THE CELL

By

Mark Legan
&
Mark Wilding
THE CELL

TEASER

EXT. CHICAGO - ESTABLISHING - DAY

We see a quick montage of all that this quintessential American city has to offer: McDonalds, the busy floor of the Commodities Exchange, a smiling family walking by the lake, an employee dressing mannequins in a window at a fancy department store, an All-U-Can Eat buffet, Wrigley Field, beautiful women taking a cigarette break outside an office building, etc.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A dingy, sparsely-furnished two bedroom apartment. We’re in the living room and kitchenette area. A sheet covers the main window. MUSAB lounges on a thrift store couch, eating Pringles and watching “Live with Kelly and Regis” on a beat up twelve inch TV.

Suddenly a series of rhythmic knocks are heard at the door. Musab sits up, listens carefully. There’s a beat.

SALAR (O.S.)
Musab. Open up.

Musab crosses to the door.

MUSAB
I need the password.

SALAR (O.S.)
I always forget it.

MUSAB
You know the rules. I can’t let you in without it.

SALAR (O.S.)
Black Eagle?

Musab quickly undoes a series of locks and SALAR enters.

MUSAB
Close enough. It’s Red Hawk. But I agree, it’s a bad password. From now on it’s --

He hears Kelly Ripa laughing on the TV.
MUSAB (CONT’D)
Kelly Ripa?

SALAR
Fine. Kelly Ripa.

Musab helps him off with his jacket.

MUSAB
Are you hungry?

SALAR
I wouldn’t say no to a snack.

MUSAB
So, how was school?

SALAR
I aced my Managerial Accounting test.

MUSAB
Congratulations. Hard work brings many flowers into your garden.

SALAR
It’s my professor. He makes learning... fun.

There’s the same rhythmic series of knocks.

AHMED (V.O.)
Red Hawk.

Musab opens the door. AHMED enters in bike messenger gear, carrying a ten-speed over his shoulder.

MUSAB
I’ll let you in but we’ve changed the password.

AHMED
To what?

MUSAB
Kelly Ripa.

AHMED
Oh, I like her.

MUSAB
How was work?
Ahmed hangs the bike up on the wall.

AHMED
Good. It’s getting cold out there.

SALAR
I heard it might snow.

MUSAB
Oh God. More snow. How do these Americans stand it?

AHMED
Well, they drink a lot of alcohol and then they go skiing and snowboarding.

Another series of knocks. Musab tenses.

ABU (V.O.)
Red Hawk.

MUSAB
Just a minute.

Musab quickly turns off the TV and hides the can of Pringles while Salar opens the door. ABU enters.

SALAR
Hey Abu. Just so you know, there’s a new password. Kelly Ripa.

ABU
(angry)
What do you mean there’s a new password? Only I can change the password. And who the hell is Kelly Ripa?

AHMED
She’s a delightful co-host of the number one morning show in America. And co-star of a successful sitcom on ABC. Which is saying something because ABC has really been struggling with their new comedies.

Abu stares at him.

ABU
You know too much about this depraved culture.
AHMED
That’s part of our job.

ABU
Don’t tell me what’s part of our job.

He crosses to the radiator. Gives it a kick.

ABU (CONT’D)
Is this thing working? I’m freezing.

MUSAB
Me too. I thought spring was coming. Abu, has there been any more talk of getting transferred to Arizona or Florida?

ABU
That is not a priority right now.

Musab pulls a Polaroid off the fridge.

MUSAB
Look at these photos from Gazir’s cell. They love Daytona Beach.

AHMED
How’d they get invited to the MTV spring break party? Is that Carson Daly?

SALAR
(off picture)
Wow. Gazir really let himself go.

ABU
He’s soft. We’re here to teach the Western dogs a lesson, not join them.

Musab happily bounces out of the kitchenette, wearing oven mitts and carrying a tray.

MUSAB
Hot Pockets?

Abu angrily knocks them to the floor.

ABU
Swine!
AHMED
What’s with you?

ABU
(sighs)
I got a communication today. Haseb is coming.

They all tense.

SALAR
When?

ABU
This Friday.

SALAR
He only visits when there’s something wrong.

Musab stops picking up the Hot Pockets.

MUSAB
(whimpering)
He’s going to slit our throats a hundred ways.

AHMED
You only really need one way.

