

Scene 2

Three days later. The same room. The cot is further stage left than it was in the last scene.

Nick and Bashir. Nick is handcuffed.

Intermittently—through this scene and others, we will hear a recurring distant mechanical buzz. Very faint. Coming in and out.

[The noise will not be referred to—or explained—until Scene 5, by which point the audience should have become acclimated to it, unaware...]

There is an iPhone before him. Playing. We hear a woman's voice. The video Nick's wife has made to plead for his life:

VIDEO. Nick is a good man. He cares about others. He volunteers on the weekends at a soup kitchen, feeding the poor. He has a young son, Kaden, who adores him. Please let my husband go. I've learned that Islam is about mercy and forgiveness—

Bashir grabs the iPhone. Stops the video.

BASHIR. Then she goes on and on about Islam, like she's got a fucking clue.

Silence.

NICK. So they were negotiating?

BASHIR. They were.

Beat.

No longer.

NICK. I told you it was too much. You didn't believe—

BASHIR. That's not it.

NICK. I don't know how many times I've told you—

BASHIR. Would you just shut it for a change?

Beat.

Imam Saleem got put on some list. Last week. Your State Department. The bank can't negotiate. She can't negotiate. It's against your laws.

NICK. List?

BASHIR. Of terrorist groups.

Bashir snickers.

Imam Saleem's not a terrorist. Fucking irony? The Taliban? They don't like us any more than they like you.

NICK. Right.

BASHIR. Imam Saleem's a visionary. He's doing what you people always promise but never do. He took over the orange groves to the river. Put people to work. Running the schools, the hospital in these parts. Money for everything's gotta come from somewhere. You've been robbing us blind for sixty years. We're just taking back what's ours.

NICK. I haven't been robbing you—

BASHIR. *(Over.)* Know what was in the paper the other day? Your bank made four billion dollars in three months. Where'd you think all that money came from?

NICK. That has nothing to do with me.

BASHIR. Your boss was the big man, Carey Martin, but it has nothing to do with you—

NICK. *(Coming in.)* —He's not the big man.

BASHIR. Ask him for the money yourself? Least he can do, for taking his place.

NICK. I doubt he's got ten million dollars lying around—and even if he did—

BASHIR. If he's got bugger all, why's he in the paper all the time?

NICK. He's in the Pakistani papers. Nobody knows who he is outside Pakistan. He's just a banker.

BASHIR. And Daniel Pearl was just a journalist.

Beat.

NICK. Cutting off my head is not going to accomplish anything.

BASHIR. See, it's not us'd be cutting it off. We don't go in for that sort of thing. That's why we'd be giving you to Lashkar. *(Off a thought, wryly.)* Always wondered about it, though. What's the part of you that—I mean your head's rolling around on the ground,

thinking... —But what's happening to the other part of you? What would it be like being in both places at the same time?

Beat.

When you find out, will you tell me?

Long pause.

NICK. We can work something out.

BASHIR. Like what?

NICK. I've already told you. I can come up with two and a half, maybe three...

BASHIR. Your ransom's not three. It's ten.

NICK. That's insane! For God's sake, three million you can get is better than ten you can't.

BASHIR. I'm actually not sure it is. To be honest. Lashkar's been breathing down our necks. Coming in across the river. Shaking us down for cash. Who knows? Maybe we tell 'em you're a Jew, and you buy us some real peace for once.

NICK. But I'm not Jewish.

BASHIR. They're idiots. They won't know the difference.

NICK. I'm not circumcised.

BASHIR. Isn't anything can't be taken care of.

Pause.

NICK. God. Bashir. Don't be stupid.

BASHIR. Excuse me?

NICK. You've got something of value. Don't piss it away.

BASHIR. You got some fucking nerve, don't you? (*Approaching.*) You're the one's yapping that you're not worth sod all—

NICK. (*Coming in.*) —That's right. To them. To my company. Not worth a penny. Not now. Not after you people kidnapped me. In fact? To them? I'm actually a liability. But that doesn't mean...

