

How Many Miles to Basra

A radio play

By

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Commissioned by BBC Radio 3

Producer Toby Swift

Characters:

Ursula
Stewart
Freddie
Dangermouse
Geordie
Malek
Gus
Janet
Sayed
First Bandit
Second Bandit
News Reader on BBC World Service
Sheikh of the Kuffa Family.
Jeannie

The speech in italics is that taken from interviews that have been done at four separate times. These times are as followed and marked with the relevant symbols.

MARCH 17/03/03 – DAYTIME - IN THE EQUIPMENT HANGAR AT THE
BASE CAMP IN SAUDI ARABIA

*APRIL 11/04/03 – DAYTIME - IN A TENT – FORWARD OPERATING BASE
ON IRAQ/KUWAIT BORDER NEAR BASRA

<APRIL 15/04/03 – EARLY AFTERNOON - NEAR THE VEHICLE
CHECKPOINT IRAQ ON DESERT ROAD TO JALIBAH

¬ APRIL 15/04/03 – LATE AFTERNOON – NEAR THE VEHICLE CHECKPOINT
IRAQ ON DESERT ROAD TO JALIBAH WHILE TIDYING UP THE INCIDENT
SITE AND STEWART DECIDES WHAT TO DO.

~APRIL 15/04/03 – NIGHT-TIME – BASRA/AL AMARAH ROAD DURING A
PITSTOP/TEABREAK

> THE DESERT 16/04/03 – NIGHTTIME. A SANDSTORM HOWLING ONLY
SLIGHTLY LESS. THE CONVERSATION, IN CONTRAST, IS EXTREMELY
INTIMATE. URSULA AND STEWART ARE FACE TO FACE.

^APRIL 17/04/03 – EVENING – DESERT NEAR A MA’ADAN HUT

1. EXT – F.O.B. KUWAIT NEAR THE IRAQI BORDER 20/3/03 – DAYTIME

Lt.Col. Tim Collins:

We go to liberate not to conquer. We will not fly our flags in their country. We are entering Iraq to free a people and the only flag which will be flown in that ancient land is their own. Show respect for them. There are some of you alive at this moment who will not be alive shortly. Those who do not wish to go on that journey, we will not send. As for the others, I expect you to rock their world. Wipe them out if that is what they choose. But if you are ferocious in battle remember to be magnanimous in victory. Iraq is steeped in history. It is the site of the Garden of Eden, of the Great Flood and the birthplace of Abraham. Tread lightly there. You will see things no man could pay to see and you will have to go a long way...

2. A MEDLEY OF SOUNDS AND SOUNDBITES FROM THE CONQUEST OF IRAQ. CRESCENDO.

3. EXT – VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ ON DESERT ROAD TO JALIBAH

15/4/03 – AFTERNOON

SILENCE

F/X – GROWING FROM THE SILENCE, THE SENSE OF HEAT AND THE CONSTANT BUZZ OF TINY INSECTS. URSULA IS REHEARSING A REPORT TO HERSELF

Ursula: And the truth... (SHE SCRATCHES AN AMENDMENT TO HER NOTES) ...and the truth of war, is that there is no single truth. No single experience of war. The truth, if there is a truth, is that the experience the victors deem most suitable. (SHE WRITES A NEW LINE) ...most suitable for their story. (BREAKING OFF) What a pile of bollocks!

Geordie: I thought it was interesting, Ma'am.

Ursula: Thanks, Geordie, but it is bollocks. I've got to say something though. Justify my existence. (RESUMING REHEARSALS) While the world considers the toppling of Saddam in Firdouz Square to be the end of it, war and its effects continue to be the norm not only for the majority of Iraqis but also for the British Soldiers manning vehicle checkpoints such as these here on the desert road to Jalibah -

Gus: (ON SATPHONE FROM LONDON) *Standing by Ursula?*

Ursula: Standing by, Gus. Give us a drag, Geordie.

Geordie: Ma'am.

Ursula: Ursula. Cheers, Geordie. Ready when you are Gus.

4. EXT – VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ BETWEEN BASRA/JALIBAH ROAD

15/4/03 – AFTERNOON

F/X. HEAT AND CONSTANT BUZZ OF TINY INSECTS.

Stewart: Time, Dangermouse.

Dangermouse: 1530, Boss.

Freddie: Four hours. Four fucking hours and not even a goat.

Dangermouse: Call this an MSR.

Freddie: Main supply route between the arsehole and nowhere. What the fuck are we doing here?

Stewart: What's Geordie doing up there?

Dangermouse: Where?

Stewart: On the escarp with Ursula?

Dangermouse: Holding her dish looks like boss.

Stewart: I can see that, Dangermouse, he's meant to be covering our backs.

Freddie: At least we won't have to put up with the nosey bitch much longer.

Stewart: Yesterday's news already.

Freddie: Knew it was going to be a bad war for us when they gave us a fucking woman.

5. INT - RADIO STUDIO IN LONDON – MORNING

Janet: - now over to Ursula Gunn who is embedded with the Third Royals in Southern Iraq. Ursula?

Ursula: Morning, Janet.

Janet: Can you tell us something of what the Third Royals are up to now that the conflict is over -

6. EXT – VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ BETWEEN BASRA/JALIBAH ROAD
15/4/03 – AFTERNOON

Stewart: He shouldn't be up there.

Dangermouse: Not like there's much happening down here, boss.

Stewart: Not the point, Danger.

Freddie: And the sand, that's another thing I hate. Cuts you in two in this wind.

Dangermouse: When it gets down your crack, it cuts your arse in two. My backside looks like a peeled -

Freddie: Let's not go into your crack, Dangermouse.

Dangermouse: Wouldn't let you near my crack, Fred.

Stewart: Do you boys want to change the record?

Freddie: Just a bit of crack, Stew, eh?

LAUGHTER FROM FREDDIE AND DANGERMOUSE.

Stewart: We're not going home just yet.

Dangermouse: First thing I do when I get back is go down The Shed and order an ice cold pint of Stella. Hear B and D Companies are out of here tomorrow.

Stewart: So I heard, Fred.

INSERT 6(a)

Freddie: *No, my real name's not Freddie. It's an army thing. When you're in training, the company christens you. Then you've got to live with that for the rest of your army life, I suppose.*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) Why did they call you Freddie?*

Freddie: *They called me Freddie because – stupid really – cos my surname is Winstone. Like Flintstone. Get it? At least they didn't call me Dangermouse. (SNORTS WITH LAUGHTER) Poor bastard.*

Dangermouse: You must be looking forward to seeing Jeannie and the kids, boss?

Stewart: Course I am, Dangermouse.

Dangermouse: Six months is a long time when you've got kids, like.

* INSERT 6(b)

Stewart: *Just Stewart. Or Sarge. Or Boss. That's me. Never got a nickname. Stew, maybe. But that isn't really a nickname. Given a few in my time though.*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) It's quite unusual, a sergeant, your age, out here.*

Stewart: *This definitely be my last tour. War's a young man's game. But what with the overstretch and the war, it was all hands to the wheel. The army's changed. I've changed. (PARTIAL LAUGH) No, maybe it's that I want to change.*

7. INT – STUDIO, LONDON – DAYTIME

URSULA IS HEARD FROM IRAQ ON THE SPEAKER'S IN STUDIO

Ursula: (WINDING UP BROADCAST) ...*this is Ursula Gunn, with Alpha Unit, the Third Royals. Iraq.*

Gus: And cut to the adverts.

F/X ADVERTS ROLLING IN BACKGROUND.

Gus: Ursula, seeing as how you're a journalist in a war zone, next time how about actually phoning in a story?

Ursula: *Yeah, well if you hadn't had me posted so far back I can barely see the sand.*

Gus: What about the documentary on the unit, the interviews-

Ursula: *I've got all the background, I've just got no story.*

Gus: In that case you can at least contribute to my budget cuts and be on that flight tomorrow.

8. EXT – A VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ BETWEEN BASRA/JALIBAH
ROAD 13/4/03 – AFTERNOON

Stewart: Isn't she nearly done?

Freddie: Heads up, boys, vehicle, three k or so. Approaching at speed.

9. INT – STUDIO, LONDON – MORNING

URSULA IS HEARD FROM IRAQ ON THE SPEAKER'S IN STUDIO

Ursula: *What's that Gus?*

Gus: *I said-*

Ursula: *(TO GEORDIE) Can you keep it steady there, Geordie, I'm losing them.*

Geordie: *Got to go, Danger's calling me like. There's a car coming, full pelt.*

Ursula: *(TO GEORDIE) Get yourself gone, Geordie. (TO GUS) You still there, Gus? Listen, there actually might be something kicking off. Keep the line open - you can cut in it into the last report later if nothing else.*

Gus: *This time you better have something -*

10. EXT – VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ BETWEEN BASRA/JALIBAH ROAD
15/4/03 – AFTERNOON

A CAR IS HEARD APPROACHING FROM A LONG WAY OFF AT HIGH SPEED.

Dangermouse: (UNDER HIS BREATH) One dead raghead shitting on the wall, one dead raghead shitting on the wall – eh Fred? – and if one dead raghead should accidentally fall, it's: Bang-bang you're dead, fifty bullets in your head.

Stewart: Might be a good time to remind you of the rules of engagement boys, we don't want any hassle.

< INSERT 10(a)

Geordie: *No, I've never shot anybody. The lads give me a hard time. Call me virgin soldier – not that I'm a virgin - they mean I've not being blooded. But I don't know many who have. Shot at someone, I mean, let alone hit someone. There's 100,000 in the British army. How many people do the British Army shoot every year? A handful. That's like a one in a thousand chance of shooting someone. Let alone killing someone.*

F/X – IN THE TENSE DESERT SILENCE, THE CAR IS LOUDER.

Stewart: Distance Freddie?

Freddie: One klick max.

Stewart: Slowing?

Freddie: No.

11. INT – STUDIO, LONDON – MORNING. URSULA IS HEARD FROM IRAQ
ON THE SPEAKER'S IN STUDIO

Ursula: *You still there Gus?*

Gus: Still here, Urs. Commercial break's nearly over, Janet's on standing by. Give us background while we're waiting. We can cut it in to later bulletins.

Ursula: *(REPORTING) A white car, approaches the checkpoint. It shows no sign of slowing. There are two, no three figures in the car. It has stopped, after all. The Sergeant approaches the car. He uses hand gestures and simple English. He is demanding ID. They are getting out of the car. They put their hands on their head and move away. The soldiers take two guns out of the car.*

CUT TO:

¬ INSERT11(a)

Geordie: *And you're thinking of the rules of engagement. Three verbal warnings before you can fire. But it's not easy following rules when it's for real. You're thinking, fuck, he could have anything on him. When is it right to shoot a man?*

CUT BACK TO:

Ursula: (TENSE, WHISPERING) *The Iraqis, Bedouins, are agitated. The corporal holds them at gunpoint while a soldier searches the car. (BEAT) The private has found something. (BEAT) The Bedouins shout. It's money, bundles of money. They are trying to grab at it. The corporal pushes his gun barrel into the driver's chest. The Sergeant is – (BEAT) – coming towards me, up the escarpment. Keep it rolling, Gus. I'm going to put it down.*

Gus: (TO PRESENTER) Be ready to go with Ursula at any moment, Janet.

Stewart: (APPROACHING) *That thing on, Ma'am?*

Ursula: *No reception. Geordie was my aerial.*

Stewart: *You might be able to help us with this, Ma'am. Any ideas?*

Ursula: *Looks like money, Sergeant McDonald.*

Stewart: *I can see that, Ursula. How much?*

Ursula: *Big denominations. (BEAT) Over a million. Couple of million.*

Gus: Saddam's missing millions. Decent story at last, Ursula. (INTO MIC) Janet, wind up, we're going to go over live to Ursula -

Stewart: *Could it be some of Saddam's?*

Gus: That's my girl. (INTO MIC) Stand by for live feed, Janet.

Ursula: *Only insofar as it has his face on it.*

Freddie: (IN THE DISTANCE) *Stew!*

Stewart: (SHOUTS) *A moment Freddie. What do you mean, Ursula?*

Ursula: *Iraqi dinars. Two and a half thousand to the dollar. A million's worth about four hundred dollars.*

Stewart: *But what's an Iraqi doing with over four hundred dollars?*

Ursula: *Why shouldn't an Iraqi-*

F/X – A SWITCH IS THROWN, THE LINE IS CLOSED.

Gus: (INTO MIC) Sorry Janet, false alarm. Next item.