SALAR
We’ve got nothing to hide. We’ve been doing our job.

ABU
Haseb doesn’t think so. Admit it, we’ve been getting sloppy. This country, it makes you weak. It hypnotizes you with the signs and the slogans --

MUSAB
And the super sizes.

SALAR
And the sexy coeds.

AHMED
And the double coupons.

MUSAB
It’s true. Everything’s a bargain.
AHMED
Haseb can’t have it both ways. They want us to blend in, we blend in.

MUSAB
I am personally offended that anyone would think this country has claimed us as one of its own.

There’s a knock at the door.

PIZZA MAN (O.S.)
Domino’s.

Abu glares at Musab.

MUSAB
(defensive)
We have to eat.

On Abu’s reaction we...

END OF TEASER
ACT ONE

EXT. FLORIST SHOP - DAY

People hurry by a florist shop on a busy Chicago street. An attractive young woman, ANDREA, arranges flowers in the front window.

Ahmed zooms by on his ten speed and disappears. A beat. Ahmed zooms by again from the opposite direction and disappears. Another beat. Then, Ahmed reappears slowly walking his bicycle and looking in the window.

INT. FLORIST SHOP - CONTINUOUS

A small bell rings as the front door opens and Ahmed enters.

ANDREA
Can I help y--
(stops)
Oh, I’m sorry, you can’t bring your bike in here.

AHMED
Is it safe to leave it outside?

ANDREA
God no.
(pause)
I tell you what – you can leave it in here. The boss isn’t around.

AHMED
Thank you very much.

ANDREA
How can I help you today?

AHMED
I’d like...some flowers.

ANDREA
You’ve come to the right place. Are they for a special someone? Your wife?

AHMED
Oh no, I am not married.

ANDREA
Girlfriend?

AHMED
Maybe.
ANDREA
Oh, I see. You like somebody but you’re not sure if she likes you.

AHMED
Exactly. You have flowers for such a predicament?

ANDREA
I believe we do. Now, you don’t want to start with roses, that’ll scare her off.

AHMED
That would be bad.

ANDREA
I’ll pull together a bouquet that no girl can resist.

Andrea starts pulling various flowers.

ANDREA (CONT’D)
So, how much money are we talking?

AHMED
Money is no object.

ANDREA
Oooh, a big spender.

Andrea shows him the bouquet.

ANDREA (CONT’D)
How’s that?

AHMED
Beautiful.

ANDREA
All right, the damage is thirty five dollars.

Ahmed pulls out a big wad of cash and pays her.

ANDREA (CONT’D)
Wow, that’s quite a bank roll for a bike messenger.

AHMED (caught)
I’m a... very good bike messenger.
ANDREA
I can see that.

Andrea turns to the cash register and Ahmed holds out the flowers to her. She turns around with his change and he quickly chickens out and pulls the flowers back.

ANDREA (CONT’D)
Do you want to include a card?

AHMED
Uh, sure.

Andrea turns to get a card and Ahmed again holds out the flowers to her. She turns back to him and he quickly pulls the flowers to his chest.

ANDREA
Anybody who gets these is a lucky girl.

AHMED
(smiles)
In that case...

He begins to hand them to her when the bell rings on the door and a tough looking woman, MARTA, enters.

ANDREA
(to Ahmed, sharply)
Get that bike the hell out of here!

Ahmed stares at her.

ANDREA (CONT’D)
(sotto)
Sorry. It’s my boss.

Frazzled, Ahmed grabs the flowers and his bike and hurries out.

ANDREA (CONT’D)
What a sweet guy.

MARTA
Lousy foreigners.

ANDREA
Marta, what are you talking about? You’re a foreigner.
MARTA
Oh please, Honduras is practically Southern California. Now sweep up.

As Andrea grabs the broom, we:

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Ahmed sits on the sofa, depressed, staring at the bouquet.

AHMED
This bouquet mocks me.

We hear the toilet flush in the bathroom and Musab comes out, buckling his belt, looking uncomfortable.

MUSAB
Whooo, that Domino’s Cheesy Bread isn’t sitting too well.

AHMED
Well, you ate the whole bag.

MUSAB
Only because no one else was.

(beat)
It is a sin to waste.

Ahmed goes back to staring at the bouquet.

MUSAB (CONT’D)
Ahmed, cheer up. So you chickened out with the American girl. There are many more olives hanging from the tree.

