

HONOR KILLING

Library of Congress Registration # 1-1723062226

WGA Registration #1739972

ACTOR BREAKDOWN:

Note: HONOR KILLING can be performed with 6 Actors when doubling is required. The below listing is the playwrights preference (without doubling)

ACTOR 1:

Allisyn Davis: 35, Caucasian American.

A free-lance journalist; works for the NY Times. Graduated cum laude from Vassar, and has a PHD in journalism from Columbia University. Attractive, determined, intelligent, educated and privileged. Well travelled, worldly. Appears conservative, but has an open mind. Hides her vulnerability. Defiant, strong-willed, curious, and not easily contained.

ACTOR 2:

Ben Adams: 36, Caucasian American.

Journalist. Harvard grad; double major in business and journalism. Hails from a wealthy family in Georgia. Incredibly driven, he's quickly climbing the ranks at The New York Times. An attractive, ambitious, hard worker- seemingly open-minded and democratic- despite his upbringing. Strong-minded and incredibly capable- he is Allisyn's true equal.

ACTOR 3: FEMALE

Mehreen: 35, Pakistani lawyer and activist. (FEMALE)

Immigration Officer: 35-40, Pakistani Immigration Officer at the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore, Pakistan.

ACTOR 4:

Mohammad Ijaz: 45-55, Husband of the deceased, Samira Tasneem. Seemingly bereft, wife was brutally murdered in front of him. Pakistani.

Abbas- 35-45, Pakistani stringer

ACTOR 5:

Muzaffar Khan, 40, Samira's Lawyer. Pakistani. Educated- but not elite. The people's lawyer.

Raja Mahmood (Consular Agent): 35-40, Pakistani. Answers to Consul General, Shahreyar Zasar.

ACTOR 6:

Shahreyar Zasar: 40-50, Pakistani Consul General to Dubai. Elegant, educated, diplomatic and cutting. A traditionalist.

ACTOR 7:

Melissa Davis: 37, Caucasian American. Allisyn's sister. Pretty, reserved. Is stronger than she looks.

BBC- News-reporter: Female, British

ACTOR 8:

Edward Evans, 50-65, NY Times Bureau Chief (London)

*Must read indicated stage directions (BOLDED) for readings/presentations

Scene 1

Lights up on the apartment of ALLYSIN DAVIS, 35. The stage is filled with current communication technology and multiple screens. A large work desk is DSC – where ALLISYN sits, facing her computer. Newspapers and notebooks are strewn about, though there is still an air of order and competence about the space. One screen shows live BBC coverage, while another is linked to Allisyn’s computer and shows her airline reservation and flight confirmation to Pakistan, via Dubai. Skype rings through her computer. Allisyn answers.

ALLISYN:
Abbas?

A screen shows ABBAS live, via Skype.

ABBAS:
Salam, Allisyn.

ALLISYN:
Hi- I got your text. This happened this morning?

ABBAS:
Her body’s been lying outside the courthouse since early this morning. No one’s moved it yet.

ALLISYN:
What the hell are they waiting for? The police have been notified?

ABBAS:
The police were there, Allisyn.

ALLISYN:
How long after she was killed?

ABBAS:
When she was killed. They were there when it happened.

ALLISYN sits down abruptly.

ALLISYN:
And they did nothing to stop them?

ABBAS:
Not according to her lawyer, Muzaffar Khan.

ALLISYN:

I've gotta get him on record.

ABBAS:

I texted you his number. He's waiting for your call.

ALLISYN:

I'm booked on the red-eye out of JFK-- I'll call him now. You'll meet me at the airport?

ABBAS:

I'll be there to collect you.

ALLISYN:

We need a safe house near the High Court.

ABBAS:

It's all arranged, Allisyn.

ALLISYN:

I'll reach out to Mehreen.

ABBAS:

I spoke to her earlier today.
But by all means,
micromanage away!

ALLISYN:

(She smiles)

I'll see you in the morning, Abbas. Thank you.

ABBAS:

Allah Hafiz.

Allisyn turns up the volume on the television- which plays on the screen. The BBC News reporter reports:

NEWS REPORTER:

Now coming to you from Lahore, Pakistan. There appears to be the body of a young woman outside the High Courthouse of Lahore. She was apparently killed early this morning. We don't have any additional information for you at this time, but will be bringing you updates as further information becomes available. Nicola Kay, BBC News.

ALLISYN:

Damn it.

Allisyn opens the desk drawer and pulls out her passport and paperwork. The screen stays connected to her computer so we watch as she pulls up the Pakistani Embassy website and confirms that her VISA to Lahore, Pakistan is valid. She is facing the audience while using her MAC and we see her very quickly navigate arranging a car service to pick her up and bring her to the airport. A countdown clock for both the flight and the car service ticks down on the screen so that we are aware of exactly how many minutes she has until her flight departs and how many minutes until the car arrives. She checks the time and Skype dials EDWARD EVANS, the NY Times Bureau Chief based out of London. EDWARD appears on Skype video-feed.

EDWARD:

Allisyn- what's happening?

ALLISYN:

The body of a young woman has been lying dead outside the high courthouse in Lahore since this morning. Word on the street is it was an honor killing. I'm flying out tonight- via Dubai.

EDWARD:

You're aware that they may have blacklisted you?

ALLISYN:

It was three years ago, Edward. My Visa is solid.

(Pause.)

I am aware of the risks.

EDWARD:

Understand there's little I can do to protect you if things go down hill.

ALLISYN:

Edward, please allow me to do what you've hired me to do.

EDWARD:

(He pauses.)

Get the story, Allisyn. Be in contact with me as soon as you land.

ALLISYN:

That's what I wanted to hear. Will do.

ALLISYN hangs up with EDWARD and immediately pulls up KHAN's information and Skype's him. She speaks in Urdu. The screens continue to show news coverage out of Pakistan. Khan's image appears on Skype.

ALLISYN:
(in Urdu) Mr. Khan?

MUZAFFAR:
 Yes.

ALLISYN:
 I'm Allisyn Davis of the NY Times... Are you comfortable in English? *(He nods.)*
 Mr. Khan, Abbas tells me you are willing to speak to me on the record about your client?

MUZAFFAR:
 Samira.

ALLISYN:
 Samira?

MUZAFFAR:
 Samira Tasneem.

ALLISYN:
 Can you please tell me when you first met Samira?

MUZAFFAR:
 Samira came to my office and asked me to help her register her marriage to Muhammad Ijaaz. That was about two months ago.

ALLISYN:
 That is standard procedure, is it not?

MUZAFFAR:
 Samira's marriage to Ijaaz was arranged last fall. They were scheduled to marry in the spring. He gave her family money and jewelry. But, her family changed their minds and insisted she marry her cousin *instead*- who she did not want to marry. She and Mr. Ijaaz were in love. So they eloped. This greatly angered Samira's family. They demanded that Mr. Ijaaz pay them more money, but he didn't have this additional money to give.

ALLISYN:
 So you helped her file the necessary forms- and then what?

MUZAFFAR:
 Then Samira's father came to the courthouse and filed a lawsuit against Mr. Ijaaz. He claimed that Mr. Ijaaz had kidnapped Samira and forced her to marry him against her will.

ALLISYN:

Which was not true in your estimation?

MUZAFFAR:

Not true. Samira wanted this marriage and had clearly chosen it for herself.

ALLISYN:

So, in your opinion, the family invented the kidnapping to get Samira back?

MUZAFFAR:

They never wanted Samira back. They wanted more money-- compensation for the shame she caused them by disobeying them.

She continues preparations to depart while she speaks to him.

ALLISYN:

Can you tell me anything about Samira herself? Like her age- was she in school?

