

THE WARRANT

by

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EXT. IRAQ -- DAY

SUPER: IBRAHIM KHALIL BORDER STATION. IRAQI KURDISTAN.

All quiet. IRAQI SOLDIERS in uniform on patrol.

EXT. ROAD NEAR THE BORDER -- DAY

A van pulls off the road, stops.

INT. VAN -- DAY

TERRORIST DRIVER, (20), long beard, at the wheel, machine gun on the seat. He looks through binoculars at the station.

He gets out.

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

Terrorist Driver opens the rear doors, removes one of several crates stacked neatly inside.

He pries open the crate with a crow bar. Inside is a shoulder carried rocket propelled grenade (RPG) with ARABIC markings.

He pulls out the RPG, lifts a small plastic safety cover, pushes a button. A RED light BLINKS.

He mounts the rocket on his shoulder, aims, and fires toward the station.

EXT. BORDER STATION -- DAY

The rocket hits the station, EXPLODES in a cloud of gas.

SOLDIERS swarm out of the complex engulfed by thick smoke. Many fall, dead. Some emerge from the cloud, coughing, grabbing their throats, then fall to the ground, blood leaking from their mouths and noses.

INT. VAN -- DAY

Terrorist Driver pulls a gas mask over his face.

EXT. BORDER STATION -- DAY

The van zigzags between corpses and crashes through a closed gate, crossing the border.

EXT. FORT BELVOIR -- NIGHT

Establishing.

SUPER: NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (NGA),
FORT BELVOIR. SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA.

INT. NGA -- NIGHT

A huge room. ANALYSTS stare at banks of monitors, each labeled with the name of a COUNTRY, TV NETWORK, SATELLITE, BUILDING, CITY, etc.

In an bank of monitors dedicated to NEWS broadcasts, a screen labeled CNN shows an ANCHORMAN and an EXPERT, seated, both in suits. Their words are transcribed on a computer screen observed by LEAD ANALYST, in a white shirt and tie, standing.

Key words on the computer screen become HIGHLIGHTED.

ANCHOR

(filtered)

How can we trust a country like Iran to comply with the treaty? That's the fundamental problem.

The word IRAN is highlighted.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

(filtered)

How do we know they're not hiding a secret facility underground? It's the same situation we had in Iraq. Saddam had plans to build an entire subway system to transport his weapons of mass destruction.

The words SECRET, IRAQ, and WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION are highlighted.

The TV screen shows IMAGES of an Iraqi Tunnel. Red boxes appear. The image inside each box is enhanced, ZOOMED, marked with DATES and TIMES.

The two talking heads return to the screen.

EXPERT

(filtered)

And they never found those elaborate, secret tunnels.

ANCHOR

(filtered)

But, and I quote a UN arms inspector directly, "That doesn't mean they don't exist." And much of Iraqi territory is now occupied by Al Shallah. We can't search under their ground.

The words "AL SHALLAH" are highlighted and BLINKING. Lead Analyst's attention is suddenly drawn to a bank of screens across the room where other ANALYSTS gather.

He heads over to the group who stare at a monitor labeled IRAQI, KURDISTAN showing overhead surveillance of the incident at the border station.

Another monitor shows still images:

-- The RPG exposed in it's crate.

-- The DRIVER firing the RPG.

-- The explosion.

-- Dead bodies everywhere, bleeding from their mouths and noses.

A picture of the RPG in the crate, up close, the markings clearly visible, emerges from a printer. Lead Analyst's hand grabs the photo.

His other hand picks up a phone.

EXT. ARGYLE COUNTRY CLUB -- NIGHT

A garden wedding. The BAND plays swing. MEN and WOMEN in formal dress mill about. DANCERS spin on a portable hardwood floor. Tables covered in white linen dot the grass.

RICHARD "BUCK" WILLIAMSON (38), solid build, short hair, dimpled chin, wears a tux. He moves through a bar area toward two GUARDS in suits, controlling entry to the private party.