12. EXT – VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ BETWEEN BASRA/JALIBAH ROAD
15/4/03 – AFTERNOON. SUGGESTED MUSIC. RADIOHEAD “2+2=5”

Sayed: (STRUGGLING) Nokoudi!

Freddie: Easy Mr Raghead, easy.

Sayed: Hadihi nokoudi yadjibo an tojaali

¬ INSERT 12(a)

Geordie: *And Freddie and the Iraqi start to struggle, and you're thinking is that a warning? And Freddie's trying to hold them back? They want their money, like. It's difficult to keep your rifle trained on him with all the pushing and the pulling.*

Freddie: Stew -

Stewart: (IN DISTANCE) A moment, Freddie -

Freddie: You got him, Danger?

Dangermouse: Watch out Fred, he has something -

¬ INSERT 12(b)

Geordie: *And Freddie's been warning them. How many times is that? Is it three warnings? Then you see it. He's got something in his hand. You think, fuck-*

13. EXT – AN ESCARPMENT ABOVE A VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ
BETWEEN BASRA/JALIBAH ROAD 15/4/03 – AFTERNOON

F/X – VOLLEY OF GUNFIRE IN THE DISTANCE.

Ursula: What the fuck! You getting this, Gus? You still there, Gus?
Where are you, you bastard! Minidisc. Where's my fucking
minidisc?

URSULA FUMBLES WITH MINIDISC.

14. EXT –A VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ BETWEEN BASRA/JALIBAH
ROAD 15/4/03 – AFTERNOON

Stewart: (OFF) Hold fire, I said.

Dangermouse: Handgun, boss. He's got a handgun!!

Freddie: Geordie, for fuck's sake fire. Geordie!!!

Stewart: (APPROACHING FROM DISTANCE) No!!

CASCADE OF GUNFIRE TO THE RAUCOUS SECTION OF RADIOHEAD'S
2+2=5.

CUT TO:

¬ INSERT 14 (a)

Geordie: *And you think fuck, I killed a man. I killed two men.*

PAUSE. CUT BACK.

Dangermouse: Hope she got that. Hope that reporter got that one. So my Mam hears what a fucking hero I am. I've got a hard on Fred. All that blatting has given me hard on. You got a hard on, Fred?

Freddie: Fuck. Bastard raghead tried to fucking kill me. Fuck!

Dangermouse: But we got him, Fred, me and Geordie, we got them all.

Stewart: (ARRIVING) Now is someone going to please explain, what the fuck happened there?

> INSERT 14 (b)

Stewart: *I fired a warning shot, but the car showed no sign of slowing, then she raises her hand. Bang, bang!*

Ursula: (OFF MIC) *Is she the reason?*

Stewart *I see her still. Laughing, always laughing when I see her. In the back window. Green Vauxhall Kadett. Laughing as it pulled away from us. And her hair's long. Black. Curly. Her eyes blue. I can see them. Our eyes met. And as the car starts to pick up pace, moving away from us, she raises her hand.*

Dangermouse: That one had something. He went for Fred.

Freddie: He tried to fucking kill me.

Stewart: (SHOUTING) Geordie! Geordie, down here, now.

Freddie: You alright, Stew? You're shaking.

Stewart: A few days from going home and hanging up my boots and I've got a fucking bloodbath to deal with.

Freddie: Shall I call Cas-evac?

Stewart: Don't be stupid. Let's not make this more complicated than it already is. You lot okay for a start?

Dangermouse: Yes, boss.

Freddie: Yeah.

Stewart: Right, let's have a look at them.

Dangermouse: They were armed boss, I swear.

Freddie: Hearts and minds s is all very well, but if it's me or him, it's him.

Geordie: Freddie warned them, boss. Three times. I counted.

Stewart: In fucking English, Geordie, how did he know you weren't talking about the weather!

Ursula: (APPROACHING) Sergeant MacDonald?

Stewart: Not now, Ma'am. Is your satphone off?

Ursula: No signal, I said -

Stewart: Could you please withdraw from the incident site. This is between ourselves until we find a way of sorting it. That last bit goes for all of us until we find a way of sorting this out.

> INSERT 14 (c)

Stewart: *And she is still smiling. There's not a day goes by I don't see her smiling face and she is saying 'Bang, Bang, you're the one.'*

Stewart: A maglite. A cheap imitation maglite. Is this the weapon you saw, Danger?

Freddie: Nothing. Must have wanted their money back real bad to have taken all of us on.

Dangermouse: Shouldn't mess with the Third Royals. The elite!

Stewart: Maybe they were foolish enough to think that we might act in a civilised manner.

Geordie: (A LITTLE WAY OFF) Boss! Boss, this one's still breathing.

Stewart: Quick. Get the first aid pack. Let's try and get one thing right.

15. EXT – SAME – SHORT TIME LATER. GENERAL ACTIVITY AND
BARELY SUPPRESSED PANIC.

Stewart: Any ID, Geordie.

Geordie: Yeah. In Arabic.

Stewart: Any sign of Ursula?

Geordie: Freddie's gone for her.

Sayed: (DYING) Min fadlika a nokoudi, alati saaltoka anha

Stewart: Someone is coming, she speaks Arabic. Push down harder,
Geordie.

Geordie: It's soaked right through.

Stewart: Use another. How's his head, Danger?

Sayed: Nokoud. A nokoud..

Stewart: I said, Danger-

Dangermouse: It's a fucking mess boss.

¬ INSERT 15 (a)

*Dangermouse: I don't look, that's how I deal with it. Sounds soft, but bits
of skull and blood and all -*

*Ursula: Did you not find the blood and his obvious pain
upsetting?*

Dangermouse: I'm not soft. I mean, he's the enemy, isn't he? I don't feel anything for him. I hate him, his ugly face, his dirty clothes – I know mine are dirty, but at least I know what it is to be clean – How can you live like that, that's what I tell myself. How can you live like that you animal? That's what we're doing here, trying to liberate them from living like this. It's not like I really hate him, it's like if I looked, I might, might begin to feel something, how fucking miserable his life, all their lives, are.

Stewart: Concentrate on what you are doing, Danger. Let me do that Geordie and get me any bandages there's left in the box.

Sayed: Zawdjati, zawdjati atfal.

Geordie: We're out, boss.

Stewart: Then give me your T-shirt. And give him some water. Are you going to be sick, Danger? Take over from him, kid.

DANGERMOUSE MOVES AWAY FROM THE BODY AND IS SICK.

Freddie: (APPROACHING) She's here, Stew.

Sayed: Nokoud

Stewart: What he's saying, Ursula?

Ursula: My Arabic's not-

Stewart: What's nokoud? He keeps saying it.

Ursula: Money.

Stewart: Tell him the money's safe.

Sayed: Sawfa a moto.

Ursula: He says he's dying.

Stewart: Look at the card there. What's his name?

Ursula: First name's Sayed. The other -

Stewart: Tell him - Sayed we're doing-

Sayed: (VERY DISTRESSED) Zawdjati wa ibni.

Ursula: His wife and son, he's saying.

Stewart: What about his wife and son?

Ursula: Calm down. Please. (RIFLES THROUGH DICTIONARY)
Nokoud ila zawdjatika wa atfalika.

Sayed: Nokoud a dum.

Ursula: (RIFLING THROUGH DICTIONARY) Dum? Dum? Dum?
Blood. Blood money?

Sayed: Aati a nokoud ila sheikh al masaul ani madjmoua Kuffa.

Ursula: Give the money to the Sheikh of the Kuffa.

Geordie: This t-shirt's soaked through, boss.

Ursula: The Kuffa must be a tribe or people holding his wife and son hostage. This was the blood money.

Sayed: Katalto ibn akh sheikh al madjmoua Kuffa

Ursula: He killed one of the Kuffa.

Sayed: Madjmouati baou kola abkari wa khorfani min adjil hadihi a nokoud.

Ursula: His tribe sold everything to raise this money.

Stewart: Ask him how we give it to them.

Ursula: Kayfa naatoha la hom?

Sayed: Kabro a generals. Al kamaro momlaa.

Ursula: Hold on. (RIFLES THROUGH DICTIONARY) Kabro a Generals must be a place. The Grave of the Generals. Kamaro is moon. Momlaa full. Full Moon at Kabro a Generals. Ayna kabro a generals?

Sayed: Torba Jafa.

Ursula: The dry something. (RIFLING THROUGH DICTIONARY) The dry marshes. He must mean the marshes Saddam drained. Towards Al Amarah. They were heading east.

Sayed: Katalto a radjel hada hisabi.

Ursula: He killed a man, this was his hisabi? Debt.

Sayed: El ana kataltani. Hada hisaboka.

Ursula: Now you have killed him, the debt is yours.

Sayed: Ashhado ana la illah ila allah ana Mohamed rasoul allah.

Stewart: What did he say? (BEAT) Ursula?

Ursula: He says he believes there is no God except Allah and that Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah.

SAYED DIES.

Ursula: Someone give me a cigarette, now.

INTRO OF RADIOHEAD 'WHERE I END, YOU BEGIN'

16. EXT – NEARBY - LATER

Freddie: Geordie panicked. He thought they were armed.

Stewart: You shouted at him to shoot. You are his superior.

Freddie: I thought they were armed. I warned them. What difference does it make?

17. EXT – ELSEWHERE NEARBY – SAME TIME.

Geordie: Didn't you notice, Dangermouse?

Dangermouse: Notice what?

Geordie: After he died. The silence.

Dangermouse: He'd stopped shouting his head off.

Geordie: There was a sound.

Dangermouse: You just said it was silent.

Geordie: Like wings. Like his ghost rising.

Dangermouse: There was no sound, kid. There are no ghosts here.

18. INT – BBC STUDIO IN LONDON – SAME TIME

Ursula: (ON SPEAKERPHONE) *You cut the line, Gus.*

Gus: Bad reception.

Ursula: *What about the story?*

Gus: An Iraqi with \$400 is not a story.

Ursula: *What about three Iraqis shot dead by British soldiers?*

Gus: Dead Iraqis are ten a penny. Give me three dead Brits and you can have top spot.

Ursula: *You can be a supercilious bastard sometimes, Gus.*

Gus: What am I the rest of the time?

Ursula: *Just a plain bastard.*

19. EXT – NEAR THE INCIDENT SCENE – SAME TIME

Stewart: You forget that I know what it's like, Fred.

Freddie: Is that what this is really about, Stew? Is this really about Ireland?

Stewart: No, this is about Iraq. It's nothing to do with Ireland. But I do know that if we make it official by the time the report has gone through to Battalion HQ, that poor bastard Sayed's wife and child will be long dead.

> INSERT 19 (a)

Stewart: The internal inquiry found I'd acted within the rules of engagement. The car had failed to stop. I saw a passenger in the rear make as if to shoot me-

Ursula: How did she do that?

Stewart: As if she held a gun in her hand. It was dark, I fired a warning shot. The car did not stop. You only have a second to make a decision. I took the decision to shoot the rear window. A second warning. At that moment the car swerved. I hit the passenger in the rear seat.

Stewart: This is not Ireland, Fred. But you do not want an inquiry. You do not want this hanging over you? Think about Geordie. He's barely eighteen -

> INSERT 19 (b)

Stewart: The internal inquiry found I'd acted within the rules of engagement.

Stewart: Right then, Fred, let the ruperts decide. I'll call Eeyore at Platoon Headquarters.

Freddie: Right.

20. SCENE: INT – BBC STUDIO IN LONDON – MORNING

Ursula: (ON SPEAKERPHONE) *I want to go to Kabro a Generals, Gus.*

Gus: Ursula, your assignment has finished. The war is over. We're withdrawing embeds. Pass the details on to John in the Tel Aviv office. He can monitor it. You be on the flight tomorrow morning.

Ursula: Gus-

Gus: It's over.

Ursula: Let me do this story.

Gus: See you in London, tomorrow afternoon.

21. EXT – ELSEWHERE NEAR A VEHICLE CHECKPOINT IRAQ ON THE
DESERT ROAD TO JALIBAH 15/4/03 – EVENING

A HELICOPTER TAKES OFF. IT DISAPPEARS INTO THE DISTANCE.

Stewart: That's her then.

Freddie: Nosey bitch.

Geordie: She wasn't happy.

Stewart: She's not our problem anymore.

Freddie: No.

Stewart: The Rover set, Dangermouse?

Dangermouse: Check!

Freddie: Fucking madness. We're only a few days from roulement and we've got to cross half the country delivering some raghead blood money. Why won't Eeyore just call in SIB?

Stewart: Because a woman and child will die needlessly, Freddie. He agreed with me. Play it this way and they'll be giving us medals. And we leave the country a better place.