MUZAFFAR:

Samira was 25. She was from Faisalabad. I don't think her family allowed her to go to school. *(He pauses.)*
Samira told me this morning that she was pregnant.

She stops moving for a moment.

ALLISYN:

She was pregnant?

MUZAFFAR:

You see- this was not a single, but a double murder.

ALLISYN:

How far along was she?

MUZAFFAR:

She said a few months. Mr. Ijaaz would be able to tell you.

ALLISYN:

I can also contact the medical examiner to confirm how far along she was.

MUZAFFAR:

That would be better, yes. Justice must be had for both Samira and her unborn child. There is no honor in these brutal murders.

ALLISYN:

Let's go back to this morning. What can you tell me about the circumstances of Samira's death?

MUZAFFAR:

She was stoned by her own family. A whole mob of them. 20 people- father, brothers, even some female cousins. I was there. In front of the High Court. With policemen standing right there. They just let it happen. They let her die.

ALLISYN:

Mr. Khan, I'm on the midnight flight to Pakistan tonight. Would you be willing to meet with me in person to discuss the details of Samira's death?

MUZAFFAR:

Yes, madam. I will. I've also filed a report with the Mahzang police station.

ALLISYN:

Are you afraid for your safety?

MUZAFFAR:

I owe this to Samira, madam.

ALLISYN:

Thank you, Mr. Khan. You'll hear from me tomorrow -as soon as I land.

MUZAFFAR:

Ok. Allah Hafiz.

Allisyn hangs up the phone and immediately becomes light headed and has to sit down. She leans forward and puts her head beneath her knees. She stays there until the episode passes.

She stands tentatively. She goes to the refrigerator and takes a long drink of water. Once she is composed, she goes to her desk, pulls out a separate phone. She plugs it into her laptop, which connects back to the screen. She checks her watch and sends off a text to ABBAS in Pakistan, which appears on the screen. Every time she types or speaks in Urdu, we see the English translation on one of the screens behind her.

Allisyn types in Urdu to ABBAS. A translation appears:

"Headed to airport. See you at 8am. Confirm." کل 8 صبح کی پہنچنے بجے - کیری تصدیق - حوالگی

*She leaves the phone charging in the computer and looks at the minimized frames to see how much time she has. She sits for a second and then closes her computer. Allisyn **(She) receives a text from the car service- which pops up on the screen:***

"Car #555 to JFK has arrived."

She collects her belongings and systematically shuts down her electronics, taking the chargers, the two separate phones, and her suitcase (passport etc.); there is no scrambling.

A text response from ABBAS on the secondary phone reads:

"Ay ay, captain."

We see this in both Urdu and English on the screen. She smiles, closes both phones, collects her bags, and exits the apartment. Lights go to black.

Scene 2

Allisyn is now at the Allama Iqbal International Airport (in Lahore, Pakistan). She's changed into more conservative attire- long sleeves and pants and wears a scarf. She pauses to switch the SIM card into her phone. She approaches Customs and an IMMIGRATION OFFICER appears.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER:

Papers, please.

She hands over her passport, visa and documents.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER:

Press? You are journalist, madam, yes?

ALLISYN:

Yes, New York Times.

She shows her visa and badge. The IMMIGRATION OFFICER takes the items and studies them. She scans the passport into the computer and becomes visibly irritated.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER:

You arrived from where- New York?

ALLISYN:

Via, Dubai, yes.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER:

Visa denied, madam.

ALLISYN:

(She switches to Urdu, sweetly)

There must be some mistake. My visa was verified before I boarded the plane in Dubai.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER:

Perhaps Visa was valid then, but Visa is no longer valid now for your entry into Pakistan. You will step over here, madam. An ISI Officer will arrive momentarily to escort you onto the next flight back to Dubai.

ALLISYN:

(Shown in Urdu, stated aggressively:)

I don't understand. It was valid 6 hours ago. How could the status change while I was in the air?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER:

You will be denied entrance at all domestic and international airports in Pakistan.
Indefinitely, madam.

ALLISYN:*(To herself.)*

Shit.

She steps to the side and awaits the arrival of her escort

She takes the memory chip out of her phone. She takes out her American iPhone and attempts to connect to the Wi-Fi from the airport. We watch the connection attempt on the screen.

As soon as the Wi-Fi bars connect, she texts ABBAS:

“Being re-routed to Dubai.”

ABBAS calls her phone in response, she answers:

ABBAS:

Immigration is having fun with you?

ALLISYN:

Don't even start, Abbas.

ABBAS:

They haven't invited you for chai?

ALLISYN:

Very funny.

He laughs.

ABBAS:

OK, just keep me informed.

Listen, I wanted to tell you in person- but it seems this is as close as we are going to get at the moment.

ALLISYN:

Now what?!

ABBAS:

No, no... good news for you. Faryal and I got married. This past summer.

ALLISYN:

Seriously, Abbas?

ABBAS:

We wanted to surprise you.

ALLISYN:

I can't believe you didn't tell me... Thanks for the invitation?

ABBAS:

Your record isn't exactly Immigration friendly, Allisyn. And Faryal's family wasn't particularly keen on a destination wedding.

ALLISYN:

(Rhetorically)

No one wanted to attend a summer wedding in Dubai?

ABBAS:

I had to persuade Faryal that you'd understand.

ALLISYN:

Of course I do. Congratulations, you nut.

ABBAS:

Not to worry- Americans say you have a year to give a gift, yes?

ALLISYN:

(she laughs)

Something like that. I'm happy for you.

ABBAS:

Thank you.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

I'll let you know what's happening.

ABBAS:

OK, standing by.

She hangs up and texts boss, EDWARD:

"Denied entrance - Visa "not valid". Being escorted back to Dubai. Will work from Dubai- will figure something out."

Scene 3

Lights up on Allisyn entering a hotel room in Dubai. She throws her bags down and immediately turns on the news. She texts Edward:

“She was killed directly in front of the High Court. It was broad day-light”.

Edward texts back:

“Do what you can from there. I’m sending you a Middle East correspondent to go in on the ground. He’ll be in Dubai in a few hours.”

She responds:

“Who?”

She flips the channel back to the news out of Pakistan and studies her phone. She texts again:

“Pakistan is not the Middle East, Edward.”

He responds:

“Ben Adams- he’s coming in from Cairo.”

Allisyn puts her head in her hands.

ALLISYN:

Of course, he is....

She starts unpacking her belongings, plugs in all her electrical devices. She turns up the volume on the news, goes to the bathroom, and turns on the shower.

Light Cue (change).

Scene 4

It is now night time. Allisyn has slept a little, showered and changed into slightly more western clothing.

Her phone beeps. A text from BEN ADAMS comes in:

“Edward sent me. I’m in room 220. Where are you?”

She collects herself and texts back:

“310. Come on up.”

ALLISYN checks her appearance in the mirror- then goes to the door – waiting for his knock. She opens the door and gestures for him to enter. BEN enters her hotel room. He waits for her to say something- and when she doesn’t- walks all the way into the hotel room and sets his bags down on the bed.

ALLISYN:

Do you want something to drink? Water? Whiskey?

BEN:

Water’d be good.

She gets him a water bottle. Hands it to him. He takes it from her- sits on the bed and smiles.

BEN (cont’d):

Hi, Allisyn.

ALLISYN:

That was fast. To get here from Cairo, I mean.

BEN:

It’s not bad if you fly direct- four hours. I guess Edward’s just hoping I’ll piss off less people than you tend to.

ALLISYN:

I didn’t mean to involve you- trust me. The last thing I wanted was to hand the story over to you....

BEN:

You’re not handing it over to me. They’re *your* contacts.

ALLISYN:

That's right. They are. My contacts.