AHMED
Oh, but if you could see her. She has the loveliest eyes and a smile that melts my heart.

MUSAB
So ask her out! What - you think just because she’s American, she’s too good for you? You’re bright, you’re funny, you’re talented - who made the best nail bomb in training camp? You did.

AHMED
That’s true.
MUSAB
So, you go back there, buy an even bigger bouquet, give it to her and tell her how you feel.

AHMED
You’re right, Musab. Thanks. You’re very wise.

MUSAB
Ooh – what time is it?
(chacks watch)
Judge Judy’s on!

Musab grabs the remote and turns on the TV.

AHMED
I don’t know how you can watch so much television.

MUSAB
I am gathering information.

He watches the show for a beat.

MUSAB (CONT’D)
The American justice system is very strange. But this Judge Judy is stern but fair.

The TV sound goes in and out.

MUSAB (CONT’D)
Oh, this stupid set!

Musab rushes up and bangs the side of the set.

MUSAB (CONT’D)
I’m missing the verdict!

He bangs the top of the set. The sound and picture briefly reappear and then fade.

MUSAB (CONT’D)
It’s so obvious the plaintiff was wrong in trimming back the neighbor’s rose bushes.

A series of rhythmic knocks is heard. Musab quickly turns off the set and crosses to the door.

ABU (O.S.)
Red Hawk.
MUSAB
The password’s Kelly Ri--
(opens door)
Never mind.

Abu enters the apartment, visibly upset.

ABU
Terrible news. Haseb is now arriving tomorrow.

AHMED
That’s too soon. We hardly have any data, our intelligence reports are incomplete--

ABU
Worse! Tomorrow is my bowling night! The team needs me.

AHMED
So you miss one game.

ABU
You don’t understand, it’s the Tri-City semi-finals. You can’t just not show up. You think we’re serious. I’m a no-show, these guys will kill me.

MUSAB
I understand you going the first couple times because they invited you. But to actually join the team?

ABU
They asked me to, I didn’t want to seem rude. Besides, I’m gathering information. These guys drink beer like crazy. Loose lips - yap-yap-yap.

AHMED
What have you learned?

ABU
Well, Donald’s had it with the wife. For the first time in ten years, he’s seriously considering divorce. I told him he has to hang in there.

(MORE)
ABU (CONT'D)
I can’t miss this tournament. What am I going to do?

AHMED
Tell your bowling friends you’re sick.

ABU
I can’t lie to them, we’re a team!

Series of knocks at door.

SALAR (O.S.)
Kelly Ripa.

ABU
Say the correct password!

SALAR (O.S.)
Oh, the old one? I forget. Something with a bird... Green Parrot?

ABU
Oh, get in here!

Abu undoes the locks and pulls Salar inside. Salar has a newspaper under his arm.

SALAR
I’m afraid I’ve got bad news.

AHMED
We know. Haseb’s coming tomorrow night.

SALAR
He is? Oh man, I wanted to have my study group over.

ABU
You were going to invite your study group here?

SALAR
Well, the university library’s being fumigated and we can’t have it at Denise’s because her Mom has the flu, so...

AHMED
Well, what’s your bad news?
SALAR
Oh. Right.

Salar holds up the newspaper.

SALAR (CONT’D)
They closed the power plant.

MUSAB
What power plant?

ABU
The one we’re supposed to blow up.

SALAR
Seems the city’s switching to hydro-electric from coal.

MUSAB
Much cleaner. I saw a whole thing about it on the Discovery Channel.

ABU
We’re dead men.

AHMED
Why? We can tell Haseb they just now closed it. How were we to know?

SALAR
Well, they actually closed it three months ago. It’s being turned into a science museum.

ABU
Oh, that’s an interesting tidbit you can share with Haseb while he’s strangling you with your own intestines.

AHMED
All right everyone, just calm down. Haseb’s not coming til tomorrow. That gives us a whole day to come up with a new plan and a new target. He’ll be happy, everyone keeps their own intestines, you might even make your bowling league.
ABU
You think so?? Don’t even kid.
(off their looks)
I have a 208 average. I’m irreplaceable.

SALAR
208? Is that good? That seems kind of high.

ABU
No, see, in bowling the higher the score, the better.

