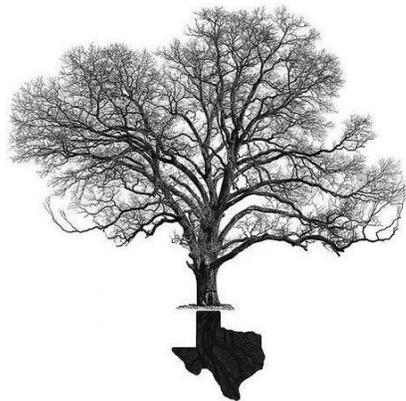


# RUMORS

ALAN NAFZGER



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RUMORS OF FAHRAN

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**EXT. PAKTIA AFGHANISTAN RURAL AREA - DAY**

The Paktia region is under American/NATO occupation, and local Taliban are fighting a brutal resistance campaign.

As the opening credits flash we see the rugged and punishing Paktia. Endless and infinite. Steep stone mountains. Bottomless valleys. Cold and dry.

In the distance, we see the outskirts of a Afghani village near the Pakistani border. We see American soldiers are leading prisoners into the village.

Some prisoners have bloody faces and some do not.

**INT. COMMANDO SOLO**

Commando Solo is a U.S. Air Force special operations EC-130 plane flying overhead part of the psyops war. It's packed with all kinds of broadcasting gear.

An officer is showing a new enlisted man the plane.

AIR FORCE OFFICER

(pointing to equipment)

Secure faxes and computers, cassette decks, compact disks, VHS tape players, and powerful transmitters.

ENLISTED MAN

Yes, Sir. This is a regular airborne Radio Shack.

AIR FORCE OFFICER

The hardware allows us to jam broadcasts and to substitute on any frequency radio and TV messages intended to confuse, deceive or inform.

ENLISTED MAN

I see.

AIR FORCE OFFICER

And, so there will be someone to listen to Commando Solo, the CIA is

supplying portable radios that are being air dropped or trucked into Afghanistan.

**EXT. PAKTIA REGION VILLAGE - AFGHANISTAN**

There is a truck there in the village with free radios. The personnel are instructing villagers in their use.

Most villagers are all watching the prisoners. There is an American command post in a building there and the suspected Taliban are being taken there. There are pigs and chickens, people living very simple lives. There are rudimentary shacks for housing.

An Afghani woman runs into the group and hugs one of the prisoners. The soldiers about jump out of their skin; however they don't fire their weapons.

AMERICAN SOLDIER

Stop! What are you doing?

The soldiers pull the woman from the man.

AFGHANI WOMAN

No!

AMERICAN SOLDIER

Go away! Stay away?

The woman falls to the ground when she is pried from the man. The men continue through town.

RADIO

(in Dari language)

Citizens. We are here to take measures against terrorists who have rooted themselves in your country. It is not you, the honorable people of Afghanistan, who are targeted, but those who oppress you, seek to bend you to their will, and make you their slaves.

On 11 September, 2001, terrorists of the al-Qaida (the Base) group, some trained and financed by Saudi Arabian

exile-in-hiding Osama bin Laden, attacked the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington DC. Bin Laden was a long-time terrorist who was known under such alias as Osama bin Muhammad bin Laden, Usama bin Laden, the Prince, the Emir, Abu Abdallah, Mjhaheed Shaykh, Hajj, the Director, the Contractor, and still more names. In response to the terrorist attacks, the United States launched the Global War on Terrorism.

The Coalition Forces came to arrest those responsible for the terrorism against America. They also come to arrest anyone that protects them.

More than 3,000 people in the United States of America were murdered in these attacks.

Over 2,800 People were killed and 3,000 children lost their parents.

Foreign Terrorists do not believe in any borders. New York - U.S.A. or Harat - Afghanistan.

The villagers simply watch. They have no emotions. They are afraid.

#### RADIO

A grave crime has been committed against the United States. Four of our planes have been hijacked, several building in our economic centers destroyed and more than 3,000 innocent people, hundreds of which were Muslim were murdered by the hand of Osama bin Laden, Al Qaida, his supporters, and the Taliban.

We see these actions as acts of war. We will not sit idly by and do nothing in these times. However, we

do not wish to spill the blood of innocent people, as did the cowardly terrorists. We do not blame the Muslims or Afghans for these attacks.

We do not hold those who follow true Islam responsible. We will hunt down and punish these terrorists. They will pay with their blood. America is not against the beliefs of Islam, nor is it against Muslims. More than 6 million Muslims live and worship Allah in peace in the United States, a number equal to almost half the population of Afghanistan.

In the United States people of all religions live side by side in peace. Muslims living in America have the same rights to worship as any other citizen of any other religion.

We know where the Taliban and Al-Qaida are hiding. Do not help them.

We hope that you will take an active part in our efforts to build a better Afghanistan.

The soldiers arrive at the command post with the prisoners.

LATER...

**EXT. RURAL AREA - DAY**

HOUSMAND and OMAID are making their way through a mountainous area. They move slowly. It appears they are armed and are aligned with the Taliban.

They cross a ravine on a rickety bridge. HOUSMAND almost falls. OMAID looks at him sternly as a warning to be careful.

HOUSMAND  
It isn't very deep.

They cross the ravine and stop. They take their boots off and rest. They aren't wearing any socks.

They begin their progress again. But suddenly they stop. They see something. A dog barks.

OMAID

Do you see it?

HOUSMAND

Over there?

(pause)

I see it.

OMAID

We will wait until nightfall.

HOUSMAND

Do you think he expects us?

OMAID

Probably not.

HOUSMAND

Maybe he ran off already.

(pause)

To join the American police.

We then see, in the distance, a house. A military helicopter flies by at a far distance.

LATER...

**EXT. RURAL AREA - NIGHT**

The men approach the home slowly, even casually.