Freddie: Fucking ruperts. Fucking hearts and minds.

Stewart: Besides, thought you wanted to see a bit of action. Charlie in mobility's given me the low down. Says we should manage it by dawn. We'll be back at Base Camp by Thursday evening latest. Right then, if there's no questions-

Freddie: Let's get this fucking over with.

F/X – THE LAND ROVER STARTS.

22. INT – A HANGAR – DAYTIME, SOME TIME PREVIOUSLY

Freddie: The Rover. A 110 Land Rover.

Dangermouse: Long chassis. Carries more gear than your civvy version.

Ursula: (OFF MIC) Can you talk us through the gear?

Freddie: The most important thing's the water. In this heat you need five litres minimum per day. Water tank, bottles-

Dangermouse: There's also the ration packs.

Freddie: Twelve in total. Enough for three days-

Dangermouse: Burger and beans for breakfast. Chicken and pasta for dinner. Sponge pud-

Freddie: Puddings of mass destruction. Need your Noddy suit to eat them.

Ursula: (OFF MIC) And that?

Freddie: Hexiblock. Burns for an hour. Heats food and water in your mess tin.

Dangermouse: Maggots-

Freddie: Sleeping bags. Guess which one's Danger's? Give you a hint, have whiff.

Ursula: (OFF MIC) What about communications?

Freddie: 352 Clansman mounted radio. Four TACBEs

Dangermouse: Tactical Beacons. You get lost in the desert, it's like a flare, only it's sound not light. Sends a message to planes over head.

Ursula: (OFF MIC) And what's that?

Freddie: A Magellan. A GPS.

Ursula: (OFF MIC) A Global Positioning System.

Freddie: You can navigate from my house to the south pole with that.

Dangermouse: Night vision gogs.

Ursula: (OFF MIC) What about the weapons?

Dangermouse: Now you're talking.

Freddie: SA80 Mark 2.

Dangermouse: The Mark 1s were shit. Wouldn't fire in the desert.

Freddie: Typical.

Dangermouse: Six magazines each. Twelve grenades and four smoke grenades.

Freddie: GPMG.

Dangermouse: General Purpose Machine Gun. Rattattattattata. Awesome bit of kit. Pure belt fed lead.

Freddie: *So you fancy your chances, Mush? Extreme fucking
prejudice boys! Let's give the bastards a proper dusting!
It's party time!*

*FREDDIE AND DANGERMOUSE BLATT AWAY LIKE
TWO SCHOOL KIDS. THEY STOP. THEY LAUGH.
SILENCE.*

Freddie: *(CALMING DOWN) Just joking, like. You're not going to
use that bit, are you?*

Dangermouse: *Could have some fun with those toys.*

Freddie: *Could take out a small village with these toys.*

SILENCE. FREDDIE AND DANGERMOUSE BURST OUT LAUGHING.

23. EXT A ROVER DRIVING TOWARDS BASRA – NIGHT TIME

Stewart: Basra-Baghdad highway coming up, Dangermouse. Charlie says take it south ten k to the north of Basra, then there's a desert road east across to the Al Amarah road.

Dangermouse: Roger, boss. So what about you, Fred?

Freddie: What about me what?

Dangermouse: What you looking forward to when we get back?

Freddie: The gasp.

Dangermouse: What gasp's that then, Fred?

Freddie: As they lie back on the bed and you slowly, ever so slowly peel down their stockings and panties. Inch by inch. And they gasp. They always give a little gasp-

Dangermouse: Before they say, I've told you not to wear my underwear you fucking perv.

GENERAL LAUGHING.

Freddie: Fuck off.

Dangermouse: Did you hear, boss, Fred likes to wear women's clothes.

Freddie: Fuck off, Dangermouse, I said.

Dangermouse: (TENTATIVELY) Would you give her one?

Freddie: Who?

Dangermouse: Ursula.

Freddie: Rather give you one.

Dangermouse: Did you hear that, boss? He wears women's clothes and wants to shag me.

Freddie: Fuck right off, Dangermouse.

24. INT – A CAR DRIVING ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BASRA – NIGHT TIME

Malek: So why would a pretty lady like you want to go to Kabro a Generals, Miss?

Ursula: Call me Ursula.

Malek: In that case you can call me Malek.

Ursula: I am trying to help some Iraqis.

Malek: I wish the world would stop trying to help Iraqis.

Ursula: I am sorry?

Malek: The world is sorry. But sorrow does not make the world go round.

Ursula: What does?

Malek: Dollars.

Ursula: And that is why an Iraqi like you, would take a pretty lady like me into the desert during a war?

Malek: I am a freedom loving person, I must embrace the market. I have nothing else to embrace.

Ursula: There are no soldiers in this part of Basra?

Malek: No need for soldiers here. Mullahs live in this part of Basra. British want the Mullahs on their side. So we can go to Al Amarah this way.

Ursula: And it's because of the Mullahs you want me to wear the Hijab?

Malek: It is safer.

Ursula: If Freddie and Dangermouse could see me now. Why do you have a hijab in your car?

Malek: It was my wife's.

Ursula: Does she not want it anymore?

Malek: Who are Freddie and Dangermouse?

Ursula: No-one.

Ursula: And what about you, Malek?

Malek: I am nothing. I am a no-one, too. I am your rafiq.

Ursula: Rafiq?

Malek: Desert guide.

Ursula: Would you do an interview for me? Later. On my minidisc?

Malek: No. I will show you Kabro a Generals. I will translate for you, and you shall pay me. Let us keep the relationship colonial.

Ursula: I come from a colony too.

Malek: Then you will understand.

25. EXT - A ROVER DRIVING TOWARDS BASRA – NIGHT TIME

Stewart: Winds picking up.

Dangermouse: You're either frying or freezing in this place.

Freddie: Shouldn't we radio in our co-ords, Stew?

Stewart: Eeyore said not to till we've completed handover. Less ruperts involved at this stage the better.

Freddie: Sounds a bit fucked up, if you don't mind me saying so, Stew.

Stewart: Well, that's what he said.

Freddie: Is it?

Stewart: Yes.

Dangermouse: What about you, boss?

Stewart: What about me what?

Dangermouse: You still haven't said what you're looking forward to most.

Stewart: A bath.

Dangermouse: That all? You must have an exciting home life.

> INSERT 25 (a)

Stewart: Eighteen, you come home on leave, you're fit, money's burning a hole in your pocket while all your mates are all stoney broke. All the girls are after you. And you sow your wild oats, you're Jack-the-Lad, you're it, and you get one of them pregnant. So you do the decent thing. I did the decent thing. But then reality kicks in. Off to Germany or Ireland, in my case Ireland, and you're living in this small isolated community, and you are out on patrol all day and she's stuck at home and feels like an extraterrestrial, but the tension of the place and the smallness of the community and the smallness of the babies keeps you tied together and it's not till you get back to England, that you realise that the tension's still there, but it's between you. You realise you were only really kids when you met and that now you've nothing in common. At least I've realised that we have nothing in common. I'd taken a desk job back at Stonehead and yet I jumped at the chance of a tour to Bosnia. Now this nuthouse. What does that mean? And things happen. Other people. Maybe I ran away. Perhaps the army's a way of running away. Leave your thinking to your superiors, MacDonald! When I get back, I'll sort it out with Jeannie. I've sworn to myself.

Ursula: (OFF MIC) And what about Jeannie?

Stewart: She still loves me. I think she loves me. Sure she does.

26. INT – A CAR DRIVING ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BASRA – NIGHT TIME

Ursula: Where'd you learn your English, Malek, it's very good?

Malek: You journalists don't give up.

Ursula: No.

Malek: I studied in London. British Museum.

Ursula: You're an archaeologist?

Malek: No. I said, I am nothing.

Ursula: You were an archaeologist.

Malek: I used to work in the Museum here in Basra. Mesopotamian collection. Now thanks to the Allies, there is no Museum and no collection. (Quoting) "How, O Sumer, are thy mighty fallen. The holy king is banished from his temple. The temple itself is destroyed, the city demolished, the leaders of the nation have been carried off into captivity, a whole empire has been overthrown by the will of the gods." Sumerian lament over the fall of the City of Ur. Four thousand years ago. Even then, Maktub.

Ursula: What's maktub?

Malek: What's the point in doing anything? It is the will of the gods.

27. EXT - A ROVER DRIVING TOWARDS BASRA – NIGHT TIME

Stewart: Time, Fred?

Freddie: 2230.

Stewart: Pass the Magellan.

Freddie: What's that you've been writing, kid?

Geordie: Leave off.

FREDDIE AND GEORDIE STRUGGLE OVER A NOTEBOOK.

Freddie: Love letters to the girlfriend?

Geordie: Leave go.

Freddie: (READING) Dear Mum. She your girlfriend?

Stewart: Leave him be, Freddie.

~ INSERT 27 (a)

Geordie: *...it's not like I've even talked to her since my stepdad came on the scene. He's the reason I left. I was young. Ran up debts. Credit cards. Truth be told, the longer I'm out here, the more of my debts I can pay off. Don't spend much in the desert. But each time, before we go out, I think there must be easier ways of paying off a debt.*

Ursula: (OFF MIC) *Will you read me some of the letter?*

Geordie: *Sure. (BEAT. EMBARRASSED) Dear Mum, another letter you probably won't get because I will have come back safe. But just in case. Sometimes I wonder how many of these letters are written. All the lads writing all they wanted to say to the people they love, and then, when they come back safe, tearing them up and all the words and things they wanted to say just disappear off into the air. The lads were winding me up today about hearing voices when we're in the desert. In the wind. It really does sound like voices, Mum. Maybe it's all these letters. But today was different, Mum. Today I killed a man. Two men-*

Stewart: According to the Magellan, it should be around here. The desert road Charlie was talking about.

Dangermouse: Got it.

Stewart: Take a left, Danger. There's the Al Amarah Road above Basra. Good time, boys, we're making good time. We keep this up and we'll be there by dawn.

FX – ROVER MOVES FROM PAVED ROAD TO SAND TRACK.

28. INT. CAR ON THE BASRA AL AMARAH ROAD. THE CAR ACCELERATES.

Malek: The Al Amarah Road, Miss Ursula.

Ursula: A hundred and fifty kilometres of this? We'll be there before dawn.

Malek: The last fifty's over desert road. It won't be so easy. Saddam had all the tracks destroyed. To keep people away.

Ursula: What is there that he wanted to keep people away from?

Malek: How can we know? We've been kept away. Maybe it's not only Generals buried there? (GROWING TENSE) There's something up there.

Ursula: Where?

Malek: There. Cars, Miss Ursula. Bandits.

F/X – CAR SLOWS.

29. INT - ROVER ON DESERT TRACK TRAVELLING CROSS COUNTRY –
NIGHT

Dangermouse: Paved road up ahead, Boss, 500 metres.

Stewart: Al Amarah Road.

Freddie: Pass us your baccy tin, Stew, mine's in my pack.

Stewart: Take a left onto it.

FX – MOVING FROM DESERT TRACK TO PAVED ROAD, LAND ROVER
ACCELERATES.

Freddie: What's all this crap in here, Stew?

< INSERT 29 (a)

Stewart: *My baccy tin? (HE LAUGHS) Had it since I first joined up. Training in Germany. Duty Free freebie. Keep some essentials in there, just in case-*

Ursula: (OFF MIC) *In case what?*

Stewart: *In case, in case.*

Ursula: (OFF MIC) *Could you talk us through them?*

Stewart: *A hacksaw blade, anti-shit tabs, water sterilizing tabs, codeine tabs, candle stub, razor blade, few squares of chocolate, a miniature absolute – doubles as disinfectant - Oxo cubes-*

Freddie: And a fucking durex! Hey lads, Stew's feeling lucky.

Stewart: For my gun, Fred.

Freddie: It's one of us, or a camel.

Stewart: To keep sand out of the barrel.

Dangermouse: Bags it's Geordie-

Freddie: Last in, first -

Stewart: Leave off him Freddie, you're always having a go-

Freddie: But it's okay for Dangermouse to have a go at me?

Stewart: You can take it.

Freddie: Can I?

< INSERT 29 (b)

Freddie: *Yeah, I'd say morale was low.*

Freddie: I can take a twelve hour VCP? Nearly get my head blown off?
Set off on some all night wild goose chase across the desert to
try and make up for killing some poor bastard who was trying
to make up for killing some other poor bastard? For fuck's
sake, I thought this was a war.