GUARD 1

Name?

BUCK

Williamson. Richard Williamson.

Guard 1 checks a clipboard. Doesn't find the name.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Might be under, Buck.

GUARD 1

Do you have an invitation?

GUARD 2 eyes Buck up and down, then moves closer to Guard 1 as Buck hands over an invitation.

GUARD 1 (CONT'D)

(reading)

Oh, it's Commander Williamson.

Both guards step aside.

GUARD 1 (CONT'D)

Thank you for your service, Sir.

Buck gives him a friendly nod and moves past. Guard 1 calls after him, regarding the invitation he still holds.

GUARD 1 (CONT'D)

Did you want to keep this, Commander?

Buck shakes his head, keeps going, heads toward the bar area.

On a small knoll, loaded with floral bouquets, LAURA SANDERS (34), wears a white bridal gown. She's photographed with her BRIDESMAIDS, the sun setting behind her.

The PHOTOGRAPHER waves the GROOMSMEN together, and Laura gets a break. She notices Buck and heads toward him as Perrier is poured into his ice filled glass.

LAURA

Thanks for coming, Bucky.

BUCK

Sorry I'm late. Duty called.

He takes both her hands in his.

BUCK (CONT'D)

You're stunning, as always.

She takes a full glass of champagne from several that sit atop the bar. They toast.

BUCK (CONT'D)

To you.

She meets his eye as the glasses click. They sip, then she looks over to the bridal party.

LAURA

For all sad words of tongue and pen...

Buck shakes his head.

BUCK

I'd have been late even if I was the groom.

LAURA

Duty has a way of finding you, Commander, even at a desk job.

BUCK

Desk jobs are more important than ever these days.

The photographer beckons for Laura's return.

LAURA

Have fun, Buck.

She heads away, turns her head back to him.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Lots of single bridesmaids.

He watches "the one he let get away" walk toward her groom.

INT. RALLY'S PUB AND GRILL -- NIGHT

SOLOMON KELLY (36) carries a few extra pounds, long hair, thick beard, gold hoop in his ear, a noticeable mole on his forehead. But without those features and with a few weeks in the gym...

... he's a DEAD RINGER for Buck.

Kelly drinks a beer at the bar. The place is packed. LOUD. Ties loosened. Cleavage and high heels. Sports on big TVs.

Kelly eyes two HOT GIRLS, barely legal, fawned over by MEN at the bar. The BARTENDER hands each girl a full shot glass.

The girls inquire, and the bartender points at Kelly, who smiles, raises his beer glass.

The girls suppress giggles, then toast him remotely and down the drinks. One girl grabs the closest guy and kisses him while the whole gang "woohoos."

Kelly frowns, disappointed. His eyes wander. The bartender hands him a shot, then points to a booth where LINDA JOHNSON (35), gorgeous, blond, raises a water glass.

Kelly heads over.

KELLY
Thanks for the drink.

LINDA
My pleasure.

KELLY
My name's Sol--

LINDA
--Solomon Kelly. Yes, I know. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

KELLY
(surprised)
Since no one under thirty recognizes me anymore, you must be older than you look, Miss....?

She extends her hand to shake.

LINDA
Linda Cunningham.

He shakes it.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Drink up, Mr. Kelly. I have a story
to offer you.

KELLY
Is that right?

He downs the shot, sits down with her, leans in.

KELLY (CONT'D)
What else are you offering?

INT. ALLISON COLBY'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

ALLISON COLBY (40), thin, business suit, sits behind her desk in a cramped room, single window, view of trees.

She stares at a photo of the RPG, picks up a document titled: "RE-MANUFACTURE OF BORAK WARHEADS AS RPG WITH SARIN PAYLOAD." The author is "Analyst: Richard Williamson."

On the next page is a picture of an RPG labeled "ARTIST RENDERING." She compares the two images, nearly identical.

