

A Vision of Angels

FADE IN:

INT. SHED IN EGYPT ON GAZA BORDER - DAY

A boy ready to descend into a hole on a ladder. A man checks the straps holding two green bundles around his waist. Their eyes say goodbye and the boy descends.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

He climbs down in air thick with dust. He reaches the bottom of the ladder; it doesn't reach all the way down. He takes a last look at the light in the shaft's opening, and lets go.

He hits the ground, tumbles into a wall and knocks a board loose. Sand spills in. Frantically he fixes it.

Using a flashlight, he crawls through the tunnel. The bundles snag on support beams. He gets wedged in and struggles to untie the bundles, pushing them ahead of him.

He comes to the end of the tunnel and flashes his light up a second shaft. He searches his pocket for something. It's not there! He pulls out his pocket and sees the hole in it.

Angry, he kicks his legs - and feels something. He jabs his hand down his pants and brings out a whistle.

He blows it. Nothing. Disbelief. He blows it again. A clod of dirt flies out followed by a shrill whistle.

He blows and blows until he sees a light above. A rope harness hits him in the face. He slips his legs into it and is hoisted up, emerging in a mechanic's shed clutching the green bundles to his chest.

FADIL, Hamas cell leader, takes them, measures their heft, and smiles revealing a gold tooth behind his bushy beard.

EXT. DAMASCUS GATE (JERUSALEM) - DAY

A solid blue sky. The noise of a crowd. Two helicopters sweep into view and disappear over rooftops.

The crowd murmurs unhappily. ISSA, Palestinian mid-30s, a good-hearted man and worrier, and his cranky father-in-law, AZZEDINE, are among them.

ISSA
There's going to be trouble today.

AZZEDINE
I've come to pray, not cause
trouble. Are you coming with me?

The old man pushes his way through the crowd.

EXT. OLD CITY (JERUSALEM) - DAY

A muezzin's call to prayer. Vendors scurry to close shops.
Soldiers patrol rooftops. Issa overhears a REPORTER:

REPORTER
Palestinians by the thousands have
heeded their President's call to
protest yesterday's arrest...

Issa and Azzedine come to a bottleneck outside tall green
gates. Beyond them is the golden Dome of the Rock.

INT. CHIEF OF STAFF BEN-AMI'S OFFICE - DAY

Issa and Azzedine enter the green gates.

CHIEF OF STAFF BEN-AMI, 50s in wheelchair, a gruff man of
power, watches Issa and Azzedine enter the green gates on a
bank of televisions on the mounted on his wall.

BEN-AMI
(into telephone)
I'm watching now. How the hell did
CNN get inside?

EXT. GREEN GATES (JERUSALEM) - DAY

An ARMY COMMANDER on a cell phone.

ARMY COMMANDER
I'm checking that now, sir.

DAVID KESSLER, American, 40s, concerned citizen of the world,
shuffles forward in the crowd taking photographs. A SOLDIER
stops him at the gates.

SOLDIER
No cameras.

DAVID
I'm a journalist.

SOLDIER
No journalists.

DAVID
I'm an American.

SOLDIER
I'll watch your American camera.

DAVID
Not on a bet.

He retraces his steps walking against the crowd.

EXT. HARAM AL-SHARAF SANCTUARY - DAY

Azzedine and Issa sit on a stone bench next to a fountain and trickle water over their bare feet.

AZZEDINE
You are learning to be a good Muslim.

ISSA
I have a strict teacher. Where would you like to pray?

Azzedine gestures to the platform surrounding the dome.

AZZEDINE
There's more room up there.

Barefooted, they climb the steps up to the Golden Dome.

Azzedine spreads out a handkerchief, kneels and touches his forehead to it. Issa kneels but doesn't pray.

A loudspeaker emits loud electronic shrieks. Then a mullah:

MULLAH
Allahu akbar!

WORSHIPERS
Allahu akbar!

MULLAH
For too long our enemy has occupied our land, now they have entered our homes to arrest our sons and daughters. They want us to fear them but we shall not be afraid!

INT. CHIEF OF STAFF BEN-AMI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben-Ami, still on phone, watches mullah on televisions.

MULLAH

We shall free our children to free
ourselves! Rise up, o Palestine!
Rise up!

WORSHIPERS

Allahu akbar! Allahu Akbar!

BEN-AMI

Go in.

EXT. GREEN GATES - DAY

The Army Commander signals his men to storm the gates.

INT. BEN-AMI'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben-Ami watches the soldiers rush in.

BEN-AMI

And find that goddamn cameraman!

EXT. HARAM AL-SHARAF SANCTUARY - DAY

Helicopters swoop in overhead. Boys throw stones at the
soldiers who fire back tear gas, gagging Issa and Azzedine.

ISSA

Hurry, Ami, put on your shoes.

AZZEDINE

But this is a holy place!

Shots are fired. A woman clutches throat and falls over. Issa
drags Azzedine by his arm, who loses his shoes in the crush.