< INSERT 29 (c)

Freddie: *I mean, look at it: this country, what the fuck are we doing
here? It's not like they're grateful or anything. It's not like
the people at home even want us here in the first place.
So who the fuck are we fighting this for?*

Freddie: And Platoon Headquarters have gone along with this shit?
Does this hearts and minds bullshit mean that the lives of
some ragheads are worth more than ours?

< INSERT 29 (d)

Freddie: *Quite apart from the blindingly obvious like no body
armour, and noddy suits, there weren't even enough
desert boots. We're fighting a war in the desert with no
desert boots. I would have liked to see some action,
that's what it's all about, isn't it? But with the kit they've
sent us out here with, we're lucky we didn't-*

Dangermouse: What's that up there on the road, Boss?

Stewart: Can't see anything, Danger. Pass the night gogs, Geordie.

Dangermouse: Straight ahead.

Stewart: Vehicles. Could be a checkpoint. Kill the engine, Danger.

Freddie: Why would you be worried if it's a checkpoint?

Stewart: Shut it, Fred.

Freddie: I mean if HQ has given us the go ahead - ?

Stewart: Three vehicles. All civilian.

Dangermouse: They're just having a chat.

Stewart: Iraqi style. One with a rifle, two with their hands on their head?

Freddie: Raghead on raghead. Leave them to it. Iraq for the Iraqis, I
say.

Stewart: Freddie, this is your last warning. And don't call them ragheads.

Freddie: Which fucking side you on, Stew?

Dangermouse: He's only having a bit of fun, boss.

Stewart: We're the ones who let the genie out of the bottle. If we fail to resolve situations like the one up ahead, we will be judged to have failed.

Freddie: We will have failed if we get ourselves killed.

Stewart: Then we'd better not get ourselves killed. So, if you're feeling that way, Freddie, you stay here with the Rover. Danger, you cover me and Geordie from behind. And this time, let's try and resolve the situation with minimum force.

30. EXT – BASRA/AL AMARAH ROAD – NIGHT TIME

CAR BEING SEARCHED. DOORS OPENING AND CLOSING.

Malek: Ma 'idna slah. Ma 'indi floos. Fetshooni itha treedoon, bes la tfetshoon marti. [We are not armed. I have no money. Search me if you like but please – my wife...]

First Bandit: Incheb! [Shut up]

BANDIT PUNCHES MALEK

Ursula: Malek!

First Bandit: Inte Moo 'Iraqi. Inte Emreeky [You're not Iraqi, you're American] Hai Mertek Hilweh? Yimkin akhuthheh weyeh floosek [What's she like under her hijab? Maybe I'll have her and your money]

F/X – TWO GUNS ARE COCKED.

Stewart: (OFF) Put down the gun and leave the lady alone.

First Bandit: La tirmi! La tirmi! [Don't shoot]

Second Bandit: La tirmi!

Malek: Thib il-Slah wu 'oof il mereh. [Put down the gun and leave the lady alone]

First Bandit: Thebeiteh. Thebeiteh. Sawwoo mithil may ygulkum. [I'm doing it. I'm doing it. Do as the boy says]

Second Bandit: Tereh ma ekhethneh hwaiyeh [Please, it is just a little
misunderstanding]

Malek: Maku Mushkileh. He says it is just a little misunderstanding. I
said there is no misunderstanding, you understand the
situation perfectly.

Stewart: Right, let's sort this out in a civilised manner.

AT THAT INSTANT, THE ARMY LAND ROVER COMES SCREECHING UP
THE ROAD. A SHOWER OF BULLETS FROM THE MACHINE GUN.

Stewart: Take cover! Take cover!

Dangermouse: It's our fucking Rover, boss.

Stewart: Where's Freddie?

F/X – THE LAND ROVER SCREECHES TO A HALT, ENGINE RUNNING.

Third Bandit: Irkab! Irkab, Uzayr. [Get in, get in, Uzayr]

FIRST AND SECOND BANDITS SET OFF TO LAND ROVER

First Bandit: Hamdo lillah. Hamdo lillah.

Second Bandit An'al Abu il-Ingileez, Labu Tony Blair, Labu George Bush [To
hell you British! To hell Tony Blair! To hell George Bush]

F/X – WITH A SCREECH OF ACCELERATED RUBBER ON TARMAC AND A
PEEL OF BULLETS, THE LAND ROVER TAKES OFF INTO THE NIGHT.

Dangermouse: They're getting away, boss.

Geordie: They're getting away with all our gear, Boss.

Dangermouse: Shall I fire?

Stewart: You'll blow it sky high. Where the fuck is Freddie?

Dangermouse: But the Rover!

Stewart: Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck. What the fuck is going on?

F/X – THE LAND ROVER HAS DEPARTED WITH A SHOWER OF BULLETS.

BEAT.

Stewart: You two okay?

Malek: Yes. Yes, thank you. I am okay.

Stewart: And the lady, your wife?

Malek: She's not my wife.

Ursula: And I ain't no lady. Got a light, soldier?

Stewart: Ursula?

Ursula: Thanks for the military intervention, boys. (SHE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE) Sorry about the Jeep.

Stewart: It was a Land Rover. We're not all Americans yet. Fuck. Let's find Fred.

31. EXT – BASRA/AL AMARAH ROAD – A SHORT WHILE LATER.

Ursula: We have some water. Give him some water.

Dangermouse: Have some water, Fred!

Freddie: Cheers, Danger.

Stewart: How's the head?

Freddie: Apart from a lump the size of a tennis ball -

Dangermouse: I just don't understand where they came from. I scouted around with the night gogs.

Malek: The desert is their terrain, they don't need night goggles.

Freddie: And who, might I ask, the fuck are you?

Malek: Malek, pleased to make your acquaintance.

Freddie: And where the fucking fuck did she come from?

Ursula: Nice to fucking see you too, Fred, nice.

32. EXT – BASRA AL AMARAH ROAD – A SHORT WHILE LATER

Geordie: But you still have the blood money, Boss?

Stewart: In my webbing.

Freddie: But what about the Magellan, Stew? Or the RPGs? Or the GPMG or the fucking radio? What about the water, Stew? Or the ration packs? I say we radio Platoon Headquarters.

Stewart: With what?

Freddie: What about her satphone?

Ursula: They took that too.

Freddie: Fuck.

Stewart: Malek says it's not far.

Freddie: Some raghead with a jalopy?

Stewart: Freddie, language.

Freddie: Stew, priorities.

Stewart: We have orders to complete the task.

Freddie: Do we? I haven't heard them.

Stewart: I told you what Eeyore said.

Freddie: I saw you on the radio. I only have your word for what he said.

Stewart: I am in charge. Chain of command. That's how it works in the army, didn't anyone ever tell you.

Freddie: I don't know anymore, Stew, I just don't. Just like I don't know why you've got that newspaper picture in your baccy tin.

Stewart: What photo? What's that to do with anything?

Freddie: It isn't Jeannie.

Stewart: What business is it of yours?

Freddie: It's the girl from Ireland.

Ursula: What girl from Ireland?

Stewart: Keep out of this.

Freddie: You've gone soft, Stew. Like the army. You're a sentimental bastard and you're going to get us killed.

Stewart: We are not going to get killed. We are going to Kabro a Generals and we are going to give this money to the person it was meant for, or a woman and child are going to die.

Freddie: And I say you have misled us. The Platoon Commander did not order this. Or at least if they did, you misled them into sanctioning something they never would have. They were not in full possession of the facts. Whichever, we are out here in the middle of nowhere risking our necks for a lie.

Stewart: How dare you!

Freddie: Well then, was this action ordered by Platoon HQ or not? (NO REPLY) Fucking bastard. Why?

Stewart: Because it's the right thing to do. Because I believe it was the right thing to do.

Freddie: You believe!!!! To land us without water, food, comms or transport in the middle of a warzone?

Stewart: We made a mistake, Geordie made a mistake firing, and Dangermouse. You made a mistake calling on them to fire. And I made a mistake not staying on top of the situation. And I've made a mistake like that before and you have to live with it a long time. But the ruperts aren't interested in that. They're interested in how it appears. They'd have called us in and had us write reports and would have passed it up the chain of command, and we'd have debriefings and one to ones, until the full moon had been and gone and it would have been too late for the woman and her child. But they are not important since they would not be Allied victims. Inter-tribal stuff. And in time, Sayed's family or tribe or people might be entitled to some guilt money from the MOD. If they have the perseverance to find out what procedure to follow and where and when fill in all the forms. And the ruperts would have been satisfied with themselves because justice – fuck justice – the right procedures and forms will have been filled out.

Freddie: That's what they're there for, to make decisions.

Stewart: No, they are there to pass the buck. One thing they will never be, is to blame. From Eeyore up to Tony fucking Blair. But we will still have to live with it.

< INSERT 32(a)

Stewart: *Do I think there is such a thing as a just war? Yes. Yes I do. War is a dreadful visitation upon a people. It is the unravelling of the moral threads that bind a society, the releasing of a genie from a lantern, but in some cases-*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) This case?*

Stewart: *I don't know. Right war, wrong reasons, perhaps.*

Stewart: Okay, okay Freddie, what do you say we do?

Freddie: I say we take this car, we drive back to Base Camp. Simple as that. That's what I say. What do you say Danger?

Dangermouse: I mean, like Fred says, Boss, if you lied- I mean misled us, knowingly, like, then I mean-

Freddie: Geordie?

Geordie: I don't know, Fred.

Freddie: We tell them what happened. We say we attempted to rectify the situation, but while doing so we were caught up in another incident where, while saving two civilian lives, we were set upon.

Stewart: I thought you wanted to see a bit of action.

Freddie: I've seen enough for one day.

Stewart: You lost your nerve at the VCP.

Freddie: Fuck off.

Stewart: You were happy to stay behind and look after the Rover.

Freddie: I'm the one who got attacked.

Stewart: And you're forgetting one thing?

Freddie: What's that?

Stewart: This is not our car.

Ursula: And it's not headed towards Basra.

Freddie: We just saved your ass.

Ursula: Thank you very much. And I'm sure Malek would be willing to let you three ride along in the back for a small fee.

Freddie: What if I put a gun to his head?

Stewart: I would put a gun to yours.

Freddie: (PAUSE) Well now we know.

Dangermouse: Know what?

Malek: Three hundred dollars and you put your guns in the boot, gentlemen.

Freddie: And where are we meant to get three hundred dollars from?

Stewart: Indemnity money.

Dangermouse: That's meant as a last resort. If we're really up shit creek.

Stewart: Look down, Danger, you're up to your waist in it, and I don't see any ATMs.

33. INT – CAR – EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING. – A SEVERELY WEIGHED DOWN CAR DRIVING ALONG THE BASRA AL AMARAH ROAD.

Freddie: Move your elbow, Dangermouse.

Dangermouse: Up yours.

Freddie: It is up mine, you fat bastard.

Dangermouse: I've got big bones.

Freddie: You're a fat bastard.

Ursula: Enjoying yourself, boys?

Freddie: Fuck off!

Malek: You do not speak to lady like that in my car.

Freddie: What lady?

Stewart: Can you turn on the radio, Malek, a bit of distraction.

F/X – IRAQI RADIO SWITCHED ON

Freddie: Least I don't have Geordie on my knee. Little lapdog.

Geordie: Shut up.

Freddie: Can't you go any faster Mr Raghead?

Malek: Yes, if you and your friends would care to step out?

Stewart: Isn't there a cut across country?

Malek: In your jeep maybe, Sergeant MacDonald. Now, we must go north and cut back south east on the desert route.

CROSS FADE MUSIC THAT IS PLAYING TO:

34. INT – CAR – LATER. EARLY MORNING.

F/X - THE RADIO PLAYS 'I HATE ISRAEL' BY SHA'ABAN ABDEL REHIM.
MALEK SINGS ALONG.

Freddie: What the hell is this shit?

Malek: This, Mr Freddie, is a very popular song. It is called 'I Hate Israel'. He is singing: 'Since the fall of the towers we are living in a tornado'.

Freddie: Raghead bullshit. It's this country I hate-

FX – CAR LURCHES TO A HALT. EVERYONE IN THE BACK MOANS.

Malek: You hate this country?

Freddie: Steady on, Mr Raghead, we're packed pretty tight here.

Malek: Look around you.

Freddie: What?

Malek: Look around you, what do you see?

Freddie: Fuck all, it's barely dawn.

Malek: What do you see against that dawn? On the horizon.

Freddie: Pylons. Electricity pylons.