MUSAB
I’ve tried watching a couple tournaments on ESPN2. I just can’t get into it.

ABU
(hurt)
You might feel differently if you ever bothered to show up and watch me.

MUSAB
But, Abu, Wednesday nights? First, Smallville, then West Wing and then Law and Order, how can I miss that?

AHMED
We should really get Tivo.

MUSAB
Ooh, I have a coupon for free installation.

ABU
Shut up, all of you!!!

On everyone’s reaction we...

CUT TO:

EXT. O’HARE AIRPORT - DAY
Airplanes arrive and take off from the busy airport.

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY CHECK POINT - CONTINUOUS
A long line of passengers wait to pass through security. In the line, we see a large, dangerous-looking man, HASEB, talking in hushed tones on his cell phone.
HASEB
I’m in Chicago. Yes, a day early. I wanted to surprise these useless jackals. If things are as bad as I think they are, I will personally flay them and skin them alive.
(them, cheery)
Okay, bye Mom. Love you, too.

He hangs up. Then tenses as he approaches the checkpoint.

The trio of SECURITY GUARDS barely give Haseb a look as they wave him through. Haseb relaxes and begins to walk away when suddenly...

SECURITY GUARD #1
Sir!

Haseb freezes. The guard approaches him.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (CONT’D)
You dropped your paper.

Haseb smiles, nods, takes the paper and exits.

Suddenly, we hear a ruckus at the checkpoint. An elderly, Waspish looking woman with two canes has been stopped.

ELDERLY WOMAN
How dare you!

SECURITY GUARD #2
Put a sock in it! Just doing our job.

He runs a security wand over the woman’s body. It beeps.

SECURITY GUARD #1
Oh, hiding something from us!

ELDERLY WOMAN
Maybe it beeped because of the metal plate in my hip.

SECURITY GUARD #2
Yeah, yeah. Take off your shoes.
(shoves her)

Now!!

As the elderly woman slowly tries to comply, we...

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Ahmed, Musab, Salar and Abu all stand at attention as Haseb is in mid-tirade.

HASEB
...you four make up the worst cell in our entire organization. Lyme, Connecticut’s been up and running for only two weeks and they put you to shame! You’re lazy, you’re sloppy and Musab, look at you! You’re a disgusting pig. You must have packed on twenty five pounds since training camp.

MUSAB
(proudly)
Only twenty, sir.

Abu signals for him to be quiet.

HASEB
I have a good mind to close this place up and ship you all back home.

This sends a shiver through all of them.

ABU
But, sir, we still have the power plant--

HASEB
The power plant’s been closed for three months. When were you planning on telling me??

MUSAB
(sotto, to Abu)
I think he knows.

HASEB
And what is going on with the petty cash? Money is flowing out of this cell like shit out of a goose.

AHMED
Sir, you told us to blend in. Americans spend. It’s a consumer driven society.
ABU
Ahmed is right. Haseb, I know
you’re upset, but there is not one
transaction we’ve made that was not
for the cause.

A loud knock is heard at the door. They all tense up. Musab
rushes over.

MUSAB
(to door)
What’s the password?

SALAR
(annoyed)
Don’t ask for the password. We’re
not expecting anyone. Besides, it
keeps changing. I would like to
know, on the record, is it Red Hawk
or Kelly Ripa?

ABU
Please shut up.

Another loud knock.

VOICE (O.S.)
Delivery!

MUSAB
What should we do? They’ve heard
us talking.

AHMED
Don’t worry, I’ll get rid of them.

Ahmed undoes the locks and opens the door halfway. It’s
quickly pushed open and two burly DELIVERY GUYS carry in a
huge flat screen TV.

DELIVERY GUY #1
Where d’ya want it?

MUSAB
I think there’s been some mistake.

DELIVERY GUY #2
Musab Khadjimuirbaradi?

They all look at Musab, who smiles nervously.
MUSAB
I think there’s another Musab
Khadjimuirbaradi on the seventh
floor.

DELIVERY GUY #1
If you make us carry this thing all
the way up to the seventh floor and
there isn’t another Musab
Khadjimuirbaradi--

HASEB
(sharply)
Sign for it.

Musab nervously scribbles his name and the delivery man gives
him his copy.

DELIVERY GUY #1
There you go, buddy.  Enjoy.

The delivery guys exit.  Our five guys stand and stare at the
huge flat screen TV that now dominates the room.