OMAID

Wait here.

HOUSMAND

Is there anything wrong?

OMAID

I will shoot.

HOUSMAND  
Don't be long.

OMAID  
I won't be. Not long.

OMAID walks to the house.

**INT. HOUSE**

FAHRAN and DEHQAN (his son) are sitting at a table. The father is teaching the son to paint pottery.

FAHRAN  
First you paint the ears and the  
body. And then you give it eyes.

FAHRAN is painting a decorative animal on outside of a  
clay bowl.

FAHRAN  
Devious eyes, like a foreigner.

The son is very young, but is watching intently.

FAHRAN  
What will we call her?

DEHQAN  
Gulalay.

FAHRAN  
How does this look?

There is a noise outside. FAHRAN gets up from the table  
and opens the door. OMAID is standing there; he has a  
weapon. OMAID dusts himself off. OMAID walks into the  
room.

OMAID  
Hello.

DEHQAN  
Look at the cup my father made.

OMAID  
That is nice.

DEHQAN  
He also made this one.

OMAID  
That is nice. What is your name?

DEHQAN  
Dehqan. My father's name is Fahran.

OMAID  
So your name is Fahran?

FAHRAN  
Yes.

OMAID  
How is life?

Fahran says nothing.

OMAID  
Sit down. Don't stand.

Fahran does nothing.

OMAID  
I didn't recognize you. You have  
changed.

Fahran nods his head.

OMAID sits and nervously fidgets with a bullet.

FAHRAN  
You seem different too.

SON  
Your friend plays with the bullet.

OMAID  
It isn't for a child to play with. It  
isn't really a bullet, but only the  
casing.

SON  
The casing?

OMAID

(turning to Fahrhan)

I've really come for you, Fahrhan.

Fahrhan picks up his son and takes him to another room.  
Fahrhan returns and sits at the table.

OMAID

Where is your wife?

FAHRAN

With the animals.

(pause)

I heated up bathwater. We were about  
to have a bath.

OMAID

To wash. That is nice.

There is a long pause. OMAID trys to remember  
the last time he had a bath.

FAHRAN

I knew you would come.

OMAID

You did?

There is a long pause. OMAID thinks trying to  
understand if FAHRAN is guilty.

OMAID

That is good. You recognize your  
guilt?

FAHRAN

There is nothing to recognize. I'm  
guilty of nothing.

OMAID

Nothing?

FAHRAN

Nothing.

OMAID

And those men?

FAHRAN

The men who were taken away?

Omaid turns as he hears Alima (the wife) returning. The wife enters the room and is surprised a bit at a guest being in the house.

ALIMA

Hello.

OMAID

Hello, Alima.

ALIMA is silent and doesn't speak. She looks very worried. She thinks, "How can I help my husband?"

ALIMA

I will prepare some food.

She looks at OMAID and tries to judge him.

ALIMA

You must be hungry.

OMAID

There is no time, Alima.

There is a long pause.

OMAID

Do you have socks for my feet?

ALIMA jumps and goes to retrieve some socks. There is a panic when she can't find them quickly. She brings him a pair of socks. Omaid takes his boots off and puts the socks on. ALIMA rushes to the stove.

ALIMA

Your wife is still alive?

OMAID

She died.

(pause)

Six months ago.

ALIMA  
And your sister?

OMAID  
She died too.  
(pause)  
Also six months ago.

OMAID replaces his boots. ALIMA places some food on the table. Fahrhan finds a bottle of alcohol.

FAHRAN  
Let's have a drink?

OMAID  
No.

FAHRAN  
We did in our youth.

OMAID  
No.

FAHRAN  
May I?

OMAID  
Yes. But quickly.

FAHRAN figures he is dead and might as well do what he wants. FAHRAN isn't very religious. OMAID has become religious. FAHRAN pours and drinks. OMAID doesn't watch.

ALIMA  
It just isn't true.  
(pause)  
It isn't true.

OMAID  
What isn't true?

ALIMA  
We don't wish this.  
(pause)

We don't want it.

There is a long pause.

ALIMA

I was so afraid when they arrested him. I couldn't sleep. I cried my eyes out. Then they released him. And what were we to do then? He didn't ask for any of this.

(pause)

He is a simply herdman. He was caring for the sheep at the time.

(pause)

He didn't do anything wrong to them. He tried to protect them.

OMAID

But still they were taken away. And he was freed. Why?

ALIMA

Who knows why?

OMAID

No. There was a reason.

FAHRAN

Forget it Alima.

(pause)

It is fate.

OMAID

Come on. Let's go.

(pause)

There is nothing to discuss.

FAHRAN takes one long last drink. The men get up from the table and put on coats. FAHRAN hugs and kisses his wife. ALIMA is crying

ALIMA

(screaming)

Where are you taking him?

FAHRAN

I must go. I will not be long.

(pause)  
Be calm. Don't cry.

OMAID  
We have somethings to do. He will be  
right back.

FAHRAN  
That's right.

ALIMA  
Fine, but why not take something with  
you. At least take some food with  
you.

ALIMA wraps some bread in a cloth and inside the hides a  
knife. She hands FAHRAN the package.

ALIMA  
Don't leave without food.

FAHRAN  
That is okay.

ALIMA  
But you like my bread.

OMAID  
Go ahead if you like it.

FAHRAN takes the package.

FAHRAN  
Go ahead and wash. I might be late.

When OMAID leaves out the door, ALIMA is in a panic. She  
can hardly breath.

**EXT. NEAR FAHRAN'S HOME - NIGHT**

FAHRAN  
Which way?

OMAID  
Over there.

FAHRAN  
Should I take a shovel?

There is a long pause.

OMAID  
Yes.

FAHRAN picks up a shovel from the side of the house.

OMAID  
You know what happens, if you betray..

FAHRAN  
I betrayed no one.