A KNOCK, the door opens, Buck enters, still in his tux.

BUCK
Double-oh-seven reporting as ordered.

ALLISON
Sorry about the timing.

She hands him the document.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
Gather the source material for this analysis. You're going to brief the secretary of defense.

Buck looks up from the document bearing his name, surprised.

INT. CIA CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Buck sits next to Allison at a table with RAY HUTCHINS (50), conservative suit, short hair. And NATHAN RAWLINGS, early 60's, gray, overweight but covered well by a Zegna suit.

They watch a VIDEO of the attack at the border station.

ALLISON
The weapon is a shoulder fired RPG with a payload containing what Army Chemical Corps believes to be Sarin gas. ACC analysis of this footage puts the purity at 50 percent.

RAWLINGS

Jesus Christ.

ALLISON

This video verifies intelligence published by Officer Williamson concluding that Al Shallah has found and modified a cache of Borak warheads. They've refined the Sarin payload and are using precision detonation to disperse the toxin in a wide field without destroying its efficacy.

Rawlings eyes Buck.

RAWLINGS

How many of these damn things do they have?

BUCK

I've made several requests to Iraqi Intelligence Service for documentation on the Borak program. IIS have not been forthcoming. But I'd say twenty of those crates can fit in the van.

HUTCHINS

Did we track the vehicle?

The screen shows overhead footage of the van entering a tunnel.

It does not come out.

BUCK

They switched trucks in the tunnel.

HUTCHINS

You can fit two of those fucking things in a goddamn rental car.

EXT. PORT OF LIMASSOL -- DAY

CHYRON: LIMASSOL, CYPRUS

Under the large cranes, two container trucks come to a stop.

Terrorist Driver gets out of the first truck, hands a clipboard to a LONGSHOREMAN, gives him a friendly smile.

Paperwork is signed, exchanged.

Cranes move into position and load the containers onto two different ships.

INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Kelly and Linda sleep. THOMAS NORQUIST (35), business suit tight on his muscular frame, opens a curtain and bright SUNLIGHT fills the room.

Kelly and Linda squint, sit up.

KELLY

What the --?

He glances at the clock on the night stand.

KELLY (CONT'D)

(to Linda)

It's six thirty in the morning.

Kelly notices Norquist, a huge blurry figure in front of the bright sunlight invading the room.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Who the hell are you?

NORQUIST

My name is Norquist. I work with Linda.

LINDA

You could have used the phone.

Norquist picks up her phone. Tosses it on her.

NORQUIST

It's on vibrate. Whirlybird's on the roof. Let's go.

KELLY

What's going on here?

NORQUIST

(to Linda)

You didn't tell him?

KELLY

(to Linda)

Tell me what, exactly?

Kelly gets out of bed, stumbles, hung-over. He lights a cigarette, then opens the mini-bar, pulls out a plastic water bottle, downs it, standing naked in front of Norquist.

NORQUIST

Important people are expecting you.
Get dressed.

Kelly moves closer. He blows smoke in Norquist's face.

KELLY

Expecting me? I'm a reporter, Mr. Norquist. I got news for you.

(closer still)

I rarely live up to other people's expectations. Now both of you get the fuck out.

LINDA

Let me explain, Solly. Please. I'm sure you'll find what I have to say of interest.

NORQUIST

Self-interest.

LINDA

This is a very big story.

NORQUIST

Yeah, you'll get a big story.

Linda stands, naked, puts on tortoise shell glasses. She's spectacular, a Victoria Secret model.

NORQUIST (CONT'D)

Isn't that why you fucked her?

EXT. CIA -- DAY

SUPER: CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY. MCLEAN, VIRGINIA.

A helicopter lands.

INT. DE-BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Windowless. Glass table. Keyboard. Ergonomic chairs. Kelly, wearing a visitor's badge, enters with Linda. Allison shakes his hand.