BEN:

Was I not supposed to come? If *you* can't cover it yourself, no one should? Anyway- I'm on the first flight to Lahore in the morning.

ALLISYN:

The victim's lawyer, Khan, was an eyewitness. He was expecting me today.

BEN:

The BBC and CNN are reporting it?

ALLISYN:

No facts or footage yet- just the headline.

BEN:

Right.

He looks around the room. Beat.

ALLISYN:

So. You're still in Egypt. Haven't had your fill of Arabian nights yet?

BEN:

Actually I rode here on my horse.

ALLISYN:

Whatever happened with the promotion? Editor In Chief, right? Back in the States?

BEN:

Edward gave it to Diane Abramson- who doesn't have half the reporting experience that I do. She's spent the last year as a cultural news editor-

ALLISYN:

Yes...but she was the Deputy Foreign Editor for five years before that. And the Executive Editor of the International Herald Tribune before that and....

BEN:

(Interrupting her) You know what? Let's....stay on subject: Pakistan. You actually thought they would let you in?

ALLISYN:

I was cautiously optimistic.

BEN:

Allisyn- you wrote an op-ed on Sharia Law for the Times *last month*.

ALLISYN:

It was the Washington Post piece from three years ago that pissed them off, Ben, not the damn op-ed. Apparently government officials get a little testy when you call them out on trading girls for sex.

BEN:

Nothing like throwing fresh fuel on the fire-- with an opinion piece on Islamic Law in the NY Times?

(beat)

You know we've already got stringers on the ground in Lahore.

ALLISYN:

They are my contacts, Ben. This is my area- you know you would do the same.

BEN:

Hey, let's start over?

I'll knock on the door, and you'll open it and say,

"Ben! I'm so glad to see you... Thank you for coming! I'm sorry Edward had to call you to my rescue, and I'm sorry I disappeared and never returned any of your calls, emails or texts after 10 days of pretty awesome love making on the Suez

last summer....

(Beat)

ALLISYN:

You weren't called to my rescue.

BEN:

Really, Allisyn?

ALLISYN:

I'm sorry. I am. Sorry.

BEN:

Are you?

ALLISYN:

Yes.

BEN:

For which part?

ALLISYN:

The running away part. And the not returning your calls part. You didn't deserve that.

BEN:
No, I didn't.

ALLISYN:
I... I needed to get back to my work.

BEN:
We were on assignment, Allisyn. I wasn't keeping you from your work.

ALLISYN:
I just mean, I couldn't stay there in your world with you.
Anyway- I was offered a position on the Clinton campaign. It was important that I be there. You know- pussy grabs back.

BEN:
Jesus- I wasn't holding you hostage. You were free to leave at any point. I was just expecting you to have the decency to tell me you were leaving.

ALLISYN:
I know.

BEN:
Things were-good, weren't they?

ALLISYN:
I know.

BEN:
I mean- *I* thought they were.
I thought they were *really* good- and you--

ALLISYN:
I know.

BEN:
So?

ALLISYN:
I just- couldn't.

BEN:
Why?

ALLISYN:
I... snuck out of your hotel room and asked Edward to reassign me.

BEN:

Well, that much I gathered. But it's good to hear you say it. I called you for weeks, Allisyn. I had no idea where you went.

ALLISYN:

I said I was sorry.

BEN:

Did I do something wrong?

ALLISYN:

No! *(beat)* That last night. After you told me about your family... I was watching you sleep. You were- sweaty. It was so fucking hot there. And the way you smelled--- I wanted you. And I was afraid that I would choose that over my work if I had to. So I had to leave.

BEN:

You'd choose *that*.

ALLISYN:

It. Us.

BEN:

Me. You were afraid you'd choose me. *(beat)*
I never would have stopped you from working.

ALLISYN:

You wouldn't have asked me to, no.

BEN:

There's room, Allisyn. To be and do whatever you want.

ALLISYN:

Wanting you- is not an option.

BEN:

I beg to differ. *(He kisses her.)*
Put your work first. I'm very self-sufficient.

ALLISYN:

I may disappoint you.

BEN:

I can live with that.

She kisses him. He responds passionately. They move to the bed.

SCENE 5:

An hour later. They're still in bed.

BEN:

So, who knows you're here- just Edward?

ALLISYN:

Yes.

He kisses her.

BEN:

Not your sister?

ALLISYN:

Just Edward.

They continue to kiss.

BEN:

She's older, right?

ALLISYN:

Two years.

BEN:

Is she like you?

ALLISYN:

Sort of. She's just... bossier than me.

BEN:

You're pretty bossy.

ALLISYN:

I have other fine attributes.

He smirks a little.

BEN:

Yes- yes, you do.

So, your big sister bossed you around, huh?

ALLISYN:

I used to steal her clothes and shit- just to drive her crazy.

BEN:

Yeah, boys don't really do that.

(beat)
Your poor dad. Two beautiful, smart girls.

She pulls away from him.

ALLISYN:

How come no one ever says, those poor little girls... I hope they have a good father?

BEN:

Hey, you get what you get. I worked my ass off to get away from mine.

She turns on the news. Reporting plays on the screens- live footage coming out of Pakistan. Ben flips it to Cairo.

BEN (cont'd):

Have you been following what's happening to the Christians since you were there?

ALLISYN:

A dozen hosed down at the Coptic Church in Cairo.

BEN:

Another twenty-one beheaded in Libya-

ALLISYN:

Isn't that the one common denominator between the Muslim Brotherhood and Isis --that they both hate the Christians as much they hate Americans?

BEN:

Only if you're grossly uninformed and over simplifying the situation.

ALLISYN:

Unbelievable that Egypt wasn't included in the "Muslim Ban".

BEN:

Or Pakistan. And it wasn't a ban—it was "ninety days".

ALLISYN:

Right.

She flips the news back to Pakistan.

ALLISYN:

So, tomorrow....

BEN:

I get on the flight in the morning.

ALLISYN:

Abbas will meet you at 10:45 and bring you into Lahore. Just speak to as many people on the ground as you can. And do your best not to get captured by Al Qaeda or the Taliban....

BEN:

That's a little harsh.

Ben takes the papers she has given him. He enters the phone numbers into his phone.

ALLISYN:

Oh, c'mon. Don't go all soft on me now.

BEN:

(Sarcastically)

Hopefully I can get them to talk.

ALLISYN:

You're not as verbose in Urdu as you are in English?

BEN:

You should try to shut me up in Arabic.

ALLISYN:

(She smiles)

Abbas has been with me over five years. You're in good hands.

(Beat)

BEN:

Listen – if something happens to me while I'm there, I don't want you to feel in any way responsible for-

ALLISYN:

Nothing's going to happen to you....

BEN:

I'm just saying-

ALLISYN:

(She interrupts him)

Nothing's going to happen to you.

BEN:

I just--- want you to know that it was my choice to come.

ALLISYN:

Edward called you specifically because he knew you'd come. No one forced you- I know that.

BEN:

Ok...I see I can relinquish any concerns about that...

ALLISYN:

How about-- I don't feel responsible for your decisions and you don't feel responsible for mine?

BEN:

Oh, I don't. Even when you're making bad ones.

ALLISYN:

I was deported- not beheaded.

BEN:

I wasn't talking about Pakistan. *(beat)*

Ben throws his boxers on, gets up and grabs both of their laptops, handing hers off to her. Their various lap top interactions are show behind them on the screens. They both pull up images and research Samira's story. We see Samira's image shown on the screen connected to ALLISYN's computer. ALLISYN refers to the photo.

ALLISYN:

Samira's lawyer, Khan, sent this. It's her ID from the Courthouse paperwork he filed for her and her husband, Ijaaz. Khan's arranged for you to meet him tomorrow.