Malek: No, Mr Freddie, they are broken electricity pylons, because they have been bombed. Look, look at the side of the road, burnt out cars. How many can we see from here? Five? Six? And I'd swear if you look close enough you'll find the charred remains of 'ragheads' that even the vultures and the rats won't touch. To remove this monster Saddam whom you made to keep us in our place, you have bombed us, impoverished us, stood by and let our children die of the most preventable illnesses, starved us physically and intellectually, and then bombed us some more. You have destroyed our country. Take a good look at it, because when I look at its' blasted remains, I see you. You reduce a country to rags and then you call us ragheads.

Freddie: I meant your turban thing.

Malek: It's called a keffiyah! I have learnt your language, kindly take the trouble to learn this one word. And it might have escaped your notice, but I am not wearing one. (BEAT) I'm waiting.

Freddie: What for?

Malek: An apology.

Freddie: Don't push your luck. Remember who's got the gun.

Malek: Wherever the word liberty is heard, a gun's not far behind.

Stewart: Say it, Freddie.

Freddie: He can fuck off.

Geordie: For fuck's sake, Fred.

Dangermouse: We don't want to be here all night.

Freddie: Right, sorry. Sorry. If it makes you feel better. Sorry. Fuck.

Malek: My brother is dead. My wife is dead. My daughter is dead. My work strewn to the four winds. My life is dust. Nothing could make me feel better. But I shall drive on.

F/X – ENGINE RESTARTS. CAR PULLS OFF. MUSIC RESUMES CROSS
FADE TO:

35. INT – CAR – EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING. CAR RADIO PLAYS THE WORLD SERVICE OR EQUIVALENT.

News Reader on Car Radio:

‘...Mr Blair defended the assertions of his speech of March 18th and assured assembled journalists that it was only a matter of time before weapons of mass destruction would be found. And in reports just in from Iraq, a British Army Land Rover has been found burnt out on the Basra/Al Amarah Road. There are no signs of any of the occupants or their equipment. It is thought they were on special operations. We will of course bring you more on that story as news becomes available. Sport now. Patrick Viera’s chances of making Wednesday’s crucial Premiership decider with Manchester United were rated-

FX – THE RADIO IS CLICKED OFF.

Stewart: Fuck.

Dangermouse: Yeah, Arsenal are handing those bastards the title.

Geordie: The Rover, Dangermouse, that’s us.

Dangermouse: Us? But they said it was special ops.

Freddie: Only because they’ve no idea what the fuck a Rover was doing there.

Dangermouse: Hey lads we’re on special ops, we’re Artists now. The Hereford Hooligans!

Ursula: I need a pee, Malek, can we pull over?

Malek: Of course, Miss Ursula, you are the boss.

FX – CAR SLOWS DOWN. CAR DOOR OPENS AND URSULA GETS OUT.

Stewart: Nearly light. We're going to have to lie up for the day soon anyway. Too hot to keep going like this. How far from the desert road, Malek?

Malek: Twenty kilometres. We could make it before the sun is too high.

Stewart: Except they'll have checkpoints and eagle patrols everywhere looking for us.

Freddie: What's she got the boot open for?

Dangermouse: You do fancy her, you're trying to cop a look.

Freddie: Fuck off.

Stewart: We'll have to cut across the desert.

Malek: This is a Volkswagen Passat. Iraqi edition. Tin can on wheels.

Stewart: I'll pay for any damage.

Malek: With what?

Stewart: When we get safely back. (SUDDENLY GETTING OUT) Stay here.

35a. EXT – CAR – CONTINUOUS.

Ursula: Hi, is Gus there?...Ursula, Ursula Gunn...

F/X – A BUTTON IS CLICKED.

Ursula: Hello? Hello?

Stewart: I can't decide, is it a funny way to take a piss, with a satphone in your hand? Or a funny way to do a report, with your knickers around your ankles.

Ursula: Is a woman not entitled to her privacy?

Stewart: Not if she's jeopardising the mission.

Ursula: You're not on an official mission -

Stewart: Or just plain dropping us in the shit.

Ursula: And I'm no longer an embed.

Stewart: Every radio signal coming out of this place is listened to and monitored. You were instructed on your training not to give away positions -

Ursula: To the enemy. Not to our own side.

Stewart: It will jeopardize the op nevertheless. Besides, if Freddie finds out you've still got a satphone, he'll want to call in a heli.

Ursula: I need to let them know I'm safe.

Stewart: You'll be safe, but you'll have no story.

Ursula: The army is not looking for me.

Stewart: We are your story.

Ursula: If I don't phone in, I still get to record the story.

Stewart: Sure.

Ursula: And I'll have yours and the others' full co operation with interviews?

Stewart: I'll tell them.

Ursula: And publishing rights.

Stewart: Have to talk to my agent about that. I'm joking, Ursula. We don't all have agents. The book, the film, whatever, it's yours.

Ursula: Right.

Stewart: One thing, though.

Ursula: What?

Stewart: Pull up your knickers.

< 36. INSERT

Freddie: *Why do I hate you? Who says I hate you?*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) You call me a nosey bitch.*

Freddie: *Yeah well...*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) Why, Freddie?*

Freddie: *Because all you lot are interested in is the story. And to make your stories suit your agenda, you have to have goodies and baddies. And the agenda dictates that the army is always painted as the baddy. Yet we didn't choose to be here-*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) You joined the army.*

Freddie: *But I didn't choose this war.*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) You know that the army fights wars.*

Freddie: *I'm only doing this because I was ordered.*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) What is our agenda, then?*

Freddie: *Well, look at yourself.*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) Yeah?*

Freddie: *I knew what the story was going to be the minute I met you.*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) And that was? Because I'm a woman?*

Freddie: *I'm not sexist.*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) Because I'm Irish?*

Freddie: *I'm not racist-*

Ursula: *(OFF MIC) I report the truth. The facts. What happens.*

37. INT - CAR BOUNCING OVER ROUGH TERRAIN – EARLY MORNING.
THE CAR JUDDERS ACROSS ROUGH TERRAIN. MOANS.

Stewart: Don't worry lads. We'll lie up once we're out of sight of the road.

Malek: This way is your decision, Sergeant MacDonald, you'll have to buy me a new car when we get back to Basra.

Stewart: I'll buy you a new car. Ursula's going to make us all famous.

Freddie: Like Bravo Two Zero?

Dangermouse: My Mum will be dead proud.

Freddie: I meant Bravo Two Zero was a fuck up too. Christ, you wouldn't transport animals like this, Stew, how much longer?

Geordie: I'm parched, Boss.

Stewart: Keep your eyes peeled for a good LUP.

Freddie: Who are we hiding from? Our own lot?

Stewart: The country's still crawling with Fedayeen. And we've got fuck all ammo.

Geordie: I said, I'm parched.

Stewart: How much water you got left, Ursula?

Ursula: Two five litre bottles.

Freddie: We're meant to have five litres a day in this heat.

Stewart: Can we ponce a few cups when we stop?

FX – THE CAR HAS STUCK ON SOMETHING. THE WHEEL SKIDS AROUND. MALEK REVS THE ENGINE.

Ursula: Only if Freddie is very, very nice to me.

Stewart I'm sure he can manage that.

Dangermouse: Looks like we have stopped, Boss.

Stewart: What's wrong Malek?

Malek: Stuck. A stone. Crazy to go off the road in this car.

Stewart: Let's get out, have a stretch and give it a push, boys.

FX – CAR DOORS OPEN AS THEY GET OUT.

37a. EXT OF CAR IN THE DESERT. ENGINE KEEPS RUNNING.

Stewart: Right, grab a little water, boys, but go easy -

FX – BOOT OPENING.

Dangermouse: Boss, it isn't a stone.

Stewart: What's that, Dangermouse?

Dangermouse: Unexploded shell. American.

Freddie: Fucking yanks.

Stewart: Fuck. Malek and Ursula, out of the car! Don't ask, get out now.

FX – DOOR OPENING.

Stewart: Leave the doors. Don't close it. Everyone, quickly, carefully, quietly move back. Keep looking, there might be others.

FX – FIVE PEOPLE MOVING AWAY FROM CAR. MIC STAYS WITH THEM.

Dangermouse: (STILL WITH CAR) I'll grab the guns, boss.

Stewart: Forget the guns, Dangermouse. Move away from the vehicle.

Ursula: My minidisc! My recordings! Dangermouse!

Dangermouse: (CALLS BACK) No problems, Ma'am.

Stewart: Danger-!

Dangermouse: I'll risk it for a biscuit.

Stewart: (SHOUTING) Forget it, Danger. Move!

Dangermouse: What you worrying about boss? I got them, I'm coming.

F/X – DANGERMOUSE SLAMS THE BOOT CLOSED. BEAT. EXPLOSION.

INSERT 37

Dangermouse: Why do they call me Dangermouse? You remember Dangermouse the cartoon? 'Dangermouse, you've saved the world' 'It's just a job, really' Used to watch it as a kid. I'm not one of those sad bastards who watch all the stuff they used to watch when they were kids when they're grown up. But when I got my first pay packet from the army, me and the lads went out on the town and we had a few bevvies. Got really shitfaced. Went to this tattoo shop in Stonehead. To get '3RF' tattooed on our arms. I must have been talking about Dangermouse or something – you know the way you talk about kids' telly when you're pissed - because next morning I woke up with this tattoo on my arm. The lads thought it was a real laugh. First I was hacked off about it, but now I've got used to him. It's me, Dangermouse. My lucky charm.

38. EXT. DESERT. SHORT WHILE LATER. DANGERMOUSE BADLY HURT,
OTHERS ROUND HIM.

Freddie: His arm. Fuck.

Geordie: It's right off.

Stewart: Dangermouse, can you hear me?

Dangermouse: Got the guns, Boss.

Stewart: Shit, Dangermouse, I mean, thank you.

Dangermouse: And your minidisc, Ma'am.

Ursula: Ursula, Dange.

Stewart: Don't talk, Danger. I'm going to try a tourniquet.

Dangermouse: They were in my hand -

Freddie: You mad bastard, Dangermouse.

Dangermouse: (LAUGHS WEAKLY) Mad, bad and dangerous to know.

Ursula: You shouldn't have, Dangermouse. I always keep my best
stuff in my pants.

Dangermouse: (LAUGHING WEAKLY) Big pants.

Ursula: Small discs, Danger.

39. EXT – DESERT EAST OF BASRA AL AMARAH ROAD 16/4/04 – MID-MORNING.

Freddie: What now, Batman?

Stewart: I'm thinking.

Freddie: He's dying.

Stewart: I know.

Malek: And, I'm afraid, now you do owe me a new car, Sergeant MacDonald.

Freddie: Shut up about your car, you fucking raghead.

Ursula: I shouted. I shouted to him-

Freddie: You shut the fuck up too.

~ INSERT 39

Geordie: *When you go down the Job Centre and ask about jobs in the army, they show you tanks rolling through woodlands and guys patrolling through the trees with twigs sticking out their helmets. They don't show you what it looks like when your mate's arm's been blown off. And you've no water or bandages or nothing and haven't slept all night. BEAT. They don't tell you what it feels like to shoot a man. That all your actions have consequences for someone.*

40. EXT – DESERT EAST OF BASRA AL AMARAH ROAD 16/4/04 – MID-MORNING

Freddie: So? Have you thought?

Stewart: We lie up here for the day. See how Danger does.

^ *INSERT 40*

Geordie: *I tried to sleep, but every time I closed my eyes I saw them. Dangermouse and Sayed at the checkpoint. Both lying on the desert, the floor of the world, shipping blood into the stoney sand, gabbling words to the wind.*

Stewart: Grab some gonk, if we can. Stay still. Lose as little water as we can. This evening - if Danger's gone - we strike out North East try for the desert route to Kabro a Generals.

Freddie: You're not seriously still thinking-?

Stewart: It's not more than twenty five klicks as the crow flies.

Freddie: It's not more than ten klicks back to the main road. We take our chances and flag something down.

Stewart: We'll lie up till evening. We'll decide then

41. EXT – DESERT EAST OF BASRA AL AMARAH ROAD 16/4/04 – MID-MORNING

Ursula: (TO HER RECORDER) It was my fault, Dominic, my stupid fault. I shouted to him for my bag. This fucking minidisc. It's a reflex - your recordings, your notes – we're programmed that way. The story is all that counts. Just like he is programmed to follow orders. I shouted for him, Dom, to get my things. He heard and obeyed. 'It's just a job, Chief.' We used to sit like on the sofa after school, like two peas in a pod, watching Dangermouse, Dom. And now he's lying on the red sand, his blood draining from the stump of where his arm once was. The sand grows redder and the sun grows more fierce. Jesus, Dom, what cost the truth-?