MUSAB
Haseb, I know this might look
extravagant, but let me explain, in
America this is nothing!  Mrs.
Rodriguez downstairs is on welfare
and has three TV’s!

Haseb rips the invoice out of Musab’s hand and reads it.

HASEB
(seething)
When you ordered this, you used
your real name??

MUSAB
Well, otherwise it’s fraud.

Haseb explodes, tearing up the invoice into a million pieces
and throwing them to the floor.

HASEB
Next time, that will be your heart.

The men shudder.  Haseb exhales loudly and runs his fingers
through his hair.
HASEB (CONT’D)
I should kill all of you. But I am a reasonable man and I believe in second chances. You have three hours to come up with a new plan.

ABU
That’s more than fair. A thousand thank yous.

Haseb heads for the door. He points to his watch.

HASEB
I will be back at seven sharp.

SALAR
Oh, you just going to walk around? It’s a great neighborhood.

AHMED
There’s a theatre just around the corner. If you’re looking to kill time and haven’t caught “Lord of the Rings”, I highly recommend it. Peter Jackson is a genius.

MUSAB
If you like ribs, you can’t beat Ditka’s.

SALAR
How about blues music? Chicago is the birthplace--

AHMED
I thought it was New Orleans.

MUSAB
You’re both wrong. It’s Memphis.

They stop and see Haseb glaring at them.

HASEB
I thought I would go to a mosque and pray.

MUSAB
(nods)
That’s another good way to kill three hours.
Off Haseb’s murderous look, we...

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - LATER THAT DAY

Ahmed paces as Salar looks on. Musab enters from one of the bedrooms with a packed suitcase.

SALAR
Where do you think you’re going?

MUSAB
It’s called running for your life.

Ahmed grabs Musab’s suitcase and puts it down.

AHMED
Nobody’s going anywhere. Every problem has a solution.

SALAR
Ahmed’s right. None of us are cowards.

MUSAB
Now, see, that’s where you’re wrong-

AHMED
Musab, calm yourself. We will think of something.

SALAR
There’s a volleyball tournament coming up at my community college we can bomb.

AHMED
How many people go to something like that?

SALAR
I dunno. Actually, I hear ticket sales are slow.

A series of knocks.

ABU (O.S.)
Red Hawk! Kelly Ripa! I don’t care! Open up!

Salar opens the door. Abu rushes in.
ABU (CONT’D)
Our problems are over!

MUSAB
(hopefully)
Haseb choked to death on a rib at Ditka’s?

ABU
No, I have here in my hand a diskette full of top secret information from the Chicago branch of the U.S. Justice Department.

Abu proudly holds up a computer disk.

AHMED
How’d you get it?

ABU
My temp agency sometimes does government work. I pulled a few strings and they sent me over there. I hacked in and downloaded everything they got.

MUSAB
We’re saved! This calls for cinnamon buns.

Musab happily pads into the kitchen.

AHMED
You think this is enough to satisfy Haseb?

ABU
He just has to bring something back to his superiors. You know how it is -- the big guy threatens the next guy, he threatens the guy below him, he threatens Haseb, who threatens us--

MUSAB
Well, who do we get to threaten?

ABU
Oh, you want everything.

SALAR
So, does this mean I can make my class tonight?
AHMED
I don’t see why not. And it also means Abu’s free on Wednesday to go bowling.

ABU
(delighted)
Oh, now my team is assured victory in the Tri-City semi-finals. We will dance in the blood of the losers from Hal’s Body and Paint Shop.

AHMED
Abu, a thousand congratulations. Once again, your computer skills have saved us.

SALAR
Thanks to you, we get AOL for free, Earthlink, I-Tunes -- I haven’t paid for one song on my I-Pod.

Salar hugs Abu.

ABU
Please. We’re a team. I have my computer skills, Ahmed is great with people, Salar, you are book smart and Musab--

Musab returns from the kitchenette wearing oven mitts, holding a pan.

MUSAB
(sing-song)
Hot cinnamon buns fresh out of the microwave!

They all smile and happily grab a cinnamon bun, as we...

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Abu sits at the computer while Haseb, Ahmed and Musab look over his shoulder expectantly.

ABU
It’ll just take a few more seconds to bring the file up.