OMAID  
Then who did it?

FAHRAN  
I don't know.

OMAID  
You were freed right?

FAHRAN  
Yes, those bastards. I wish I was in  
an American prison.

OMAID  
Move along.

The men move off into the night. Housmand join  
them.

**EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT**

OMAID stops on the trail. FAHRAN wants to keep walking.

There is a long pause.

FAHRAN  
There are all rock. How can you  
brother? There isn't a place for a  
grave.

OMAID

What do you want sand?

FAHRAN

Well not here. Sand would be better.  
You might face this someday. You will  
want something better than a pile of  
rocks.

OMAID

Fine. You want sand. Let's move on.  
(pointing)  
There is some sand over there.

They progress.

**EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT**

The men are walking the path through the  
mountains.

FAHRAN

There is some nice ground ahead.

OMAID

Go on then.

The men walk and then stop.

OMAID

This is good for the occasion.

FAHRAN

Occasion?

OMAID

Yes.

FAHRAN

If you had told me...

OMAID

Anything can happen in this kind of  
war.

FAHRAN

This is savagery.

OMAID

Shut up.  
There is a long pause.

OMAID

Housman, look out here while we go  
over there.  
(to FAHRAN)  
Go.

FAHRAN hesitates but does move on along the path.  
HOUSMAND remains behind.

**EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT**

FAHRAN moves a few rocks and there is some ground for a  
grave. FAHRAN begins to dig.

FAHRAN

It would be better if you didn't tell  
ALIMA about this.

OMAID

About what?

FAHRAN

That you shot me.  
(pause)  
Tell her that the American's shot me.  
(pause)  
Of course later, she will find out.

OMAID

Keep digging. We will see.

FAHRAN continues to dig.

**EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT**

HOUSMAND has fallen asleep. There is an Afghan Army  
patrol passing his position. HOUSMAND awakes as they are  
passing. After they pass, he runs in search of OMAID.

**EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT**

FAHRAN is digging. OMAID is watching without emotion.

OMAID

Maybe that is enough.

(pause)

It will take too long to fill it up.

FAHRAN

Do it as a favor for me?

(pause)

This coat. You must give it to ALIMA

OMAID

Your coat?

(pause)

I will take care of it.

FAHRAN takes the coat off.

FAHRAN

It is a good coat.

(pause)

She is not likely to find another one  
this good..

(pause)

A widow.

FAHRAN throws the coat to OMAID's feet. OMAID raises the  
rifle and takes aim.

There is a long pause. OMAID hesitates pulling the  
trigger. There is a rock slide beneath them at HOUSMAND  
stumbles up the mountain.

OMAID

Housmand, is that you?

It is not HOUSMAND. It is the Afghan Army  
patrol. They fire at OMAID and miss. FAHRAN  
falls into his grave to escape harm. OMAID  
fires back at them. They exchange fire back and  
forth. OMAID is shot.

FAHRAN scrambles out of the grave in the  
confusion and crawls off away from the gun  
fight.

OMAID is wounded but is running amongst the rocks.

AFGHAN SOLDIER  
(shouting)  
Stop!

FAHRAN and OMAID escape in different directions.

AFGHAN SOLDIER  
(shouting)  
Get him! Move around to get him.

There is more gun fire. OMAID is hidden. FAHRAN stops crawling and listens. There is a long silence.

FAHRAN doesn't know which way to move. He does move but finds a sharp drop off a cliff blocks his escape. He moves then back toward where OMAID would be.

He hears moaning. He doesn't have to but he moves toward the sound. When he arrives, it is OMAID and he is shot

FAHRAN  
You are alive?  
(pause)  
Where are you wounded?

There isn't a response. FAHRAN moves the body. We see OMAID is still alive but is seriously wounded.

LATER...

**EXT. MOUNTAINS - NIGHT**

FAHRAN has OMAID over his back and is hauling him down the mountain. He stops to rest. He puts OMAID down. OMAID make a painful noise.

FAHRAN  
Are you alright?  
What do you want?

OMAIN

Housmand?

FAHRAN

No. It is Fahrnan.

OMAID

I... am... hurt... badly?

FAHRAN

Who knows?

(pause)

But you were shot.

OMAID

And obviously I didn't kill you in time.

FAHRAN

No time. The afghan army appeared out of no where.

OMAID

Take me to Tsamkani.

(pause)

I must go to Tsamkani.

(pause)

Over there look for Kasra.

FAHRAN

Kasra? Fine.

Later...

**EXT. MOUNTAINS - MORNING**

HOUSMAND is waking on the mountain. He encounters FAHRAN who is carrying OMAID.

FAHRAN

Hello.

HOUSMAND

What happened to OMAID.

FAHRAN

They shot him.

HOUSMAND

This is what you get!

**EXT. VALLEY - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

A truck is driving on a road. It contains Afghan army soldiers. It drives and pulls up to their command post building. They unload some sacks (possibly poppy seeds) and also bring some valuables, clocks and cameras. These items are probably stolen. Most importantly a dead sheep is unloaded. The soldiers hop the fence into OMAID's garden and steal vegetables.

**INT. OMAID'S HOUSE - NIGHT - RETROSPECTIVE**

OMAID lives across the street from the command post. He is looking out the window. He can see the Afghan army command post. Inside the command post we hear a radio and loud talk. Obviously they are having a feast inside.

One of the Afghan army soldiers exits the building and looks around. He seems to sense something is wrong or someone is out in the rocks. He smokes a cigarette.

The other soldiers exit the building. They get in the truck and leave.

**INT. OMAID'S HOUSE - NIGHT - RETROSPECTIVE**

MOTHER

What are you doing?

OMAID

Nothing.

MOTHER

What are you plotting?

(pause)

What are you plotting?

OMAID

I am not a herdsman for them to harvest my sheep.