BASHIR. What?

NICK. That I'm not still worth something...to you. Just because you can't get what you want one way doesn't mean you can't get it another.

Beat.

BASHIR. I'm listening.

NICK. Just a month ago, I had a meeting with emerging markets at UBS.

BASHIR. What's that?

NICK. Union Bank of Switzerland.

BASHIR. Right.

NICK. Their operation is ten times bigger here in Pakistan than Citibank. I was actually in talks to leave Citibank and go to UBS. They were going to pay me a lot more money.

BASHIR. How much?

NICK. Seven figures.

BASHIR. For what? Showing greedy Pakistanis like Bilal Ansoor how to rob their own people?

NICK. For my understanding of the marketplace. The market climate here in Pakistan.—Hell, Carey Martin is an idiot. I've been doing his job for three years. I'm worth a lot more to you alive than dead.

Beat.

BASHIR. How'd you work that out?

NICK. I—uh—engineered a trade...that cleared the Gaznoor Group twenty million dollars.

BASHIR. You mean the Gaznoor family? Richest family in Punjab?

NICK. Gaznoor Group is their holding company.

Beat.

BASHIR. How'd you make 'em twenty million?

NICK. Trading wheat.

BASHIR. Wheat... —You're talking about the food shortage.

NICK. No. This was the spring before.

BASHIR. That's when the food shortage actually began. Not this spring. Last spring. People buying and selling, fucking up the wheat supply.

NICK. You want to talk about how I made the Gaznoors twenty million dollars or not?

Beat. Bashir finally nods.

I recognized a systemic difference in the prices of wheat in Faisalabad and Multan. It was pretty drastic.

Nothing to do with agriculture, just an abnormality in the distribution. Once I understood it, I was able to take advantage.

BASHIR. How?

NICK. I created an instrument that made it easier for people in Multan to buy wheat in Faisalabad.

BASHIR. An instrument?

NICK. A future.

BASHIR. Future. Fuckin' hell. Heard of that.

Pause.

NICK. Where are you from?

BASHIR. What does that have to do with anything?

NICK. Your accent.

BASHIR. You know you've tried that before...

That shit's not gonna work on me. I know all about that stupid class they give you when come work in Pakistan: Make friends with your captor, get him to see you're a human being.

NICK. I wasn't trying to make—

BASHIR. You really think I'm an idiot, don't you?

NICK. I don't think you're an—

BASHIR. I'm not an idiot. And you best not be insulting my intelligence like that. For your information... I had three offers on my UCAS.

NICK. UCAS?

BASHIR. You're not so clever after all, are you, Mr. *Bright*? You know about Hounslow?

NICK. I don't.

BASHIR. Well, *you're* the ignorant fucker then, aren't you?

Beat.

You ever take the Tube from Heathrow Airport?

NICK. Yes.

BASHIR. You went right by my house. Had a view of the tracks

from my bedroom. If I'd known you were passing by, would have thrown something at your train, you fuck. See I don't like you. I'll never like you. You're a heartless greedy bastard. And I think the likes'a you are better off dead. You got that?

NICK. I got it.

BASHIR. So what the fuck is a future?

NICK. It's a contract to buy something. Or sell something. In the future. If sugar is cheap right now because of—I don't know—over-production in Brazil, you can say, I'd like to keep buying a month from now, six months from now, at today's price.

(Off Bashir's interest.) If you do, if you lock in that price, you've bought a future. If the price of sugar goes back up, then it's worth something. You can sell it to make money.

BASHIR. What if the price goes down?

NICK. You can make money a different way if that happens.

BASHIR. You can?

NICK. Absolutely. It's called shorting.

BASHIR. Right.

Pause.

NICK. There are opportunities.

BASHIR. Twenty million.

NICK. Give or take.

BASHIR. Wheat.

NICK. Potatoes.

BASHIR. A way for people in the south to buy from the north... In the future...

NICK. And then we sat back and watched the money roll in.

Bashir nods.

With a thought.

Lights out.