(MORE)
We’re about to see highly classified information that’s recently been exchanged between top Justice Department officials.

HASEB
You have done well. We are in the belly of the capitalist beast.

Musab with oven mitts holds up a small tray.

MUSAB
Taquito?

Without taking his eyes off of computer screen, Haseb takes one and eats it.

HASEB
Mmm...not bad.

MUSAB
Trader Joe’s.

ABU
Ah - here we go.

The file comes up and Haseb starts to read aloud from the screen.

HASEB
“The evidence of a significant relationship between the size of the organization and factors of the management accounting system provides management accountants with a rationale in the choice of accounting techniques and practices...” -- what in the hell is this??

MUSAB
Oh boy.

AHMED
That’s Salar’s.

HASEB
What?

AHMED
He has a presentation tonight in his accounting class. He must have taken the wrong disk.
ABU
(nervous chuckle)
Heh-heh. Silly Salar. Oh well.
Water under the bridge.

HASEB
That’s funny, because that’s what
your lungs will be full of.

There’s an awkward silence.

MUSAB
(sotto)
That’s a very clever threat.

AHMED
(sotto)
Yeah, it’s a thinker.

MUSAB
(sotto)
Yeah, because what he’s saying is
he’s going to throw Abu from a
bridge--

ABU
Will you guys shut up!! Haseb,
listen to me, I’ll call Salar right
now and tell him to bring us the
disk. Problem solved!

Abu whips out his cell phone and speed dials.

MUSAB
Uh... Abu, Salar never keeps his
cell phone on during class out of
respect for the teacher.

Abu throws the phone on the couch as Haseb walks to the door
and puts on his coat.

AHMED
Where are you going?

HASEB
To the airport. I have a flight to
catch.

ABU
Haseb, Haseb, wait! I always make
a back-up. When I was at the
Justice department I transferred
the files to my computer here.
(MORE)
ABU (CONT'D)
I just need to download it from the hard drive.

Abu begins to nervously peck at the computer.

ABU (CONT'D)
See, all is not lost!

Abu presses a button with flourish and we hear a voice from the computer:

COMPUTER (V.O.)
File located. Download will take 9 hours and 30 minutes.

ABU
Man, I gotta upgrade.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Nine hours and 29 minutes.

ABU
See, time’s flying.

AHMED
When is your flight?

HASEB
In three hours.

AHMED
Oh, that’s not good.

Haseb glares at all of them as he heads for the door.

ABU
Haseb, please. These downloads take time. It’s over a thousand pages of classified material.

HASEB
My plane leaves at 9:50 tonight. If the correct disk is not in my hand, you will have no hands --

The three men flinch. Musab leans into Ahmed.

MUSAB
(sotto)
At least we can still play soccer.

HASEB
-- then I will cut off your feet.
MUSAB (sotto)
At least we can watch soccer.

HASEB
-- then I will cut off your heads.

MUSAB (sotto)
Well, now he’s just being a prick.

HASEB
I just have to say I am incredibly disappointed in all of you. You have let down me, your fellow soldiers and most importantly, the cause. You are a disgrace to your family and ancestors.

Haseb walks out the door as Musab waves.

MUSAB (cheerily)
Well, goodbye!

Abu sits, depressed.

ABU
I’m confused. Is he going to cut off my hands, feet and head and then throw me off a bridge or is he going to throw me off a bridge and then cut off my hands, feet and head?

MUSAB
Yeah, he was all over the place.

Ahmed has put on his bike helmet and pulls down his ten speed from the wall.

ABU
Where are you going?

AHMED
There’s still time. I will ride out to Salar’s college and get the disk and then race to the airport and give it to Haseb.

MUSAB
You’ll never make it.
AHMED
I’ve got to try.

Ahmed grabs his bike and hurries out the door.

MUSAB
Good luck. May you fly with the speed of a thousand eagles.

There’s a beat. Musab turns to Abu.

MUSAB (CONT’D)
With our sayings, why is it always a thousand? Wouldn’t fifty eagles be enough?

Off Abu’s glare, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF CHICAGO - DUSK

Ahmed zips through the heavy traffic on his ten speed.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

A small community college classroom. Salar is about to start his presentation in front of a dozen or so students. His teacher, MR. BILLINGS, smiles at him.

MR. BILLINGS
Another presentation by Salar. You going to wow us again, kid?