MOTHER  
Don't be foolish. Haven't I had  
enough grief?

There is a long pause.

MOTHER  
Haven't I had enough?

OMAID  
Go to sleep, mother.

MOTHER  
I know you are plotting.  
(pause)  
You want justice.  
(pause)  
I've had enough suffering.

OMAID  
I'm sleeping.

MOTHER  
You sleep?  
(pause)  
I don't know how you sleep.

MOTHER  
In the name of Allah, the Gracious,  
the Merciful.  
(pause)  
I seek refuge with Allah from Satan,  
the accursed.  
(pause)  
Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the  
Greatest; there is no God but Allah,  
and Allah is the Greatest; Allah is  
the Greatest and all praise belongs  
to Allah.  
(pause)  
I seek forgiveness from Allah for all  
my sins and turn to Him.

They go to sleep.

**INT. OMAID'S HOUSE - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

OMAID's MOTHER is doing housework. There is a knock at the door. Before she can open the door. The man outside opens it and walks into their home. The man is in an Afghan army uniform.

SOLDIER  
Aunt, is Omaid home?

MOTHER  
Don't shout. I'm not deaf.  
(pause)  
You are dressed fancy.

The soldier looks around. OMAID returns to the house.

SOLDIER  
Hello, cousin.

OMAID  
What do you want?

SOLDIER  
My boss sent me. We need your help.  
We want you to join our group.  
(pause)  
Come on join us.

OMAID  
Cousin, I once broke a tooth of yours.

SOLDIER  
And?

OMAID  
Now, looking at you I want to break them all.

SOLDIER  
You are Taliban. So?  
(pause)  
Are you coming?

OMAID  
Get the Hell out.

SOLDIER

That is how you want it?

(pause)

I could order you to come.

(pause)

You are asking for it.

The soldier raises his weapon and points it at OMAID.

OMAID

Come closer, I'm going to split your face.

The mother throws a dish rag over the face of the soldier and slaps him.

MOTHER

Get out of here. I'm sick of you.

OMAID's MOTHER slaps him again.

SOLDIER

(running out of room)

I'll get you one day. Count on it.

OMAID's MOTHER shuts the door behind the SOLDIER. The SOLDIER stands in the front of the house shouting.

SOLDIER

He is only upset because we ate one of his sheep.

(pause)

I will have him against the wall someday!

(pause)

You will regret this, Omaid!

The soldier throws a rock against the door and leaves.

**INT. OMAID'S HOUSE - NIGHT - RETROSPECTIVE**

OMAID sit listening to the American propaganda on the radio. He hears the Afghan army return. Their vehicles make a great deal of noise.

Without looking out the window, he puts on his coat on.  
He quietly leaves the house so not to awake his MOTHER.

**EXT. COMMAND POST - NIGHT - RETROSPECTIVE**

OMAID is peached outside. It the very dark and he waits.  
The lights go out. He looks for guards but there aren't  
any. He silently approached the vehicles. He produces  
rags and and a can of gasoline. He then puts the rags in  
the gas tanks of the Afghan army trucks.

OMAID looks at his home and looks at the command post. He  
hesitates lighting the rags. This is a serious choice and  
he can't go back after it is done. He isn't Taliban and  
he will be isolated and alone if it is done.

He lights the rags and runs back toward his home.

Soon there are explosions.

**INT. OMAID'S HOUSE - NIGHT - RETROSPECTIVE**

OMAID enters the house quietly. But he sees his mother is  
awake. He begins to pack his clothes and gather some food  
into a duffle bag.

MOTHER

You were impulsive as a child and  
still you are impulsive.

OMAID

Say I went to my grandfather's.

MOTHER

Where will you go? The Americans will  
be looking for you.

OMAID walks to the window and has a little chuckle at the  
Afghan army is confused about how to put out the fires.

MOTHER

Where will you go?

OMAID

I will hide until the mess settles. I  
will hide until the American's leave.

MOTHER

You shouldn't have done that.

OMAID leaves the house.

**EXT. EDGE OF THE VALLEY - DAWN - RETROSPECTIVE**

OMAID leaves and is shown walking toward the mountains.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY - RETURN TO PLOT**

OMAID is lying against a bolder. HOUSMAND has a belt and is synching it up to put pressure on his wound. OMAID's health is improved but he is still in danger of death.

OMAID

Idiot. I sent you to keep watch.  
(pause)  
And you didn't.

HOUSMAND

I did stand guard.  
(pause)  
But they sneaked in from the other side.

OMAID

The other side? You are so sly.

HOUSMAND

You are sly. Why did you go out of the rocks to shot him?

OMAID

You really don't understand.  
(pause)  
Where is Fahrhan?

HOUSMAND

Sitting over there.

OMAID

Don't harm him.

HOUSMAND

As you wish.

(pause)  
What do I care?  
(pause)  
What will the commander say?

HOUSMAND finds some dirt and uses it to get the blood off his hands. He picks up the weapons and walks to FAHRAN.

FAHRAN  
What do we do now?  
(pause)  
Wait and sit here?

HOUSMAND  
I don't want to be shot like a rabbit.

FAHRAN picks OMAID up and resume their journey.  
HOUSMAND carries the weapons.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

They have walked a great distance. They hear a distant gun shot. They stop.

HOUSMAND  
From where?  
(pause)  
Americans?

FAHRAN  
Probably.

There is a second gun shot. There is a long pause. They begin walking again. After only a shot distance, FAHRAN is exhausted and puts OMAID down. They rest.

OMAID  
There isn't any way I'm going to survive.  
(pause)  
You can't carry me. We are in the mountains.

FAHRAN  
We need help.

The men contemplate.

FAHRAN

Stay here. I will get help.

OMAID

Hurry and do your best.

HOUSMAND

Fahran, you know your way around here?

(pause)

You know where a village is?