EXT. DAMASCUS GATE - DAY

David is taking photos when worshipers start pouring out of
Damascus Gate. He swings his camera onto STRETCHER BEARERS.

STRETCHER BEARERS

Make way! Let us through! Make way!

David spots Issa in crowd, zeros in and takes his picture.

DAVID

(to himself)

Hello Issa.

The thud of an EXPLOSION. A black cloud rises nearby. People flee while David runs towards it changing his film.

He comes around a corner and sees a bus in flames. Emergency vehicles arrive blaring sirens. David snaps away capturing images of bodies on fire, dazed shopkeepers, medics scrambling to help the injured.

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND BETWEEN GAZA AND ISRAEL - DAY

A half mile stretch of road between high walls topped with spools of barbed wire.

Three trucks bypass a long line of trucks waiting to cross into Israel. The lead DRIVER leans on his horn and waves documents out his window.

The driver stops for the barrier. SERGEANT AVI STEIN, an American transplant, 30s - likable and easy going - steps out of the pillbox.

INT. JAKOV'S OFFICE (GAZA CHECKPOINT) - DAY

A temporary metal hut. MAJOR JAKOV LEVY, 50s - confident, stubborn, a family man - hangs up his phone, and collects his cap and briefcase.

EXT. CHECKPOINT - DAY

Jakov steps outside and Avi approaches him.

AVI

They want to jump the line.

JAKOV

There's been another bomb in Jerusalem. The border is closed.

AVI

He's got a pass signed by you.

Avi tries to hand it to Jakov, who ignores it.

JAKOV

I don't care if it's signed by God. Seven dead, Sergeant. It was lunch hour on Jaffa Street. Who could do that?

EXT. MOUSA FARMHOUSE - DAY

AMIN MOUSA, patrician farmer, late 40s, refined and premeditated; and his foreman, RASHID, an old seen-it-all farmhand, watch field hands stack crates of tomatoes in clearing before a handsome farmhouse. BUZZING FLIES swarm the tomatoes.

RASHID
They don't have much time for
sitting in the sun.

AMIN
(towards a shed)
Mohammed!

MOHAMMED, 15, waifish, and confident for a kid, appears at the shed's door.

AMIN (CONT'D)
I need that truck!

MOHAMMED
The new fuel pump doesn't fit.

AMIN
Then find one that does. Today!

A horn sounds and a truck bounds down dirt lane into clearing. The driver leans out his window.

DRIVER
They're letting nothing across.
Something's happened in Jerusalem.

AMIN
Levy approved the pass himself.

DRIVER
He's the one who personally revoked
it.

AMIN
Where are the others?

DRIVER
Holding my place in line.

RASHID
Don't lose it.

The driver, grinding gears, reverses and leaves.

The flies buzzing grows oppressively loud and Amin flees up the porch steps.

INT. MOUSA FARMHOUSE - DAY

Spacious rooms with a melancholy air. Amin bolts up the stairs and enters STUDY where a large leather journal is on the desk. A folded wheelchair and rifle are in the corner.

He crosses to the window, opens it to a stand of pine trees and rolling hills beyond.

When he turns back to the room he sees an apparition of his FATHER seated in the wheelchair writing in the journal. He looks at Amin.

AMIN'S FATHER

Ours is a proud legacy son. It should not be forgotten.

INT. LEVYS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

The telephone on the bedside table rings. Jakov comes out of the bathroom drying his hands and answers it.

JAKOV

Levy here.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

BEN-AMI

Is that Leah's cooking I smell?

JAKOV

You're always welcome to join us.

BEN-AMI

One day soon, God willing it will be possible. Listen, Jakov, I'm calling about Mishe.

JAKOV

That's fast intelligence.

BEN-AMI

We have to know our enemies.

JAKOV

He'd be ashamed to hear you say that.

BEN-AMI
He's going too far with this
Steering Committee thing.

JAKOV
He's got a right-

BEN-AMI
He's got a right to a lot of things
and he can thank his country for
that. He's also your son and that's
giving legitimacy to the peace
movement. The boss is not going to
let them bring down his government.
It could get rough.

RACHEL (O.S.)
Abba! Mom says supper is ready!

JAKOV
He'll come around.

BEN-AMI
Talk to him, Jakov. I love him like
my own son. Now go eat dinner.
Shabbat shalom.

INT. FADIL'S FLAT (GAZA CITY) - DAY

Fadil opens the door to Mohammed and flashes his gold tooth.

FADIL
So the kid's on time.

Mohammed enters. Two other CELL MEMBERS sit on floor.

MOHAMMED
I'm not a kid.

They all sit on floor. Mohammed's gaze is automatically drawn
to the PORTRAITS OF MARTYRS hung under a green Hamas banner.
He focuses on the picture of his brother, SUAD.

Fadil passes around two green bundles.

FADIL
Our brothers in Egypt have done
well.

CELL MEMBERS
Allahu akbar.

FADIL

It is only one week until the
Christian holiday.