SALAR
Oh please. It is you, professor, who wows us.

MR. BILLINGS
(to class)
Now, that’s how you get an `A’.

The class laughs as Salar begins. He pushes a clicker and a screen is illuminated with the symbol for the Chicago Office of the U.S. Justice Department.

SALAR
Hmm. That’s not right.

Suddenly, Ahmed bursts into the classroom, panting and sweating.
AHMED
(frantic)
Who numbers these classrooms?? 320-A! 320-B! There’s a Gibson Hall, a Gibbons Hall. I’ve been running all over the place!

Ahmed leans against a desk to catch his breath.

SALAR
What are you doing here?

AHMED
I’ve got your presentation. There was a mix-up at home.
(pointedly)
Father-was-very-upset.

SALAR
Oh.
(pointedly)
Oh! Well, then father probably needs this.

Salar quickly turns off system and yanks out the disk.

AHMED
More-than-you-know.

Ahmed grabs the right disk from Salar and shoves it in his satchel.

AHMED (CONT’D)
(to the class)
A thousand pardons.

Ahmed rushes out.

MR. BILLINGS
Is that your brother? I thought you said you were an only child.

SALAR
No, I said I wanted to be an only child. Well, now that all that craziness is over - who wants to learn about Theory and Methodology in Managerial Accounting??

The class cheers.
INT. CLASSROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ahmed hurries down the hall.

ANDREA (O.S.)
Ahmed!

Ahmed turns, surprised.

ANDREA (CONT’D)
What are you doing here?

AHMED
Oh, um...delivering ...stuff. What about you? Are you a student here?

ANDREA
I take a few night courses. Business.

AHMED
Good for you.

ANDREA
Yeah, I don’t want to work in a flower shop my whole life. I hope one day to own one and make others work in a flower shop their whole lives.

AHMED
Everyone needs a dream.

ANDREA
So, did the lucky girl like the flowers?

AHMED
Huh? Oh. Yes. Big hit.

ANDREA
Listen, I don’t have my class for another twenty minutes, want to grab a cup of coffee?

AHMED
(taken aback)
You are inviting me to join you for coffee?

ANDREA
Yeah. Is that okay?
AHMED
It is more than okay. It is fantastic. I love you forward American women.
(gasps)
I just remembered I have to be somewhere!

ANDREA
(disappointed)
Oh. Okay. Is it because I was too forward? I always do that.

AHMED
No, please, keep doing that. You are perfect. But I really must run.

ANDREA
Boy, you bike messengers lead exciting lives.

AHMED
You have no idea.

Ahmed runs off down the hall as Andrea calls out:

ANDREA
Where you going anyway?

AHMED
To the airport.

ANDREA
At this time of night? Oh, you’re dead.

Ahmed flinches for a second and then continues on his way.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT
Abu sits depressed in front of the computer.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Remaining download time: 7 hours and 26 minutes.

ABU
Thanks for the update.

Abu glances at Musab, who’s watching a show on his new, huge flat screen TV.
ABU (CONT’D)
What are you doing?

MUSAB
If I’m going to be killed, I might as well enjoy my impulse buy.

Abu shrugs and walks over to join him on the sofa.

ABU
(gesturing at screen)
So, what do we got?

MUSAB
(excited)
We have state-of-the-art liquid crystal, high definition color on a glorious fifty-eight inch flat screen TV.

ABU
And all that for Jim Belushi.

MUSAB
No, Abu, it is really quite amusing. See, his pretty blonde wife is upset with him because, once again, he has forgotten their anniversary.

On Abu and Musab watching Jim and his TV family:

INT. TAXI CAB - NIGHT

A tense Ahmed sits in the back seat, checking his watch as a middle-aged, unshaven Caucasian drives the cab. They sit in horrible traffic. The driver, SEAN, leans on the horn. He speaks with a thick Irish brogue.

SEAN
I’ve been here two months from Dublin and I’m ready to go back. This bloody traffic, it’s everywhere! I don’t know how you Americans do it.

At being called an American, Ahmed can’t help but smile.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Abu, Musab and now Salar sit on the sofa watching the huge television.
SALAR
I am confused. The fat man has the beautiful wife?

ABU
I’m confused, too. Is that still Jim Belushi?

MUSAB
No, that’s Kevin James. This is “King Of Queens”, another highly amusing show about a fat man and a long-suffering beautiful wife.