Skype rings on her computer. She sees that it is MELISSA.

ALLISYN:

I'm sorry- I need to take this.

BEN:

No problem.

BEN puts his laptop on the table and goes into the bathroom to take a shower. ALLISYN answers; the screens show a very pregnant, MELISSA.

ALLISYN:

Hey, there.

MELISSA:

Hi! Did I wake you?

ALLISYN:

No, no- it just took me a minute to get to the phone. How are you?
Feeling any better?

MELISSA:

Whoever said the nausea passes after the first trimester *lied*.

ALLISYN:

I'm sorry. Hey, remember when we were on the Gravitron- at the fair?

MELISSA:

Oh, God.

ALLISYN:

It was spinning around so fast- and you were screaming you were gonna puke-

MELISSA:

Please don't remind me-

ALLISYN:

and I was begging you not to so it wouldn't fly straight back in our faces.

MELISSA:

Ally- you are making it worse!

ALLISYN:

Your face was totally green.

MELISSA:

Like it is right now?

ALLISYN:

(Smiling.)

Sorry.

MELISSA:

Brat.

(beat)

You look good. Uncharacteristically relaxed.

ALLISYN:

Oh?

ALLISYN scrambles to appear normal, and not in bed.

MELISSA:

Are you in a hotel? Where are you?

ALLISYN:

Uh- I'm in Dubai, actually.

MELISSA:

Dubai? What for? You didn't tell me you were going?

ALLISYN:

I know. It came up kind of quickly.

MELISSA:

Well, what are you doing there?

ALLISYN:

I'm supposed to be covering a story in Pakistan but they re-routed me here.

MELISSA:

Ally, Jesus. *(beat)*

They didn't let you in, did they?

ALLISYN:

It's fine- it happens sometimes-

MELISSA:

I think we both know why "it happened" this time. Couldn't they send someone else?

ALLISYN:

No.

MELISSA:

Why not?

ALLISYN:

Because Pakistan is my area.

MELISSA:

I know that, Ally. That's not why I asked you that.

ALLISYN:

(She exhales.)

I know. Sorry. *(beat)*

Melissa doesn't say anything. Ben comes out of the bathroom and sits at the table with his laptop.

ALLISYN (cont'd):

Look, I'm sorry. I wanted to tell you I was leaving but I didn't want to worry you, so. I figured you had enough on your plate.

MELISSA:

I...

How long will you be gone this time?

ALLISYN:

I don't know exactly.

MELISSA:

Will you be back for the baby?

ALLISYN:

Of, course.

MELISSA:

I mean, I could deliver any day now.

ALLISYN:

It's another honor killing.

MELISSA:

And I'm having a baby.

ALLISYN:

I'll be back soon, I promise.

Listen, I've gotta run.

MELISSA:

You're not even in the right country. Can't you just come home?

ALLISYN:

I have a colleague here who's working with me, ok? It will be fine; I'll cover this one story and I'll be back.

MELISSA:

You don't have to do this.

ALLISYN:

Actually, I do. *(beat)*

ALLISYN (*cont'd*):
I'll let you know when I'm back, ok? I love you.

MELISSA:
I love you, too.

ALLISYN:
Ok, bye.

She goes to hang up.

MELISSA:
Ally?... Please be careful.

ALLISYN:
I will. Don't worry. Bye.

MELISSA:
Bye.

She turns to Ben.

ALLISYN:
Sorry about that.

BEN:
She's pregnant?

ALLISYN:
Almost nine months.

BEN:
First baby?

ALLISYN:
Yea.

BEN:
No wonder; she must be a wreck.

ALLISYN:
Her husband is an OB-GYN.

BEN:
Wow, OK.

ALLISYN:
I mean, he's not *her* OB-GYN...

BEN:
That's probably a good thing-

ALLISYN:
Yes- I'm sure it is.

BEN:
But still....That's gotta be amazing for them.

ALLISYN is quiet.

BEN:
Right? I mean, no wonder she is worried about you.

ALLISYN:
Anyway, I'm hoping she'll have delivered by the time I get home.

BEN:
Why's that?

ALLISYN:
Oh, it's a long story.

Ben smiles, pats the bed – gesturing for her to join him.

BEN:
I don't have anywhere else to be....

ALLISYN joins him, reluctantly.

ALLISYN:
She just- spent a lot of time in the hospital.
Melissa. I'm not anxious to see her there again.

BEN:
She was sick?

ALLISYN:
No, no. She was.... drugged. Roofied.

BEN:
Jesus. I'm sorry.

She switches the news back to coverage of Samira.

ALLISYN:
Anyway. Samira.

BEN:
Wait, Allisyn.

She ignores him.

ALLISYN:
So Khan was witness to her death.

BEN:
We were talking about your sister---

ALLISYN:
It looks like his office is almost directly across the street from the Courthouse....

BEN:
Was she at a bar?

ALLISYN:
So he probably escorted them from his office to the Courthouse...

BEN:
Allisyn...

ALLISYN:
And somehow she ends up murdered by her own family in broad daylight?

BEN:
Allisyn!

ALLISYN:
She was raped, ok? She was gang raped.

BEN:
What the hell happened?

ALLISYN:
It was a group of boys. She and Julie- her friend Julie- were at a party together. I was invited to go, too, but I decided not to.

BEN:
Where were your parents?

ALLISYN:
Away for the weekend.

BEN:

So, why didn't you go with her? *(Beat)* Al?

ALLISYN:

We'd had a fight. I borrowed her new Pink Floyd t-shirt without asking her.

BEN:

So...?

ALLISYN:

So she caught me stealing it from her closet and freaked out.

BEN:

You stole her shirt and-

ALLISYN:

She called and said the party was a blast. That it was too bad I couldn't respect her shit or it would've been fun to go together.

So I told her to piss off- and hung up on her. And unplugged the phone. The police knocked on our door in the morning. They'd found her passed out on the street. They'd been trying to call.

BEN:

Wow. I'm sorry.

ALLISYN:

My dad stopped talking to her for a while after that.

BEN:

Why would he do that?

ALLISYN:

It seemed like he was punishing her.

BEN:

Did he think it was her fault?

ALLISYN:

I don't know what he thought.

BEN:

What about your mother?

ALLISYN:

She wanted to go to the police- but he insisted Melissa'd been through enough.

BEN:

Your parents never pressed charges? That's absurd.

(beat)

Allisyn, this was not your fault. *(beat)*

Did you ever find out what actually happened that night?

ALLISYN:

So... they were at the party. Apparently Melissa wanted to stay and hang out with Phil- this guy she'd been dating. He was gonna walk her to Julie's.

BEN:

He was one of the guys that attacked her?

ALLISYN:

I don't know, Ben.

BEN:

Wasn't she examined at the hospital?

ALLISYN:

She was, yes. But she admitted they'd been sleeping together for a while.

BEN:

How old was she?

ALLISYN:

Sixteen.

BEN:

She started young.

ALLISYN:

How old were you?

BEN:

Fifteen.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

Anyway- she was getting a lot of attention.

BEN:

And she liked it?

ALLISYN:
Who doesn't?
(beat)

BEN:
So- Phil was one of the guys but-

ALLISYN:
But because she was dating him- no one believed that he was part of the rape.

BEN:
But she claimed he was.

ALLISYN:
Melissa said he forced himself on her and then invited several of his friends to have her, as well.

BEN:
What a piece of shit. These other guys- you knew who they were?

ALLISYN:
They were from our school. She'd actually been out with a couple of them before.

BEN:
She'd slept with them?

ALLISYN:
She was all about Phil. They were spending all their time together.

BEN:
So she wasn't sleeping with any of other guys?

