

ARGO

by

Chris Terrio

based on the May 2007 "Wired" magazine article  
entitled "The Great Escape" by Joshua Bearman;  
and chapter nine of the book entitled  
"The Master of Disguise" by Antonio Mendez

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FADE IN:

BEGINNING LOGO

The familiar logo WARNER BROS. PRESENTS COMES UP.

After a beat, it is consumed by FIRE.

It becomes AN AMERICAN FLAG, BURNING in the street.

1 EXT. U.S. EMBASSY (TEHRAN) - MORNING 1

Effigies of Jimmy Carter and the deposed Shah -- crowds chanting "Magbar Carter! Magbar Ahmrika!" Fists in the air.

SUPERIMPOSE: TEHRAN - NOVEMBER 4, 1979

YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN -- about 2/3 men and 1/3 women, some with flak jackets; about half the young women wear full chador. Many wear plastic bibs with photographs of Ayatollah Khomeini.

PASTED TO ROOSEVELT GATE: photographs of STUDENTS who were killed under the deposed Shah of Iran's regime.

Signs in English: "U.S.A. RETURN THE SHAH" -- "JUSTICE FOR MURDER." A few IRANIAN POLICE attend -- more as bystanders than peacekeepers.

A MAN frantically stabs an EFFIGY of the SHAH.

An IRANIAN STUDENT films the scene with a Super 8 camera.

2 EXT. EMBASSY GROUNDS - MORNING 2

From INSIDE THE EMBASSY GATES we can hear the noise of the protest. There are three primary buildings on campus: the CHANCERY, the embassy's main building, THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, and the CONSULATE.

We can see that the compound is securitized: sand-filled traps and steel bars on the windows of the consulate.

3 INT. U.S. EMBASSY - CONSULATE OFFICE - MORNING 3

Now, we see the POV THROUGH those steel bars.

Standing on a chair looking at the protest outside the gate, is BOB ANDERS, late 40s-50s, a consular officer.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

BOB ANDERS  
Carnival's bigger today.

MARK LIJEK, 29, a consular officer, joins Anders at the window.

4 EXT. ROOSEVELT GATE - MORNING 4

Then, in a famous piece of archive footage, something simple happens. A YOUNG MAN IN A SWEATER climbs the gate and makes it to the other side.

And now, we see the REVERSE of that famous shot. This isn't archive footage anymore.

We're looking at the POV of TOM AHERN, 48, the CIA station chief here.

5 INT. MARINE GUARD POST - MORNING 5

From a pillbox on the embassy campus, SGT. ROCKY SICKMANN, a young MARINE, can also see the protestors break across the lawn.

MARINE SGT. SICKMANN  
(into his radio)  
... Fort Apache is breached --  
please advise --

\*

6 EXT. ROOSEVELT GATE - MORNING 6

The PROTEST in front of the gate is getting rowdier -- its energy and numbers swelling.

A group of STUDENTS -- these more brisk, organized, all bearded and dressed in flak jackets -- push their way to the front of the protest --

WOMEN raise a banner. It's a signal.

As if on cue, the IRANIAN POLICE move from the gates. A WOMAN removes a large pair of bolt cutters from underneath her chador -- hands them to a BEARDED STUDENT -- who gets to work on the CHAINS holding the gate closed --

When one YOUNG MAN wearing a green military field jacket raises his fist, we can see that he has a concealed PISTOL in his clothes.

More STUDENTS climbing the wall -- dropping the 12 feet to the other side, one after another.

7 INT. MARINE GUARD POST - MORNING 7

MARINE SGT. SICKMANN  
THEY'RE COMING OVER THE WALLS --

8 EXT. ROOSEVELT GATE - MORNING 8

But a moment later no more climbing is required, because the GATE CHAIN IS CUT and protestors FLOOD through the embassy gates, a human dam breaking --

9 INT. CHANCERY OFFICE - MORNING 9

Mounting chaos in here, the nerve center of the embassy. Everyone on a different phone. It's like an emergency room where the patient is the whole building.

ANN SWIFT, 31, Deputy Political Officer, has the phone by her ear -- trying to hear reports from D.C.

ANN SWIFT  
There are hundreds of people out there --  
(looks out)  
No, thousands... There are thousands --

\*  
\*

10 IN THE CONSULATE OFFICE - MORNING 10

Mark Lijek and Bob Anders look out windows, nervous, but not like the Iranian VISA APPLICANTS who are close to panic.

BOB ANDERS  
Are these supposed to be bulletproof?

\*

MARK LIJEK  
Well, they've never been tested.

11 INT. CHANCERY (MARINE POST ONE) - MORNING 11

Six MARINES watch images from closed-circuit television cameras on chunky 1970's monitors. Crowds of protestors from every part of the embassy campus.

AL GOLACINSKI, 30, chief of security for the embassy, shouts into a radio.

(CONTINUED)

- 11 CONTINUED: 11
- AL GOLACINSKI  
Marines to Number One -- FALL  
BACK --
- 12 EXT. CHANCERY - MORNING 12
- PROTESTORS come running, turning the corner to reach the building. They use bats and crowbars to smash the windows of the building.
- 13 INT. CONSULATE OFFICE - MORNING 13
- BOB ANDERS  
(on the phone)  
Can we get some fucking police  
please?
- 14 INT. MARINE POST ONE - MORNING 14
- One by one, the security monitors are going black -- or smashed. The Marines stare.
- 15 EXT. TALEGHANI AVE. - MORNING 15
- An IRANIAN POLICE CAPTAIN smokes a cigarette, watching the mayhem, impassive.
- 16 INT. MARINE POST ONE - MORNING 16
- MARINES are putting on armor, gas masks, riot gear. AL GOLACINSKI goes down the line reminding them of protocol.
- AL GOLACINSKI  
Don't shoot. You don't want to be  
the sonofabitch who started a war -  
-
- CUT TO: \*
- AL GOLACINSKI \*
- They need an hour to burn the classified -- Hold.  
(beat, stern)  
You shoot one person, they'll kill every one of us in here.
- 17 EXT. CONSULATE - MORNING 17
- PROTESTORS, now on the embassy grounds, carry banners.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: 17

PROTESTORS

*La ilaha ilallah --*

A WOMAN IN A CHADOR uses her own radio.

Some of them ring around the building, holding hands and chanting. Some carry AUTOMATIC WEAPONS openly.

18 INT. MARINE POST ONE - MORNING 18

AL GOLACINSKI

(into walkie)

Tear gas as last resort ONLY -- I repeat, *only if your life is under threat!*

19 INT. HALLWAY - MORNING 19

Gallegos and Sickmann hear Golacinski's admonition, but PUMP TEAR GAS out a window onto protestors below despite it. One cannister after another.

20 INT. CONSULATE OFFICE - MORNING 20 \*

Now the five in the consulate are joined by LEE SCHATZ, 32, an agricultural attache. \*

JOE STAFFORD

-- We're not going out in this --

MARK LIJEK

(interrupting)

We are in the only building with an exit direct to the street. We need to GO --

The SOUNDS OF MARINES barking at one another over the radio.

21 OMITTED 21

22 INT. HALLWAY - MORNING 22

They look out a small WINDOW to see a MOB outside.

AL GOLACINSKI

I'm going outside.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: 22

GALLEGOS

Why?

AL GOLACINSKI

To reason with them. \*

Marines open the Chancery door, with a look --

23 INT. CHANCERY OFFICE - MORNING 23

FRED KUPKE, 34, communications officer, is shouting at staffers who pile up documents for the shredders --

KUPKE

Just everything. Don't sort it --

ANN SWIFT

(on the phone)

-- NONE, there are no police --  
ZERO --

24 EXT. CHANCERY - MORNING 24

Al Golacinski steps out onto the steps and immediately there is shouting, and a protestor puts a GUN to his head -- blindfolds him -- PUSHING AL'S head to the ground...

25 INT. CONSULATE OFFICE - MORNING 25 \*

CORA LIJEK

-- Second floor -- anyone who can hear this -- we need help --

As we MOVE DOWN the line of desks, JOE STAFFORD is also on a radio repeating the same in FARSI --

Others PACK things.

26 INT. THE HALLWAY - INTO THE VAULT - MORNING 26

MARINES and STAFFERS -- including TOM AHERN -- RUN down the hall, pushing a cart of items to secure. They reach the security locker -- code the door -- and enter the locker, heading to the INCINERATOR to begin destroying classified material --

27 EXT. CHANCERY - MORNING 27 \*

Golacinski HELD UP TO THE DOOR -- GUN TO HIS HEAD. He starts to panic.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

AL GOLACINSKI  
Let me in! Jesus Christ! Open  
the fucking door!

The Marines OPEN THE CHANCERY DOOR -- PROTESTERS POUR IN.

27A INT. CHANCERY OFFICE - MORNING

27A

ANN SWIFT  
-- Washington on flash -- Get Ops  
-- get a line --

We hear --

The POUNDING of footsteps on the roof. They look up.

28 EXT. CONSULATE ROOF - MORNING

28

Protestors RUNNING on the roof of the consulate building.  
Several stop to try and RIP off a vent cover using CLUBS  
and PIPES.

29 EXT. EMBASSY GROUNDS - MORNING

29

THOUSANDS are now on the grounds of the embassy and they  
continue to swarm through the gates.

The student with the SUPER 8 continues to film it all.  
Also filming, a NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER with a 16 mm camera.

Smoking cannisters of TEAR GAS, people hurling them.

A protestor lights a paper on fire to ward off the sting  
of the gas --

30 INT. CHANCERY OFFICE - MORNING

30

STAFFERS using pieces of machines to destroy other  
machines -- any embassy equipment that might function --

Then... screams. The lights have gone out. The power  
has been cut.

31 IN THE VAULT - MORNING

31

AHERN destroys the cryptography keys -- box-sized hard  
drives -- while BILL DAUGHERTY, 33, tosses stacks of  
papers into an electrical furnace.

(CONTINUED)



31 CONTINUED:

31

BILL DAUGHERTY

Well, Tom. You wanted to see the world...

The furnace makes a LOUD CHUNK and stops. They both hold their looks for a beat.

BILL DAUGHERTY

Are you kidding me?

AHERN

Get the shredder.

32 INT. CHANCERY STAIRWELL LEADING TO 2ND FLOOR - MORNING 32

BROTHER ALI, 20s, one of the student leaders, shouts as he holds a cloth near his face to protect from tear gas.

33 INT. CHANCERY OFFICE - MORNING 33 \*

The mood is now frantic -- people destroying things or shouting everywhere --

ANN SWIFT

No... Hal -- yes -- INSIDE the building, IN --

34 INT. CONSULATE OFFICE - MORNING 34

Bob Anders SMASHES AMERICAN VISA PLATES.

The visa-applicant Iranians are now huddled in a group. A couple of the women are wailing.

Improv resuming the debate over leaving.

Lijek on his walkie, but every channel is now speaking FARSI.

MARK LIJEK

Nobody is coming. We need to go.

\*

35 OMITTED 35

36 INT. CONSULATE OFFICE - MORNING 36

Mark gestures for the other six staffers -- and the twenty IRANIAN VISA SEEKERS in the office -- to head to the stairwell.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: 36

BOB ANDERS  
Iranians first.  
(as no one moves)  
Go! Now!

37 INT. CHANCERY - HALLWAY - MORNING 37

One STUDENT emerges with a large portrait of KHOMEINI that had been used for dart practice.

STUDENT  
(screaming)  
Who has made this!!!

Two EMBASSY EMPLOYEES look at the floor.

38 INT. CONSULATE STAIRWELL - MORNING 38

The twenty VISA-SEEKING IRANIANS pass our guys and run down the stairs out onto the street and disperse outside. Behind them, the FIVE CONSULATE EMPLOYEES we saw head down the stairs.

So the group of SIX is: MARK AND CORA LIJEK, JOE AND KATHY STAFFORD, and BOB ANDERS. They get to the bottom of the stairs. \*

39 INT. CHANCERY OFFICE - MORNING 39

The students, guns drawn, burst into the Chancery Office, shouting at Ann Swift and the others. The mood among the staffers is now almost peaceful.

ANN SWIFT  
(into the phone)  
It's done. They're in.

She puts down the phone. \*

40 EXT. BIST METRI STREET - MORNING 40

The It's quiet -- the sound of the protest on the other side of the roof and the embassy campus is distant. Just the empty street. \*

On the ground: discarded banners from the protest, fliers and newspapers.

We see something that looks like BLOOD on the street.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

They walk west. They're hurrying but taking care not to run. The five can hear the gunfire and shouting in Farsi. They walk up the street, away from the sounds of the protest, instinctively grouping together. Cora looks back.

BOB ANDERS

Keep going.

41-45 OMITTED

41-45

46 INT. STATE DEPARTMENT HALL - SEVENTH FLOOR - NIGHT

46

Halfway around the world, hell has broken loose here, too. BATES and MALICK, 30s, State Department mid-level aides. A cascade of voices and energy -- a reverberation from the embassy siege -- the building exploding into a crisis center.

BATES

These fucks can hit us, we can't hit back?

MALICK

Mossadeq. We did it to them first.

BATES

You think the Russians would put up with this? They'd fucking invade --

ROBERT PENDER, 40s, joins them heading down the hall. They've all gotten the same call to get to the Secretary's office. PETER GENCO, late 20s, behind.

MALICK

What did you expect? We helped a guy torture and de-ball an entire population --

PENDER

(turning behind him)  
Schafer! Schafer!

BRICE

At least 60. Could be a hundred.

GENCO

(catching up to them)  
You still haven't found Schafer?

PENDER

(to Genco)  
No, I was screaming his name 'cause I was fucking him.

HAL SAUNDERS, late 40s, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, perpetually stressed, coming out of his office, out of breath --

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

SAUNDERS

Six got out!

47 OMITTED

47

47A INT. SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

47A

STAPLED PAGES with PHOTOGRAPHS. In the hands of SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS VANCE, 62, a former Navy man who is used to telling important people what to do.

EVERYONE FROM THE PREVIOUS HALLWAY SCENE is here in attendance as well.

VANCE

I was told five.

BATES

Apparently it's six now.

VANCE

What happened?

PENDER

Not clear. We know they escaped the embassy.

VANCE

Where are they?

SAUNDERS

The Canadian Ambassador's house.

BATES

Are we attempting rescue?

BRICE

Hold for the Secretary --

VANCE

(handed another phone)

-- there's no one -- this is he...

(to an aide)

Can we get Ottawa patched? Five phones and none of them work.

Coming back -- on phone --

VANCE

Is White House joining?

48 INT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING - NIGHT 48

HAMILTON JORDAN, 40s, Carter's White House Chief of Staff, comes up stairs, trailed by AIDES. Jordan is forty, Southern.

BUTLER (O.S.)

They're claiming the embassy was a 'den of -- '

JORDAN

We wish it was the fucking Den of Espionage. C.I. had three people there, didn't see a revolution coming? I'd call that something other than intelligence --

49 INT. CHIEF OF STAFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT 49

There are already maps of Iran on easels in here. The big three plus foreign networks on silent televisions. LONDON BUTLER, 30s, Jordan's Deputy Chief of Staff, is on the phone.

SECRETARY

(into a phone)

Hold for the Chief of Staff --

(holds out the phone  
to Jordan)

Hodding --

JORDAN

(to Secretary)  
I'll call him back.

BUTLER

They're sticking to it. No release till we expel the shah.

Jordan sinks into his chair, putting his feet up on the desk.

JON TITTERTON, 30s, an aide to Jordan --

TITTERTON

Put him on a plane. Fuck him.

JORDAN

He's half dead and he's in chemo.

BUTLER

We took him in. He's ours now.

TITTERTON

So we'll take in any prick as long as he's got cancer?

(CONTINUED)

JORDAN

No. Just the pricks on our side.  
So all our other pricks on their  
prick thrones know, when they get  
run out on a rail, they won't be  
getting their spleens out by a  
camel vet in the Sinai.

TITTERTON

The six with the Canadians.

Now Jordan is looking at a monitor showing footage of a  
BLINDFOLDED HOSTAGE in front of the Embassy. AL  
GOLACINSKI being prodded and led down the front stairs of  
the embassy.

JORDAN

We've got 60 in the embassy with  
guns to their heads right now --

TITTERTON

The eyes of the world are on the  
embassy. That makes them safer  
than the six on the street.

\*  
\*  
\*

ANALYST

(coming to the door)  
Bani-Sadr's saying it'll be over  
in 24 hours.

JORDAN

Leave the six where they are.  
I'll go brief the president.

\*  
\*

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. OLD DOMINION DRIVE (VIRGINIA) - AFTERNOON

A LONE ribbon sags in the f.g. -- the CAPITOL BUILDING  
behind.

Yellow ribbons tied to lampposts. A Catholic church with  
a sign on the lawn that says PRAY FOR OUR HOSTAGES. A  
dry cleaner with a large American flag in the window and  
yellow ribbons drawn by kids around it.

The exterior of a neighborhood bar, O'Tooles. More  
ribbons.

SUPERIMPOSE: McLEAN, VIRGINIA - 69 DAYS LATER

49B INT. MENDEZ APARTMENT - BEFORE DAWN 49B \*

A television connected to a faraway wall with an extension cord sits on a coffee table. The t.v. shows color test patterns. \*

We move over the coffee table, a mess of Chinese food containers and beer bottles, to find TONY MENDEZ, 40, asleep in his clothes from the day before. \*

The phone rings. He answers it, half awake. \*

MENDEZ \*

Yeah. \*

He listens for a moment, then sits up, suddenly wide-awake. \*

49E 49E \*

50 EXT. CANAL ROAD - MORNING 50

Mendez's car speeds by yellow ribbons along trees on Canal Road.