ABU
Oh, what does it matter. Even this laugh track can’t lift my spirits. We are all dead.

SALAR
Yes, I can’t believe Ahmed hasn’t answered our page.

ABU
Obviously, he didn’t make it.

There is a long beat as this sinks in.

SALAR
Well, I guess we can expect a visit from one of Haseb’s executioners.

MUSAB
I wonder who he’s going to use? I hope it’s Tazir. He’s quick and merciful.

ABU
As long as it’s not Aldhar. Mr. Show Off. “Oh, whose spine is this in my hands?”

Another long beat.

SALAR
I’m really going to miss this country.

ABU
Salar!
SALAR
What? I am. I really liked my community college. Dr. Billings was a wonderful teacher. And my classmates, they treated me as an equal. And Abu, are you telling me you’re not going to miss your bowling friends?

ABU
That is true. Donald is a good man. He once said that I was the only person he could really talk to.

(beat)
But how can you talk to a friend when he doesn’t have a head?

SALAR
True.

MUSAB
You know what I will miss? Walmart and cookie dough.

Musab holds up a half-eaten roll of raw cookie dough and offers it to Abu. Abu takes a bite.

ABU
Oh, sweet paradise. Keep that away from me.

(beat)
Oh, what the hell.

Abu rips off a huge piece and passes it to Salar. All three begin chowing down. Suddenly, we hear the familiar series of knocks. They react.

AHMED (O.S.)
Kelly Ripa.

They throw down the cookie dough and all hurry to the door. Ahmed enters casually. They all look at him.

AHMED (CONT’D)
I didn’t get there in time.

Musab starts whimpering and looking to the heavens.
AHMED (CONT’D)
But, luckily because of heightened security, his plane was delayed and I put the disk right in Haseb’s hand.

MUSAB
Oh, glorious of glorious days! We are saved.

ABU
We are saved, right? Haseb was happy?

AHMED
He was thrilled. He said we’re guaranteed another year here in Chicago.

They all cheer and clap each other on the back.

SALAR
That’s fantastic news!

AHMED
I’ll say. Oh, to be here when the Cubs win the World Series.

MUSAB
Are you crazy? They’re going nowhere without a middle reliever.

AHMED
What are you talking about? They picked up LaTroy Hawkins.

MUSAB
Ah, he’s a bum.

Abu picks up the cookie dough and shares with Salar.

ABU
Where has this been all my life?

SALAR
If you like that, do you know they put it in ice cream?

ABU
No way! We must get some.
And as our foursome discusses baseball and ice cream, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

We are in mid-celebration. Music is playing from a boombox and our group is drinking and eating. Suddenly, from the computer we hear:

    COMPUTER (V.O.)
    File's done.

They all stop. Abu quickly shuts off the music and they hurry to the computer.

    ABU
    And now we can see all the classified information that is shared by this country’s top government officials.

Abu hits a button and begins reading.

    ABU (CONT’D)
    “Hey Joe, did you get a load of the new receptionist? What a pair of tits on her!”

They all gasp in shock.

    ABU (CONT’D)
    I don’t understand. What is this?

    SALAR
    It’s called instant messaging. Read on.

    ABU
    “Larry on the 3rd floor totalled his Jag last night. What a lush. Ten bucks says he’s in rehab by the end of the month.” I’m so confused. Is that what these people do all day?

    AHMED
    Try another page.

Abu clicks down.
ABU
Ah, here we go. Molly’s Tex-Mex Chili Recipe...?

MUSAB
(reading)
Oh, five cloves is way too much garlic.

Abu scrolls down some more, utterly confused.

ABU
Recipes, Ziggy cartoons, what’s this? Joke Of The Day?

Salar reads over his shoulder.

SALAR
“Yo mama’s so fat, at the zoo, the elephants started throwing her peanuts.”

There’s a pause.

MUSAB
Oh, then she must be very fat.

ABU
(chuckles)
That is rather amusing. I must share that with Donald and rest of the bowling team.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAINS OF AFGHANISTAN - DAY

We sweep over the rugged, rocky terrain until we zoom in on one particular cave. From within it’s dark confines, we hear someone laughing.

VOICE (O.S.)
“...the elephants started throwing her peanuts!!”

As the laugh gets louder, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW