who actively facilitated the ambush..."