ALLISYN:
I just told you she was only dating Phil.

BEN:
Only Phil? I mean, do you think there some confusion about what she was up for?

ALLISYN:
I'm sorry?

BEN:
I'm just wondering if maybe she was a little more interested in the other guys than you might have realized. I mean- it sounds like maybe-

ALLISYN:

(Interrupting him)

What I said was that she'd had sex with Phil. Which you obviously have a judgment about-

BEN:

I didn't say it was wrong- I just said she was young.

ALLISYN:

Please tell me you aren't asking me to explain the difference between choosing to have sex and being gang raped....

BEN:

I'm simply restating the facts. She was a sexually charged girl. She was already dating a few of them.... I'm just asking if it's possible that the guys were getting mixed signals from her?

ALLISYN:

You are not serious.

BEN:

I'm just trying to understand what happened.

ALLISYN:

I already told you what happened.

BEN:

I'm not defending them...

ALLISYN:

Are you sure?

BEN:

Allisyn. I am a reporter. I am just trying to get the facts. This is what we do...

ALLISYN:

In my entire life, I have never regretted telling anyone this story- more than I do right now.

BEN:

It's a horrible thing that happened to Melissa- I just thought...

(beat)

BEN (cont'd):

Listen, I used to have this girlfriend. We played these games in bed. She'd take off all her clothes and climb on top of me, and then tell me not to touch her. She'd keep

BEN (cont'd):

teasing me, saying yes and then no, and then beg me to over-power her... She'd get so worked up and ask for it harder after she'd said no... It was hot.

ALLISYN:

Melissa was a teenager- not a grown woman, role-playing with you.

BEN:

I'm sorry- I just thought maybe-

ALLISYN:

Maybe WHAT? Have you ever seen someone who's been gang raped, Ben? Cause let me tell what that looks like. Unconscious. With a black eye and swollen jaw-- bruises on the shoulders and arms. There were these crusty, bloody parts of her head. The surgeon stopped the internal bleeding so as long as the swelling in her brain hadn't caused brain damage, the Dr. said she might just pull through OK.

She sits down abruptly. Fights through the light-headedness- but is clearly thrown off.

ALLISYN (cont'd):

Is that what you needed to hear me say? You needed me to explain the way they almost killed her before you bought it? Because she *might* have had sex with one of them before- that her saying no this time doesn't count?!

BEN:

I didn't realize... I had no idea she'd been hurt so badly. That is not how you presented it. You told me this history with Phil and the other boys- I just thought it was possible that she was more involved in it to begin with and then it turned into something else. And for the record- yes, I *have* seen women who've been ganged raped. Let's not have a competition over whose seen worse shit.

ALLISYN:

It's not a competition. I'm talking about how eight boys drugged, beat and gang raped my sister- at home in the U.S., Ben.

(beat)

How could I be so stupid? It's the same old, Goddamn story- everywhere. Spewing from the mouth of the President of the United States or camouflaged inside a Harvard education with a NY Times badge.

(beat)

So tomorrow you meet *my* contacts. And you say the things I tell you to say.

ALLISYN (cont'd):

What did you come here for, Ben? To send me back home safe and sound while you cover *my* story?

BEN:

I came here for you, Allisyn.

ALLISYN:

And I came here for Samira Tasneem. Not to get laid.

Ben walks out of the hotel room. Black out.

Scene 6

It's very early the next morning- 5:30am. Allisyn is on her computer. She is dressed and already working. Skype rings. The screens behind her switch to Al-Jazeera- the riots in Lahore. ALLISYN answers the call.

ALLISYN:
Mehreen? Hello?

MEHREEN:
Hi there, Miss hotshot NY Times. Guess your Washington Post articles went over a bit better in NY than they did here in Pakistan...

ALLISYN:
Yeah. It would've been nice to have a heads up about that before I got to Immigration.

MEHREEN:
Well, it's been a long time since I've heard from you now- what, three years?

ALLISYN:
About that, I guess. And you're freelancing with The Dawn now, right?

MEHREEN:
I have a monthly column. It's not the Washington Post...

ALLISYN:
It's the largest English speaking publication in Pakistan, Mehreen. Congratulations.

MEHREEN:
Well, I'm mostly in the courtroom these days.
I guess its good we got you out when we did. Your message said they sent you back to Dubai?

ALLISYN:
I'm in a hotel here – working with a colleague who's arriving today in Lahore. I wondered if I could connect the two of you?

MEHREEN:
For what purpose, Allisyn?

ALLISYN:
We're covering the honor killing of Samira Tasneem. He's on the ground. I thought maybe you could give him the lay of the land?

MEHREEN:

What happened to Abbas?

ALLISYN:

We're still working together.

I just thought you might be in a better position to corroborate some of the facts- or facilitate a meeting with the police officers who were involved at the Mahzang station?

MEHREEN:

To what purpose, can I ask?

ALLISYN:

I'm sorry?

MEHREEN:

I mean, sorry to be blunt, but what is your angle? Another episode of the noble, white American sweeping in to save the poor brown people? Brown women, more specifically?

ALLISYN:

Jesus, Mehreen.... That's a little unfair.

MEHREEN:

You know, Allisyn. It's funny... When we exposed the sex trade here and you published those articles in the Washington Post- I actually believed that you had Pakistan's best interest at heart. But instead, you became the poster-child for Pakistani women.

ALLISYN:

Did I misrepresent you in some way?

MEHREEN:

You were here for 11 months. That does not give you the right to be the voice of our people.

ALLISYN:

I wasn't trying to be the voice of your people, I was trying to continue what we started. You could've picked up the phone if you didn't like what I was writing.

MEHREEN:

You wrote an Op-ed in the NY Times on how Sharia Law affects the lives of Pakistani women, Allisyn, and neglected to include one single on-the-ground, female

MEHREEN (*cont'd*):

Pakistani perspective. *That* is not continuing what we started. That, is self-aggrandizing American propaganda.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

You helped get me out of the country. I thought we were on the same page...

MEHREEN:

I don't know if you can hear the rallies behind me, can you? Maybe you can see them?

ALLISYN:

It's on Al-Jazeera-

MEHREEN:

We're not people without voices who need you to swoop in and turn this into another Op-Ed in the Sunday Times.
Because we are not all victims, here, you do know that, right?

ALLISYN:

Well, Samira certainly was.

MEHREEN:

That is why we are gathered here to challenge the interpretation of some of our Islamic teachings, and to re-write them- if necessary. But this is something that only the people of Pakistan can do.

ALLISYN:

I don't see how my covering this story in any way belittles what you are working towards.

MEHREEN:

In theory, Allisyn, it doesn't. But in practicality, it does. It's in the way this news and media is presented to the American people. Like your Sharia Law Op-ed.... All it did was reinforce the idea we are all victims. That we have no voice, no education, no ability to resolve our own country's issues without Western influence. And quite frankly, I am sick of it.

ALLISYN:

So let me get this straight. You would rather the story not run in the Times at all, than have me write my version of it?

MEHREEN:

We do not need Westerners to come in and fix our country for us. Or to feel sorry for us. It's either that, or we are all suicide bombers and terrorists. I'm sorry, Allisyn, but your country doesn't seem to understand that there is anything in between.

ALLISYN:

I think you have forgotten your objectivity here, Mehreen.

MEHREEN:

We all lost that years ago.

ALLISYN:

Look. I'm covering this story. Ben is already on his way there. If you don't want to be a part of that- what can I say?

MEHREEN:

We don't need to be fodder for a dinner party debate. You want to *do* something about it- then come back here. Oh, *you can't*. You can't come see for yourself, can you? And there is a reason for that. Maybe Samira, as you so intimately call her, doesn't need to be saved- the way you think she does. Maybe you should focus on the people who are speaking up here on her behalf?