ALLISON

Hello, Mr. Kelly. My name is Allison Colby. I'm a senior analyst in the CIA's counter-terrorism center.

Kelly sits, stares at a monitor showing a hostage in an orange shirt, on his knees, next to a hooded TERRORIST with a knife.

KELLY

I'm listening.

INT. COMMAND CENTER -- DAY

Flat screens everywhere. On the large, center screen is a LIVE image of the de-briefing room.

Hutchins and Rawlings watch Kelly on the center screen as he lights a cigarette.

On smaller screens are surveillance images of Kelly taken over several months:

-- Kelly doing drugs with FRIENDS.

-- Kelly at home, writing, a cigarette in an ashtray.

-- Kelly in a staff meeting at New York Times.

-- Kelly at a Knicks game.

Rawlings opens a folder, reads, then looks over at Hutchins.

RAWLINGS

Did you run this op by the
Intelligence Oversight Board?

HUTCHINS

If Kelly doesn't sign, there's no op
for the IOB to review.

RAWLINGS

Then it stinks already.

HUTCHINS

Colby identified herself as an
officer. They're not holding a gun
to his head.

RAWLINGS

No, just dangling pussy in his face.

HUTCHINS

The man's juvenile antics make him
easy to recruit.

Rawlings points at the surveillance photos of Kelly.

RAWLINGS

You ran surveillance on a New York
times reporter?

HUTCHINS

FBI did. Colby got them a FISA
warrant.

Hutchins hands Rawlings a legal sized folder. He reads.

RAWLINGS

He's not a foreign national.

HUTCHINS

Actually, he was raised by foster
parents here, but Kelly was born in
Istanbul.

Hutchins closes the file. Hands it back.

RAWLINGS

What are you going to tell the Senate Committee if it goes tits up? "We're honorable men devoted to her service."

HUTCHINS

The target is a terrorist, not a foreign government. We kill them every day.

Rawlings points at Kelly on the screen.

RAWLINGS

And he's the fucking New York Times. If that goddamn newspaper gets their hands on this warrant, they'll shut the court down. I can't sell this to the President.

HUTCHINS

It doesn't need to be on page one of the DB until there's a legit target. Look, we take out Panchenko via this op, and no one will bat an eye, including the New York Times.

RAWLINGS

And if we don't?

On the screen they see Kelly react to what he's watching on the screen in front of him: the hostage is beheaded.

HUTCHINS

Then Allison Colby gets her head handed to her.

The victim's bloody head lands on his torso.

INT. DE-BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

The screens in front of Kelly display IMAGES of VACHESLAV PANCHENKO, tall, fat, big white beard, an albino Don King.

ALLISON

Recognize this man?

KELLY

Vacheslav Panchenko. Russian Weapons Scientist. Genius IQ. Known as "The White Whale."

ALLISON

Very good, Mr. Kelly.

IMAGES of a big factory APPEAR. Large, rectangular buildings, surrounded by chain link, barbed wire.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

This is a factory Panchenko runs in the Ukraine. They use precision explosives to manufacture diamonds.

KELLY

I'll call him if I get engaged.

ALLISON

The same explosives are used to detonate complex warheads. Including certain chemical weapons.

IMAGES of chemical weapons fill the screens.

-- Stockpiles in warehouses.

-- Older weapons, leaking, stacked in storage.

-- A cylinder held by a terrorist in a black robe.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

I'm sure you're aware that Mr. Panchenko is now leader of Al Islam Shallah.

KELLY

Yeah, I heard there's a new Caliph in town.

The IMAGE of the hostage kneeling returns to the screen.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Maybe you guys should stop blowing these dictators-du-jour out of their jeeps. Each supreme leader seems worse than the one before.

ALLISON

Panchenko's made their media machine more sophisticated. They're recruiting in even greater numbers.

LINDA

He'll talk to the Western press.

Kelly gets it now. He nods slowly.