FAHRAN

Yes, there is one over there.

HOUSMAND

Near the gunfire?

FAHRAN

Yes.

HOUSMAND

Wait.

(pause)

I'll go.

HOUSMAND gets up, takes both rifles.

HOUSMAND

Wait here until I return.

(pause)

Stand guard.

OMAID

Leave me my gun.

HOUSMAND talks his pistol out and gives it to OMAID.

HOUSMAND

Here.

(pause)

I'll try to be quick, if it's not far.

HOUSMAND disappears down the mountain.

OMAID

Why didn't I...

(pause)

kill you at the house?

(pause)

If I had done it then

(pause)

I wouldn't be dying now.

FAHRAN

In my own home?

(pause)

My boy was there.

OMAID

The boy... yes.

(pause)

And why... haven't you escaped yet?

FAHRAN

Escape to where?

OMAID

To the Americans.

FAHRAN

I've been with the Americans.

FAHRAN pulls up his shirt.

FAHRAN

Here look.

Evidently he was beaten and perhaps tortured.

OMAID

It was you. You betrayed them.,  
those three men.

FAHRAN

I betrayed no one.

OMAID

Then why didn't they take you away  
with the others?

FAHRAN

If they took me away, I would be  
grateful.

(pause)

But no. They freed me.

(pause)

I sat at home for two weeks.  
Where should I have gone?

OMAID

I don't know.

FAHRAN

I began to understand why they freed  
me.

(pause)

They used me as bait.

(pause)

You fell into their trap.

(pause)

I was a sheep herder for 15 years.  
Surely you know that already.

OMAID dies. FAHRAN doesn't notice.

FAHRAN

I almost quit when the American's  
arrived. But the tribal leader asked  
me to continue. What could I do?

**EXT. FIELD - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

There are sheep grazing. FAHRAN is standing in  
the field. The tribal leader is standing in  
front of him. The tribal leader looks at him  
square in the eye. The tribal leader takes out  
a pistol, points it at FAHRAN's forehead, but  
then suddenly punches him in the gut. He walks  
away.

**EXT. FIELD - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

FAHRAN oversees his sheep in a field near a road. Also near this location is a bridge.

There are now Taliban fighters with him dressed as shepherds.

TALIBAN #1

When the American's drive past, push this button.

TALIBAN #1 produces a remote control device.

TALIBAN #2

How near do I need to be.

TALIBAN #1

Within site of the bridge.

FAHRAN

They are not stupid. They would know you were part of the sabatage.

TALIBAN #1

How?

FAHRAN

Look around. There isn't anyone else around.

TALIBAN #1

When this thing goes off there will be nothing left.

TALIBAN #2

Last month. There was some sabotage. And it was a total mess. It was impossible to be detected.

FAHRAN

They will know.

TALIBAN #1

No. We will simply go home.

TALIBAN #2

No one will suspect a herdsman.

FAHRAN

And the nearby village?

(pause)

They will go to the village and ask questions.

(pause)

They might shoot everyone.

TALIBAN #1

American's won't shoot anyone.

FAHRAN

It has happened many times before.

TALIBAN #2

What village?

TALIBAN #1

That is a rumor. It isn't true. No villages were destroyed.

FAHRAN

You must not do this.

TALIBAN #1

You are afraid to defend your religion.

FAHRAN says nothing.

TALIBAN #2

Maybe he likes the infidels.

FAHRAN says nothing. The two Taliban soldiers walk several meters away and quietly confer with each other. They are probably debating to kill FAHRAN.

Later...

**EXT. FIELD - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

The American convoy of trucks are approaching the bridge. FAHRAN only watches.

**EXT. FIELD - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

The TALIBAN are shown running from the field, firing their weapons in the general direction of the bridge. The American soldiers are dead but the TALIBAN are firing as they run. FAHRAN doesn't move.

**INT. AMERICAN MILITARY JAIL - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

The two TALIBAN and FAHRAN are hauled into a cell. They are beaten and bloody.

**INT. COMMAND POST OFFICE - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

The American colonel is sitting at his desk while FAHRAN is brought in. FAHRAN is placed in a chair in front of the desk. His face is swollen and he is bad condition.

COLONEL

Let's speak like friends.

(pause)

You seem like a reasonable person.

(pause)

And we want to help you.

(pause)

Tomorrow, I will hand the others over to the intelligence gathering people.

(pause)

Do you know what that means?

(pause)

But we are offering you freedom.

Except...

(pause)

Yes?

(pause)

You must sign a collaboration paper.

FAHRAN

What collaboration?

COLONEL

The secret collaboration.

(pause)

With American authorities.

(pause)

Then we'll organize your release.

(pause)

You can return to your sheep, wife and family. Your son.

(pause)

Return to your friends, the ones who  
dispatched you on this mission.

(pause)

We will stay in close contact.  
Secretly, of course.

FAHRAN

No.

(pause)

You know I can't.

(pause)

I can't do that.

COLONEL

What? What did you say?

FAHRAN

I can't do that.

COLONEL

Are you an idiot? You refuse to live?

FAHRAN

Of course not.

COLONEL

So sign the document.

(pause)

We will take every precaution.

(pause)

No one will suspect a thing.

FAHRAN

I can't do it.

COLONEL

So you want to be tortured.

(pause)

Tomorrow they will leave for a new  
prison. Will you be with them?

(pause)

Give it some thought.

You have until tomorrow.

**INT. AMERICAN MILITARY JAIL - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

FAHRAM is sitting on the floor leaning against the wall. He looks very depressed. An American soldier enters the cell and motions for him to get up.

SOLDIER #1

Move it.

(pause)

Let's go.

SOLDIER #2

(motioning to FAHRAN)

Not that one.

FAHRAN

(struggles)

Why not?

SOLDIER #1 slugs FAHRAN and FAHRAN is knocked unconscious. The two TALIBAN are dragged out of the cell.

**INT. COMMAND POST OFFICE - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

COLONEL

Do you have anything to tell me?

(pause)

Do you still want to go to another location with your friends?

(pause)

I mistook you for a clever fellow.

(pause)

Want to honor your memory?

(pause)

Want the to write pamphlets about you?

(pause)

No, that isn't going to happen.

(pause)

I will arrange another sort punishment for you.

(pause)

For the last time. Yes or no?

FAHRAN

I can't do it.

COLONEL

Fine. You can't.

(pause)

Go.

FAHRAN slowly walks to the door. Out the door.  
Through the halls. He enters the street.

**EXT. VILLAGE STREET - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

FAHRAN walks several yards down the road. He  
stops and looks back. Several Americans are  
looking at him. They are solemn.

FAHRAN walks though the village. People look at  
him without emotion.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY - RETURN TO PLOT**

OMCID's dead body is there. FAHRAN doesn't realize that  
he is dead. He has been explaining how he got in this  
situation.

FAHRAN

I couldn't do it.

(pause)

I envied them immediately.

(pause)

Everyone honoured them.

(pause)

There children were proud.

(pause)

Neighbors helped their familiers.

But I was hated.

(pause)

I sensed that even the person who  
loved me most, my wife Alima, no  
longer looked at me, like before.

(pause)

One day, she burst into tears and  
said, "taking you away would have  
been better."

(pause)

I started to wonder. If I might even  
agree. But even then people would  
say, "His guilty conscience. He was a  
traitor."

(pause)

How could I live like that, Omaid?

OMOID had died and only now does FAHRAN realize this.

FAHRAN  
Did you hear me?  
(pause)  
Omaid?

FAHRAN reaches out and shakes the body?

FAHRAN  
Omaid?

Later...

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

HOUSMAND is not going for help. He is sitting in the shade of a bolder eating. He looks very casual. He stops eating. Looks around. He gets up and begins again down the mountain again.

Later...

**EXT. EDGE OF THE VALLY - DAY**

HOUSMAND arrives off the mountain. It isn't a precautionary thing, he is simply walking casually.

Suddenly he stops dead in his tracks. He ducks down to hide. It is an American patrol. He watches them pass.

Later...

**EXT. EDGE OF THE VALLY - DAY**

HOUSMAND is walking though the valley. He happens on a shack. It isn't elaborate, very humble, but it is designed to avoid detection.

HOUSMAND approaches it carefully. It isn't his. He looks in it warily. He points his weapon into the door. It is empty and his caution subsides.

He puts is weapons down. He enters the shack and goes to sleep.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

HOUSMAND remembers. HOUSMAND leaves a cave. He isn't visibly armed. There is snow and it is winter. One of the men from the cave follows him.

TALIBAN #3

Hey don't forget. You must take this tape into town. Bring back some salt.

HOUSMAND

Don't worry. I will.

HOUSMAND takes a package and begins down the mountain.

**INT. HOME - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

There is an older woman nursing a dying soldier. There is food on the table. An older man and HOUSMAND are eating food.

HOUSMAND

The guys are asking about salt.

The old man says nothing.

HOUSMAND hands a sack to the woman when she returns to the table. She puts salt and food into the bag.

Later...

**INT. HOME - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

HOUSMAND is sleeping. He looks very comfortable. However, suddenly he awakes; he looks frightened. The house is empty. He gathers his guns and the sack of food. He steals some extra onions and eats some bread. HOUSMAND notices that the soldier has died.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

HOUSMAND is returning to the cave. He stops; from a distant he hears someone shouting.

AFGHAN SOLDIER

Halt!

HOUSMAND doesn't move. He waits.

AFGHAN SOLDIER

Come here.

HOUSMAND takes two steps toward them. The soldiers travel the remaining distance between them.

AFGHAN SOLDIER

Where are you going?

HOUSMAND says nothing.

AFGHAN SOLDIER

Where do you come from?

HOUSMAND says nothing. The soldier takes his bag. He opens it and looks inside.

AFGHAN SOLDIER

Where did you get this?

HOUSMAND

I don't know. I stopped by some guys house. He gave it to me.

AFGHAN SOLDIER

Where?

HOUSMAND

I don't know.

The soldier put his weapon at HOUSMAND's guy.

AFGHAN SOLDIER

Take us there.

There is a long pause.

Later...

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

The soldiers are following HOUSMAN down the mountain. They have a weapon at his back. The progress is slow.

They approach the house where HOUSMAN has been. The soldiers approach the house carefully.

The AFGHANI SOLDIER kicks in the door without warning. He enters. One AFGHANI SOLDIER and HOUSMAND wait outside.

There is a gun shot from inside the house. The AFGHANI SOLDIER in the house runs out. He has been shot. He stops just outside the door and pulls out a grenade. He pulls the pin and throws it back inside the house.

It exploded and seriously damages the house. It is near collapse. The doors and windows are destroyed.

HOUSMAND has ducked down. The two AFGHANI SOLDIERS with guns up and ready, enter the smoking house. We hear some another gun shot and then another.

HOUSEMAND begins to walk away. We hear another shot. Now HOUSMAND begins to run. We hear another shot.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY - RETURN TO PLOT**

HOUSEMAND is walking up the mountain. He arrives at the site where FAHRAN and the body of OMAID are waiting.

HOUSMAND  
You are still here?

FAHRAN  
No need for any help.

Vultures circle above. FAHRAN points upward.

HOUSMAND  
They are waiting up there.

FAHRAN  
Since yesterday.

HOUSMAND  
So?

FAHRAN  
There was no help?

HOUSMAND  
No help.  
(pause)  
The Americans are in the village.

FAHRAN  
The Americans? So what now?

HOUSMAND  
So we hid the body and leave.  
(pause)  
We might get through.