51 EXT. CIA - PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING 51

Mendez gets out of his car and hurries toward a white building that looks like a college campus.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

Prime Minister Bani-Sadr today re-stated demands for the hostages' release...

52 INT. CIA DIRECTORATE OF OPERATIONS - MORNING 52

As we watch him hurry out of his car and into the CIA, we start to pick up TVs as we go by them -- all tuned to some version of the same story.

He enters the front doors and crosses the famous EMBLEM on the ground.

He moves past the STARS ON THE WALL, signifying fallen CIA officers (and there were fewer stars then than now).

He passes the SECURITY GUARD at the desk, holds up his badge. The guard nods.

(CONTINUED)

52

CONTINUED:

52

A young Tom Brokaw in a yellow, sleeveless sweater and teal tie plays on the television, intoning on the "Today Show." ANGELA BELK, young wife of hostage WILLIAM BELK, has a soft Southern voice and fights back tears. (\*ABC, 11/23/79)

BROKAW (V.O.)

Week ten of a hostage crisis that seems without end. A glimmer of hope after the release of some women and Afro-Americans but little activity in the weeks since, and the images of bound Americans under armed guard have many losing hope --

ANGELA BELK (V.O.)

I'm so afraid that I won't see him again. That he won't get out from over there, because everything -- it seems like everything they're trying to do is just backfiring, it's not working --

Under these images we hear an undulating drone -- the constant accompaniment of life then -- coverage of the hostage crisis.

PRESIDENT CARTER (V.O.)

The United States shall not purchase oil from Iran. Iranian assets shall be frozen and the U.S. shall engage in a forceful campaign of international diplomacy against the Iranians...

MENDEZ (V.O.)

*Ten weeks State's sitting on this?*

53-55 OMITTED

53-55

56 INT. D.O. FLOOR - HALLWAY - LANGLEY - AFTERNOON

56

O'Donnell, frantically grabbing documents and tossing them into an accordion folder.

O'DONNELL

The six of them went out a back exit. Brits turned them away, Kiwis turned them away. The Canadians took them in. They've been there since.

O'Donnell hands Mendez pages with STAFF PHOTOGRAPHS of SIX PEOPLE -- the escaped embassy employees -- as he continues to toss stuff into his folder.

(CONTINUED)



O'DONNELL

Traffic calls them The Houseguests. Haven't left the Canadian ambassador's house since it happened.

MENDEZ

Compromised? \*

O'DONNELL

(shakes his head)

Just a matter of time. We've got Revolutionary Guards going door-to-door like Jehovah's Witnesses, looking for escapees. They're out for blood, Tony. Half of them think Khomeini's been too lenient with the ones in the embassy.

Walking out of his office, Mendez following.

MENDEZ

White House?

They walk through an open floor of cubicles lined with offices, we get a look at the 1979 CIA headquarters: nothing sleek or sexy about the interior. An open area of desks where Woodward and Bernstein might be spilling coffee on their thick '70s ties. Papers and files everywhere. Trash emptying happens only once a week. Cigarette and cigar butts in ashtrays. Everything is perpetually a mess. And typewriters. The constant percussive sound of telexes and typing is the metronome that beats out the day here.

O'DONNELL

Carter's shitting enough bricks to build the pyramids. He wants the six of them out. \*

MENDEZ

Who else knows?

O'DONNELL

Just the families. Meanwhile, some genius in the embassy was keeping a mug book of everybody who worked there.

MENDEZ

Jesus Christ.

56A CONTINUED:

56A

O'DONNELL

We think it got shredded before they got in, but the fuckers have sweat-shop kids in there re-assembling the shreds.

O'DONNELL

They're gonna make an example of the ones who escaped. Standing-room-only for beheadings in the square.

MENDEZ

Who's handling?

They walk through a door and out of the Pit.

57 INT. D.O. FLOOR - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

57

-- into a HALLWAY WITH POP ART on the walls. People with laminated badges and folders with red stripes walk with purpose.

\*

O'DONNELL

State's coordinating in-house.

MENDEZ

They don't do exfiles.

\*

O'DONNELL

They do now. They want to run it by us, strictly as consultants.

Off his look.

O'DONNELL

Engell's saying it's lose-lose. These people die, they die badly. Publicly. 'State wants the blame, he'll give it to them.

MENDEZ

Then why's he want me?

O'DONNELL

So he can tell State he ran it by his best exfil guy.

They stop in front of a conference room. Jack looks at him.

O'DONNELL

Tony. This isn't the kind of meeting where you talk.

58

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

58

They enter to find: ADAM ENGELL, 40s or 50s, Deputy Chief of Operations, hosting visitors from the State Department: PENDER and BATES from State. The State guys are both dressed better than the CIA guys, except for Engell.

Other CIA Operations OFFICERS and ANALYSTS sit in audience.

ENGELL

Okay. This is Bob Pender from State O.S. He's been talking to Morgan at ExtAff.

GENCO, a State Department Assistant, removes a drape from the photographs of SIX FACES, State Department I.D. photos. Pender indicates the first two photos -- and during this, we may flash to scenes of the Houseguests in the Canadian ambassador's residence --

PENDER

Mark and Cora Lijek, 29 and 25. He's a consular officer and she's an assistant. Newlyweds. They just got there a couple of months ago. No language skills or in-country knowledge.

(re: the next photo)

Henry Lee Schatz. Agricultural attache from Idaho. He was there to sell U.S. tractors to Iranian agro. Hid out with the Swedes during the takeover then made his way to join the others with the Canadians.

(re: next photo)

Joe Stafford. Late twenties. He's smart and a climber. Speaks Farsi. Arranged the hire of his wife Kathy --

BATES

Understaffed so the faculty wives were the typing pool.

That goes without comment in this room of men.

PENDER

(then, finally)

Bob Anders. Senior consular officer, oldest of the group. Most likely to be group leader. So.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PENDER (CONT'D)

(now, shifting gears)

What we like for this are bicycles. We've identified backroads from the Shemiran district -- a couple of rat lines through the mountains to the crossing at Tabriz. Cars are off the table because of the roadblocks.

Pender nods to Bates, who goes to a map, indicating the north of Iran.

BATES

We wait till the weather clears up then we deliver six bikes and provide maps to the Turkish border.

PENDER

We have intelligence they can ride bicycles. Or we're prepared to send in somebody to teach them.

The professional spies shifting at the stupidity of it. But nobody speaks up. And then --

MENDEZ

You can send in training wheels and wait at the border with Gatorade.

Attention turns to Mendez. O'Donnell shifts. Engell, not happy.

MENDEZ

It's 300 miles to the Turkish crossings. They'd need a support crew behind them with a tire pump.

ENGELL

(directed at Mendez)  
We've only been asked to sharpshoot this, State's handling the op.

PENDER

Who is --

O'DONNELL

Tony's an exfil spesh. He got a lot of the shah's people out after the fall.

MENDEZ

(to Pender)

If these people can read OR add, any minute they're gonna figure out they're six short of a full deck. It's winter. You wanna wait around for a nice spring day for bike rides?

(a beat)

The only way out's through the airport. You build them new identities, a Moses goes in, takes them out on a commercial flight.

BATES

We're exploring that option.

ENGELL

They wouldn't clear airport control. Komitech own the place.

BATES

They would pose as reporters. The government issued 70-something --

Jumping in--MARIO MALINOV, 30s, an ambitious Bulgarian CIA analyst, Bronx Science and MIT, raised in Queens,

BATES

-- visas for American journalists.

MALINOV

74.

MALINOV

And the Revolutionary Guards keep them on 74 leashes.

MENDEZ

They get caught with journalist creds, you've got Peter Jennings with a noose around his neck in an hour.

PAUL LAMONT, late 20s, a Master's from the Woodrow Wilson School before he joined CIA --

LAMONT

World Noose Tonight.

Pender looks at Bates, who is trying to impress his boss.

BATES

North American accents give us limited options. So we get the *Canadians* to issue them passports...

(CONTINUED)

GENCO

English teachers from the international school. Tested model. It's worked before.

MENDEZ

The school was shut eight months ago.

Bates, meanwhile, removing a binder from his accordion folder: in the binder, a photograph of an emaciated kid in Namibia.

BATES

So do-gooders. They're six Canadians who've been over there inspecting crops. Making sure the kids get enough to eat. Get them creds for an AG NGO --

But he's already lost Mendez, who is going through a newspaper on the table.

BATES

A Feed the Children thing -- O.S. can make binders with starving kids --

MALINOV

These kids are black. These are African kids.

LAMONT

Are there starving kids in Iran?

GENCO

We can get ethnically appropriate kids.

PENDER

I'm sure there's skinny kids...

ROSSI

A logo with... seeds. 'Seeds of Hope'...

Mendez holds a page from the newspaper up to Pender.

MENDEZ

What do you see in the picture, sir?

A beat. Pender doesn't like this, but he'll play.

PENDER

Tehran.

MENDEZ

What's on the ground?

PENDER

Snow.

58 CONTINUED: (4)

58

MENDEZ

So what crops are the do-gooders  
inspecting under Frosty?

Pender shifts.

MENDEZ

Exfils are like abortions. You  
don't wanna need one, but when you  
do, you don't do it yourself.

The meeting is breaking up. Pender, followed by Bates,  
leaves the room. Engell, who has just been made to look  
bad and inherited a problem, stops by Tony.

ENGELL

(to Mendez)  
You have a better plan?

Mendez doesn't respond.

ENGELL

Get one.

\*

58A-59 OMITTED

58A-59

60 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

60

At dinner around a dining room table: the SIX  
HOUSEGUESTS; KEN TAYLOR, 40s, Canadian ambassador. He  
does much to support the myth that Canadians are always  
in a good mood. Next to him is PAT TAYLOR, Filipino,  
40s. We're joining various conversations, including one  
with LEE SCHATZ, 29, an American agricultural attache,  
the sixth escapee we heard about.

TAYLOR

-- Martin was the worst one.  
Martin the Maximo King --

PAT TAYLOR

(to Lee Schatz)  
-- he looked like a cartoon witch  
doctor, bone through his nose, so  
she asked to take her picture with  
him --

Joe Stafford, keeping to himself.

KATHY STAFFORD

(to Joe Stafford)  
You okay?

(CONTINUED)









74 INT. CARPET FACTORY - DAY 74

ANGLE - A SMALL HAND

pieces shreds together to form the words: U.S.  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE -- TEHRAN -- CLASSIFIED.

He is working on reassembling the seized EMBASSY PAPERS --  
a giant pile of shredded documents -- with the skill of a  
blindfolded child Mozart at the harpsichord.

We see the unmistakable image of a FACE being formed from  
the shredded material.

75 ANGLE - CLOSEUP OF AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI 75

(Footage from a Mike Wallace interview. \*"60 Minutes"  
11/18/79.)

KHOMEINI (V.O.)

(Farsi)

Our young people have taken over  
this nest of corruption. America  
can't do a damn thing about it --

76 OMITTED 76

77 ARCHIVE FOOTAGE 77

Rage at an anti-Iran protest in front of the White House.  
Signs: "DEPORT ALL IRANIANS"/"CAMEL JOCKEYS GO HOME."  
An IRANIAN-AMERICAN MAN is kicked as he crouches on the  
ground. A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN looks murderous as she waves  
an American flag at the camera.

CUT TO:

78 INT. SMALL-TOWN BAR - DAY 78

Back to the ABC News report, the bar in Pecatonica.

STROUP (V.O.)

I'm like that guy screamin' in  
that movie-program *Network*,  
y'know? I've had it. And if need  
be, I'll bear arms again.

79 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE (TEHRAN) - NIGHT 79

The Houseguests descend into the crawlspace, a darkened, cramped area -- first the Lijeks, then Anders and Schatz... then Joe and Kathy Stafford.

The trapdoor closes and the crawlspace goes COMPLETELY BLACK.

CUT TO:

80 INT. MENDEZ APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT 80

WALTER CRONKITE (V.O.)

(on TV)

And that's the way it is, on this, the 70th day of captivity for the American hostages in Iran.

Mendez is watching Cronkite on a small television in his kitchen. In front of him, a folder with Xeroxed photographs of the HOUSEGUESTS.

He changes the channel and finds a GOOFY SEVENTIES COMMERCIAL -- He picks up the phone.

81 INT. CHRISTINE'S HOUSE - CROSS-CUTTING - NIGHT 81

IAN MENDEZ, 7 and about to turn 8, is watching a movie on his bed. He picks up on the second ring. \*

IAN \*

Hello. \*

MENDEZ (V.O.) \*

Buddy-man. \*

IAN \*

Mom's asleep. \*

MENDEZ \*

You do homework tonight? \*

IAN \*

Yeah. \*

MENDEZ \*

What was it? \*

But Tony can hear a television soundtrack with ominous electronic music. \*

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

MENDEZ

What do I hear?

\*

\*

IAN

(coming clean)

'Battle for Planet of the Apes.'

Am I in trouble?

\*

\*

\*

\*

A beat.

\*

MENDEZ

What channel?

\*

\*

IAN

Nine.

\*

\*

81 Mendez turns on his living room television to the three-hour "BATTLE FOR PLANET OF THE APES."

81

\*

\*

MENDEZ

Catch me up.

\*

\*

Tony listens, staring ahead at the TV . A desert landscape dotted with technological garbage. An ape played by Roddy MacDowell walks across the landscape. He's staring at the television, but now really paying attention.

\*

\*

The apes walk into the ruins of what was once a great city.

RODDY MacDOWELL (V.O.)

(on TV, as Caesar)

*This is the hell my forefathers  
used to speak about. (Etc.)*

ON TONY

staring at the movie. Wheels turning in his head.

CUT TO:

82-85 OMITTED

82-85

\*

86 INT. SCI-FI LAB - A MINOTAUR - DAY

86

A bull/human experiment in a SCI-FI lab, coming to bovine life. A SEXY SPACE NURSE is administering some kind of shot to him. A SECOND NURSE stands by.

SPACE NURSE

My creation... My creation...

(CONTINUED)

86

CONTINUED:

86

The Minotaur lifts his head, KNOCKS into the Nurse.

SPACE NURSE  
(breaking character)  
What the fuck, Brian?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
Cut!

A.D. (O.S.)  
WE'RE CUTTING!

A bell. WIDER REVEALS that we're on a...

87

INT. WARNER BROS. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

87

A DIRECTOR, 40s, whispers something to an A.D., mid-thirties.

A.D.  
(inquiring into a  
walkie)  
John Chambers. John Chambers make-  
up...

CUT TO:

88

INT. WARNER BROS. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

88

JOHN CHAMBERS, Hollywood's first Oscar winner for makeup, walks onto set carrying a fishing tackle box of supplies.

SUPERIMPOSE: BURBANK, CALIFORNIA - JANUARY 19, 1980

The A.D. joins Chambers, walking him onto the set.

A.D.  
He says the Minotaur's prosthetic  
is too tight so he can't act.

CHAMBERS  
If he could act he wouldn't be  
playing the Minotaur.

He smiles and waves at the Minotaur and begins to work on his prosthetic with a brush and solvent.

CUT TO:

89

INT. NEAR CRAFT SERVICES TABLE - DAY

89

Chambers is foraging through '70s SNACKS. At the craft service table. A guy in his SPACE ARMOR PANTS without the top is eating as well.

A P.A. approaches, carrying a PHONE on a long cord.

P.A.

Mr. Chambers.

CHAMBERS

(still foraging)

Who is it?

P.A.

Kevin Harkins?

Chambers gives the kid a look, takes the phone from him and puts it to his ear.

CHAMBERS

Hey, Tony.

90

INT. CIA - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

90

Pender and Engell sit at the table; O'Donnell hovers. A few State Department and CIA ANALYSTS here, including Malinov and Lamont; and DAVID MARMOR, early 30s, Engell's guy.

O'DONNELL

(quiet, to Malinov)

Is he coming?

Engell nods for the door to be shut.

ENGELL

(to Pender)

Okay. Our N.E. put together a work-up. David.

MARMOR

They would pose as teachers from the international school.

PENDER

We went through all that -- it's boarded up --

O'Donnell looking at the clock.

(CONTINUED)

MARMOR

Suppose the airport guards don't know that --

PENDER

Suppose. Suppose Heckle and Jeckle go over and save them --

The door swings open.

MENDEZ

Hi. Sorry. Hi.

O'DONNELL

Have a seat, Tony.

He doesn't. There's an energy in him we haven't seen before.

MENDEZ

They're a Canadian film crew on a location scout for a science fiction movie --

A shift in the room.

MENDEZ

*Star Wars, Star Trek.* They need an exotic place to shoot. We put it out -- the Canadian producers put it out -- that they're looking at Turkey, Egypt, whatever. Then we go to the consulate and say we wanna look at *Iran*. I fly in there and we fly out together as a film crew. Done.

MARMOR

(dry)

'In an exfiltration, flamboyant cover identities should be avoided, as it increases operational' --

MENDEZ

This is more plausible than foreigners who want to go to *school* in Iran --

\*

ENGELL

So you're going to wake up tomorrow in the movie business? We have credentials for --

(CONTINUED)



90 CONTINUED: (2)

90

MENDEZ

I've got a contact in L.A.

ENGELL

(catching on)

Chambers.

MENDEZ

(to Pender)

John Chambers. He's a Hollywood prosthetics guy, does contracting work for us on the side. If I go see him, he'll set us up. A couple days to make it look real.

\*

Mendez and O'Donnell turn their eyes on Pender, who is the decision-maker here.

PENDER

(after a beat, to Mendez)

Remind me who you are again?

91 INT. CIA - THE PIT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

91

Tony stands in small messy KITCHEN AREA, pouring coffee. On the coffeepot somebody's pinned a note: CHANGE FILTER IF YOU USE! DO UNTO OTHERS.

O'Donnell approaches, quietly stands behind him, smoking quietly. Mendez turns around.

O'DONNELL

We want you to go to L.A. If you can make the movie thing credible, we'll take it to the Director.

(a beat; a cigarette drag)

Don't fuck up. The whole country's watching you. They just don't know it.

92 INT. T.W.A. FLIGHT - MORNING

92

Mendez sits in an aisle seat. The PASSENGER next to him is looking at the headline of *The New York Times*: "NEW THREATS FOR HOSTAGE TRIBUNALS."

Mendez is reading *THE FIVE C'S OF CINEMATOGRAPHY*.

93 INT. MIDDLE-CLASS TEHRAN HOUSE - NIGHT 93

Six KOMITEH force their way into a house.

KOMITEH SOLDIER  
SAVAK! SAVAK!

A Komiteh drags away a MAN in his forties while the man's wife cries. Automatic weapons are aimed at him, point-blank.

From ACROSS THE STREET, an IRANIAN WOMAN, 20s, watches.

94 OMITTED 94

95 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 95

Lee Schatz and Bob Anders play poker in a room decorated with Persian carpets and mosaics. The gunfire audible here too. Staring at their cards.

LEE SCHATZ  
50 caliber?

BOB ANDERS  
Mmm. 50, 35.

95A INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 95A

Pat Taylor helps THE SAME WOMAN we just saw, SAHAR, 20s, clear the table. She is their housekeeper.

SAHAR  
Your friends from Canada, ma'am.  
All this time. They never go out.

A significant moment of eye contact. Then Sahar goes back to clearing the table.

96 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATER 96

Kathy Stafford is roughly washing wine glasses at the sink.

JOE STAFFORD  
You've washed them three times.

He puts his arm on her shoulder. She keeps scrubbing.

97 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - NIGHT 97

Ken Taylor is brushing his teeth in the mirror. Pat comes in.

PAT TAYLOR

Sahar knows.

98 EXT. BURBANK - AFTERNOON 98 \*

The water tower on Warner Bros. studio -- which in 1980 read, "Burbank Studios."

99 INT. CHAMBERS' STUDIO - AFTERNOON 99

Chambers leads Mendez into his makeup studio and starts to open windows. Around the studio: stunt double-masks, deformed monster foreheads, dental implants on shelves. *Planet of the Apes* prosthetics. Mr. Spock ears on Styrofoam stands. (Chambers created all these -- really.)

MENDEZ

What are you shooting?

CHAMBERS

A monster movie.

MENDEZ

Any good?

CHAMBERS

The target audience will hate it.

MENDEZ

Who's the target audience?

CHAMBERS

People with eyes. Talk to me.

MENDEZ

It's an exfil.

CHAMBERS

From where?

MENDEZ

Worst place you can think of.

CHAMBERS

Universal City.

\*

(CONTINUED)

Mendez picks up a *Newsweek* magazine under a can of Tab on a makeup table: blindfolded Iran hostages on the cover. Chambers takes it in for a moment -- the gravity of it.

CHAMBERS

How you getting in the embassy?

MENDEZ

Six got away. They're hiding in the city. I'm going over to get them.

CHAMBERS

What am I making?

MENDEZ

I need you to help me make a fake movie.

CHAMBERS

You've come to the right place. \*

MENDEZ

I need to set up a production company and build a cover around making a movie.

CHAMBERS

That we're not going to make.

MENDEZ

No.

CHAMBERS

You want to go around Hollywood acting like you're an important person in the movie business.

MENDEZ

That's right.

CHAMBERS

But you don't want to actually *do* anything.

MENDEZ

No.

CHAMBERS

You'll fit right in. \*

100 INT. SMOKE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

100

A couple of empty highball glasses on the table. Chambers is looking at PHOTOGRAPHS of the SIX. Mendez is taking notes. On a photo of Cora Lijek.

CHAMBERS

This one's got an M.A. in English. She should be your screenwriter. Sometimes they go on scouts 'cause they want the free meals.

(re: Bob Anders)

This guy's the director.

MENDEZ

Can you teach a guy how to be a director in a day?

CHAMBERS

You can teach a rhesus monkey to be a director in a day. Look, if you're gonna do it, you've got to do it. The Khomaniacs are fruit loops, but they have cousins selling eight tracks and prayer rugs on La Brea. You can't build cover stories around a movie that doesn't exist. You need a script. You need a producer.

\*

\*

MENDEZ

I'm the producer.

CHAMBERS

No, you're not. 'Associate' at best. If it's a twenty-million dollar *Star Wars* rip-off, you need somebody who's a somebody to put his name on it.

Here we see some AUTOGRAPHED '70s CELEBRITY 8X10s hanging on the wall.

The waiter brings a bill.

CHAMBERS

Somebody respectable. With credits. Who we can trust with classified information. Who'll produce a fake movie. For free.

101 EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - EVENING

101

They walk up the driveway of a '70s Bel Air home.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

SIEGEL (V.O.)

Yeah, come in.

102 INT. SIEGEL HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING

102

And there's LESTER SIEGEL, a semi-legendary producer in his semi-legendary seventies. He's equal parts bookie and rabbi. His father sold perfume on the Lower East Side. Lester is halfway to dressed in a tuxedo.

SIEGEL

(shakes hands)

I only got a couple minutes. I'm getting a lifetime achievement award tonight.

\*

CHAMBERS

Mazel tov, Lester.

SIEGEL

Aaah, I'd rather stay home and count the wrinkles on my dog's balls. These fuckin' things are like getting measured for your coffin. 'He don't look so good. Let's give him an honorary award.'

TIME CUT TO:

103 INT. SIEGEL'S DEN - ANGLE ON TV - TED KOPPEL - EVENING

103

Reporting on Iran.

SIEGEL (O.S.)

A little experiment. You be me hearing you.

The TV we're watching sits in a room with a couple of Golden Globes and pictures of a younger Lester.

ANOTHER ANGLE

SIEGEL

Six people in the middle of a city of, what, four million --

ON TV, a wild-eyed woman in the crowd (in one of the most widely-played clips of the hostage crisis) makes an ax-falling gesture with her arm repeatedly.

(CONTINUED)

SIEGEL

-- who chant 'Death to America'  
all the livelong day. You wanna  
set up a picture in a week. Lie  
to a whole town of people who lie  
for a living. Have Double-O-Seven  
here sneak into a country that  
wants CIA blood with their  
breakfast cereal. Duck Iranian  
intelligence. Then walk the Brady  
Bunch out of the most watched city  
in the world...

\*  
\*

MENDEZ

... and past a hundred Komitech at  
the airport.

SIEGEL

Look, I wanna help you but... In  
the Army, we did suicide missions  
that had better odds. So lemme  
hit it again for the cheap seats:  
NO.

Chambers gives Mendez a look.

CHAMBERS

(to Lester, as he  
gets up)

Enjoy your fish dinner tonight.

Chambers stops at the muted television. More images of  
angry crowds.

CHAMBERS

You ever think, Lester, how it's  
all for the cameras?

SIEGEL

They're getting the ratings, I'll  
give 'em that --

\*

Siegel looks at the TV: at that moment, a HOSTAGE TAKER  
holding up photos of hostages for CAMERAS in front of  
him. He takes a beat.

\*

SIEGEL

We're gonna need a script.

A beat of silence. A LOOK from Siegel to Chambers.

CHAMBERS (V.O.)

(pre-lap)

How 'bout *The Horses of Achilles*?

104 EXT. BY LESTER'S POOL - MORNING

104

Chambers, on hold on the phone, walks to Siegel holding up *The Horses of Achilles* script in a William Morris binder. Stacks of scripts on a table outside. Siegel's new A.F.I. award is being used as a coaster.

SIEGEL

Nobody makes Westerns anymore.

CHAMBERS

(looking through it)

It's ancient Troy.

SIEGEL

If it's got horses in the title,  
it's a Western.

\*

CHAMBERS

(into the phone)

Yeah, Kenny, please. It's John  
Chambers, about the office space.

(then)

It doesn't matter. It's a fake  
movie.

SIEGEL

If I'm doing a fake movie, it's  
gonna be a fake hit.

\*

CHAMBERS

(to phone)

Is A006 still open on the lot?

105 INT. SIEGEL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

105

Mendez, on the PHONE near a fully stocked bar.

O'DONNELL (V.O.)

The Canadians are done. Say  
they're bearing too much risk.

106 INT. O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - CROSS-CUTTING - DAY

106

O'DONNELL

Foreign Secretary cornered Vance  
in Brussels and told him she's  
serving eviction papers. The  
Cardinal wants all cover options  
on his desk Friday morning.

MENDEZ

That's too soon.

(CONTINUED)



106 CONTINUED:

106

O'DONNELL

Engell's prepping the Bikes Option  
and the Teachers Option. You've  
got 72 hours to make yours  
better...

107 INT. SIEGEL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

107

Mendez is looking down at the SCRIPT in front of him. He  
opens to the first page.

ANGLE ON HIM

reading, thinking.

108 EXT. LESTER'S POOL - DAY

108

Mendez walks up to the table where Siegel and Chambers  
are already eating.

MENDEZ

(entering, reading)

'Fade in on starship landing. An  
exotic, Middle Eastern vibe.  
Women gather, offering ecstatic  
libations to the sky gods.'

(looks up)

'ARGO. A science-fantasy  
adventure.'

Mendez throws down the script.

SIEGEL

It's in turnaround. It's dog  
shit. \*

MENDEZ

It's a space movie in the Middle  
East. Does it matter? \*

Chambers looks at the BULLSEYE logo on the cover page.  
Reacts. \*

CHAMBERS

(to Lester)

Can we get the option? \*

MENDEZ

Why do we need the option?

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

SIEGEL

You're worried about the  
Ayatollah? Try the WGA.

\*

109 EXT. CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD (HOLLYWOOD) - DAY

109

\*

Tony and Lester turn off Sunset Blvd. and into the office  
complex.

SIEGEL

He's only a prick if you catch him  
on the wrong day.

MENDEZ

Is it the wrong day?

SIEGEL

It's always the wrong day.

They've arrived at a door with a sign: "MAX KLEIN  
PRODUCTIONS/BULLSEYE FILMS."

110 OMITTED

110

\*

111 INT. MAX KLEIN'S OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

111

We see all kinds of MOVIE POSTERS AND MEMORABILIA ALL  
OVER THE OFFICE.

KLEIN

You're gonna get this into  
production in one month?

MENDEZ

One month.

\*

KLEIN

Who are you again?

MENDEZ

Kevin Harkins. Studio Six Films.

SIEGEL

He's the money.

KLEIN

I thought you were retired,  
Lester.

(CONTINUED)

SIEGEL

-- Till I read the Argo. Look, how 'bout we say fifteen thou and close on this?

KLEIN

You want me to be honest with you, Les?

SIEGEL

Naah, bullshit me, Max.

KLEIN

Okay. Because I enjoyed your films, the early ones. I took this meeting out of respect because I wanted to tell you 'no' to your face.

SIEGEL

Thank you. Very respectful.

KLEIN

You're done, Lester. You've gotta get your cataracts fixed and read the trades. MGM just capitalized for six new films and they're desperate for Sci-Fi. They've already offered me four times what you are.

SIEGEL

(a beat)

What can I say? Congratulations.

(shrugs to Mendez)

He's got me.

A beat. Mendez ready to go --

SIEGEL

But see -- it worries me, what you said, and I'll tell you why. A couple weeks back I was sitting in Trader Vic's enjoying a Mai Tai when my pal Warren Beatty came to wish me well and we had a little chat. Seems he was attached to star in *Zulu Empire* -- which was gonna anchor that MGM slate -- but Warren confided in me that the picture's gone over-budget 'cause the Zulu extras wanna unionize.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: (2)

111

SIEGEL (CONT'D)

They may be cannibals swallowing each other up but they want health and dental, so the movie's kaput -- which means that MGM deal ain't gonna happen and your script ain't worth the buffalo-shit on a nickel. So.

Lester takes some documents out of a folder.

SIEGEL

The way this looks to me -- through the cataracts, I grant you -- is that you can either sign here and take ten thousand for your toilet-paper script -- or you can go fuck yourself.

Siegel smiles kindly and holds a pen and the contracts out to Klein. Klein takes them.

112 EXT. STREET - A FEW MINUTES LATER

112

MENDEZ

You know Warren Beatty?

SIEGEL

I took a leak next to him at the Golden Globes.

(beat)

Taco?

113 OMITTED

113

114 EXT. WARNER BROS. LOT - LATE DAY

114

Lester and Tony eat tacos at a picnic table on the lot.

MENDEZ

You got kids, Lester?

SIEGEL

Two daughters.

MENDEZ

You see them much?

SIEGEL

I talk to them once a year, maybe.

MENDEZ

Why's that?

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

SIEGEL

I was a terrible father.

(beat)

The bullshit business is like coal mining. You can't wash it off before you kiss your wife and kids... You?

MENDEZ

A son. Lives with his mother in Virginia.

SIEGEL

You're divorced?

MENDEZ

Taking time off.

(then, quiet)

He's gotta... stay where he is.

SIEGEL

(beat)

Kids need the mother.

114A EXT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE (LOT - NY STREET) - MORNING 114A

Chambers and a GRAPHIC ARTIST walk through the set. We REVEAL a couple of CYLON RAIDERS, helmets off, taking a break from shooting and leaning against the wall.

115 INT. O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - DAY 115

O'DONNELL reads from the EYES ONLY document.

O'DONNELL

They caught the shah's chief of security trying to get on a plane to Paris.

INTERCUT WITH:

116 INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - MORNING 116

WIDER REVEALS that the production office is being set up. A couple of FURNITURE GUYS move chairs in.

Mendez is looking at a POSTER. It reads: "Studio Six Productions presents: ARGO. A COSMIC WAR."

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

116

MENDEZ  
 (to a graphic artist)  
 'War' sounds like *Star Wars*.  
 Let's use a different word.

Mendez closes the door to his private office.

O'DONNELL  
 'Since the incident, the number of  
 guards at the airport has doubled.  
 Thorough background examinations  
 should be expected.'

MENDEZ  
 I need another week.

O'DONNELL  
 You don't have it.

117 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT

117 \*

Mendez goes out into the main part of the office -- it's  
 Tony, Siegel, and Chambers now.

They have hung up all their ARGO MATERIALS on the wall  
 and are reviewing them.

MENDEZ  
 We've got a script. We've got  
 business cards. We've got a poster.  
 If I'm them? It's nothing we  
 couldn't make at home.

\*  
\*

CHAMBERS  
 I did a movie with Rock Hudson  
 once.

\*  
\*

(a beat)  
 'You need to sell a lie, you get  
 the press to sell it for you.'

118 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

118

Now it's noisy in here now -- a PUBLICIST, ASSISTANTS and  
 controlled chaos --

SIEGEL  
 (on the phone)  
 -- press event and reading... No,  
 I promised *Variety* exclusive on  
 that one...

\*

Mendez is making a list with a PUBLICIST.

(CONTINUED)

MENDEZ

'Biggest Canadian production in  
history.' *Canadian Gone With The  
Wind* --

PUBLICIST

ASSISTANT #2

Canadian Sci-Fi *Gone With* Studio Six Films.  
*The Wind*.

As Chambers pulls Mendez --

SIEGEL

(on the phone)

I gotta get back to you, Phil. I  
can't get my own mother a ticket.  
I had to tell her it was  
cancelled.

MENDEZ

Are you turning people away?

SIEGEL

(covering the phone)

You know what gets more suckers  
than a sign that says 'Brooklyn  
Bridge For Sale'? 'Brooklyn  
Bridge: Approved Buyers Only.'  
(as they go)  
Philip? You there?

Chambers leads us into the main room, leading Tony to a  
table where JACK KIRBY, 62, comics artist, fusses with  
large COMIC PANELS of ARGO CONCEPT DRAWINGS spread over a  
table.

Kirby starts to distribute storyboards. Some hold on to \*  
them and an ASSISTANT begins putting them up on the \*  
board.

Mendez looks at them. Impressed. He picks up a drawing \*  
of some futuristic-looking vehicles. \*

MENDEZ \*

Any way to make the chariots look  
more -- Middle-Eastern -- ?

KIRBY

Mesopotamia... Egypt...

MENDEZ

Iran.

Kirby takes out a marker and starts to sketch a \*  
futuristic-looking desert glider.

119 OMITTED 119 \*

120 OMITTED 120

121 OMITTED 121 \*

122 OMITTED 122 \*

123 EXT./INT. BEVERLY HILTON - LATE DAY 123

A black sedan pulls up to the hotel. A driver opens the back door. Mendez, Siegel, and Chambers get out of the car. They're wearing suits.

They walk past a sign that reads: PRESS EVENT and READING FOR ARGO. A couple of posters with the explosion-in-space ARGO: A COSMIC CONFLAGRATION logo.

124 INT. BEVERLY HILTON - STARDUST LOUNGE - DUSK 124

Tony is on a balcony outside the ballroom. He passes the bar on his way in.

Inside he sees Chambers, Lester and a PUBLICIST who promptly moves Tony into a conversation with a REPORTER.

PUBLICIST

Janet from the *Times* -- You know Johnny Chambers and Lester Siegel. This is Kevin Harkins. He'll tell you a bit about the film --

We leave Mendez with the *L.A. Times* --

FOLLOWING Siegel --

Jack Kirby's storyboard drawings throughout the room. Four or five ACTORS IN SCI-FI COSTUMES.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Lester.

He turns around. NINA, a woman in her early sixties, made up to look younger.

SIEGEL

You're gorgeous. You're in the reading?

(CONTINUED)



NINA

I'm playing Serksi, the Galactic Witch.

BACK TO: Mendez. A Publicist is guiding Mendez toward an anemic-looking man --

PUBLICIST

(to Mendez,  
introducing)  
Rodd from *Variety*. Kevin Harkins.

BACK TO Siegel and Chambers, walking away from NINA.

SIEGEL

Keep that fucking space witch away from me.

CHAMBERS

You know her?

SIEGEL

I was *married* to her.

Mendez, now talking to RODD, from *VARIETY*.

RODD

(to Mendez)  
You said shooting in *Iran* with an N?

MENDEZ

Tehran.

RODD

You ever watch the news?

Publicist hands Mendez a LASER GUN and a photographer snaps his picture. Siegel walks by, downing one from the bar. \*

BACK TO SIEGEL AND CHAMBERS

A *Hollywood Reporter* writer talking to Siegel. The publicist stands by -- \*

REPORTER

So the title refers to...

SIEGEL

The *Argo*, it's the, y'know, the thing --

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED: (2)

124

Siegel takes a couple of canapés from a passing Waiter,  
starts eating. \*

REPORTER

... Jason and the Golden Fleece,  
or...?

SIEGEL

(chewing) \*  
-- the spaceship, it flies around  
space, alllll over space --

REPORTER

Is it the Argonaut?

Siegel doesn't know what he's talking about. \*

SIEGEL

No.

REPORTER

Then what does 'Argo' mean?

And finally Lester's had it -- with his mouth full -- \*

SIEGEL

It means Argo fuck yourself.

PUBLICIST

Let's all take our places for the  
reading.

And we SETTLE ON MENDEZ. He takes a glass of wine from a \*  
passing waiter's tray, downs it, and puts it on another  
WAITER'S tray. We FOLLOW that waiter THROUGH a swinging  
door, INTO the kitchen and prep area, where a small black  
and white TV plays...

125 ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

125

Tehran Mary speaks into a microphone.

TEHRAN MARY (V.O.)

(on TV)  
As the Imam Khomeini said, we have  
found no evidence that proves that  
these people are diplomats.

126 INT. O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

126

O'Donnell, watching the same footage on the News.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

126

TEHRAN MARY (V.O.)

(on TV)

All evidence proves that these  
people are spies.

The ARRAY OF VIDEO CAMERAS on tripods recording her.

NINA (V.O.)

(as Serksi)

Our world has changed.

\*

127 INT. BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL - STARDUST LOUNGE - DUSK

127

The reading of Argo is happening around a table.

PRINCESS ALEPPA

The fire of hope stopped burning  
in this galaxy long ago.

A HANDSOME LEAD, ACHILLES CRUX, says his line.

ACHILLES CRUX

Fire the thrusters!!

\*

128 INT. AROUND THE CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE (TEHRAN)  
- NIGHT

128

MARK LIJEK

-- fifty-seven -- fifty-eight --

Mark counts out as Lee Schatz does push-ups. Bob Anders  
watches a television in the b.g., subtitled in Farsi.

JIMMY CARTER (V.O.)

(on TV)

We will not yield to international  
terror or to blackmail.

129-130 OMITTED

129-130

131 INT. MUSHROOM INN (AMERICAN EMBASSY, TEHRAN) - NIGHT

131

Five of the EMBASSY HOSTAGES -- men from their 20s to  
their 50s -- are roused from their sleeping mats by  
Komiteh. Hoods are put over their heads.

PRINCESS ALEPPA (V.O.)

The old ways are lost, but there  
is still hope.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: 131

TEHRAN MARY (V.O.)

We will begin the trials and will  
carry out the sentences.

This MONTAGE: Voice upon voice, image upon image, landing  
on television sets.

132 OMITTED 132

133 INT. AMERICAN EMBASSY (TEHRAN) - BASEMENT - NIGHT 133

The four hostages, hoods on their heads, placed against  
the wall. HOSTAGE TAKERS raise their guns at the men.

GREEN JACKET  
(Farsi)  
Fire!

PRINCESS ALEPPA (V.O.)  
If we find his ship, we  
will find our chance.  
Aboard the Argo lies my  
hope. My hero. My  
husband.

\*

They pull their triggers. But nothing happens. It's a  
mock execution (actually occurred -- February 5, 1980).  
The five hostages, after a beat, either scream or  
collapse.

134 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT 134

Joe Stafford, watching Khomeini on TV, to Bob Anders --

JOE STAFFORD  
(realizing the  
gravity of it)  
He's marginalized the moderates  
now.

\*

MARK LIJEK  
A hundred and twelve --

134A INT. BEVERLY HILTON - DUSK 134A

NESTOR THE DROID  
We're hit. We'll never clear the  
Perseus Range!

\*

We see the ROW OF PRESS PEOPLE. Not unlike the ones  
watching Tehran Mary.

\*

134B INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT 134B

Lee Schatz collapses from his push-ups. Breathing heavily.

MARK LIJEK

And we have a new champion.

Bob Anders looks up from Khomeini, who keeps talking in the b.g., and applauds.

134C OMITTED 134C \*

134D INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT 134D

SAHAR quietly cleans a table. She's watching the Houseguests.

CHAMBERS (V.O.)

'Crane down over the battlefield  
and hold there...'

135 INT. BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL - NIGHT 135

Chambers, at the table, sitting next to Siegel. Mendez sits off to the side.

CHAMBERS

(reading stage  
directions)

'... on a single red flower  
growing from the ruins of the  
starship in the desert. Fade to  
black. The End.'

APPLAUSE.

136 OMITTED 136 \*

136A OMITTED 136A \*

137 INT. TONY'S HOTEL ROOM - EVENING 137

Mendez, lying on his bed with the phone. Near him, a copy of VARIETY turned to a full-page ad. (\*This is real -- Variety): STUDIO SIX PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS: ARGO: A COSMIC CONFLAGRATION. \*

138 INT. NEAR O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - MORNING 138

O'Donnell comes from the kitchen to find ENGELL waiting. He hands O'Donnell a copy of *Variety*. "ARGO TO BEGIN SHOOTING IN MARCH. Oscar-winner Chambers, Siegel Among Producers."

And there is a photo of Mendez from the press event. Smiling and holding a laser gun.

139 INT. TONY'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING 139

Mendez, seeing red, pacing --

MENDEZ

Why'd he do it?

O'DONNELL (V.O.)

He did it 'cause he did it.

INTERCUT WITH:

140 INT. O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - MORNING 140

O'DONNELL

He saw a covert intelligence officer saying 'cheese' with R2-D2. They're going with the teachers.

MENDEZ

It's a death sentence, Jack.

O'DONNELL

Well then it's on Engell.

(a beat)

It's done, Tony. Wash your hands.

He hangs up. Mendez, looking out the hotel window at L.A.

141 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - MORNING 141

While Tony packs a bag of papers from his desk.

SIEGEL

I made thirty pictures. Half of them the pricks upstairs tried to shut me down.

Mendez finishes packing, zips up the bag.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

SIEGEL

My ass is staying right here and  
running a movie company.

Mendez stops zipping as Siegel takes a bottle of Jack and  
three shot glasses from a drawer.

SIEGEL

(pours)  
Ey. The first shot of the  
picture.

Lester gives glasses to each of them. Chambers holds up  
his glass.

CHAMBERS

Argo fuck yourself.

They raise to that.

MENDEZ AND SIEGEL

Argo fuck yourself.

They each do a shot. Then Tony picks up his bag and  
heads out. Before he goes --

MENDEZ

How'd you always get around the  
pricks upstairs?

SIEGEL

There's always another prick one  
floor higher up.

142 EXT. STATE DEPARTMENT - DAY

142

Mendez approaches the iconic building.

143 INT. STATE DEPARTMENT LOBBY - DAY

143

Mendez catches up with Jack on the second level of the  
lobby, opposite the row of flags.

O'DONNELL

What did you do to get the  
meeting? \*

MENDEZ

I used your name. \*

Jack looks to Tony. \*

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

MENDEZ

You can forget about that time-share in Ocean City, Jack.

144 INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - SEVENTH FLOOR - RECEPTION ROOM - DAY 144

Tony and O'Donnell sit in the waiting area, across from a SECRETARY. They look down the hall to see:

CIA DIRECTOR ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER, 50s, and SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS VANCE walk down the hall together, discussing something in hushed tones.

O'DONNELL

(under his breath)

Brace yourself. It's like talking to those two old fucks on 'The Muppets.'

Vance and Turner enter the room without recognizing them. Mendez and O'Donnell stand up.

145 INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - SEVENTH FLOOR OFFICE - ANGLE - DAY 145

A concept drawing from Argo.

TURNER (O.S.)

Aliens and robots.

MENDEZ (O.S.)

Yes, sir.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The four men are gathered in the back of Vance's office, around a table. Over them we see the STATE DEPARTMENT EMBLEM.

TURNER is looking at the storyboard.

TURNER

You're telling me there's a movie office in Hollywood right now that's funded by the Central Intelligence Agency.

MENDEZ

Yes, sir.

(CONTINUED)



VANCE

What's wrong with the bikes again?

Vance, with a copy of *Comics Week*. THE NEXT STAR WARS? Next to it, a photograph from the press event: Mendez holding a laser gun. CANADIAN EPIC WILL BE FILMED IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

TURNER

... you think this --

O'DONNELL

We tried to get the message upstairs --

TURNER

-- this is more plausible than teachers?

O'DONNELL

One, there are no foreign teachers in Iran anymore --

MENDEZ

-- two, we think everybody knows Hollywood people. And everybody thinks they would shoot during Stalingrad with Pol Pot directing if it'd sell tickets.

(beat)

There are only bad options. It's about finding the best one.

TURNER

You don't have a better bad idea than this?

O'DONNELL

This is the best bad idea we have, sir. By far.

Vance and Turner exchange looks.

TURNER

(to Mendez)

The United States government just sanctioned your science fiction movie.

\*

Mendez is packing to go. He packs a passport with his photo and the name KEVIN COSTA HARKINS. He takes off his wedding band and places it with care -- almost with ceremony -- in a spot on his dresser.

147 OMITTED 147

148 INT. O'DONNELL'S CAR - NIGHT 148

O'Donnell is driving, Mendez in the passenger seat. They just sit there for a moment. In the car.

O'DONNELL

I'm required to remind you that if you're detained, the agency will not claim you.

MENDEZ

Barely claim me as it is.

O'DONNELL

Your 'In Case Of's' good?

MENDEZ

Just Christine.

They don't need to look at one another. A shared understanding.

MENDEZ

Guess I should have brought some books to read in prison.

\*

O'DONNELL

Nah. They'll kill you long before prison.

Tony gets out of the car, pulls his bags from the back seat, and slams the door. Headed into the airport.

149 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - DUSK 149

Siegel is standing in the office watching Jimmy Carter speak mournfully on TV, Chambers watching from a desk behind him.

SIEGEL

Bad news, bad news, even when it's good news it's bad news. Christ.

(a phone starts ringing)

John Wayne's in the ground six months and this is what's left of America.

\*

\*

(CONTINUED)

149 CONTINUED:

149

CHAMBERS  
 (picking up the  
 phone)  
 Studio Six.

INTERCUT WITH:

150 INT. DULLES AIRPORT - NIGHT

150

MENDEZ  
 We've got a green light.

Chambers gives Siegel a thumbs-up.

MENDEZ  
 Keep the office running till you  
 hear otherwise.  
 (this means thank  
 you)  
 Argo fuck yourself.

\*

151 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - DUSK

151

CHAMBERS  
 Argo fuck yourself.

152 OMITTED

152 \*

153 INT. CHRISTINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

153

The phone in the living room rings. No one is home.

154 INT. DULLES AIRPORT - NIGHT

154

Mendez hangs up the airport pay phone.

CUT TO:

155 INT. DULLES AIRPORT - LATER

155

He sits near a mailbox inside the terminal writing on a postcard with the Washington Monument on it.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE BUDDY-MAN. NO PHONE FOR A WHILE. JACK WILL CALL. LOVE YOU BOTH. Then he adds: SO MUCH.

He drops the card in the box and heads toward a gate marked "LUFTHANSA."

156 OMITTED 156 \*

157 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 157

The Houseguests are gathered around Bob Anders.

BOB ANDERS

-- it was thirty seconds for  
Christ's sake. To get some air in  
the yard. I couldn't breathe --

MARK LIJEK  
You know what the rules  
are.

JOE STAFFORD  
All it takes is one second  
to spot you.

BOB ANDERS

Who saw me go out?

MARK LIJEK  
It doesn't matter. You did  
go out.

CORA LIJEK  
I did, actually. I saw  
you.

BOB ANDERS

(to Cora Lijek)  
Miss Hall Monitor. Creeping  
around with her notebook --

MARK LIJEK

(something roused)  
Don't talk to her that way.

CORA LIJEK  
(to Mark)  
I'll defend myself. Okay?

BOB ANDERS  
Little Laura Ingalls.  
Watching every move --

A sound at the door, and they go silent.

LEE SCHATZ

Dad's home.

Ken carrying his briefcase, cheerfully oblivious to what  
he's walked into.

TAYLOR

You're getting a visitor.

158 OMITTED 158 \*

159 INT. WEST WING - MORNING 159

An NSC LIAISON, holding a file with a red stripe, walks  
to Jordan's office. \*

160 INT. CHIEF OF STAFF OFFICE - MORNING 160

He finds Jordan sitting on a long table, looking exhausted, silently watching one of the monitors: "The Today Show" on NBC.

JORDAN

A man in Scranton's putting a flag on his lawn for every day of captivity.

(beat)

When he runs out of lawn, Kennedy wins the primary.

Vance hands him the folder.

LIAISON

The six with the Canadians are coming out.

\*  
\*

Jordan, brought back from Scranton and politics by this, opens the file and looks at it.

JORDAN

(after a moment)

Who signed off on this?

161 OMITTED 161

161A EXT. ISTANBUL - DAY 161A

ESTABLISHING SHOT. WIDE. OVER the city, featuring the famous domed mosques.

SUPERIMPOSE: ISTANBUL - JANUARY 25

162 EXT. ISTANBUL - PLAZA ON THE WATER - DAY 162

Mendez walks, the BOSPHORUS in the b.g. He reaches the doors of an OFFICIAL-LOOKING BUILDING and goes inside.

163 INT. IRANIAN CONSULATE (ISTANBUL) - DAY 163

Mendez sits in a reception room with a few VISA APPLICANTS. Photographs of the Ayatollah Khomeini hang on the wall. Two REVOLUTIONARY GUARD OFFICIALS in ill-fitting suits sit at a desk.

164 INT. IRANIAN CONSULATE - VISA OFFICE - DAY 164

The IRANIAN CONSUL OFFICIAL, late 30s, is smoking.

CONSUL OFFICIAL  
What will be the purpose of your  
visit to Iran?

MENDEZ  
Business. Film production.

The Consul Official looks at his Canadian passport.

CONSUL OFFICIAL  
Why didn't you get your visa in  
Canada?

MENDEZ  
My boss waited until I was here to  
send the telex.  
(lighting cigarette)  
If he had a thought in his head,  
it would die of loneliness. \*

Pointed look from Mendez. The universal condition of  
boss hatred almost always works for him, and it does now.  
Consul nods. Stamps the passport. KINGDOM OF IRAN -- He  
crosses out KINGDOM and writes by hand: ISLAMIC REPUBLIC  
OF.

164A EXT. BLUE MOSQUE - MORNING 164A

Tony walks through the doorway revealing the historic  
mosque, we hear the call to prayer echo through the  
courtyard. Tony walks through the courtyard. We see  
some TOURISTS with '70s Instamatics. Locals are HEADING  
IN TO PRAY.

165 INT. HAGIA SOPHIA - UPPER LEVEL - LATER 165

We see the beautiful ceiling of the former cathedral.  
PULL BACK to reveal Tony stands looking out over the  
second level balcony. A MAN walks up behind him.

MAN (O.S.)  
'Iran is a hundred percent not in  
a pre-revolutionary state.' End  
quote.

Mendez looks up: a MAN, late 40s-50s with a British  
accent, is talking to him. PETER NICHOLLS, an Oxbridge  
type and a very good spy.

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED:

165

MENDEZ

Can't be right all the time.

NICHOLLS

Mr. Harkins.

MENDEZ

When'd you get back?

CUT TO: \*

165A INT. HAGIA SOPHIA - LOWER LEVEL - DAY

165A

FIND Mendez and Nicholls.

MENDEZ

Were you metal detecting? \*

NICHOLLS

None left to find. Shah escaped with a 747 so laden with gold bars it nearly didn't make it off the runway.

MENDEZ

But you kept busy.

NICHOLLS

Ferrying out the torture apparatus of our friend's fallen dictatorship.

Both these men do this work and share an unspoken understanding. They stop and look up at a MOSAIC on the wall. An ancient rendition of Christ, fashioned before the Muslims took the city and converted this church to a mosque. \*

Nicholls has WHITE AND YELLOW SLIPS OF PAPER with Farsi writing on them in hand. He gives them to Tony.

NICHOLLS

It's getting worse. Everybody who lands at Mehrabad now fills out one of these. \*

(a WHITE one)

That slip makes a copy to this one underneath.

(a YELLOW one)

Passenger keeps Yellow, Airport keeps White.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

165A CONTINUED:

165A

NICHOLLS (CONT'D)

When you leave the country, they match them up to verify you came into the country when you said you did.

MENDEZ

So if they look, they'll know six people didn't come in with me.

NICHOLLS

If they look.

Nicholls and Tony turn away from the mosaic, surreptitious work now done, and meander toward the middle of the great room.

166 INT. HAGIA SOPHIA - CONTINUOUS ACTION

166

Nicholls and Tony walk towards the inner courtyard.

NICHOLLS

When you land, you should go straight to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to kiss the ring. Get on record as having applied for a film permit. If they catch you later, at least they'll be confused while they're torturing you... Your biggest problem may be convincing the six of them to go with you. They're foreign service. They're willful.

Nicholls takes a picture.

MENDEZ

How's June?

NICHOLLS

Left.

MENDEZ

I'm sorry.

NICHOLLS

She picked out a ring and gave me a choice. She's a Chinese national. If I married her, I'd have to resign, so. You and Christine?

\*

MENDEZ

Good. Yeah.

(CONTINUED)



166 CONTINUED: 166

He said that without hesitation. Maybe here we realize that Mendez is a very good liar.

166A EXT./INT. PRODUCERS' BUILDING - NIGHT 166A \*

Lester is BOUNCING A RUBBER BALL. The PRODUCER from later in the movie walks by. \*

PRODUCER  
You're working late. \*

SIEGEL  
'Til the dawn's early light. \*

PRODUCER  
You got stamina, Lester. I wanna be you. \*

SIEGEL  
You wouldn't be me for long. I'm 80. \*

Producer walks away and Lester looks into the 'Argo' office as he squeezes the ball. \*

FROM INSIDE THE OFFICE -- In the foreground, we see what Lester is looking at: a phone. Stubbornly silent. \*

167 OMITTED 167 \*

168 OMITTED 168 \*

169 OMITTED 169 \*

170 INT. BRITISH AIRWAYS DC-10 - MORNING 170

Mendez sits in a window seat. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT speaks with a pleasant British accent.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)  
The Captain has informed us that we have entered Iranian airspace. Members of our cabin crew will be coming through to collect any remaining alcoholic beverages at this time.

171 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY 171

Mendez walks through the terminal of a crowded 1960s-era airport. Newly-hung portraits of the Ayatollah Khomeini watch over the duty-free shops.

SUPERIMPOSE: TEHRAN - JANUARY 26

The MOBS OF PEOPLE WITH BOXES OF THEIR WORLDLY BELONGINGS puts in high relief that Tony is going into a place that everyone else is desperately fleeing.

172 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT IMMIGRATION - DAY 172

Tony fills out a white form. It makes an impression on a YELLOW form.

Tony presents his passport to a REVOLUTIONARY GUARD IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL. Official looks at it, Tony hears the sound of a woman screaming in Farsi.

Three lanes away, at the outgoing immigration station, a Revolutionary Guard is dragging away the woman's HUSBAND.

The Immigration Official stamps Tony's passport -- takes the white form, gives Tony the yellow one -- and waves him through.

173 EXT. TEHRAN - DAY 173

Archive footage may be mixed with new footage. Normal city life mixed with men with automatic weapons. The contradictions of Tehran at this moment.

173A EXT. TEHRAN - DAY 173A

A Massive HELICOPTER SHOT OF TEHRAN. We TILT DOWN to see a traffic jam SPRAWLS AROUND THE AZADI MONUMENT. Bikes, mopeds, pedestrians, peddlers and old, patched together cars compete for space. No one gets anywhere.

174 INT. TAXI - DAY 174

Mendez sits in the back of a taxi in the Tehran traffic, some of the worst traffic in the world. We see the AZADI MONUMENT out his window.

ANGLES OUT HIS WINDOWS

The Ayatollah looks down from everywhere.

(CONTINUED)

174 CONTINUED:

174

A MAN IS HANGING FROM A CRANE. People mill underneath.

Women in chadors at Kentucky Fried Chicken.

An ARMED GANG in the back of pickup truck pulls up near his taxi.

We see PROPAGANDA painted on a wall/window.

175 INT. TAXI/EXT. MINISTRY - DAY

175

The taxi pulls up to a FORMAL, PINK BUILDING.

The Driver stops. They've arrived.

\*

176 INT. MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND ISLAMIC GUIDANCE - DAY

176

MEHDI BEHROUZ, 33, is the newly appointed Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Like many of the stars of the Revolution, he was educated in the U.S. Right now he's looking at the ARGO script.

BEHROUZ

This film crew is just yourself?

MENDEZ

Six more are joining me today.  
They're coming from Canada.

BEHROUZ

You'd like to film at the bazaar?

MENDEZ

The bazaar, maybe the palace.

BEHROUZ

(not particularly  
friendly)

I see. The exotic Orient. Snake  
charmers and flying carpets.

(a beat)

You come to us at a complicated  
time. Before the Revolution, 40  
percent of the movie theaters in  
Tehran were showing pornography.  
Our function is *purification* as  
well as promotion of the arts.

(takes script)

I'll review for the Minister.

177 EXT. CANADIAN EMBASSY - DAY

177

A TAXI pulls away.

Mendez, carrying his luggage, stands at a wrought iron gate with MAPLE LEAVES worked into the iron. Ken Taylor comes out of the building, opens the gate himself.

MENDEZ

Mr. Ambassador.

TAYLOR

Ken Taylor.

He shakes Tony's hand and they start to walk to Taylor's car.

TAYLOR

I was expecting more of a G-Man look.

MENDEZ

You're thinking of FBI, sir.

They get into the car.

178 INT. TAYLOR'S CAR - OUTSIDE EMBASSY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

178

Taylor gives Tony SIX BLANK CANADIAN PASSPORTS.

TAYLOR

These are blank, y'know. The stamps?

MENDEZ

I'll take care of that.

TAYLOR

How long?

MENDEZ

A day to prep them with their cover stories. Two if they need it.

TAYLOR

And you'll fly out with them?

Tony nods. A distant sound of a crowd outside.

(CONTINUED)

178 CONTINUED:

178

TAYLOR

There's something you should know.  
We think one of our housekeepers  
figured out who they are. We  
don't know if we can trust her.

Now the noise outside is louder. Taylor turns to the  
window. Tony joins him.

TAYLOR

So sooner is better.

They stand listening to the demonstration sounds, echoing  
over the rooftops of the city.

179 OMITTED

179 \*

179A INT. CIA - O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

179A

O'DONNELL

He got to the embassy.

O'Donnell closes the door. Pender, wearing an undone  
tuxedo, as if he's just been pulled from a formal event.  
They stay standing.

O'DONNELL

I can't tell you more than that  
'cause I don't know any more.

PENDER

(cutting to it)  
The Times and A.P. found out  
they're with the Canadians.  
Somebody in one of the families  
talked.

O'DONNELL

Mother of God.

PENDER

I just put Vance on a plane to  
take the editors to Le Cirque. He  
thinks he can get them to sit on  
it. For now.

(a beat)

Your guy better get them and get  
the hell out.

- 180 EXT. SHEMIRANAT (TEHRAN) - DAY 180  
 Ken Taylor drives up to a nice, but not huge, home in the expat/diplomatic neighborhood of Tehran. Automatic gates open.
- 181 EXT./INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAY 181  
 Taylor leads Mendez inside. Pat Taylor waits for them in the hall. Takes Tony's hand.
- 182 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE (TEHRAN) - DAY 182 \*  
 They enter the LIVING ROOM... and here are the SIX HOUSEGUESTS. They're looking at Mendez like kids waiting to be told the lesson plan.
- 183 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 183

Each Houseguest has a copy of the ARGO script.

BOB ANDERS

It's theater of the absurd.

MARK LIJEK

What are the chances?

MENDEZ

The chances are good.

MARK LIJEK

What's the number value of 'good'?  
 30 percent chance of success? 80  
 percent?

CORA LIJEK

We just --

BOB ANDERS

What was the objection to picking  
 normal cover identities?

MENDEZ

There are no Canadians in the  
 country for normal reasons.

KATHY STAFFORD

They'll sniff us out  
 regardless.

MARK LIJEK

The Swedish consul said  
 they accused him of being  
 an American at the airport  
 and held him for an hour.

(CONTINUED)

BOB ANDERS

We can't stand up to that. We don't know what the hell movie people do.

MENDEZ

That's why I'm here. I'll be with you. This is what I do.

CORA LIJEK

Have you gotten people out this way before?

MENDEZ

This would be a first.

CUT TO:

184 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

184

THE HOUSEGUESTS --

minus Joe and Kathy Stafford, go into the living room. Mendez stays in his seat; Joe approaches him.

JOE STAFFORD

Do you know that every day...

KATHY STAFFORD

... Joe, don't.

JOE STAFFORD

... every day they catch another friend of the shah at the airport. Kangaroo trials then firing squads. Just for having American names in their phone books.

He puts the Iranian newspaper in front of Mendez.

JOE STAFFORD

You've been here an hour and you're asking us to trust you with our lives, Mr. --

MENDEZ

Harkins.

JOE STAFFORD

Is that your real name?

A beat.

MENDEZ

No.

(CONTINUED)

184 CONTINUED:

184

Joe Stafford nods, as if this has proven a point. He goes back into the living room, followed by Kathy.

ANGLE ON THE PHOTOGRAPH

in the *Tehran Times*. A MAN IN A SUIT at Mehrabad Airport. Terrified, being led out at gunpoint.

185 EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - VERANDA - NIGHT

185

Mendez comes out and lights a cigarette. Ken Taylor is already there.

TAYLOR

We've got orders to close the embassy and go back. There's nowhere for them to stay.

186 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

186

JOE STAFFORD

I'm serious, too. This is what?

BOB ANDERS

Don't do this, Joe...

JOE STAFFORD

... the part where we say, 'That's so crazy it just might work'? C'mon...

BOB ANDERS

I saw it in Burma. They get people out. They know how.

JOE STAFFORD

Snitches in banana republics. They get them over the border after the coup...

BOB ANDERS

That's your opinion.

JOE STAFFORD

... pay the guards at the crossing a hundred bucks to look the other way...

MARK LIJEK

His opinion got us out of the embassy in the first place.



187 EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - VERANDA - NIGHT 187

MENDEZ

If we go, you need to leave  
immediately. There's a  
danger --

\*  
\*

TAYLOR

Pat and I discussed it. If they  
catch you at the airport, they  
come here and we go on trial for  
harboring the enemy. It's a risk  
we took.

(after a moment)  
Can you pull this off?

MENDEZ

I don't know.

188 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 188

JOE STAFFORD

-- even if they do. They find us  
here, we're not lying, we're just  
hiding. We go out there with fake  
passports, we're spies, period,  
execution.

CORA LIJEK

So how long do we stay? A month?  
A year?

JOE STAFFORD

That man out there, he's got bad  
cards, he's gonna lose. If he  
loses, it's our lives.

KATHY STAFFORD

(after a beat)  
And his life too.

\*

Another beat. ANGLES ON the Houseguests.

\*

CUT TO:

\*

189 OMITTED 189 \*

189A INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - 189A \*  
NIGHT

MENDEZ

Your cover identities were created  
specifically for each one of you.

\*  
\*  
\*

Mendez, now dressed to leave, is handing each Houseguest  
an envelope.

MENDEZ

What I need you to do is memorize  
everything inside. Who you are,  
what you are, where you've been.

Cora Lijek looks at a document from inside her envelope.  
A union card for the Canadian Writers Guild with her  
picture on it.

MENDEZ

When we're done, you'll know these  
so well that you'll dream as these  
people.

Mendez nods at them, and goes. The Houseguests look at  
what's inside their envelopes -- all except Joe Stafford,  
whose envelope remains sealed.

190 INT. SHERATON HOTEL - NIGHT 190

A TELEFAX MACHINE spells out a message, letter by letter:  
"MR KEVIN HARKINS - CARE OF HOTEL SHERATON."

191 OMITTED 191

192 INT. SHERATON ROOM - NIGHT 192

Tony is PREPPING the CANADIAN PASSPORTS -- expertly  
copying Farsi stamps with a small sharpened stick. A  
KNOCK on the door. Tony hides the passports. Answers  
the door.

BELLHOP

Sir, a telex arrived for you.

The BELLHOP hands Tony a piece of paper. He reads it.

CUT TO:

193 INT. SHERATON ROOM - NIGHT 193

Mendez takes a small 1978 model radio out of his suitcase. He unscrews the casing and from inside takes out what looks like a 6-inch transistor board for the radio.

On either side of the board: telephone jacks.

He detaches the cords from the hotel phone and plugs them into the jacks on the transistor board. It's a phone scrambler.

MENDEZ (V.O.)

'The Minister of Culture and Guidance has approved your location scout.'

194 INT. SHERATON ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER 194

Mendez, on the phone --

MENDEZ

(reading the telefax)

'He will send a representative to meet you and your crew at the Khayyam entrance to the Grand Bazaar tomorrow at 3 PM.'

INTERCUT WITH:

195 INT. O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT 195

O'Donnell on the phone.

O'DONNELL

They called your bluff.

MENDEZ

Or maybe they're cooperating.

O'DONNELL

N.E. says absolutely not. Seven Americans walking the bazaar, you're asking for a riot, it's the hive --

MENDEZ

Seven Canadians, Jack.

O'DONNELL

Never give them multiple shots at a cover. Are they even ready?

(CONTINUED)

195 CONTINUED:

195

MENDEZ

They're getting there.

O'DONNELL

Terrific. There's no prize for  
'Most Improved.'

MENDEZ

(escalating)

I don't have a choice. We say no,  
they come to the residence and  
pull everyone out at gunpoint.  
How do you think the covers hold  
up with their fingernails pulled  
out?

196 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

196

Mark Lijek is studying pages from the envelope Tony gave him. Joe Stafford is sitting near him, having a drink, watching Iranian State Television footage of the Ayatollah. Joe Stafford translates out loud.

JOE STAFFORD

'We are a nation of 35 million  
and... many of these people are  
looking forward to martyrdom.'

Kathy Stafford looks into the room. Joe stops talking, looks up.

JOE STAFFORD

(to Kathy)

Five minutes?

He smiles at her. Kathy, who looks like she hasn't been sleeping, nods and leaves. Joe takes a drink. After a moment --

JOE STAFFORD

She pleaded with me.

Mark, looking to Joe. This is new.

JOE STAFFORD

When it started in the streets  
nine months ago. She begged for  
us to leave. She packed our bags.  
I said, 'A little longer.' And  
what I was thinking was, 'This is  
a good thing for me. Stay. Show  
Newsom you've got the balls. Grab  
for the ring.'

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

- 196 CONTINUED: 196
- JOE STAFFORD (CONT'D)  
(a beat)  
I think we're gonna die here.
- 197 INT. KOMITEH HEADQUARTERS (AMIR ABAD DISTRICT) - DAY 197
- The feeling here is dangerous. Young men carrying automatic weapons casually.
- Behrouz stands next to ALI KHALKALI, 30s, a Revolutionary Committee security official. There are RECONSTRUCTED EMBASSY PICTURES ON THE WALL.
- We see the FAMOUS PICTURES OF THE HOSTAGES BEING MARCHED DOWN THE STEPS.
- 197A INT. KOMITEH HEADQUARTERS STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION 197A
- A Kafka-esque stairway. We see a YOUNG KOMITEH call up from the bottom and head up the stairs.
- JUMP CUT TO: one flight to go.
- Now on the level WITH CAMERA, we carry him INTO the office as he hands off the ARGO script and STUDIO SIX BUSINESS CARD. Khalkali has some words in Farsi for the young man.
- 198 EXT. SHERATON BALCONY - MORNING 198
- Tony looks at one of the Argo storyboards -- one depicting an EXOTIC SPICE MARKET, a BAZAAR -- in the light.
- CORA LIJEK (V.O.)  
This isn't what we agreed to. \*
- 199 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - KEN'S OFFICE - MORNING 199
- The Houseguests are gathered in the office. Cora hands the telefax to Bob Anders. Joe Stafford, looking on.
- CORA LIJEK  
You said 'a day to learn your covers then straight to the airport.' You said that.
- BOB ANDERS  
They suspect something?

(CONTINUED)

MENDEZ

What I know is we need to act like a movie crew. We go to the bazaar today, we fly out tomorrow.

Silent assent among the group. Then Joe Stafford, sitting with his wife, speaks up --

JOE STAFFORD

We won't do it.

MARK LIJEK

He told them there were six of us. They're expecting six.

\*

JOE STAFFORD

(to Mendez)

You are about to show the only card we're holding. Which is that they don't know we're here.

MENDEZ

I'm asking you to trust me.

JOE STAFFORD

I *don't* trust you.

BOB ANDERS

(fed up, to Joe)

What's the alternative? This is the ball game, Joe. What world are you living in?

JOE STAFFORD

The one where they're hanging people from construction cranes, Bob.

Joe takes Kathy's hand and goes, leaving Mendez with the others. After a moment --

MARK LIJEK

(to Mendez)

So we'll see you at two?

A KOMITEH BOSS inspects the work of the CARPET WEAVER KIDS -- whose numbers have grown into the HUNDREDS -- as they labor quietly.