ALLISYN:

That's what I'm trying to do, Mehreen.

MEHREEN:

Well, I guess Pakistan has decided you are not the one to tell it. It just gets too twisted in the presentation.

The crowd behind her gets louder.

MEHREEN (cont'd):

Anyway, Allisyn. ... I've got to go. Good luck, ok? I'll see you when I see you.

They hang up. She is flummoxed by this call. The monitors show what she sees on her laptop; rioting continued on the news in Pakistan, and her own maps of a chronological timeline of the events as she knows them to have transpired. She looks at Google earth: maps of the High Court House, the Mazhang Police Station and the lawyer's office.

Allisyn's cell phone beeps- it's Ben. The screen shows his text:

"Arrived in Lahore."

She is visibly relieved. She texts back:

“Have Abbas bring you to the High Court House. Send me whatever shots you can get.”

Scene 7

*The same day, several hours later, **the time is now 1:05pm**, local time **in Dubai**. Allisyn is sitting outside the office of the Consul General, Shahreyar Zasar, waiting to be seen. A consular Agent, Raja Mahmood, greets her.*

RAJA MAHMOOD:

Ms. Davis?

ALLISYN:

Yes?

RAJA MAHMOOD:

The Consul General will see you now.

He presents the Consul General, Shahreyar Zasar, and remains standing inside the door. Zasar gestures for her to have a chair.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

I hear you've been busy since your arrival, Miss Davis.

ALLISYN:

Thank you for seeing me, Mr. Zasar.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

We, at the Consulate, were notified of your denied entrance to Pakistan two days ago, and your subsequent re-entrance into Dubai.

ALLISYN:

Yes, it seems that while my Lahore Visa was in good standing upon boarding the plane in Dubai, it became invalid over the course of the 4-hour flight from here to Pakistan. That is indeed interesting, is it not, Mr. Zasar?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

We are well aware of your articles in the Washington Post from your last foray in Pakistan, what was it- three years ago? Several of my colleagues lost their positions as a result of them.

And then there's your most recent Sharia Law Op-ed in the Times. Seems you have a fairly one sided opinion of our Islamic Law.

Pakistan, as you know, maintains the right to disallow anyone they wish from entering its domain. Those people who commit actions that are anti-Pakistani should be prepared to be denied entrance.

ALLISYN:

A journalist's job is to present the facts, sir. If your government chooses to view that as my being anti-Pakistani- well, I don't have control over that, do I?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

No, madam. Indeed you do not.

(Beat.)

How long do you intend to stay here, in Dubai?

ALLISYN:

I had hoped you might assist me in getting back into Pakistan.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

Oh, I don't think so.

ALLISYN:

Then I suppose I'll be here as long as it takes, sir.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

To accomplish what, Ms. Davis?

ALLISYN:

To tell the unbiased story of the killing of Samira Tasneem.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

You think you already know what that is, though, don't you, Ms. Davis?

ALLISYN:

I've collected a few facts so far. My intention is to fully understand what happened.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

When I was a little boy, Allisyn, I was a cricketer. We lived just outside Lahore- so our team would often play against some local boys from India. My mother used to take my brother and me to play every weekend. She insisted we play. Good competitive rivalry. And then one day, my father found out that my mother had been lying to him. She'd been telling him that we'd been visiting her sister outside of Islamabad when we were actually playing on the Indian border. We had no idea we were doing something wrong. So you know what my father did? He waited until my brother and I were at school, and he threw acid on my mother's throat.... Not her face, mind you, but her throat. He disfigured her from the chin to the collarbone. Just her neck and throat. Careful not to disturb her beautiful face. And he told us, "You see sons, this is what happens to a wife when she lies, and goes behind her husband's back."

She sits abruptly.

ALLISYN:

Are you threatening me?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

To the contrary, Miss Davis. My mother is very dear to me. I was very upset by what happened to her skin.

But I am trying to explain to you that there are acceptable limits.

ALLISYN:

For whom? All women- or just Pakistani women?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

This is not the United States. There are systems in place that preserve the economic and social order of our country. We must all play our designated roles within this system.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

What became of your mother, Mr. Zasar?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

She is perfectly well. They are still married- many, many years now. She is still beautiful.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

You went on to become a Consul General... surely your mother had something to do with your interest in education and diplomacy?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

That is the point, Ms. Davis. My mother knew the risk she was taking and the consequences of her actions. She accepted her punishment humbly. Do you think I could come into your country and understand your people? Your traditions?

ALLISYN:

Were you not educated in the West, Mr. Zasar? London? And then graduate school in the U.S.?

(He nods.)

ALLISYN: (cont'd)

You're telling me that you understood none of the traditions you witnessed and participated in there?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

I witnessed some, yes. But I did not understand them all, nor did I try. I am Pakistani, and a representative of Pakistan, no matter where I am. Just as you are an *American* journalist. Therefore you view everything through the eyes of an American.

ALLISYN:

Facts are facts, Mr. Zasar. Not everything is subjective.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

You are incorrect, Miss Davis. Everything is indeed subjective. There is great joy and pride in Pakistan. Neither your Washington Post nor NY Times articles mentioned this.

(beat)

This country girl, with her simple life and her limited brain- why is she important to you?

ALLISYN:

Because I don't think she had a limited brain, sir. I think her family likely beat her to death in broad daylight to insure she wouldn't have the opportunity to use this brain.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

I understand you've spent a few months in Lahore before? *(She nods.)* Yes, I know. When you drove through our Salt Range, like your male reporter friend, Ben, might be doing right now.... You saw many birds on this drive, no?

ALLISYN:

Some birds, sir, yes...

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

One sees many birds. And the urial and the ibex, as well, yes?

ALLISYN:

I haven't noted those animals myself but I am sure they are there if you say so.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

This ibex, has a much bigger brain than this girl. This girl has less value than this ibex, this urial, this bird. At least these animals can be killed and eaten for nourishment. They make us strong. This girl, was nothing. This girl shamed her people and her people did what was their right, what must be done. That is truth.

ALLISYN:

Well, that's clearly your truth.

She gestures to the TV screen showing the rioters.

ALLISYN: *(cont'd)*

Your people are rioting in the streets.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

It will all quiet down in a day or two.

ALLISYN:

Back to where everyone plays their designated roles within the system?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

Correct, Allisyn.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

May I ask you something?

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

As you wish.

ALLISYN:

Is that your opinion of my brain, as well, sir? That my brain is limited and small like the white bird of the Salt Range?

Shahreyar Zasar laughs- and then thinks.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

No, Miss Davis. Your brain is more like the jackal's. It is a tricky brain. You're sneaky and manipulative. And your skin is tough and thin, not like our beautiful birds. "Jackal-lady". That is precisely why you were not granted entrance into Pakistan. We have enough jackals in our Salt Range, already.

Her cell phone beeps: it's a new text message from Ben. They both hear it, but Allisyn intentionally doesn't acknowledge it. SHAHREYAR ZASAR cocks his head slightly.

SHAHREYAR ZASAR:

I might remind you, Ms. Davis, that anti-Pakistani activities are punished by the death penalty in Pakistan. Please ask your friend, Ben, to bear this in mind, as well.
Good day, Miss Davis.

The Consular Agent opens the door for her imminent departure. Her phone beeps again. He turns his head and acknowledges it.

ALLISYN:
Goodbye.

She is guided out of the office. Back in her hotel room, Allisyn shuts the door behind her and immediately passes out cold- landing on the floor and loses consciousness temporarily. The phone rings on her laptop as she lays on the stage. Texts buzz. When she comes to she sits on the stage, and touches her head.