FAHRAN  
To go where?

HOUSMAND  
Each his own way.  
(pause)  
I'm going back to my group.  
(pause)  
You will probably go back to the  
Americans.

FAHRAN  
I'm not going to the Americans.  
(pause)  
Take me with you.

FAHRAN  
Yes, to my group.

HOUSMAND  
They're waiting on you.

FAHRAN  
We must take Omaid.  
(pause)  
We can't just leave him here.  
(pause)  
Do you see all those vultures.

HOUSMAND  
Well, you must carry him.

FAHRAN

Yes, I will.

HOUSMAND

Understood. Then get up.

FAHRAN picks up the body and they begin to walk. HOUSMAND takes a gun and chambers a round. FAHRAN stops. He points it at the head of FAHRAN. FAHRAN glares at him. There is a long pause. HOUSMAND lowers the weapon.

FAHRAN

You know where to go?

(pause)

If we want to avoid the Americans.

(pause)

Then turn south.

HOUSMAND

Lead the way.

(pause)

Be careful.

(pause)

Steet clear of the Americans.

Later...

**EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY**

SABA & WASIMA are sitting in the back of a ANA pickup truck. The ANA in the cab of the truck are debating each other and they are on the radio. There is an American mentor in the cab and he is trying to tell them to stop. Finally they stop the truck.

WASIMA

Just give me 100 men, they must be loyal and be well armed, and I will hunt the Taliban down wherever they are.

SABA

This is your first day on patrol.

WASIMA

Our American advisers give us one plan. The Italians give us another. And then the special forces tell us to ignore all that and go with them on missions.

SABA

I grew up here before the Russians came and before then there was law and order during this time. Now ever since I was a child, we have been at war. Three decades of war is no joke.

WASIMA is lost. He is the simple man. He simply looks up at the mountains.

SABA

Today even a young Afghan boy knows about war. What it is and how it happens. I think the Taliban are not that formidable. The problem is the ANA.

WASIMA

How?

SABA

The Americans are used to getting their way. A few weeks here they will get the idea that this is Afghanistan.

WASIMA

Our Army is new, right?

SABA

Nine out of ten of our fellow soldiers are illiterate.

WASIMA

But you can read.

SABA

We are only paid \$31 per month. If it gets too rough, they will leave and you and I will be left to die up in

the mountains. There is too much tribal and local loyalty among the soldiers. Can we trust such an army?

**INT. ANA TRAINING BASE - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

The American medical staff is giving the ANA recruits a health evaluation. SABA and WASIMA are asked to do some basic squat thrusts and they take an eye exam. After they pass their exam, they are addressed by an American Colonel.

AMERICAN COLONEL  
(through translator)

Welcome boys. The first question I must ask is why did you come all this way?

SABA  
To be a soldier.

AMERICAN COLONEL  
This guy says he wants to be a soldier? It is my guess that you already know how to fight. No?  
(pause)  
Maybe you want to be a professional? Good because this is what I want to offer you. But...  
(pause)  
Joining the national army was not just a privilege for one group. No ethnic group is stronger than another. This is an Afghan army. Understand? You get equal privileges. Your contract is for three years. Did all of you come here voluntarily? All of you?

SABA & WASIMA listen intently.

**EXT. ANA TRAINING BASE - DAY - RETROSPECTIVE**

SABA & WASIMA, with the other recruits are marched out with the unit. The ANA unit is standing out on the parade ground in formation. They are waiting for the ANA General to address them. They are looking straight ahead at a sign that says, "You are the future of Afghanistan."

WASIMA  
What are we doing?

SABA  
Waiting.

WASIMA  
Waiting for what?

SABA  
The general is supposed to address us. I don't know what he will say. I'm as new as you are.

WASIMA  
What then?

SABA  
Next, we have got literacy instruction. To get to be able to read. The papers say 4:00 p.m. class that's coming up in one hour.

WASIMA  
One hour, for the literacy?

SABA  
For the literacy, yes.

WASIMA  
I agree it's important, but I think they are taking our prayer time.

SABA  
You can't pray later? They're only asking for an hour. If you need to go to a mosque, then go to the mosque later. You can't pray when we are done here?

WASIMA  
They are OK with that?

Finally the General appears and walks to address the assembled soldiers. There are some American advisors not standing beside him but near him.

ANA GENERAL

Damned am I for being your commander.  
In soldiers' lockers, we found all  
kinds of things, bayonets, knives,  
empty clips. Bullets are being sold.

(pause)

Come to my office. I will show you  
this much ammunition meant for the  
Taliban. Wouldn't it be a shame if  
this got you killed or led Mullah  
Omar's to our gates? Wouldn't it be a  
disgrace if the country we took back,  
after such sacrifice, was handed back  
to these outlaws to destroy before  
our eyes?

(pause)

If people see this in their own army,  
how can they trust us? All the  
Taliban are being armed from here.  
You should be and probably will be  
shot with a bullet you stole and then  
sold. I am ashamed to be your  
commander. Thank you.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY - RETURN TO PLOT**

SABA & WASIMA are waiting silently in the back of the  
pick up. The American advisor and the ANA soldiers in the  
cab have decided what to do.

The driver gets out and shouts to SABA & WASIMA.

SOLDIER

Let's go. You two walk up about  
halfway and then over to the road. We  
will pick you up a mile down the  
road.

WASIMA jumps up and jumps out of the pickup. He  
drops his weapon which discharges. The bullets  
flay into some boulders.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

HOUSMAND and FAHRAN, with OMAID, are walking up the mountain. They hear distant gun shots. The men crouch down to avoid detection.

HOUSMAND

Where did that come from?

FAHRAN

The road on the other side.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY - RETURN TO PLOT**

The Afghan Army SOLDIER become enraged. He picks up the weapon and points it at WASIMA. He shouts. The American advisor is aghast.

SOLDIER

You idiot. Peasant. I should shot you.

There is a long pause. The SOLDIER appears like he is about to kill WASIMA. However at the last moment he raises his gun and fires into the air.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

HOUSMAND and FAHRAN are hiding behind boulders. There is another gun shot.

HOUSMAND

The road?

FAHRAN

Yes.

HOUSMAND

The main road?

(pause)

Where are you taking us?

FAHRAN

Where else can I go?

(pause)

You said the Americans are in the village.

HOUSMAND

They are.

FAHRAN

Then this is the only option.

(pause)

We have to cross this mountain over  
to the other side. We must cross the  
road.

They wait. They wait. It is quiet. Finally they  
begin again.

Later...

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

The men are resting. HOUSMAND looks nervous and  
keeps a sharp lookout. FAHRAN is much more  
calm. He only sits and rests.

HOUSMAND

What do we do now?

(pause)

Do we cross?

FAHRAN

We should wait until it is dark and  
then cross.

HOUSMAND

That is a long time from now.

FAHRAN

But it is better.

HOUSMAND

(looking at OMAID)

You knew each other well?

FAHRAN

Since childhood. We lived on the same  
street.

(pause)

He was younger than me.

(pause)

He always loved the sheep.

HOUSMAND  
That was his downfall. And yours too.

FAHRAN  
Him, perhaps. Mine was something  
else.

HOUSMAND  
What?

FAHRAN  
That I wasn't taken prisoner back  
there by the Americans. That's what.

HOUSMAND  
Why hurry to leave?

FAHRAN  
Omaid was in a hurry. He couldn't  
wait.

HOUSMAND  
His foolishness is to blame.

FAHRAN  
He died too soon.  
(pause)  
He was still young. A pity.

HOUSMAND  
What do you care?

FAHRAN  
It was sort of my fault.  
(pause)  
But not entirely.  
(pause)  
I didn't want it.

FAHRAN motions to the neighbouring mountain.

FAHRAN  
I just didn't want to die up on that  
mountain.

HOUSMAND

If you had, Omaid would still be  
alive.

(pause)

Isn't that right?

FAHRAN

Yes, probably.

(pause)

You will tell everything to your  
commander and let him decide.

HOUSMAND

Tell what?

FAHRAN

Everything about me.  
If I don't make it.  
After all, I have a wife.  
A son.

HOUSMAND

Oh, that.

(pause)

Yes. I will tell them.

FAHRAN

I better write it down.

(pause)

It would be documented.

HOUSMAND

Well yes.

FAHRAN

Maybe they'll sort it all out  
someday.

HOUSMAND

But they did enlist you, didn't they?

FAHRAN

No.

HOUSMAND

Go on, confess.

FAHRAN

If only I did. But I didn't.

(pause)

They tried.

(pause)

I just couldn't do it.

HOUSMAND

You really couldn't? You must be lying!

FAHRAN

You know that's impossible.

(pause)

Not this situation. We cause our own ruin.

What kind of life will they have?

(pause)

If they remain alive?

HOUSMAND

Anything can happen.

(pause)

This is wartime, of course...

FAHRAN

You refer to war, how anything can happen...

(pause)

But did everything change in a year-and-a-half?

(pause)

Do people really change so quickly?

(pause)

Does war really transform us to that extent?

(pause)

I've lived here for 37 years.

(pause)

Everyone knows me.

(pause)

I was always respected.

(pause)

I never had problems with anyone.

(pause)

Why not trust me anymore?

(pause)  
Why do we trust the Americans, but no longer our neighbours?  
(pause)  
No one believes me. Not you...  
(pause)  
Not even my wife.  
(pause)  
She had doubts.  
(pause)  
Did I change?  
(pause)  
How, if I was born with this character?  
(pause)  
People can change a lot.  
(pause)  
Especially if they want to survive.

HOUSMAND

Exactly.

FAHRAN

If you want to live, why choose to betray?  
(pause)  
In the face of death, everything looks the same.  
(pause)  
But when you want to live, you live with hope...  
(pause)  
If not for yourself, then maybe for your children.  
(pause)  
Maybe they will be lucky enough to survive.  
(pause)  
Wait for me on the other side.

There is a long pause.  
Later...

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

HOUSAND is hiding and watching. FAHRAN is again carrying the body of OMAID. After a moment, we

see the road that must be crossed. There is absolute silence as the wind. FAHRAN pauses before crossing. They cross.

HOUSAND waits a very long time. Then finally moves to cross the road. He is reluctant.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1

Halt!

HOUSAND stops and can't seem to move.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1

Halt!

HOUSAND finally runs back to the cover of the rocks but is shot. His body rolls down the hill and back into the road.

The soldiers approach the body.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1

He has some rifles! I knew he was a terrorist.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #2

Is he dead?

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1 kicks the body. It appears that HOUSMAND is dead.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1

It seems that way.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1 kneels down. He looks for weapons. He finds a wallet. He takes money from the wallet. He finds a pocket knife and a table knife and fork. He take them and puts these items in his own pockets. He walks away.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1 reconsiders. He returns to the body and he removes HOUSMAND's belt. The SOLDIER stands up and the moves away.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1

Will you look at those boots?

AFGHAN SOLDIER #2

Hurry up.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1 returns a second time and removes the boots. HOUSMAND moans.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1

Damn it. He is still alive.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #2

Finish him and lets go.

AFGHAN SOLDIER #1 throws the boots to the feet of AFGHAN SOLDIER #2. He aims his weapon at HOUSMAND and fires.

Later...

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

OMAID's body is there a few feet from the road behind some rocks. FAHRAD brings HOUSMAND's body and lays it there also.

FAHRAD straightens the bodies. He finds a pistol in the coat of OMAID. He sits and contemplates.