Some HEADSHOTS are in various stages of repair.

200 CONTINUED:

200

Dozens of documents are now complete, sitting on the floor in rows. Some pages from the EMBASSY MUG BOOK are now re-assembled. The boss picks one of the pages up: meticulously worked so that text and photos are now intact.

201 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAY

201

PAT TAYLOR

This one.

She gives Bob Anders a Canadian maple leaf lapel pin, which he affixes to his shirt. Cora Lijek paints lighter hair dye onto her hair. The Houseguests are making subtle efforts to disguise themselves.

CORA LIJEK

(at a mirror, quoting instructions)

So don't be recognizable, but look exactly like your passport picture.

MARK LIJEK

Not *that* picture. You won't want to scare them.

A nervous smile. Trying to deal with anxiety.

Joe and Kathy Stafford look to each other. Sitting reading newspapers while the other Houseguests prep for the scout. The PHONE starts ringing.

PAT TAYLOR

(answering the phone)

Hello?

A cloud comes over Pat as she listens.

PAT TAYLOR

No, there's no one like that here.

She hangs up the phone fast, as if it were hot to the touch.

BOB ANDERS

Who was it?

\*

Pat shakes her head.

ON JOE STAFFORD

listening. Kathy takes his hand.

(CONTINUED)

201 CONTINUED: 201

KATHY STAFFORD

(to Joe)  
Somebody knows.

202 INT. SHERATON ROOM - DAY 202

Tony getting dressed. Thinking.

He gets up and leaves, and we start to hear the sound of a man talking fast in Farsi.

203 EXT. CAR RENTAL - DAY 203

It's a CAR RENTAL MAN, 60s, speaking. Tony is looking at a MINIVAN on a lot of beaten-up rental cars.

MENDEZ

This one, how much? One day, how much?

204 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAY 204

Four of the Houseguests are waiting on the couch, dressed in their best approximation of the clothes of a movie scout crew. Cora has the maple leaf flag pin on her shirt.

They turn when they see Tony come in the door.

Tony as he steps down into the living room, down the hall -- \*  
\*

205 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY 205 \*

... to find Joe Stafford sitting at the table. They are badly shaken.

MENDEZ

I promise you that if you will play along today, I will get you out tomorrow.

JOE STAFFORD

I wish I could believe you, Mr. Harkins.

MENDEZ

My name is Tony Mendez. \*

Mendez goes back out to the minivan. STAY WITH Joe and Kathy.



206 INT. MINIVAN - DAY

206

Mendez, in the driver's seat, looks at the house, then at his watch. He starts up the van, filled with four of the Houseguests.

Then he looks in the rearview and sees one of the back doors open. Joe and Kathy Stafford board.

207 EXT. TEHRAN - DAY

207

Tony drives the minivan through streets of Tehran. The Houseguests sit in silence, looking out the windows. There is a vehement DEMONSTRATION going on -- stars-and-stripes burning in Molavi Square -- and it's taking place right in their way.

They stop at the demonstration, then realize people aren't passing by as much as celebrating in the street. Tony is forced to nose his way through the crowd -- chanting and yelling -- some SLAPPING THE WINDOWS.

They finally get through and pull away. With the demonstration receding behind them, Tony tries to regain their focus.

MENDEZ

Tell me who you are.

This recalls attention from the windows.

LEE SCHATZ

Mike McEwan, cameraman.

BOB ANDERS

Robert Baker, director.

MARK LIJEK

Timothy Harris, location manager.

CORA LIJEK

Mary Ann Boyd, screenwriter.

KATHY STAFFORD

Rachel Dewart, production designer.

Kathy looks at her husband.

JOE STAFFORD

Sean Bissett, associate producer.

MENDEZ

Let's make a movie.

208 EXT. STREET NEAR THE BAZAAR - DAY

208

The minivan double-parks on Musavi Street. Taxis, men loading and unloading rolled-up carpets onto pickup trucks, chaos.

A YOUNG MAN IN SUIT WITH NO TIE waits. This is REZA, mid-20s, a low-level administrator in the Ministry of Guidance.

Mendez gets out and they speak and shake hands. The image FREEZES. In a BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH.

They exchange pleasantries and Reza leads them down a narrow street toward the bazaar.

209 EXT./INT. TEHRAN BAZAAR - DAY

209

Reza is leading Mendez and the group of Houseguests through the Tehran Bazaar. A word about the place: the world's largest bazaar. 10 kilometers of narrow alleys. Chinese-made Swiss watches, banks, mosques, butchers, fabric stores, gold stands. Boys with hand-trucks loaded down with piles of fabric cut through the crowd. Older Islamic architecture elbows up against neon signs and rickety wooden stands with second-story balconies like Bourbon Street.

Bob Anders walks toward the front.

REZA

You are the director?

BOB ANDERS

Yes.

REZA

(pleasant)

Is this film a foreign bride film?

BOB ANDERS

I'm sorry?

REZA

A film where a foreign bride is brought to Iran, but she doesn't understand the language and customs and there are misunderstandings and laughs.

BOB ANDERS

No.

(CONTINUED)

REZA  
 (not happy with that)  
 Mmmm.

Mendez walking toward the back of the group. Lee, the cameraman, is looking through a viewfinder down the alley of the bazaar.

MENDEZ  
 (quiet)  
 Mike?

LEE SCHATZ  
 (not looking up)  
 Yeh.

MENDEZ  
 If I said you were looking through the wrong end of that viewfinder, would I be right?

Lee turns the viewfinder around and looks through it again.

LEE SCHATZ  
 Yep.

\*  
 \*

ANGLE

Mendez talking to Lee from a distance. A zoom, a closer snapshot of LEE. Then of CORA LIJEK, who walks through the bazaar with an open ARGO SCRIPT in her hand.

The Revolutionary Guard photographer is taking pictures of each of the Houseguests, picking their portraits off one by one like a sniper.

210 EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE (TEHRAN) - DAY

210

Two sedans turn onto the property and head up the driveway.

Ali Khalkali, the revolutionary official, gets out of one of the cars. He's joined by a couple other OFFICIALS and by two armed REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS.

Sahar is moving through the garden, she sees the men approach. She goes to greet them at the gate.

SAHAR  
 (Farsi, from behind the gate)  
 Yes?

211 OMITTED 211

212 INT. TEHRAN BAZAAR - DAY 212

Reza leads Mendez and the Houseguests deeper into this city within a city; fundamentalist ground zero. BAZAARIS stand at their shop doors; puzzled; unfriendly; watching the visitors.

Kathy Stafford, the production designer on the scout, takes a Polaroid of a window adorned in gold. The SHOPKEEPER, a 70-ish bazaari, sees her do so.

He hurries out of his store, speaking in rapid-fire Farsi at her. The Houseguests stop. Reza speaks to the Shopkeeper.

REZA

(to Kathy)

He wants the photograph you took.

MENDEZ

She's the production designer.  
Her job is to take photographs.

SHOPKEEPER getting more and more heated in Farsi.

REZA

He says he did not give you  
permission to take a photograph of  
his store.

Other BAZAARIS and SHOPPERS are starting to gather. Kathy holds out the Polaroid toward the Shopkeeper.

KATHY STAFFORD

He can have the photograph. Tell  
him --

The Shopkeeper knocks the Polaroid out of her hand.

213 INT./EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - ENTRANCE - DAY 213

KHALKALI

(Farsi)

When did they arrive? \*

SAHAR

(Farsi)

I'm sorry?

(CONTINUED)

213 CONTINUED:

213

KHALKALI

(Farsi)

The guests of the ambassador. How long have they been in this house?

214 INT. TEHRAN BAZAAR - DAY

214

People are now starting to surround Mendez and Reza and the Houseguests. Bazaaris more and more heated. Women in chadors are screaming and finger-pointing.

ANGRY MAN

(in English)

America NO!... NO!

Then he speaks in Farsi and makes shooting gestures with his hand.

LEE SCHATZ

(quiet, to Mendez)

He's saying the Shah killed his son with an American gun.

Cauldron heating up and --

215 INT./EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - ENTRANCE - DAY

215

ON Sahar -- her face impassive -- and then --

SAHAR

(Farsi)

Two days. They arrived two days ago.

Khalkali looks to the other Officials.

216 INT. TEHRAN BAZAAR - ANGLE ON MORE AND MORE BAZAARIS - DAY

216

A CROWD starts to gather around the group.

ON KATHY

Her claustrophobia as the crowd closes in -- an ANGRY BAZAARI WOMAN sticks her finger in Kathy's face --

CORA LIJEK

(to one of the women)

Canada... Ca-na-da...

(CONTINUED)

216 CONTINUED:

216

She's showing a Canadian flag, Bob Anders' lapel button --

LEE SCHATZ

(quiet; to Mendez)

He says we're the CIA taking  
photographs to plan the bombing of  
the city.

217 INT./EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - ENTRANCE - DAY

217

Khalkali eyes Sahar, gauging her. She hides her fear well.

KHALKALI

(Farsi)

Sister, those who are with him,  
Rasool of Allah, we are tender  
among ourselves.

(beat)

But stern against the kuffar.

SAHAR

As god wills it.

KHALKALI

(quoting Mossadegh)

But those who sit silently have  
sinned.

Does he know? Does he not know? Is he trying to trick her? His opacity makes it impossible to know. He holds his look to her -- and she holds hers.

218 INT. TEHRAN BAZAAR - DAY

218

Reza indicates an exit to the street.

\*

219 INT./EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - ENTRANCE - DAY

219

-- and Sahar, so dignified and stony she is almost  
shaming these men --

SAHAR

Everyone in this house is a friend  
of Iran.

Khalkali makes his decision. He wordlessly turns to go.

220 INT. TEHRAN BAZAAR - DAY 220

The CROWD heckles the Houseguests as they walk toward the exit.

221 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - FOYER - DAY 221

Sahar calmly closes the door.

After she does, she lets the facade go. All of a sudden scared. Maybe she tears up. Either way, it's clear she knows the stakes of the game she is playing.

222 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - AFTERNOON 222

The aftermath. The Houseguests, badly shaken, come inside. Each dealing with shock and adrenaline.

Ken Taylor comes up next to Mendez and, for once, Taylor's ambassadorial calm is breaking.

TAYLOR

They drew you out there to take  
your picture.

\*

MENDEZ

Nobody broke.

\*

At the door to the residence, Tony can see Pat Taylor, holding Sahar's hand, both looking spooked as the Houseguests come inside.

TAYLOR

(sobered now)  
And tomorrow?

\*

A beat on Mendez, who stamps out his cigarette and follows.

MENDEZ

Tomorrow they'll be ready.

\*

\*

We start to hear the sound of the evening's call to prayer, amplified over a megaphone, in the distance. Then --

223-224 OMITTED

223-224

224A MONTAGE - EXT. TEHRAN - DUSK

224A

The call to prayer echoing as night falls in Tehran. In an alley where cloaked women hurry past posters of Khomeini. On a street where a five-year-old boy, in the care of his eight-year-old brother, watches a pickup truck of armed komiteh speed past.

224B INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

224B

Mendez holds a passport and some papers in front of Bob Anders' face. It feels late. The Houseguests are tired, sweating, sitting around a dining room. Mendez, sleeves rolled up, drilling them. The ARGO STORYBOARDS are scattered around the room.

MENDEZ

Where was your passport issued?

Bob Anders doesn't know. ANGLES ON the Houseguests.

ANDERS

Vancouver.

MENDEZ

Where were you born?

BOB ANDERS

Toronto.

MENDEZ

Toronno like piranha. Canadians don't pronounce the T.

LEE SCHATZ

Some border guard's gonna know that?

MENDEZ

If you're held for questioning, they'll bring in somebody who knows that.

MENDEZ

(to Cora Lijek)  
Last three Canadian prime ministers.

CORA LIJEK

(an A student)  
Trudeau, Pearson, Diefenbaker.

(CONTINUED)



MENDEZ

Good.  
(to Joe Stafford)  
Your job on the film.

JOE STAFFORD

Producer.

MENDEZ

Associate Producer. What's the  
name of the last film you worked  
on?

JOE STAFFORD

Uh... *High and Dry*.

MENDEZ

Who paid for the movie?

JOE STAFFORD

C.F.D.C.

MENDEZ

What's your middle name?

Joe Stafford is silent. He looks down to consult the paper in front of him, but before he can, Mendez pulls the paper.

MENDEZ

He's an American spy. Shoot him.

A beat on Stafford, frustrated --

MENDEZ

They'll try to break you by  
getting you agitated. You need to  
know your résumé so well that you  
don't flinch.

JOE STAFFORD

(nearly defeated,  
looking away)  
You think your little story will  
matter when there's guns to our  
heads?

MENDEZ

My story's the only thing between  
you and the gun to your head.

A beat. Mendez puts the résumé back in front of Stafford. Kathy looks at her husband: he just isn't good at this.

(CONTINUED)

224B CONTINUED: (2)

224B

MENDEZ

Let's go again.

224C INT. CIA - THE PIT - AFTERNOON

224C

O'Donnell, walking toward his office. It's the first time today Malinov has seen him.

MALINOV

(good news)

They made it through the location scout.

O'Donnell ignores him. He goes straight to his office. Looking like he's seen a ghost.

224D EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - VERANDA - NIGHT

224D

Mendez, finishing a cigarette outside. We might hear the distant sound of a phone ringing.

Ken Taylor emerges. Waits a beat.

TAYLOR

Kevin.

224E INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - KEN TAYLOR'S OFFICE - CROSS-CUTTING - NIGHT

224E

Mendez picks up the complicated-looking satellite phone in Ken Taylor's home office. As soon as he does --

O'DONNELL

Go to black on green.

Jack's calling him here, so he knows something's wrong.

MENDEZ

What is it?

O'DONNELL

Go to black on green.

Mendez turns knobs on the satellite phone.

224F INT. O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - CROSS-CUTTING - AFTERNOON

224F

We see Jack is on a GREEN PHONE.

(CONTINUED)

O'DONNELL

It all just changed. They called the game. You've got to come back.

ON Mendez, not believing what he's hearing.

O'DONNELL

(quiet, fast, clear)

Joint Chiefs are planning a military rescue of the hostages in a month. Delta Force started training to storm the grounds. So if the six of them get brought down there, they won't be held for long.

MENDEZ

I never would have exposed them if I wasn't authorized to take them out.

O'DONNELL

It's over, Tony.

MENDEZ

They will be taken. Probably not ALIVE --

O'DONNELL

LISTEN TO ME. The thinking's changed. Six Americans get pulled out of a Canadian diplomat's house and executed, it's another world outrage. Six Americans get caught *playing movie make-believe with the CIA at the airport* and executed, it's a national embarrassment. They're calling the operation.

MENDEZ

We're responsible for those people.

O'DONNELL

(genuinely sad)

What we are is required to follow orders. I'm sorry.

Mendez hangs up. O'Donnell sits listening to the dial tone for a moment, then puts the phone on the receiver.

(CONTINUED)

224F CONTINUED: (2)

224F

Then, very suddenly, he looks at an old coffee cup near him and backhands it off his desk.

TIME CUT TO:

224G INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - KEN TAYLOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

224G

Maybe only a minute, maybe ten or more have passed. Mendez sits at Taylor's desk, numb. Cora Lijek knocks but doesn't get a response. She tentatively opens the door and sticks her head inside.

CORALIJEK

We're ready to try again.

MENDEZ

(after a beat)

I think the most important thing you can do to be ready for tomorrow is rest.

\*

TIME CUT TO:

225 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

225

Now the mood among the Houseguests is lighter. Bob Anders, a handful of liquor bottles in his arms, puts them down on a table. Music plays on a record player.

BOB ANDERS

Scorched earth policy tonight. Nothing gets left.

Taylor comes in, drink in hand, thoughts heavy, looks at Tony.

MENDEZ

So you know.

\*

TAYLOR

(nods)

ExtAff wants you to burn the passports before you leave.

Mendez looks at the Houseguests, setting the table.

TAYLOR

If we tell them, they'll panic. It's better if you just don't show.

(a beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

- 225 CONTINUED: 225
- TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
It was always a fucked mission.  
You came closer than anybody else.
- Kathy and Cora are cracking each other up.
- No one sees Mendez take a bottle of Macallan from the table and put it in his bag.
- 226 INT. CAR - NIGHT 226
- Mendez drives through nighttime Tehran, back to the hotel.
- There is a dangling TOTEM from the rearview mirror. It reflects light.
- He passes a VAN ON FIRE.
- 227 OMITTED 227
- 228 INT. SHERATON ROOM - NIGHT 228
- Mendez takes the bottle of Macallan from his bag. He takes a drink, then drinks more. \*
- 229 OMITTED 229 \*
- 230 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY 230
- Chambers, listening on a phone, shakes his head at Siegel. He hangs up.
- CHAMBERS  
It's off. They want us to pack up  
the office.
- A beat on Lester. He's devastated but he's not showing it. \*
- SIEGEL  
They can wait. Let's go get a  
drink. \*
- 231 EXT. TEHRAN - DAWN 231
- The city waking up.

232 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAWN 232

The Houseguests, getting dressed. Suiting up for the airport.

Ken Taylor watches in the hall.

233 INT. SHERATON ROOM - DAWN 233

Mendez -- who looks like he hasn't slept -- sits at a table, looking out the window.

234 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAWN 234

Lee Schatz puts his Infant of Prague holy card into an Argo script. Packs the script.

Cora Lijek is sitting next to her husband.

Kathy Stafford looks at the clock.