KELLY

Oh, I see. I interviewed Mullah Amir Muhammad, that means I can get to Panchenko?

LINDA

It means you know a courier.

ALLISON

Can your courier get you to Panchenko?

Kelly shifts in his chair, thinks about it.

KELLY

Nobody can get to Panchenko.

EXT. RABBAN HERMIZD MONASTERY -- DAY

CHYRON: NORTHERN IRAQ

A narrow switch back road winds its way to a ancient building, nestled in a u-shaped canyon, surrounded by granite walls.

INT. BENEATH THE MONESTARY -- DAY

A high tech weapons factory, like the control room of a nuclear generating facility.

Vacheslav Panchenko sits at a panel, stares at little glass windows with moving needles. A TECHNICIAN in a white coat hands him a clipboard.

He signs, hands it back as ABDUL BIN-ALI, 50, big man, long, bushy, beard approaches on an electric cart, stops. Stands.

They speak in Russian, SUBTITLED.

ABDUL

Three RPGs made it to Limassol. One is headed to Majorca the others to Boston Harbor.

Panchenko picks up another clip board, studies it, puts two check marks on it with a pen, then hands it to Abdul.

PANCHENKO

Hit the indicated targets.

Abdul reads.

ABDUL

Sir, the Majorca target will net only twenty, maybe thirty deaths--

Abdul tries to hand the list back.

PANCHENKO

It's not about the body count. Keep the goal in mind.

ABDUL

But our fighters don't understand that.

PANCHENKO

They don't have to understand. They have to follow orders. Like you.

Panchenko stares at the clipboard, does not take it back.

ABDUL
Yes, commander.

PANCHENKO
Get the video camera. And find
someone to translate my message into
Arabic that I can actually pronounce.

Abdul is about to move away.

PANCHENKO (CONT'D)
Allahu Akbar! God is great. You
believe that, don't you, Abdul?

Abdul nods slightly.

PANCHENKO (CONT'D)
Let's make sure the good citizens of
the free world believe me too.

INT. DE-BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Kelly, Linda and Allison remain in conference.

ALLISON
Panchenko directs the command and
control of a large military operation,
and he manages several weapons
factories in the former east block.
He can't do that without
communicating. Someone gets to him.

KELLY
Let's say my guy sets it up. He
won't take me through the checkpoints.

ALLISON
We'll fly you to Mosul on a stealth
helicopter.

Kelly is very hesitant. But he's getting tempted.

KELLY
If I'm involved in a CIA
assassination, I'll never write
another story.

ALLISON
We'll deny that you had any knowledge
of the operation. And you can expose
the CIA for using a New York Times
reporter to locate a military target.

KELLY
The truth will leak.

ALLISON

We're good at keeping secrets, Mr. Kelly. Read this agreement. It gives you unprecedented access and permission to publish.

She pushes a single sheet of paper at him.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

It's worth at least a million to you.

She waits for him to read, but he stares right at her.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

And maybe another Pulitzer. How many of your colleagues have two?

Now he's tempted. Kelly picks up the agreement, reads.

INT. COMMAND CENTER -- DAY

While Kelly reads, Rawlings and Hutchins examine military records and photos of Buck on their screens.

-- Buck training with Navy SEALs.

-- Buck getting a medal pinned to his chest.

-- Buck at a CIA training facility.

Hutchins hands Rawlings a dossier.

HUTCHINS

Background on Officer Williamson.

Rawlings reads. Looks up.

RAWLINGS

(surprised)

What's a SEAL doing in the intelligence division? You guys thought we were all pussies when I sat at Colby's desk.

HUTCHINS

He's smart. Harvard man, like you. Speaks fluent Arabic.

Rawlings reads more. Something causes concern.

RAWLINGS

I don't like the family history.

HUTCHINS

We're at war, Mr. Secretary.

RAWLINGS

And war is not about revenge.

HUTCHINS

Williamson's op is our best shot at Panchenko. He wrote it.