ALLISYN:
(Getting her bearings)
Shit.
(Realizing she missed Ben's call)
Shit!

She runs to the phone, and opens her laptop. Ben has texted photographs of the Lahore High Court.

She texts:

*"Have Abbas call me on this line now."
Abbas calls on the local line. They converse in Urdu- with English on the screen.*

ALLISYN:
Abbas?

ABBAS:
Yes?

ALLISYN:
I'm getting some serious push back from Zasar. Do you know his guys on the ground there?

ABBAS:
We're OK, Allisyn. I grew up with these men.

ALLISYN:
Good. *(beat)*
Speak to the police officers at the Mazhang station. Make an introduction for Ben, Ok? Pass the phone to him, please.

Abbas passes the phone to Ben.

BEN:
Yea.

ALLISYN:

Abbas is connecting you to the policemen who offered to speak to us. You need to watch your ass, Ben. I just met with the Pakistani Consul General.

BEN:

Zasar? What for?

ALLISYN:

I thought he might pull some strings for me- get me back in on the ground.

BEN:

And?

ALLISYN:

No-go. Listen, he knows you're there. He knows what you are doing- and he is not impressed. He suggested very strongly that you get out of Pakistan.

BEN:

We'll be in and out of here in a few days. Now let's just get this done. What happened with Samira's husband?

ALLISYN:

Abbas is taking you to him this afternoon.

She is quickly typing notes as he speaks and uploads the photos he sent onto her laptop.

ALLISYN (cont'd):

Try to find some witnesses by the Courthouse until then. And make sure you get some footage of the demonstrators, too. Forget Mehreen. She's not an option- just see if there are any rioters willing to talk to you, ok?

BEN:

You are getting what I've taken so far, yes?

ALLISYN:

It's uploading right now. I'll speak to you soon.

They hang up. She immediately starts to dissect the photos sent to her of the courthouse. There is a knock on the door. Allisyn collects herself physically and goes to the door.

ALLISYN:

Yes?

*We hear, "Room Service?" Allisyn heaves a sigh of relief. **She opens the door and takes a tray of food.** She gestures and thanks him. **She takes the tray back to the desk and keeps working.***

Scene 8

Lights come up; several hours later; Allisyn is still working in her hotel room. Behind her is a map of the High Court in Lahore. She has blown it up and shown where the police may have been located.

A text from Ben comes:

“Arriving in Jaranwala to interview the husband.”

Allisyn texts back:

“Standing by.”

They hang up. SCENE CHANGE.

Ben is now in the home of Mr. Ijaaz. The screens show Ben in the home of Mr. Ijaaz. Ben’s shoots the interview throughout the scene. Allisyn will conduct these questions in Urdu. The screens will show her questions and his answers in English. Ben appears on Skype with his video camera.

BEN:

He’s all set, Allisyn. I have shown him your list of questions. I’ll shoot and you ask away. Ask in the order that’s on the paper. He seems ready to talk.

ALLISYN:

Ok- let me know when we are rolling.

The footage shifts so that we are seeing Mr. Ijaaz up-close. Ben gestures that she should begin.

ALLISYN:

Mr. Ijaaz, my name is Allisyn Davis. I am a journalist for the NY Times. Can you hear me OK?

IJAAZ:

Yes, I can hear you fine.

ALLISYN:

You’ve met my colleague, Mr. Adams? He’ll be video taping this interview with your permission?

IJAAZ:

I understand.

ALLISYN:

I’d like to express my sincerest condolences for the death of your wife, Samira.

IJAAZ:

Thank you.

ALLISYN:

My hope is to help bring some justice to her, to you, and your family.

IJAAZ:

Thank you.

ALLISYN:

Would you like to tell me a little bit about your wife?
How did you and Samira meet, Mr. Ijaaz?

IJAAZ:

We are neighbors. My farm is right next to their house in Faisalabad. She would pass by on her way to the village. I saw her very often, since she was a young girl. I liked Samira since she was a child.

ALLISYN:

I see.

IJAAZ:

She was good wife. Beautiful. We were happy. My sons loved her.

ALLISYN:

Mr. Ijaaz, can you tell me a little bit about what happened at the courthouse?

IJAAZ:

We went to tell the judge that I did not kidnap Samira, like her family was saying. We went very early in the morning in order to avoid any problem- since they had attacked us before.

ALLISYN:

There was a previous attack?

IJAAZ:

Yes- a few weeks ago. But they said that if we gave them another 10,000 rupees they would leave us in peace. I am a farmer; I live a very modest life, so is not easy to come up with such a large sum. But we were going to get them the money somehow.

ALLISYN:

Were you surprised when they attacked Samira yesterday?

IJAAZ:

Surprised, no. Samira had been nervous that they might try this again but we both thought they were going to leave us in peace as soon as we gave them the money. That we could live our lives without this on our heads.

ALLISYN:

What is it they wanted, Mr. Ijaaz?

IJAAZ:

They wanted to punish her for not obeying her father. The whole family was against our marriage so they were threatening to kill her.

ALLISYN:

And yet, she did it anyway.

IJAAZ:

Yes.

ALLISYN:

She must have been very brave.

IJAAZ:

Samira was brave. Very strong minded. I tried to protect Samira, I... there were just too many of them.

ALLISYN:

Ok, Mr. Ijaaz. Can you tell me specifically what happened outside the High Court in Lahore?

IJAAZ:

We were waiting by the gates of the Court House. We heard gunshots. Samira screamed – right away, she knew. I told her no, no- it was going to be OK- I saw the police men looking right at us and looking to see where the gun shots came from. When we turned around we could see a group of angry people coming toward us.

ALLISYN:

Were they people you knew? Who was this mob of people?

IJAAZ:

Of course, yes. It was Samira's family. It was her father, her brothers, many cousins. We know these faces.

ALLISYN:

So what did you do?

IJAAZ:

I tried to shield Samira from them – but they came and ripped her from my arms. They had bricks and rocks from the town. They held me back and I couldn't get to her. She was screaming. I tried to tell them- please, please! Wait, wait! We will get you the money. We swear! Samira tried to tell them, too. But they wouldn't stop; they beat her with these bricks on her head and they killed her.

ALLISYN:

I am so sorry, Mr. Ijaaz.

He collects himself.

IJAAZ:

Thank you.

ALLISYN:

Were there any other people there with you? Anyone that was trying to help?

IJAAZ:

There were policemen, several policemen. But they just watched. I took off my shirt and begged them to save her. But they said, "This is not our duty".

ALLISYN:

Do you know who these policemen are?

IJAAZ:

I would know their faces.

ALLISYN:

Have they been arrested?

IJAAZ:

No. Not that I know of?

ALLISYN:

What about the other members of her family that killed her? Where are they now?

IJAAZ:

I believe everyone has escaped except for Muhummad, her father. The rest have gone to different towns- or the Salt Range, I suppose.

Allisyn refers to her notes for a moment.

ALLISYN:

You mentioned your son, Mr. Ijaaz?

IJAAZ:

Yes. I have three sons. Arsalan is the oldest.

ALLISYN:

How old is he?

IJAAZ:

Twenty-four.

ALLISYN:

How is he doing with all this? He and Samira were almost the same age.

IJAAZ:

They knew each other from the village, yes.

ALLISYN:

And how did Arsalan respond to having Samira as a new mother? I know she wasn't his stepmother for long.

IJAAZ:

He liked her. He is very upset.

ALLISYN:

Arsalan's mother died, yes?

IJAAZ:

Yes.

ALLISYN:

How long ago did she die?

IJAAZ:

Four years ago.

ALLISYN:

If you don't mind me asking, how did she pass away?

IJAAZ:

I killed her.

ALLISYN:

(Allisyn pauses.)