KATHY STAFFORD  
(to Joe Stafford)  
He's late.

235 EXT. SHERATON BALCONY - DAWN 235

Tony comes out to the balcony with a hotel ice bucket in one hand and the Canadian passports in the other. He puts the passports in the bucket, LIGHTS A MATCH.

He looks down at the match, at the passports. The first stirring of the morning calls-to-prayer echo in the distance.

HOLD for a long beat ON Tony. Thinking.

Then, HE BLOWS OUT THE MATCH.

236 INT. O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT 236

O'Donnell is packing up for the night. Paper towels sit on top of the coffee spill on his rug.

His phone rings. He picks up.

O'DONNELL  
Yeah.

237 INT. SHERATON ROOM - DAWN 237

MENDEZ

Somebody is responsible for things  
when things happen, Jack. I am  
responsible.

(a beat)

I'm taking them through.

And before Jack can answer, Tony hangs up. Stands. A  
duffel bag over his shoulder, Tony turns out the light in  
the hotel room. Goes.

238 INT. CIA (LANGLEY) - O'DONNELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT 238

O'Donnell, thinking. Looking at the phone. Then, with a  
sudden decision, he gets up.

Rushing out of his office, into --

239 INT. CIA - THE PIT - NIGHT 239

-- where he catches ALAN SOSA, 50s, head of the  
Directorate of Support -- the CIA's chief financial  
officer -- leaving for the night.

O'DONNELL

We need to confirm those seven  
tickets out of Tehran on  
Swissair --

SOSA

N.E. shut that down.

O'DONNELL

I'm saying it's back on!

SOSA

I can't do it. It's backstopped  
pending Executive Branch GO.

O'DONNELL

What the fuck does that mean?

SOSA

Carter's got to say yes for us to  
get the tickets.

240 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAWN 240

Pat Taylor comes to answer an insistent knocking on her  
front door. She opens it.

(CONTINUED)

240 CONTINUED: 240

She's shocked to see him. Ken Taylor now appears behind Pat. In the hall behind him: The Houseguests are assembled, waiting to go. They look their parts -- or, much more so than they did on the scout. Cora Lijek has darker hair. The Staffords look on, fully dressed.

\*

241 INT. OUTSIDE ENGELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT 241

O'DONNELL

Where's Engell?

SECRETARY

He's in a meeting.

O'DONNELL

Pull him out.

(as she hesitates)

PULL HIM OUT!

242 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - DAWN 242

Pat Taylor is embracing the Houseguests, saying goodbye.

PAT TAYLOR

Sahar's on a bus.

MENDEZ

Good. And you two leave right now.

Ken Taylor nods. Mendez shakes his hand.

243 INT./EXT. MINIVAN - DAWN 243

Mendez gets into the driver's seat. Lee Schatz on the passenger side.

We see Ken's black embassy sedan waiting, driven by a PAKISTANI DRIVER.

Mendez pulls away.

243A INT. KEN'S OFFICE - LATER 243A

Ken Taylor watches a SGT. CLAUDE GAUTHIER, 30s, Canadian military policeman, use a sledgehammer to SMASH EVERYTHING IN THE OFFICE TO PIECES.

Pat Taylor comes to the door. She's holding a suitcase.

(CONTINUED)



243A CONTINUED:

243A

TAYLOR  
 (to Gauthier, as he  
 leaves)  
 Get to your flight.

\*

244 INT. OUTSIDE ENGELL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

244

ENGELL  
 N.E. said NO, this is not a long-  
 leasher...

O'DONNELL  
 ... watching a show behind  
 a one-way whorehouse  
 mirror...

ENGELL  
 ... and it never has been,  
 YOU don't decide if it  
 goes...

O'DONNELL  
 It is going.

ENGELL  
 You're goddamn close...

O'DONNELL  
 Am I goddamn close?

ENGELL  
 You're goddamn close to the line  
 with me.

O'DONNELL  
 (interrupting)  
 I'm not leaving him at the airport  
 with six people and his dick in  
his hand. Tell the Director to  
 call the White House. DO YOUR  
 FUCKING JOB.

Engell just stares O'Donnell down.

245 INT./EXT. MINIVAN - MORNING

245

The van speeds down the hills of the Shemiran district.

MENDEZ (V.O.)  
 The first checkpoint is just to  
 look at your passport.

246 FLASHBACK - INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

246

Mendez is sitting in the living room instructing the  
 Houseguests.

(CONTINUED)

246 CONTINUED:

246

MENDEZ

Your passports came straight from the Canadians, so you're gonna be fine.

247 INT. CIA (LANGLEY) - THE PIT - NIGHT (A MOMENT LATER)  
(PRESENT)

247

O'Donnell, charging in --

O'DONNELL

Where's the Director?

MALINOV

He's on the plane.

O'DONNELL

Find White House Chief of Staff.

MALINOV

How would I find him?

O'DONNELL

We're a fucking SPY AGENCY! FIND HIM!

248 FLASHBACK - INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

248

MENDEZ

The second checkpoint --

249 INT. CIA - THE PIT - NIGHT (PRESENT)

249

MALINOV

Jordan's in the West Wing. He's not taking calls.

A beat on O'Donnell.

O'DONNELL

Where are his kids?

LAMONT

WHAT?

O'DONNELL

Where do his kids go to school?

250 FLASHBACK - INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

250

He gives out yellow immigration forms to the Houseguests.

(CONTINUED)

250 CONTINUED:

250

MENDEZ

The second is immigration. You'll hand them these. They say you landed two days ago.

251 INT. MINIVAN - MORNING (PRESENT)

251

Cora Lijek fingers her yellow immigration form in one hand, holds Mark's hand with the other.

MENDEZ (V.O.)

These guys are bureaucrats left over from the shah. They can't be bothered to second-guess you.

252 INT. CIA - THE PIT - NIGHT

252

Malinov slams a phone down.

MALINOV

Pace Academy in Buckhead, Georgia!

O'Donnell dials a number.

O'DONNELL

Yes, it's Mr. Murphy calling from Pace Academy for Mr. Jordan... I'm afraid it IS an emergency...

253 INT. WHITE HOUSE OPERATOR ROOM - NIGHT

253

WHITE HOUSE OPERATOR

Hold just a moment.

She plugs a wire into an old-fashioned Ma Bell switchboard.

MENDEZ (V.O.)

Third checkpoint is the trap.

254 INT. MINIVAN - MORNING

254

The van pulls up to the airport. We see THROGS of people trying to get in -- so they can get out.

Tony pulls the car to a semi-open place and tries not to run anyone over.



257 CONTINUED:

257

KHALKALI, the fiery guy who came to the residence, along with two YOUNG KOMITEH compare (one who delivered the pictures): on one side, copies of re-assembled diplomatic photographs of Americans from the embassy -- like the ones of the Houseguests we saw early in the film -- and, on the other side, the candid photographs from the bazaar.

258 INT. CIA - THE PIT - NIGHT

258

LAMONT

Telex on Flash.

The telex begins to print, line by line...

EYES ONLY -- OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES  
-- HOLLYWOOD OPTION APPROVED -- GOOD LUCK. (\*Carter  
White House telex, 1/29/1980.)

O'DONNELL

Copy D.S.! Confirm the tickets!  
GO!

259 INT. SWISSAIR COUNTER (MEHRABAD) - MORNING

259

Mendez's and the Houseguests' passports sit on the counter.

SWISSAIR REP

I'm sorry, sir. I don't have  
those reservations...

SWISSAIR REP looks at some green text on her screen, hits another button.

SWISSAIR REP

My apologies. They just came  
through.

She hits another button and tickets start to print.

260 INT. CIA - THE PIT - NIGHT

260

MALINOV

(to O'Donnell)

Swissair says they've picked up  
the tickets.

O'DONNELL

Get the L.A. office -- tell them  
to be ready in case they call.

(CONTINUED)

260 CONTINUED:

260

MALINOV

We told them to shut that down!

He RUNS toward a phone --

261 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - FIRST CHECKPOINT - MORNING

261

The PASSPORT OFFICIAL is looking at the Canadian passports of the six and waving them through. Mendez has already passed. Everyone except Kathy Stafford.

The Passport Official looks at Kathy, who is doing her best to look friendly and casual. Then he looks at Kathy's passport, in which she looks stern and angry.

Kathy Stafford smoothes down her hair, frowns like she does in the passport photo. The Passport Official half smiles and waves her through. They've all cleared the first checkpoint.

\*

262 INT. KOMITEH HQ - MORNING

262

Khalkali comes upon a diplomatic photograph of a man with glasses.

He starts to leaf through the photographs from the bazaar.

QUICK CUT TO:

263 EXT. BAZAAR - POV OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARD PHOTOGRAPHER  
- DAY

263

Mark Lijek being photographed at the bazaar the previous day.

QUICK CUT BACK TO:

264 INT. KOMITEH HQ - MORNING

264

KHALKALI --

looks at the black and white still of Mark Lijek, compares it to his diplomatic picture, the first portrait we saw of Mark toward the beginning of the film. MATCH.

Khalkali stands up. SHOUTS in Farsi to another Komiteh --

265

INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - SECOND CHECKPOINT - MORNING

265

Bob Anders stands in front of a rough-voiced IMMIGRATION OFFICER. He's holding Bob Anders' YELLOW IMMIGRATION FORM and leafing through a file of hundreds of WHITE IMMIGRATION FORMS, the duplicates. Without success.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER #2

(in Farsi; to Officer  
#1, re: his own  
white pile)

Nothing.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

(to Bob Anders)

When did you say you arrived in  
Iran?

BOB ANDERS

Two days ago.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

What was the purpose of your  
visit?

BOB ANDERS

We were looking at locations to  
make a film. I'm the director.

Immigration Officer pauses and looks up. Looks at the six other faces. He looks every bit as confrontational as Tony acted in rehearsal.

BOB ANDERS

(very calm)

We have a letter from the Minister  
of Culture ...

\*

The Immigration Officer gestures for the letter. Bob takes the letter inviting them on their location scout out of a folder. Tony, barely perceptibly, nods.

266

INT. KOMITEH HQ - MORNING

266

Khalkali is now speaking with MORADI, an older Komiteh official. They speak Farsi and it's untranslated, but we get it. He is showing the photograph of Mark Lijek from the bazaar and comparing it to the U.S. diplomatic photograph.

Moradi picks up the phone as Khalkali heads out.

267 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - SECOND CHECKPOINT - MORNING 267

Immigration Officer is conferring with Immigration Officer #2 as they look at the letter from the Minister of Culture. The Houseguests and Mendez wait.

Finally, Immigration Officer #2 shrugs.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Okay -- Yes -- Okay --

He waves them through. Second checkpoint done.

268 INT. CIA - THE PIT - NIGHT 268

Malinov, a phone to his ear. Ringing.

MALINOV

C'mon c'mon c'mon --

269 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT 269

The phone in the office rings. No one is there.

270 EXT. WARNER BROS. STUDIOS - NIGHT 270

Siegel and Chambers are walking back to the Argo office.

They are within sight of the Argo bungalow, but a P.A. steps in front of them. \*

P.A.

(a stage whisper)

I'm sorry, we're shooting.

He motions for them to wait. A movie -- it looks like a police procedural -- is shooting on the lot between them and the office.

271 INT. AIRPORT GATE - MORNING 271

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)

Swissair announces general  
boarding for Flight 363 to Zurich.

Passengers, mostly European businessmen, get up and approach the gate.



272 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - THIRD CHECKPOINT - MORNING 272

Mendez checks in with the Houseguests with his eyes. They are now in sight of the airport gates. And here are six Komiteh. Young men -- none more than 33 or so -- holding automatic weapons.

They have created their own checkpoint. It looks recent, A SCREENED-OFF AREA WITH TABLES.

KOMITEH #1

Passports.

He looks at the Canadian passports and then almost immediately speaks.

KOMITEH #1

You come.

He directs Mendez and the Houseguests into the screened-off area. Speaks in Farsi to another Komiteh.

273 INT. CIA - THE PIT - NIGHT 273

LAMONT

(holding the phone)  
Purser's telling Swissair they're not on the plane.

O'DONNELL

They should have boarded already.

MALINOV

(on another phone)  
Still no answer in L.A.

274 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - THIRD CHECKPOINT - MORNING 274

MARK LIJEK

A film.

Mark mimes turning the rotor of a movie camera. Komiteh #1 doesn't understand.

AZIZI (O.S.)

Sit down.

A young man with a beard -- AZIZI, late 20s -- arriving on the scene, speaking in Farsi to the others and then in very good American English. He looks at the six and the face he singles out is Joe Stafford's.

(CONTINUED)

AZIZI

(harsh, icy; in  
Farsi)

You. You had no business in Iran.

\*  
\*

He motions for JOE STAFFORD to step forward. Mendez shifts. A tense moment.

JOE STAFFORD

(Farsi)

We did. We were preparing to make a movie here, sir.

\*

AZIZI

(Farsi)

You don't have journalist visas.

\*

JOE STAFFORD

(Farsi)

Not a documentary. A movie.

\*

Joe Stafford reaches into his pocket and gives Azizi a copy of the Argo Variety ad.

JOE STAFFORD

(Farsi)

You see?

(to Mendez; English)

Kevin, where's your briefcase?

\*

\*

A beat on Mendez. Who then opens his accordion folder and takes from it the ARGO STORYBOARDS. Joe Stafford spreads them out on the table.

Three other Komiteh in the room lean forward, their AUTOMATIC WEAPONS at their sides, and look at the STORYBOARD DRAWINGS. The Persian Empire futurism of Jack Kirby's drawings.

JOE STAFFORD

(Farsi)

These are the villains. Y'see these guys here? And these are the heroes... in the spice market...

\*

Joe Stafford points at the various drawings. He speaks with an ease and confidence that we didn't know he had.

JOE STAFFORD

(Farsi)

They know our hero is the Chosen One, so they kidnap his son in the spice market ... They have these chariots... like this one...

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

274 CONTINUED: (2)

274

JOE STAFFORD (CONT'D)

they go like this... whoooosh,  
 hmm? They can fly... The people  
 are just farmers, but they rise up  
 and find their courage and defeat  
 the alien king--

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Mendez watches. It's a performance. The three young  
 Komiteh are now wide-eyed, pointing, whispering in Farsi,  
 like teenagers around a comic book.

Azizi says something to another Komiteh in the room.  
 Then --

AZIZI

(to Joe Stafford; in  
 English)

You don't go until we verify.

\*  
\*

MENDEZ

You can call our office.

Mendez hands Azizi his card. STUDIO SIX FILMS. Kevin  
 Harkins. A 213 (818 wasn't around yet) phone number.

ANGLES ON THE HOUSEGUESTS

as Azizi leaves the room with the business card and three  
 young Komiteh barely look up from the drawings --

275 EXT. WARNER BROS. STUDIOS - NIGHT

275

P.A., still holding Chambers and Siegel. The ACTOR  
 playing the cop is conferring with the director. He's  
 not happy with something. They're holding everyone until  
 the next take, and --

P.A.

Going again please! We're  
 rolling --

276 EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - MORNING

276

A PICKUP TRUCK with 5 Komiteh -- including Khalkali --  
 automatic weapons out -- drives up to the Canadian  
 Ambassador's residence.

277 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - KOMITEH STATION - MORNING

277

Azizi, who apparently has some authority here, enters,  
 telling another Komiteh in Farsi to get off the phone.

(CONTINUED)

- 277 CONTINUED: 277
- Azizi looks at the Studio Six business card and picks up the receiver.
- 278 EXT. WARNER BROS. STUDIOS - NIGHT 278
- SIEGEL  
I'm sorry, pally. We're just gonna  
be in the movie. Call my agent. \*
- P.A.  
Sir. SIR!
- Siegel and Chambers walk through the shot toward the Argo office.
- 279 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - KOMITEH STATION - MORNING 279
- Azizi dials the long international number. And it is a DIAL, so this takes a long time.
- 280 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - THIRD CHECKPOINT - MORNING 280
- One of the young Komiteh is loudly debating with another Komiteh the air-worthiness of a futuristic desert glider in the storyboards. He's miming the thing crashing.
- Joe Stafford and the Houseguests are silent. Mendez can see the line of passengers on their Swissair flight dwindling.
- 281 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - KOMITEH STATION - MORNING 281
- Azizi rings the phone three times -- four times -- he's going to hang up --
- CHAMBERS (V.O.)  
(out of breath)  
Studio Six Films.
- 282 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT 282
- A beat of silence. Chambers catching his breath, listening. The door to the office wide open.
- 283 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - KOMITEH STATION - MORNING 283
- AZIZI  
May I speak to Mr. Kevin Harkins --

(CONTINUED)

ARGO - Final 108.

283 CONTINUED: 283

CHAMBERS (V.O.)  
He's out of the country on a  
location scout. Can I take a  
message?

284 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT 284  
Chambers listens for a response. Siegel now catches up.

285 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - KOMITEH STATION - MORNING 285

AZIZI  
No message.

286 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - MORNING 286

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)  
Swissair announces final boarding  
of Flight 363 to Zurich. All  
passengers should be at the gate  
at this time.

287 EXT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - MORNING 287  
Khalkali and Komiteh are forcing the front door of the  
house open.

288 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - THIRD CHECKPOINT - MORNING 288  
Azizi comes back into the screened-off area. Looks at  
Joe Stafford, then at Mendez. Then says something in  
Farsi to the three Komiteh in the holding area. Then he  
leaves.  
The three young Komiteh look at the drawings, then at Joe  
Stafford. Silence for a moment.

MENDEZ  
(pushes the  
storyboards toward  
them)  
Our gift to you. From our film.

Komiteh #1, who speaks enough English to understand,  
translates to the others. They forget their  
revolutionary mission for a second, happy with their  
gift. They'd high-five if they could. They're kids.  
Komiteh #1 motions for the Houseguests to go.

- 289 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - FOYER - MORNING 289
- Khalkali and a dozen Komiteh, guns drawn, rush into the residence. Empty liquor bottles. The remains of what looks like breakfast for a group of people.
- But the place is empty.
- 290 INT./EXT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - FLIGHT GATE - MORNING 290
- A BUSLOAD of passengers about to be ferried to the airplane.
- A Swissair Rep is closing the gate to Flight 363. She looks up to see the Houseguests and Mendez hurrying through the terminal, headed toward her. She holds the gate, speaks in German into a walkie, and --
- 291 INT. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - KEN'S OFFICE - MORNING 291
- The Komiteh search the house. Khalkali gets on the phone.
- 292 OMITTED 292
- 293 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - FLIGHT GATE - MORNING 293
- Kathy Stafford's ticket is taken and she walks through the door. Hurries toward the transport bus. The other five Houseguests and Mendez behind her and --
- 294 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - KOMITEH STATION - MORNING 294
- A phone rings and a Young Komiteh picks up the call. He listens for a moment. Then he drops the phone and RUNS into the airport terminal and --
- 295 INT. RUNWAY TRANSPORT BUS - MORNING 295
- The Houseguests sit aboard the bus, headed to a waiting DC-10.
- The DRIVER puts the bus into gear. It doesn't go. He shakes his head. This goddamn thing. Shifts gears again. Now it goes.

296 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - MORNING 296

Young Komiteh RUNNING through the terminal, pushing through a crowd, making a woman drop her suitcase, contents scattering. An automatic weapon at his side.

297 EXT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - MORNING 297

The Houseguests head up the stairs to the plane.

298 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - FLIGHT GATE - MORNING 298

Azizi and the three Komiteh from the third checkpoint stand up from the table with the Argo storyboards. Young Komiteh shouts at them and they take up their weapons and join him, running --

Azizi and the three Komiteh arrive at Flight 363's gate. The door is CLOSED.

299 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - MORNING 299

The Houseguests put their carry-on luggage into the overhead bins. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT is already holding a detached seatbelt preparing to do her safety mime.

PILOT (V.O.)  
(German-accented  
English)

Ladies and gentlemen, from the  
flight-deck. We're looking at a  
brief delay --

\*

Passengers groan a bit as they read paperbacks or International *Herald Tribunes*. Mark Lijek's arm is around Cora. Lee Schatz is moving his mouth in what looks like a prayer. Kathy Stafford's fingers shake as she holds an arm rest. Joe Stafford tries to stay her hand.

Mendez is sitting looking out the window toward the terminal.

300 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - FLIGHT GATE - MORNING 300

Azizi yells to the Swissair Rep, dragging her back toward the gate. We can't hear what she says back, but she's shaking her head.

- 301 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 COCKPIT - MORNING 301
- From the window, we can see a GROUND CREWMAN give a thumbs-up. The scrubbed Swiss PILOT, 50s, gives a thumbs-up back.
- He gently releases the throttle lever.
- 302 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - MORNING 302
- Mendez and the Houseguests feel the plane start to move.
- 303 INT. MEHRABAD AIRPORT - MORNING 303
- Azizi goes to the WINDOW. He can see the Swissair plane slowly backing onto the runway.
- He picks up a walkie and pushes through the flight gate door, setting off an alarm, followed by the three other Komiteh.
- He reaches the METAL BARS outside and can't get past.
- He CALLS INTO THE WALKIE.
- 304 INT. MEHRABAD FLIGHT TOWER - MORNING 304
- An Iranian FLIGHT TRAFFIC CONTROLLER calmly speaks into his radio in British-accented English.
- FLIGHT TRAFFIC CONTROLLER  
SwissAir 363, you are Number 2 for  
departure.
- 305 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - MORNING 305
- Out the window of the plane. Two IRANIAN POLICE CARS and a CANVAS-TOPPED TRUCK are headed down the runway toward the plane.
- 306 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - MENDEZ'S POV - MORNING 306
- looking out from his window seat.
- 307 EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - MORNING 307
- An IRAN AIRLINES 747 takes off, revealing the Swissair jet behind it. Only empty runway ahead of Swissair 363 now and --



- 308 INT. MEHRABAD FLIGHT TOWER - MORNING 308
- ANGLE ON BOOTS
- taking stairs two at a time.
- Three KOMITEH WITH AUTOMATICS rush up the tower stairs --
- 309 EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - MORNING 309
- We're SPEEDING BEHIND two Iranian police cars and a canvas-topped TRUCK as they speed toward the Swissair plane. In the back of the truck we can see half a dozen Komiteh, weapons drawn and --
- 310 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - COCKPIT - MORNING 310
- FLIGHT TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (V.O.)  
Swissair 363 --
- The Pilot puts his hand on the throttle control.
- 311 INT. MEHRABAD FLIGHT TOWER - MORNING 311
- FLIGHT TRAFFIC CONTROLLER  
-- you are cleared for take-off.
- The Flight Traffic Controller moves his head-set mic away from his mouth to take a drink of very strong Iranian tea, and -- the door to the Control Room BURSTS OPEN. Three Komiteh with automatics, shouting instructions to the Traffic Controller, who spills his tea --
- 312 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - MORNING 312
- Mendez looking out the window --
- 313 EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - MORNING 313
- ANGLE ON THE THREE IRANIAN VEHICLES
- speeding ahead -- they're GAINING ON us --
- 313A INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS ACTION 313A
- The CO-PILOT looks out the window. Sees they are being pursued by militia and police. He looks to the Pilot.

(CONTINUED)

- 313A CONTINUED: 313A
- A beat. The Pilot reaches down and pushes all four engines to go FULL THROTTLE.
- 313B EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION 313B
- ANGLE ON THE JEEPS
- We start to PULL AWAY FROM them -- leaving them behind -- beginning to RISE UP --
- 314 INT. MEHRABAD FLIGHT TOWER - MORNING 314
- The Flight Controller has his arms up... THROUGH the floor-to-ceiling windows of the tower, as three Komiteh watch a Swissair DC-10 angle upward and leave the ground...
- 315 EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - MORNING 315
- The Komiteh from the Jeep are now standing on the runway watching the plane disappear.
- 316 EXT. TEHRAN STREET NEAR AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS ACTION 316
- We are looking at a street corner in Tehran when the PLANE CRESTS THE STOREFRONT, heading upward and away.
- 317 INT. CIA (LANGLEY) - NIGHT 317
- O'Donnell and the Kids gathered around some phones and monitors in the Pit.
- LAMONT  
(taking off  
headphones)  
We have wheels up. \*
- He starts to punch the air. O'Donnell stays his arm.
- O'DONNELL  
Wait.
- 318 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - MORNING 318
- The Houseguests -- holding their breath --
- Mendez -- looking out the window -- scanning the air around the plane -- behind every cloud --

(CONTINUED)

318 CONTINUED:

318

## FLIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is our pleasure to announce that alcoholic beverages are now available, as we have cleared Iranian airspace.

The Houseguests shout and embrace and celebrate. Bob Anders high-fives Lee Schatz, then the other Houseguests. Mark Lijek, crying, embraces Cora.

Kathy Stafford is laughing. She kisses her husband's hand.

Some of the other passengers look up from their newspapers, annoyed at this Canadian fuss.

319 INT. CIA (LANGLEY) - THE PIT - NIGHT

319

All eyes watch Malinov, listening, headphone to one ear...

## MALINOV

They're CLEAR!

Cheers in the Pit. O'Donnell embraces Malinov.

320 INT./EXT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT

320

Siegel throws down a phone and rushes outside... to where Chambers smokes.

## SIEGEL

Ouuut! THEY'RE OUT!

Chambers and Lester scream like kids who've just scored the game-winning touchdown. The P.A. tries to shush them.

321 INT. SWISSAIR DC-10 - MORNING

321

A mini-champagne bottle pops. The Houseguests are celebrating: New Year's Eve and a Super Bowl victory party in a DC-10 aisle.

FIND Mendez, sitting alone, apart from the celebration. Looking out the window. Mendez turns to see that someone is standing in the aisle next to him. Joe Stafford. Tony looks up at Joe.

(CONTINUED)

321 CONTINUED:

321

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)

I'm sorry, sir. You need to sit  
down.

But Joe doesn't pay attention to the Flight Attendant.  
He extends his hand to Mendez. Who takes it. A moment  
between them.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Sir?

Joe goes back to his seat.

HOLD ON Tony Mendez.

322 INT. ARGO PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT

322

Drinking straight from a bottle of Beefeater.

SIEGEL

It's history, is what it is.  
'History plays out first as farce,  
then as tragedy.'

CHAMBERS

The quote's the other way around.

SIEGEL

Who said it? \*

CHAMBERS

Marx.

SIEGEL

Groucho?

CHAMBERS

Karl.

322A EXT. BORDER CROSSING - ABADAN, IRAQ - MORNING

322A \*

An IRAQI BORDER GUARD, checking passports at a chain-  
link, barbed-wire fence, speaks to a WOMAN IN HIJAB who  
is turned away from us. The Guard stamps the Woman's  
passport. \*

BORDER GUARD (ARABIC) \*

You are admitted to the Republic  
of Iraq. \*

He closes the passport and the Woman turns around: it is  
SAHAR. \*

(CONTINUED)

322A CONTINUED:

322A

She stands and stares at the line of REFUGEES still waiting to cross: WOMEN balancing blankets tied up with all they own. An OLD MAN being helped by his SON. A couple of KIDS, a SEVEN YEAR-OLD shushing an INFANT in her arms. Lives that have become another tableau of refugees.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Sahar, now one of them, walks into Iraq.

\*

323 INT. CIA (LANGLEY) - NIGHT

323

The celebration is quieter and drunker now.

LAMONT

(a couple of beers  
along)

We are the good guys!

\*

ROSSI

Six down, fifty to go.

LAMONT

Call the *Times*, nail it to the fucking door. The CIA are the good guys.

MALINOV

The Canadians are the good guys.

LAMONT

-- we're not greedy -- them too --

MALINOV

Only. Canada takes the credit, or they'll retaliate against the hostages. Great Satan wasn't involved. No CIA.

LAMONT

Is that right, Jack?

O'DONNELL

Involved in what? We're as surprised as anybody. Thank you, Canada.

Jack raises a glass of Scotch and takes a drink.

324 ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

324

A homemade sign that reads: "THANK YOU CANADA!"\*  
(\*Homecoming ceremony for Houseguests 2/1980.) Hundreds are gathered to welcome the six back.

(CONTINUED)

324 CONTINUED:

324

TED KOPPEL (V.O.)  
 Finally, a sliver of really good  
 news.

\*AMERICA HELD HOSTAGE, DAY 87, BROADCAST (1/29/80).

CUT TO:

325 CANADIAN MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

325

FLORA MacDONALD, late 60's. (\*A.H.H. 1/29/80)

FLORA MacDONALD (V.O.)  
 It was a simple operation, really.

326 INT. STATE DEPARTMENT - LOBBY - DAY

326

The Houseguests arrive in the State Department lobby.  
 Television lights everywhere.

TED KOPPEL (V.O.)  
 The six fled the country posing as  
 Canadian diplomats. They simply  
 walked away.

Camera flashes, wild cheers. Banners: "WELCOME HOME  
 CORA AND MARK!" "IDAHO LOVES YOU, LEE!" "WELCOME HOME,  
 BOB ANDERS!" It's the first moment of national  
 celebration since the beginning of the crisis.

327 ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

327

IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SADEQ GHOTBZADEH speaks angrily  
 into a microphone.

SADEQ GHOTBZADEH (V.O.)  
 Sooner or later, here or anywhere  
 in the world, Canada will pay for  
 this violation of the sovereignty  
 of Iran. (\*News conference  
 1/29/80.)

328 MORE ARCHIVE FOOTAGE (\*1/30/1980)

328

Of the State Department WELCOME HOME CEREMONY.  
 Ambassador KEN TAYLOR is presented with a HUGE FLORAL  
 BOUQUET. Cheering crowds all around him.

329 OMITTED

329 \*

330 EXT. BY LESTER'S POOL - DAY 330

Siegel in a bathrobe, looking out over L.A., holding *The New York Times* in front of him: SIX U.S. DIPLOMATS, HIDDEN BY CANADA, LEAVE IRAN SAFELY. Next to that, an article about Ken Taylor: DIPLOMAT DIRECTED ESCAPE IN IRAN. (Front page, \*NYT 1/30/80.)

SIEGEL

She said, 'Why couldn't we pull off something like that?' You know what I said to her?

331 INT. CIA (LANGLEY) - THE PIT - DAY 331

Mendez stands at a desk on the main floor.

MENDEZ

Wha'd you say to her?

332 EXT. BY LESTER'S POOL - DAY 332

SIEGEL

I said, 'Argo fuck yourself.'

333 INT. CIA ARCHIVES - DAY 333

And suddenly it's dead-quiet. We're in a vault inside a vault in the basement of the main building.

Mendez's suitcase is laying on a low counter, an ARCHIVES OFFICER toe-tagging and cataloging various items. Separating Mendez's personal things from material related to the operation.

Mendez empties his briefcase and the officer puts a sticker on the *VARIETY* featuring the ARGO ad. Another on the ARGO script. He's putting things into a box that reads: USCIA CLASSIFIED MATERIAL.

Mendez opens his accordion folder -- flips through it -- it's empty -- no. There's something inside.

In one of the compartments is a STORYBOARD FROM ARGO.

One that the Komiteh missed. While the Archives Officer is turned around, Mendez slips the storyboard back into the accordion folder and puts it back with his personal things.

334

EXT. CIA - FRONT PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

334

O'Donnell is on his way out, heading toward Tony who is heading in. Seeing Mendez, he stops dead.

O'DONNELL

And I left my autograph book at home. His Eminence called me. He wants to see you.

\*  
\*

MENDEZ

He wants to fire me himself.

O'DONNELL

He wants to give you the Intelligence Star. You're getting the highest award of merit of the Clandestine Services of these United States. Ceremony's two weeks from today.

Mendez stops walking. A beat.

MENDEZ

If they push it a week, I can bring Ian. That's his winter break.

\*  
\*

O'DONNELL

The op was classified so the ceremony's classified. He can't know about it. Nobody can know about it.

MENDEZ

They're gonna hand me an award, then they're gonna take it back?

O'DONNELL

If we wanted applause, we would have joined the circus.

MENDEZ

I thought we did.

O'Donnell claps Tony on the shoulder. Tony walks towards the entrance and Jack heads to his car.

O'DONNELL

(yelling to Tony; an afterthought)  
Carter said you were a great American.

(CONTINUED)





337 CONTINUED:

337

WIDEN to HOLD ON them holding each other in the dark hall of the very American, even Hummel-kitschy house. HOLD there for a while.

338 INT. CHRISTINE'S HOUSE - IAN'S BEDROOM - ANGLE ON TV - NIGHT

338

A scene of the Old West on a television.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ian is watching 1973's sci-fi Western *Westworld* in the bedroom. Ian doesn't have to describe the scene to his father this time. WIDEN to see that his head is on a pillow on Tony's lap.

CARD #1: THE IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS ENDED ON JANUARY 20, 1981, WHEN THE REMAINING EMBASSY HOSTAGES WERE RELEASED AFTER 444 DAYS IN CAPTIVITY.

339 INT. IAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

339

We can hear the sounds of gunslinging from the movie. Glow-in-the-dark stars on the wall. A *Star Wars* X-Wing fighter. A couple of rubber *Planet of the Apes* figures that look like they've been chewed by a dog.

CARD #2: OSCAR-WINNING MAKEUP ARTIST JOHN CHAMBERS WAS AWARDED THE CIA'S INTELLIGENCE MEDAL OF MERIT, ITS HIGHEST CIVILIAN HONOR. HE REMAINED FRIENDS WITH TONY UNTIL CHAMBERS DIED FROM DIABETES COMPLICATIONS IN 2001.

The CAMERA MOVES OVER the dresser of Ian's toys --

\*

CARD #3: THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE CIA COMPLEMENTED EFFORTS OF THE CANADIAN EMBASSY IN FREEING THE SIX HELD IN TEHRAN. TO THIS DAY, THE STORY STANDS AS AN ENDURING MODEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS.

\*

\*

\*

\*

-- settling on a motley group of action figures.

\*

CARD #4: ALL OF THE HOUSEGUESTS RETURNED TO THE U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE AFTER THEIR ORDEAL IN IRAN.

\*

\*

Then FIND, almost unnoticeable among Ian's science fiction collection, a piece of cardboard behind Captain Kirk and Han Solo figures.

\*

\*

\*

It's a STORYBOARD FROM ARGO. The one missed by the Komitech at the airport.

(CONTINUED)

339

CONTINUED:

339

CARD #5: TONY MENDEZ WAS NOT GIVEN BACK HIS INTELLIGENCE STAR UNTIL 1997, WHEN THE ARGO OPERATION WAS DECLASSIFIED BY PRESIDENT CLINTON.

\*

LINGER ON the ARGO STORYBOARD. A MAN in a futuristic chariot sheltering a KID from what look like laser beams.

CARD #6: HE LIVES IN RURAL MARYLAND WITH HIS FAMILY.

\*

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END