FREDDIE ARRIVES.

Ursula: Jesus, Freddie, you made me jump. I thought you were all -

Freddie: What are you doing over here, Ma'am?

Ursula: Couldn't sleep. Scorpion in my shoe. How is he?

Freddie: How do you think, Ma'am? (BEAT) Stew had some codeine pills. And a baby Absolute. He's not in so much pain.

Ursula: I know what it's like for you, Freddie.

Freddie: Do you?

Ursula: Yes.

Freddie: How's that then?

Ursula: I lost my brother.

Freddie: To an American shell?

Ursula: No, an RUC bullet. An accident. I mean, they're not even meant to kill anyone. The bullets. Rubber. Nor the police.

Freddie: These things happen.

Ursula: He was going to a school disco.

Freddie: Sometimes you've got to make snap decisions. Mistakes can be made.

Ursula: But there was no inquiry into the mistake. They didn't even apologise. They just told lies about him to cover up their mistake.

Freddie: Sometimes the truth must be sacrificed to a greater end.

Ursula: No, the truth must be known. That's why I became a journalist. To report the truth. It's the least we owe those upon whose suffering our world is built.

Freddie: You must be happy then.

Ursula: Happy?

Freddie: This must be like revenge.

Ursula: Revenge?

Freddie: Seeing us suffer.

Ursula: I'd never wish on anyone -

Freddie: Well, you've got your story now.

Ursula: I've told you -

Freddie: Probably got it running now.

Ursula: Only because you interrupted-

Freddie: Danger lost his arm for that thing.

Ursula: I'll turn it off. Don't touch it.

FREDDIE THROWS THE MINIDISC ONTO THE HARD GROUND.

Ursula: My machine! Don't touch me, Freddie, don't -

Freddie: I've been watching you all along.

Ursula: Freddie, don't, we're in enough trouble-

Freddie: Whose fault is that? Stew's lost it. I wanted him to turn back.

Ursula: Freddie, you're hurting me.

Freddie: No, you're the one who made mistakes. Giving Stew an out. Saying they'd stolen your satphone. There's a blackened sat dish near the wreckage looks remarkably like yours. Where was the truth then, truth seeker?

Ursula: Freddie -

Freddie: The others would have come with me. But you twisted him round your little finger. Standing behind the car with your knickers round your ankles. Waving your cunt at him. And shouting at Dangermouse to get you're stuff. His biggest problem is that he's a decent guy, it gets in the way of his professionalism.

Ursula: Freddie, I'll scream.

Freddie: No, you won't. Because I'm sick of listening to you.

FREDDIE PUTS HIS HAND OVER HER MOUTH AS SHE STRUGGLES.

Freddie: Just playing at being a soldier. This is war. The genie from the bottle, isn't that what Stew calls it? (SINGS) We shall overcome, we shall overcome.

FREDDIE IS KICKED IN THE HEAD BY GEORDIE.

Freddie: What the fuck, Geordie?

Ursula: (SPITTING) Bastard, bastard, filthy fucking bastard.

Freddie: My ear! My fucking ear! What are you doing spying on me?

Geordie: You okay, Ursula?

Ursula: Bastard.

Freddie: It's between me and her.

Geordie: Didn't look like she saw it that way, Corporal.

Freddie: You fuck off or I'll eat your balls for breakfast.

Geordie: I'm afraid I can't do that, Corporal.

Freddie: You follow that soft bastard MacDonald like a dog across the desert, and now you won't obey me?

Geordie: Sergeant MacDonald is trying to do the right thing.

Freddie: Since when is it your job to think what's right and what's not? It's about obeying orders. I've given you an order.

Geordie: I am afraid I can't obey you, Corporal.

Freddie: You little -

FREDDIE JUMPS TOWARDS HIM. A GUN IS COCKED. STEWART HAS ARRIVED.

Stewart: Easy, Fred.

Ursula: Keep him away from me, Geordie.

Freddie: You don't have the balls, Stew.

Stewart: Don't push me, Freddie. Normal rules don't apply anymore. You've decided that.

42. EXT – A LITTLE WAY OFF FROM THE SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT –
LATE MORNING

Malek: So this is the liberation that you bring us?

Stewart: Please, Malek.

Malek: These are the actions of lovers of freedom? Skhan Wijih.

Stewart: I am trying to sort the situation.

Malek: Skhan Wijih. Skhan Wijih, Sergeant MacDonald.

Stewart: (WEARILY) What is Skhan Wijih, Malek?

Malek: During the last war, on the retreat from Kuwait, Saddam ordered the army to set fire to all the oil wells as a final act of defiance. A final fuck you. But true to Iraqi luck, the wind began to blow from the south. The air of Iraq became black with the burnt oil particles. Our cars, our houses, our roads and, if you dared to venture out, your face went black. Skhan Wijih. Black faced, shame faced. Shame on us. Be careful, Sergeant MacDonald, the wind is picking up.

GEORDIE APPROACHES.

Geordie: Dangermouse is dead, boss.

Stewart: (PAUSE) It's probably for the better. We'll bury him as best we can and move on. Where's Freddie?

Geordie: Thought you were keeping an eye on him.

Stewart: Ursula! You go that way, Geordie.

THEY RUN OFF.

43. EXT – SAME AS ABOVE – MOMENTS LATER

Geordie: (APPROACHING BREATHLESS) His gun's gone, and one of the water bottles.

Stewart: He's bugged out. He's headed back towards the Basra Road. He'll fry in this.

Geordie: Should we go after him?

Stewart: No. No we shouldn't. I set out with the intention of repaying this debt. Freddie was never with us on that. He's made his choice, he's taking his chances.

Geordie: What about us? We need five litres of water each a day in this heat?

Stewart: We wait till evening. Conserve energy. We walk it then. Twenty-five k cross country, isn't that what you reckon, Malek?

Malek: That depends what we encounter crossing that country. The wind is really picking up -

Geordie: But how do we know where we're going? All the maps were in the car.

Stewart: We still have the stars, kid. Don't they teach you anything in basic training? Now, let's see to Dangermouse.

[^] INSERT 43

Malek: *The day the bomb came was my daughter's birthday. I had saved. Saved a whole year. She had set her heart on a white silk dress. Nothing we could do could persuade her to change her mind. She wanted to look like an angel that she had seen in a book of Christian Art I had bought in London. And, as Mr Bush threatened war, and the dinar fell lower and lower, I had to save harder and harder to buy it. We ate less. We would not drive our car but walked everywhere. And at last I was able to buy her dress. She looked like an angel in it. I went out to work at the Museum. Happy. That same day, the Allies started what they call pre-war bombing in Basra. The tree of Adam was bombed. It is what Christians called the Tree of Life. It had stood in Basra since before time and was supposed to be guarded by Allah and have healing powers. My home was bombed too that day. My daughter had wanted the dress to be an angel to go to heaven in. Compensation? Why do all your English words that are to do with the most important things like heart and soul come from the language of the shopkeeper, the insurance man and the usurer? Compensation? Redemption? Recompense? Saving? Nothing could compensate me for the cost of that dress.*

Ursula: (OFF MIC) *Why do you continue with us?*

Malek: *Business. There is no language now, but the language of the market. The new Iraq will be a knockdown shop for the west. And I am nothing but a shop assistant. (BEAT) And I said I wasn't going to talk to your recorder. That will be another twenty dollars.*

44. EXT – WALKING ACROSS THE EASTERN IRAQI DESERT – DUSK. A LIGHT WIND MIGHT BE DISCERNIBLE. THE TERRAIN IS DIFFICULT AND TIRING AS THEY WALK

Stewart: The difficulty usually is knowing whether it is waxing or waning. But we know tonight that it is full. How they used to do it in ancient times, isn't that right, Malek?

Malek: Bedouin still do. The sky is a map. A reflection of the world.

Stewart: You hanging on in there, Ursula?

Ursula: I'll outlive you all.

Stewart: I don't doubt it. So much nearer to heaven, it feels like. Alright, kid?

Geordie: Okay, boss.

Stewart: Call me Stew. (BEAT) You did alright with Freddie, kid.

CROSS FADING OVER:

Stewart: You see that one, [you start with the pole star and figure the angle between it and...

45. EXT – WALKING ACROSS THE EASTERN IRAQI DESERT – NIGHT

Geordie: How far do think we've done, boss?

Stewart: Ten klicks. Good progress.

Malek: My shoes are falling to pieces.

Stewart: We'll stop soon. Let's hope they wait for us.

Malek: Who?

Stewart: The Kuffa. The sheikh of the Kuffa.

Geordie: There's only a litre of water left boss.

Stewart: We'll find some.

Malek: There used to be water here. This used to be Marshland. All these wadis were waterways. Then Saddam dammed up the Euphrates. We will be lucky to find a cup of water.

Stewart: But people live here, the Marsh Arabs?

Malek: Ma'adan.

Stewart: And the Kuffa, they are Ma'adan?

Malek: If they are from around here, yes.

Stewart: Ursula says you know about Kabro a Generals. She said it's an archaeological site.

Malek: Late Babylonian. Time of Alexander. Another western invasion.

Stewart: Who were the Generals?

Malek: Greeks.

Stewart: His Generals?

Malek: No. Earlier. They led an army of mercenaries here to the deserts of ancient Babylonia. They were in the pay of Cyrus, the pro-western pretender to the throne of Persia which then ruled Babylonia. Even then the West tried regime change.

Stewart: Did they succeed?

Malek: Cyrus died on the first day of the first battle. The Greek army found themselves without a cause to fight for, lost in the deserts surrounded by hostile tribes. Greeks go home! Get your snout out of the honey pot of civilisation! I am extemporising, you understand. The Greek Generals sent word to the Persians that they were willing to negotiate. The Generals made a rendezvous. But those sneaky deceitful Easterners tricked them

Stewart: So they killed the Generals and buried them here at Kabro a Generals?

Malek: The Generals had first tried to overthrow the leadership, then they tried to make peace with it. The Persians were not stupid. They realised this to be the hypocrisy it was, so they cut off their heads and had those severed heads displayed here as a sign.

Stewart: A sign of what?

Malek: The severance between the head and heart at the core of your Western Civilisation.

Geordie: What about the other Greeks, the soldiers?

Malek: Without their generals, they instituted a true democracy amongst themselves; they marched home through Kurdistan and Turkey to the Mediterranean. Of course, seventy years later the Persian Empire fell to some Greek named Alexander.

Stewart: Alexander the Great?

Malek: Perhaps in the West he is called great. We think of it more as arrogance. He set up a temple to those generals. In his version of the truth, they became early martyrs in the civilization of the barbarians. So, what was a sign of treachery to the East, was a shrine to heroism in the West.

F/X – WIND

Malek: The wind is picking up.

Ursula: I can't see the stars anymore, Stewart. It's got very dark.

Stewart: It's cloud.

Malek: It's not cloud, Sergeant MacDonald, it's sand. We must stop.

Stewart: We must keep going. Tonight is the full moon.

Malek: If we don't stop now, we shall all die.

FX – THE WIND AND SAND ARE REALLY BLOWING.

Stewart: It's blowing from the south west. There's a wadi bank up there
 might do us.

FX – A SANDSTORM HOWLS.

46. THE DESERT 16/04/03 – NIGHT TIME. A SANDSTORM HOWLING ONLY SLIGHTLY LESS. THE CONVERSATION, IN CONTRAST, IS EXTREMELY INTIMATE. URSULA AND STEWART ARE FACE TO FACE.

Stewart: You sleeping, Ursula?

Ursula: Through this?

Stewart: The sand's getting in on you. Keep tight to the wall.

Ursula: What about Freddie?

Stewart: He's younger and fitter than me, he had less ground to cover.
We can hope. (BEAT) I'm sorry, Ursula, about Freddie.

Ursula: Forget it. (BEAT) Why are you doing this, Stewart?

Stewart: You asked me that already.

Ursula: Do you actually want to go home?

Stewart: Perhaps not quite yet.

Ursula: Is it because of that girl in Ireland? The one Freddie was talking about in the car. Is she a reason?

Stewart: (BEAT) I see her still. She's laughing, always laughing when I see her. In the back window. Green Vauxhall Kadett. Laughing as it pulled away from us. And her hair's long. Black. Curly. Her eyes blue. I can see them. Our eyes met. And as the car starts to pick up pace, moving away from us, she raises her hand. And we've been on stag four, five hours, and this is the middle of the night, and I'm tired and twitchy –

CONT.

and she points her index finger and forefinger at me like a gun. She cocks it. And I can see her lips mouthing. Bang, bang, you're dead. I close my eyes. I blink. And when I open them the glass has shattered. And the car is screeching to halt and jolting forward and rolling back and she is coming out through the shattered back windscreen and there is a hole in her head. And she is still smiling. There's not a day goes by I don't see her smiling face and she is saying 'Bang, Bang, you're the one.' And I am the one. I miss her as if I loved her. Or as if I were dead and it was my life I missed.

Ursula: (BEAT) I lost my brother, Dominic. RUC shot him. I still talk to him. How are you doing Dominic? You won't believe where I am, Dominic. The middle of a sandstorm with a fucking squaddie, Dom. (LAUGHS) Everything decent I've ever done is because of him. Every place I've not had the courage to go, he has held my hand and walked with me. In the valley of death, no evil shall I fear. Even here, now, with you – (BEAT) Is this maktub?

Stewart: Maktub?

FX – BLAST OF SAND AND WIND.

Ursula: Written by the hand of God. Stewart, I'm going to pass out. Hold me.

MUSIC: RADIOHEAD 'WHERE I END, YOU BEGIN'

47. EXT - DESERT 17/4/03– MORNING. SILENCE OF EXTREME HEAT IN THE DESERT. GEORDIE IS DESPERATELY DIGGING WITH HIS HANDS.

Geordie: (HOARSELY) Boss! Boss! You in there? (MORE DIGGING)
Boss! You under there?

STEWART SPITTING. GROANING.

Geordie: You alright Boss?

STEWART COUGHING AND SPITTING.

Geordie: Where's Ursula?

Stewart: Here. With me.

Ursula: (SPITTING AND COUGHING) Thanks.

Stewart: What time is it, Geordie?

Geordie: 0830, Boss.

Stewart: We've lost them.

Geordie: The others?

Stewart: The mother and child.

Ursula: We couldn't have gone on in this. Maybe they never made it to the rendezvous either.

Stewart: Perhaps. You okay, Ursula?

Ursula: I need water.

Geordie: We finished it last night.

Stewart: We need water. We'll have to push on. Where's Malek?

Geordie: I can't find him.

Stewart: He was just along the wall of the wadi.

Geordie: What wadi, Boss? The sandstorm's changed the whole landscape.

48. EXT – DESERT – MORNING

Stewart: (CALLING) Malek!

Geordie: Malek!

Ursula: Malek!

49. EXT – DESERT – DAY

Stewart: He's dead or bugged out.

Ursula: I can't believe he'd have left us.

Stewart: He didn't owe us anything.

Ursula: We owed him a lot. He said he didn't care, but he wanted to see it through.

Stewart: Whatever. We can't stay here. We've got to get moving.

URSULA TEARING HER JACKET

Stewart: What are you doing, Ursula?

Ursula: Making a keffiyah out of my jacket.

Stewart: What about tonight? You'll freeze.

Ursula: We won't be alive by tonight if we don't find water.

Geordie: She's right, boss. Nineteen hours you can go in the desert without water.

Stewart: Right, get tearing.

ALL TEARING.

Geordie: Look at us. A bunch of ragheads.

[^] INSERT 49 (a)

Geordie: *Nineteen hours a man can go in the desert without water.*

Stewart: *We were walking for what seemed like forever along the floor of the wadi. It was once a river, now it was a river of sand.*

Geordie: *The mirages start normal. Like on a hot day on a tarmac road, a flat stretch seems to shine.*

Stewart: *It's never still, the desert. It moves. It is a living thing. Not just when a sandstorm blows it every which way, but even in the stillest moment of the hottest day, it's shifting all the time, under the light. And out of the light and the shadows you start to see the domes of mosques and walls of fortresses, towers and minarets, cities -*

Geordie: *Ancient cities made of sand which crumble as you reach out to touch them -*

Stewart: *As if a natural disaster -*

Geordie: *Or a bomb or something had sucked out all life and left no explanation.*

Stewart: *A man can go nineteen hours in this desert without water. Then his eyes begin to fill with light.*

Geordie: How far, boss?

Stewart: How long've we been walking?

Geordie: Two, three hours.

Stewart: A fair distance, kid. We've done a fair distance. Eight, nine k.
The desert route to Kabro a Generals shouldn't be too far.

Ursula: What's that Stewart?

Stewart: Where? I can't see clearly.

Ursula: Up ahead. In the sand.

Geordie: Tracks.

Stewart: Do you both see them?

Ursula: Yes. Can't you, Stewart?

^{^ INSERT 49 (b)}

*Stewart: Can you have collective mirages? Perhaps if people want
the same thing badly enough.*

THE THREE RUN.

Geordie: Footprints.

Ursula: Perhaps they're Malek's.

Geordie: There's more than one set.

Stewart: Bedouin.

Ursula: Two sets, three sets.

Geordie: Two large, one smaller. (BEAT) What is it, boss?

Stewart: Stewart, call me Stew, kid. They're ours.

Geordie: You mean...?

Stewart: It's circular, the wadi. I don't know which way we are facing anymore. I am surrounded by sun. My eyes are full of blinding light.

[^]INSERT 49 (c)

Stewart: *Then I saw ghosts. I saw a Bedouin sleeping against a tree.*

Geordie: A rock.

Stewart: *Two children running across a hill. My kids. Jeannie not far behind. I called to her. We'll talk. I shall tell her the truth and she'll understand. No. It is the woman and boy I must save. It's not too late. I'll save them, if I can only reach them, but they keep moving away from me –*

Geordie: *They were just the shadow of birds that were circling overhead. That is all it was. It's like being drunk. My father, my real father, died of drink. Here was I, dying for want of one.*

Stewart: *A man can go nineteen hours in this desert without water-*

Geordie: What's that up there?

Stewart: I can't see, Geordie. I can't see.

Gerodie: Ursula?

Ursula: A tree.

Stewart: There must be water. Dig! Dig!

Ursula: It looks dead.

Geordie: There's something tied to it.

^ *INSERT 49 (d)*

Stewart: *Can you have a collective mirage? Perhaps if people want the same thing badly enough. Or fear the same thing badly enough.*

Ursula: It's a man.

Geordie: (SHOUTING) Hey! Hey!

Ursula: He's not moving.

Stewart: Another mirage.

Ursula: No, there is a man. He is tied to a tree.

Geordie: We all see him. Hey!

Ursula: He is there, Geordie, but he's dead. His eyes -

Geordie: He has no eyes.

Ursula: Pecked out. By vultures.

Geordie: He's been nailed, Boss, not tied. (BEAT) Freddie.

GEORDIE DRY WRETCHES.

[^] INSERT 49 (e)

Geordie: *And I got sick, but I couldn't even do that. All I'd had for twenty-four hours was an oatmeal block. It was Freddie. I saw him. I swear. I didn't like Freddie, he could be mean bastard. But for fuck's sake, this? He'd been beaten and cut. Badly. Looks like the Fedayeen had found him and taken the whole war and Saddam and the crapness of it all out on him. Then they crucified him and left him in the sun to burn. The Boss said it wasn't him. That we were all seeing things.*

50. EXT – THE DESERT – MID TO LATE AFTERNOON.

Geordie: They'll follow us, Boss, they'll get us too.

Stewart: It wasn't him, Geordie, do you hear me? There's no one out there.

Geordie: There is, I know it.

Stewart: Don't lose it on me. Keep it together. We need to keep it together until we find water.

Geordie: We're not going to find water.

Stewart: We are. And the woman and the child will be there. And they will be okay. And we will be okay.

Geordie: The woman and child are dead, and we are going to die.

^ *INSERT 50*

)Stewart: And then it's too difficult to even talk. My tongue and throat swelled up. It was difficult to even breathe. I was slowly suffocating. (BEAT) Can you have a collective mirage?

Geordie: (LAUGHING) At one point we ran down the side of a dune, throwing off our kegs, to jump into the white horses breaking on the sandy shore.

Stewart: And later, somewhere on the floor of a wadi, we lay down to die.

Geordie: It was then we heard him.

Stewart: *The sound of flies.*

Geordie: *Bees. It was bees. Louder and louder. And he was laughing.*

Stewart: *I cannot say. I was blind. But I sensed something -*

Geordie: *And though he stood between us and the sun, I could see his head was the shape of a bull. And that he had a long beard, of bees. And he laughed. It was his voice I'd heard all along. The genie from the bottle. Malek told me. Genies are Djinns. Desert spirits. Ancient gods. And he struck the earth with a great club -*

FX – THE TRICKLE OF WATER, SLOWLY BEGINS TO FLOW.

Geordie: *And he laughed, I swear he was laughing, and he struck the earth and it began to flow with water. First a trickle, then a rush -*

FX - THEN THE WATER RUSHES, BECOMING A FLOOD.

Stewart: *(SWIMMING FRANTICALLY AND LAUGHING) Ursula!*

Ursula: *(DITTO) Stewart.*

Stewart: *Swim to the edge.*

Ursula: *I'm going to drink and I'm going to myself wash in the rivers of fucking Babylon.*

Geordie: *(DROWNING AND LAUGHING) Boss, I can't swim. I'm going to drown. Drown in the fucking desert!*

Stewart: Grab my arm, Geordie.

Geordie: It's a miracle, a fucking miracle.

LAUGHING, SPLASHING AND DRINKING.

FADE TO:

51. EXT – DESERT – EVENING. SILENCE

Ursula: How does a desert fill up with water?

Geordie: It's a miracle.

Stewart: It's getting on for evening. The stars will be out soon. Let's fill the bottles and move on.

Ursula: We're a day late.

Stewart: Perhaps they were delayed too. We can only try.

Geordie: Boss.

Stewart: What is it now?

Geordie: Four-wheeler coming towards us. From the North.

Stewart: You imagining things again, kid?

Geordie: You're still blind? Could be the same ones that did for Freddie?

FX – FOUR WHEELER DRIVING OVER DESERT APPROACHES.

Stewart: We don't know what happened to Freddie. (BEAT) Cover me anyway.

Geordie: My gun's so full of sand it wouldn't fire shit.

Stewart: They don't need to know that.

FX – CAR STOPS. DOOR OPENS.

Malek: (IN DISTANCE) Miss Ursula! Sergeant MacDonald, Geordie-

Stewart: Malek. Put the gun down, Geordie, it's Malek, it's Malek!

MALEK IS WITH THEM NOW. THEY EMBRACE.

Stewart: Another miracle. But how, Malek?

Malek: Business. I have come to find you. I want my new car.

Geordie: But we looked for you. After the sandstorm.

Malek: I was buried. When it was over, I couldn't find you. I walked north. I found the desert road. These Ma'adan found me and took me to their mudith. They gave me food and drink then we set out to look for you. I said you'd reward them.

Stewart: We will. We will. But the water? Or was that written by the hand of Allah too?

Malek: No. Not God. Iraqis dare now to write their own deeds. When news of the fall of Baghdad reached Ma'adan further north, they begged borrowed and stole any bulldozer, tractor, horse or camel – to pull down the dykes that Saddam had built across the Euphrates. For the last few days that water has been filling up the wadis. Now, our Ma'adan friends here wish to show you hospitality, get you cleaned up and offer you something to eat.

Stewart: Tell them thank you but we must push on to our rendezvous at Kabro a Generals.

Ursula: Why's he on his knees?

Malek: He is saying he will divorce his wife if you do not accept his hospitality.

Stewart: Please explain to him why we must hurry.

Malek: Sergeant MacDonald, the woman and child are okay. He sent word to the Kuffa. You will meet tomorrow. Now you must rest.

52. INT – STUDIO – LONDON. A WEEK LATER.

Ursula: So?

Gus: Yes. Good stuff, Urs.

Ursula: It's just a rough cut, Gus -

Gus: I can tell. But still. Those last interviews -

Ursula: Stewart and Geordie?

Gus: Yes. The hallucinations. When did you do them?

Ursula: That night. And some the next morning. Before we went to Kabro a Generals.

Gus: And you brought the recordings from the next day, from there?

Ursula: I brought them. There's not much. I've tried to put them in some order. There's not much, just the stuff I recorded at the temple.

URSULA CLICKS A MINIDISC. WE LISTEN TO THE TWO FOLLOWING EXTRACTS ON MINIDISC IN THE STUDIO IN LONDON:

INSERT 52(a)

Ursula: - and there's an inscription here, Malek, is this about the Generals?

Malek: (TRANSLATING) Do not say that we were killed for nothing. What do we live for if not the words that are spoken of us when we die? We live for what is written by our deeds.

URSULA FAST FORWARDS THE RECORDINGS:

INSERT 52(b)

Ursula: I am now in the Temple of the Generals built by Alexander the Great over 2400 years ago. At first we thought the floor was covered in twigs. They were in fact bones. The hand of the lord laid me down in a valley of bones, Ezekial. But these are not ancient bones. These bones came with id cards. One reads: Salam Mohammed. Born 17 July 1958. The very day of Iraqi Independence.

URSULA FAST FORWARDS AGAIN. SHE PRESSES PLAY. WE ARE AT THE SCENE.

53. INT – THE TEMPLE – DAY AFTER SC.51 – THE SCENE CROSS FADES FROM BEING PLAYED ON THE MINIDISC TO REAL THING.

Stewart: Sheikh Kuffa.

Sheikh: Gulleh tereh il-Ingleez yimkin akbar 'asheereh bil-Basra, bes hai Gaa'neh. Gulleh khelli yinezzil Slaha

Stewart: Malek?

Malek: He says the British might be the biggest tribe in Basra, but here, he is boss. Put down your guns.

Stewart: We are putting down our guns. Geordie?

Geordie: Sure, boss.

GUNS BEING PUT DOWN.

Stewart: We did not wish to show any disrespect.

Malek: Moo Qasidhum

Stewart: We come not as soldiers, but to pay a debt.

Malek: Ma Jayyeen Bwajib, bess metloobeen deyn.

Stewart: A debt we have incurred by our own rashness and fear.

Malek: Ihneh jibneh hell museebah 'ala rwahneh.

Stewart: We have brought the blood money.

Malek: Lfloos 'Idhum.

Stewart: And in return Sayed's wife and son?

Malek: Mai ridoonheh ilneh itha ma nrid marit Sayid u ibneh.

Stewart: Before I give you the money, I must know that they are with you and alive.

FX – THE DRONE OF AN AIRPLANE IN THE DISTANCE.

Sheikh: Hummeh 'idneh

Malek: They are with them.

Sheikh: Khalleehum bil Sandoog

Malek: They are in the boot of the car.

Ursula: In this heat? Jesus, get them out of there -

Stewart: Tell them to take Ursula and Geordie to them. I'll wait here.

54. EXT – MORNING. THE ONLY BUZZ NOW IS THAT OF APPROACHING U.S. AIRCRAFT.

Ursula: Whose planes are they?

Geordie: Yanks, most likely. Must be on the flight path to Baghdad.

Ursula: Which car? Ayato siyara?

Geordie: The Volkswagen, over there.

Ursula: They'll suffocate.

Geordie: Hang on, Urs, they're smaller. That buzzing. F18 Hornets. It's not right. They're diving. They're coming low.

THE PLANES CONTINUE TO APPROACH.

CROSS FADE TO SCENE PLAYING OUT IN LONDON.

55. INT – STUDIO IN LONDON – DAYTIME. THE PREVIOUS SCENE CONTINUES BUT WE ARE NOW LISTENING TO IT ON MINIDISC IN LONDON

Geordie: *Couldn't be!*

Ursula: *What?*

Geordie: *We're the target. This place is the target. It's a blue on blue. Fuck. I've got to tell Stew-*

Ursula: *No.*

Geordie: *(MOVING AWAY) I must tell Stew and Malek. Move away from the cars, Ursula -*

Ursula: *What about the mother and child?*

Geordie: *(RUNNING) Just run!*

EXPLOSION. URSULA CLICKS THE MINIDISC OFF. PAUSE.

Ursula: *I thought a documentary.*

Gus: *And what would your line be?*

Ursula: *The true story of Alpha Unit. MacDonald's as the central story. He made the decisions. Most interesting character.*

Gus: *I can see why S.I.B. are so keen to get their hands on the recordings. I've been having daily phone calls from some supercilious bastard called Tims from the MoD since you got back. He claims the recordings are needed for his investigation.*

Ursula: Isn't that the pot calling the kettle a supercilious bastard?

Gus: He wishes to preserve the men's reputations as heroes.

Ursula: He wishes to preserve his own backside.

Gus: He's threatening the Official Secrets Act.

Ursula: You won't give in?

Gus: The subjects gave their consent to the recordings. The recordings are your property.

Ursula: Glad to see your run in with the government hasn't dimmed your commitment to press freedom.

Gus: If you think the government's bad, you should try the advertisers.

Ursula: No language anymore except the language of the market.

Gus: Malek?

Ursula: I went looking for a trace of him in Basra but could find none. He was the last of his family. Deleted from history. Perhaps we could do a second doc -

Gus: Ursula.

Ursula: What? I know that 'Ursula'.

Gus: I said there was some excellent stuff there.

Ursula: But?

Gus: We're under a lot of pressure.

Ursula: You said with three dead Brits I could have top spot. I've got four. And an army cover up. I want a documentary.

Gus: The board have demanded we go through our procedure with a fine-tooth comb. I'm only back on sufferance.

Ursula: So?

Gus: Recordings smuggled out of Iraq from under the nose of the Military Police...

Ursula: What are you saying?

Gus: ...in your knickers does not constitute best practice.

Ursula: They were my recordings. The subjects gave their consent.

Gus: The MoD have issued a statement saying how these four servicemen died escorting three Bedouins through the British zone to deliver blood money to save a Bedouin woman and boy.

Ursula: They shot three unarmed Bedouins.

Gus: They died heroes.

Ursula: They were heroes, but -

Gus: One when the car went over a mine -

Ursula: Unexploded American shell.

Gus: One presumed lost in a sandstorm -

Ursula: Having attempted to rape a journalist.

Gus: And two at the rendezvous which had inadvertently been arranged at an archaeological site Saddam was using as a weapons dump.

Ursula: It was a two and a half thousand year old body dump. And the Allies have just dumped more bodies on it.

Gus: Their story is largely true.

Ursula: Apart from the bits that are blatant lies. Christ, Gus, isn't it our jobs to report the truth?

Gus: There you go again with your truth. As if the truth was so simple -

Ursula: There you go again ducking it. Just because it is complex, does not mean we must avoid it.

Gus: Is truth always the most important thing? Your version tarnishes the reputation of four military heroes. Why?

Ursula: They were heroic, but in a much more human way. Because the public are not idiots. They should understand the moral complexity of actions taken in their name.

Gus: The discrepancies you wish to expose strip these men of the dignity the official version affords them. And the government would be only too happy to seize on your contradicting the official version of events to sidetrack us and the public from the real issues.

Ursula: Which are?

Gus: Why we were there in the first place.

Ursula: You're not going to hand the recordings over?

Gus: No. I think you should.

Ursula: What? That would be a betrayal of those men -

Gus: They are all dead.

Ursula: For Christ's sake, Gus-

Gus: There has been discussion about your next posting.

Ursula: Gus!

Gus: Some felt your reports from Iraq were less than value for money.

Ursula: I don't believe this?

Gus: Of course I defended you.

Ursula: What about the documentary?

Gus: We thought Brussels.

Ursula: You only asked me in to get the recordings from me.

Gus: Lots of complexity in Brussels. Not so sure about truth.

Ursula: You bastard, Gus.

Gus: I'll hang onto the material, Urs. Till a later date. There's some good stuff there. When the war is over and forgotten and the Government are off our back we'll get put out.

56. EXT – DOORSTEP IN STONEHEAD – EARLY AFTERNOON IN EARLY SUMMER.

FX – DOORBELL RINGS. DOOR OPENS.

Ursula: Mrs MacDonald?

Jeannie: Yes?

Ursula: Ursula Gunn.

Jeannie: Jeannie. Call me Jeannie. Come in.

57. SCENE INT – STONEHEAD – EARLY AFTERNOON

FX – KETTLE COMES TO THE BOIL. JEANNIE POURS WATER INTO POT.

Jeannie: You're not like them.

Ursula: Who?

JEANNIE PUTS BISCUITS ON A PLATE.

Jeannie: The other ones.

Ursula: Journalists?

JEANNIE GETS MILK FROM THE FRIDGE, THEN POURS INTO JUG

Ursula: Have there been others?

Jeannie: At first.

Jeannie: Then they lost interest. Nothing to dig up. Someone died trying to do someone a favour. Not enough dirt, I expect. Then the next tragedy happened and they were off.

TEA POURED INTO MUGS.

Jeannie: You were with Stewart?

Ursula: Yes.

Jeannie: In Iraq?

Ursula: Yes.

Jeannie: Milk? Sugar?

Ursula: Thanks.

Jeannie: You're from Ireland?

Ursula: Northern. Yes.

Jeannie: Stewart served there.

Ursula: I know.

Jeannie: I mean, we lived there. (BEAT) Funny, he didn't usually talk about it. I think things happen in the army. Between men. They don't like to talk to outsiders about it.

Ursula: Yes.

Jeannie: I expect he began to treat you as one of the boys. I don't know why he went back out. He's seen so little of Tom and Ella growing up. (BEAT) He said it was the overstretch. Undermanned. Under resourced. (BEAT) If he's talked to you, I don't know why you want to talk to me. I'm not very interesting. Or is this what you wanted? Some tears? He didn't have to go. I knew that. I let him believe that I believed he had to, but I knew he didn't. No one should have had to go out there. But it was easier for that to be the reason. Easier to go for the wrong reasons than confront the real ones. And now he's dead and a hero for fifteen minutes and I'll have to keep all this stuff inside me. The children miss him. (BEAT) But then he's barely been here all their lives. We've coped with that. We'll cope with this. (BEAT) I've got to pick them up from school in twenty minutes and look at the state of me. Is this what you wanted?

Ursula: I came here because I wanted you to know that your husband was a good man-

Jeannie: I know that. I know that. How dare you! I don't need a journalist to tell me.

Ursula: Yes. I'm sorry. He saved my life three times. The third time, at Kabro a Generals, I think he knew something was going to happen. Like Malek's daughter and her white dress-

Jeannie: I beg your pardon?

Ursula: He sent me and Geordie out of the temple. Geordie ran back to save him. He wasn't meant to. Stewart wanted to save people.

Jeannie: Men who want to save people are dangerous to be around.

Ursula: I came here because – because perhaps you haven't been told all the details surrounding the death of your husband. I went to Geordie's mother. I had a tape of him reading a letter he had written to her. The letter was never passed on to her because in it he admitted killing a Bedouin at a checkpoint. I felt she should know the truth, but also that she should hear him tell her he loved her which he hadn't done since he'd left home.

Jeannie: You have a great commitment to the truth.

Ursula: Stewart gave me this as he was dying.

Jeannie: His tobacco tin.

Ursula: He kept everything that was important to him in it.

Jeannie: A candle stub, tablets, more tablets -

Ursula: Aspirin.

Jeannie: An Absolut Vodka miniature. Empty.

Ursula: Helped Dangermouse as best it could -

Jeannie: Some other bits.

Ursula: There's a photo.

Jeannie: Yes. Thank you. I see.

Ursula: You and the kids.

Jeannie: He always used to keep a condom in it.

Ursula: To keep sand -

Jeannie: I've looked in his tobacco tin before. I know what he kept there. I know that isn't the photo. Perhaps you should keep the tin?

Ursula: I don't smoke.

Jeannie: Well, perhaps Tom would like it. I really must pick them up.

CUT TO:

58. EXT – DRIVEWAY IN STONEHEAD – EARLY AFTERNOON.

FX – HOUSE DOOR SLAMS. JEANIE & URSULA WALK A FEW PACES TO THE CAR. CAR DOOR OPENS.

Ursula: Jeannie?

Jeannie: Yes.

Ursula: He loved you.

Jeannie: He told you?

Ursula: Yes.

Jeannie: When?

Ursula: The morning, the morning he died.

Jeannie: (BEAT) Thank you for saying that, Ursula. Perhaps, if you're allowed, if you had any tape of him. His voice.

Ursula: I'll make you one.

Jeannie: Good-bye.

F/X A CAR MOVES OFF.

[^] INSERT 58

Stewart: *It had been a day of miracles, the bull headed creature, a djinn or genie or even an ancient God of Babylon, Marduk or Baal or the God of a Thousand Faces Malek said, who made the desert flow with water. And then Malek's return, and then the Ma'adan who had so little, whose very world had dried up under Saddam, yet for us they had rolled out the carpet and celebrated our deliverance with olives and kofta balls and water from their deepest secret wells, water that tasted like the finest wines. And afterwards, we lay on the floor of the desert looking up at the heavens. No mediation. Nothing in between us and eternity. At peace.*

MUSIC: 'WHERE IS THE LOVE?' BLACK EYE PEAS AND JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE.

END