MOHAMMED

Mousa's trucks are stuck in line
like everybody else's.

CELL MEMBER

South of al-Burayj it's not
patrolled regularly. I can carry
them out.

FADIL

Then what, hitchhike to Jerusalem?
If they catch you, they catch us.

(to Mohammed)

Mousa doesn't want his friends
knowing what he's been doing.
Remind him of that. He's always got
ways to make things happen.

INT. LEVYS' HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Standing around a dining table are Jakov Levy, his daughter
RACHEL, a brat, and wife LEAH, a dark beauty and worrier.
Leah lights tall candles.

JAKOV

Mishe!

Down the hall, MISHE, 22, a political activist with the
fervor and certainty of youth, opens his bedroom door.

MISHE

Why didn't someone tell me dinner
was ready?

JAKOV

Your mother has been calling you.

LEAH

No arguing tonight.

JAKOV

He's like an absent-minded
professor.

Rachel snickers.

LEAH

That includes you.

Mishe shows up with a big grin.

MISHE
Looks yummmie!

INT. FADIL'S FLAT - GAZA CITY - TWILIGHT

Outside, a muezzin's call to prayer. The cell members stand to pray. Mohammed glimpses Suad's photo and closes his eyes.

FLASHBACK - SOLDIER SHOOTS MOHAMMED'S BROTHER

The call to prayer in background. Kids throw stones at a jeep and crack its windshield. The jeep skids sideways to a stop. YOSSE, a blue-eyed soldier, fires a shot. Suad falls over.

Mohammed, weeping, cradles Suad, his dying brother.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Mohammed weeps silently. The others have already stopped praying. Fadil touches Mohammed's shoulder.

FADIL
You'll have your revenge. Soon.

INT. LEVYS' HOUSE - NIGHT

The family joins hands around the table. Jakov gives his son a troubled look before bowing his head.

JAKOV
[Opening lines of Sabbath prayers]

LATER

Only Jakov and Mishe remain at the table.

MISHE
I thought you might be proud of me.

JAKOV
For what, aiding the enemy?

MISHE
For working for peace.

JAKOV
We don't need traitors.

MISHE
Isn't that a bit melodramatic?

JAKOV

Don't use smart words with me. I know you're going to college. I'm paying for it, remember?

Rachel comes out the swing door to the kitchen.

RACHEL

Mama says to quit arguing.

JAKOV

We weren't arguing.

MISHE

We were.

RACHEL

Abba, I need to let my scout troop know if I can go to Hebron on Friday.

MISHE

You're not seriously thinking of letting her go, are you?

RACHEL

It's none of your business.

MISHE

It's my business when my sister is going whacko religious and her parents don't stop her because they're whacko too.

JAKOV

I'm warning you, Mishe. I'm big enough to pick you up and throw you out of this house.

MISHE

Maybe I'll just move out.

JAKOV

Maybe you should.

They exchange a hard look before Mishe storms off.

RACHEL

He can be such a pig sometimes.

INT. DAVID'S APARTMENT - DARKROOM - NIGHT

Red light. Photos cover every inch of the walls. Pictures of bus bombing hang on drying wires. David clips his PORTRAIT OF ISSA next to them.

There's a KNOCK overhead. He ignores it. It's repeated.

DAVID
Give me five minutes!

EXT. DAVID'S BUILDING - NIGHT

JOSHUA, 7, precocious yet troubled by parents' divorce, slams a door and runs down the metal steps. He finds a key hidden under a stone.

INT. DAVID'S APARTMENT - DARKROOM - NIGHT

A knock on door. David puts away his photo paper.

DAVID
I said five minutes!

JOSHUA (O.S.)
You always say five minutes!

David opens door, switching off the red safety light.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
No, leave it on. I like to see your pictures the way you see them!

Joshua zeros in on Issa's picture.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
Who's that?

DAVID
A friend.

JOSHUA
You have Arab friends?

DAVID
I try to.

JOSHUA
My mom says you're really old fashioned because you don't take pictures in color.

KATYA (O.C.)

Joshua!

JOSHUA

Uh-oh. I forgot to tell her I was coming down here.

DAVID

Not a cool move where moms are concerned. Let's go.

They leave the darkroom.

The apartment has thick walls and arched doorways. Thousands of photographs of peoples' faces stream out the darkroom in long lines that trail down the hall and into the rooms.

KATYA, early 30s, a hassled mother, is at the front door.

KATYA

Did you tell me where you were going, young man?

DAVID

He was helping me, weren't you, partner?

KATYA

I'm sorry he's such a bother.

JOSHUA

He said I was helping him!

KATYA

Upstairs, young man. Bath time!

The boy runs up the steps and goes inside slamming the door.

DAVID

I didn't mean to interfere with a parenting moment.

KATYA

You didn't, and I confess it's mostly me. He's so likely to befriend any stranger. But of course, David, you're no stranger, and I've been meaning to invite you to Seder dinner.

DAVID

I'm not much of a practicing Jew.

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