Rawlings stares at the images glorifying Buck.

RAWLINGS

Bring him in.

Hutchins hits a button on a phone.

The door opens, Buck enters.

RAWLINGS (CONT'D)

Officer Williamson.

BUCK

Sir.

RAWLINGS

The DCI wants to give your OP a green light. I'm skeptical.

BUCK

Why is that, Mr. Secretary?

RAWLINGS

First, I don't think Kelly's going to sign a commercial cover agreement.

BUCK

He'll sign.

RAWLINGS

How can you know that?

BUCK

I've spent over a year studying him. I know what motivates him, how he makes decisions.

On the screen, Kelly signs the document.

Rawlings nods, impressed. He stares at Buck for a long beat.

RAWLINGS

Can you really pull this off? Will you fool him?

Buck works a mouse, a slide show begins on the monitor, split screen. The right side of the screen is a picture of Kelly, the left, of Buck. Both images go through a Photoshop fueled transformation:

Kelly's hair is removed, replaced by a conservative cut.

Buck's green eyes become blue.

Kelly's Beard is removed.

A gold hoop appears in Buck's left ear.

A mole appears on Buck's forehead.

The two images are now strikingly similar.

BUCK

With all due respect, Mr. Secretary,
the only person I need to fool is a
terrorist named Vacheslav Panchenko.
And only long enough to kill him.

Buck's expression is pure intensity and determination.

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE -- DAY

It's closed. One car in the parking lot. Empty shooting stalls face targets surrounded by a tall hedge. In the last stall, SYLVIA DAHER (35), dark hair, sunglasses, Middle Eastern features, athletic body, fires a handgun.

A limo pulls into the lot, heads slowly toward Sylvia's car and parks. She glances at it, then loads a new magazine.

Hutchins gets out. He watches Sylvia aim, two handed, and shoot. A bullet hits the full-size, paper target in the groin area, then one in the heart, and one between the eyes.

She puts the gun down on a side table, turns toward Hutchins, removes ear protection, shakes her hair out. Very sexy.

SYLVIA

Mr. Hutchins.
(sarcastic)
What a surprise.

HUTCHINS

An operation went live today. There's
a role for you.

SYLVIA

Of course. They didn't fly me here
just to translate for a U.N. Envoy.

He hands her a file. Photos of the RPGs, Panchenko. She glances at each page.

HUTCHINS

Al Shallah has chemical RPGs.
Compact. Easy to smuggle.

She picks up the gun, removes the magazine and tosses it on the table, then holds the weapon out toward him.

SYLVIA
I'll need a bigger gun.

HUTCHINS
The President is sending a team to gather and share intelligence with your agency. A staff member from the embassy will join the team.

SYLVIA
And they'll just happen to pick me.

HUTCHINS
They already have.

SYLVIA
What's the mission?

HUTCHINS
Turn to the last page in the file.

She puts down the gun, reads.

HUTCHINS (CONT'D)
Solomon Kelly signed a commercial cover agreement this morning. He's on his way to Iraq.

She's furious. Shoves the file into his hands.

SYLVIA
Damn you people. You said working for the CIA would protect my friends and family.

HUTCHINS
He signed of his own free will.

SYLVIA
Bullshit. He swallowed whatever line of crap you fed him.

HUTCHINS
Mr. Kelly's too smart for that. He has his own agenda.

SYLVIA
Which will get his head cut off.

HUTCHINS
Not if you stop that from happening. Don't let him breach. Then we won't have to kill him.

Hutchins gets back into the limo.

SYLVIA
Mother fuckers.

She grabs another magazine, inserts it. Hard.

The limo drives away.

In a flash, she raises the gun, one handed, fires at the target, nearly hitting the same three bullet holes.

EXT. BAGDAD -- DAY

SUPER: BAGHDAD, IRAQ.

An Air France jet flies over the sprawling city, descending gracefully as it approaches the airport.