Excuse me?

IJAAZ:

I killed her.

ALLISYN:
You killed her?

IJAAZ:
Yes. I wanted to send a proposal to Samira, so I killed my wife.

We see the video camera shift for a moment- as if Ben has momentarily let the camera slip. Then the camera focuses in closer on Mr. IJAAZ's face. Allisyn lowers her head temporarily- composes herself and continues.

ALLISYN:
Can you tell me a little bit more about this, Mr. Ijaaz? Were you convicted of murder for your previous wife?

IJAAZ:
Yes. I went to jail for one year.

ALLISYN:
You were incarcerated for one year.

IJAAZ:
Yes. In Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore.

ALLISYN:
You had a trial for this murder?

IJAAZ:
No, no. No trial. My son, Arsalan was upset about his mother so he told the police I had killed her. And they arrested me. But he forgave me so I was released.

ALLISYN:
He forgave you?

IJAAZ:
Yes. The law of Diyat.

ALLISYN:
Can you explain this law to me?

IJAAZ:
This law says that if the family forgives the perpetrator, than you are released. Arsalan forgave me one year later so I come home. We made a compromise. And then I made arrangements with Samira's father, Muhummad, to marry her.

ALLISYN:
I see. Mr. Ijaaz, may I ask how you killed your first wife?

IJAAZ:

Just with my hands.

ALLISYN:

You beat her?

IJAAZ:

No- I strangled her.

ALLISYN:

Do you feel any remorse about this killing?

IJAAZ:

No. I was in love with Samira And I killed my first wife because of this love.

ALLISYN:

I see. May I ask her name, your first wife?

IJAAZ:

Aafiya.

Allisyn moves some papers around; shifts her body. She is visibly thrown but trying to keep it together.

ALLISYN:

I'd like to go back to Samira for the moment, Mr. Ijaaz. I've spoken with your lawyer, Mr. Khan. He told me that Samira said she was pregnant. Can you confirm this?

IJAAZ:

Samira? Yes. Samira told me she was pregnant, yes.

ALLISYN:

Do you know how far along she was?

IJAAZ:

A few months. She told me the baby would come in winter.

ALLISYN:

What happened to Samira's body? Will a medical examiner have her remains?

IJAAZ:

No, no. I buried her in a village graveyard in our region, Punjab. It was very late at night. Around 2am.

ALLISYN:

Why so late?

IJAAZ:

Because her body was in a very bad state. It wasn't correct for people to see her body like this.

ALLISYN:

I see. Alright, Mr. Ijaaz. I want to thank you for your time. I think I have all I need right now. My colleague, Mr. Adams, will be in touch if we need anything further. Ben, we can cut the recording now.

BEN:

Copy that.

ALLISYN:

Thank you, Mr. Ijaaz.

IJAAZ:

Thank you.

Ben stands, puts the camera down- and his screen goes fuzzy, then silent. Allisyn closes her electronics and sits alone in total silence. Blackout.

Scene 9

The scene starts in semi-darkness with half dimmed lights. ALLISYN is in the bathroom, leaning over the sink, with the faucet running. The phone rings and rings. Eventually she runs to catch it. She misses it and her Skype starts to ring. She throws open the computer and we see Ben on the screen.

ALLISYN:

Hello?! Ben?

BEN:

Holy, shit.

ALLISYN:

You got it all recorded, yes?

BEN:

Every moment.

ALLISYN:

I'm uploading all this into a file for Edward. It's a little early to call him now. I'll get it all prepped and call him in an hour or so.

BEN:

OK.

ALLISYN:

What's happening with the policemen?

BEN:

There are two officers who are willing to talk to us. They're faxing over a copy of the first report that was filed. You should have that by the end of the day. Hopefully they'll comment on it.

ALLISYN:

Good. Let's include her father's statement, as well- that should be in the report. Is Abbas with you now?

BEN:

No, he's waiting for my text. I thought I might head to the burial grounds- see if I could get some shots there before it gets dark.

ALLISYN:

He can take you to the safe house just outside Lahore.

BEN:

Ok, I'll get as many shots tonight as possible and will head back out first thing in the morning. You haven't heard anything else from Zasar, have you?

ALLISYN:

No, but I'm sure he's monitoring our every move. You need to watch your back.

BEN:

Let's just see this through. And I'll send you the new shots from tonight.

ALLISYN:

OK.

BEN:

I didn't see that coming.

ALLISYN:

Neither did I. *(beat)*
Do you think Samira knew?

BEN:

That he killed his first wife to be with her? I don't know, Allisyn. Would it change anything if she did?

(beat)

He thanked me on way out. On Samira's behalf.

ALLISYN:

(She scoffs)

On Samira's behalf. Not on Aafiya's though, right?

BEN:

He gave me one of her scarves for you.
A gift- to express his gratitude.

ALLISYN:

(She exhales)

I don't know what to say.

BEN:

Well. I'll keep it safe until I see you.

(Beat)

BEN (cont'd):

When you asked me about the promotion, last night.... You knew already, didn't you?

ALLISYN:

That Edward had given it to Diane, yes.

BEN:

Did he ask you your opinion?

ALLISYN:

I didn't advocate for her, Ben.

BEN:

You know that would've put me in DC. An hour flight from you.

ALLISYN:

He's our boss, Ben.

BEN:

And?

ALLISYN:

Edward doesn't need my input to make decisions. *(beat)*
I told him I thought she was a strong choice.

BEN:

I just got it, Allisyn.
The only person you're actually protecting is yourself.

Beat.

BEN (cont'd):

Anyway- Abbas just texted me. He's on his way.

They hang up. Blackout.

Scene 10

Allisyn continues working furiously. The food sits untouched on her desk. It's late. She has transcribed all the testimony. The screen behind her shows her secured line to the NY Times site for automatic upload. Her files are all uploading.

She texts EDWARD:

"Please call as soon as you are awake and have reviewed uploads."

There are several different windows open on her computer, shown on the screens, that she's navigating: the NY Times upload, some information on law of Diyat, preparation of questions for the police officers for Ben's interview in the morning. She looks at the time again. The screen turns to Skype. She then Skype's Melissa. Skype rings until Melissa picks up. It is morning in the US.

MELISSA:

Ally?

ALLISYN:

Did I call too early?

MELISSA:

No, I'm up. I'm so glad you called. Is everything ok?

ALLISYN:

Yes... I just thought I'd check in. See how you are.

MELISSA:

Well.... The baby is now squatting directly on my bladder so I have to pee every 30 seconds, I just got my first hemorrhoid and I have hives all over my back- but other than that we are status quo! *(beat)* Mom and Dad called. I didn't tell them you'd gone back. I felt kinda weird about not mentioning it, but I understand that you don't want them to worry and... they didn't ask, so.

ALLISYN:

Thanks, Mel. I appreciate that.

(beat)

I'm sorry I'm not there.

MELISSA:

You're staying because of what happened to that girl in Lahore, right?

(Allisyn nods.)

MELISSA (*cont'd*):

Ally. How long are you going to keep doing this?

ALLISYN:

Keep doing *what*?

MELISSA:

I'm sorry, Ally... but enough is enough.

ALLISYN:

What the hell are you talking about?

MELISSA:

Listen to me very carefully, please. You have got to let this go.

ALLISYN:

Let it go?

MELISSA:

Yes. It was 20 years ago.
Stop punishing yourself. Just- stop.

ALLISYN:

Melissa- this is my job.

MELISSA:

For God's sake, look at yourself. You're putting your life at risk.
You need to ask yourself why you are doing that. Really truly, *why*.

ALLISYN:

I know why.

MELISSA:

All right, why?

ALLISYN:

This is one thing I *can* do.

MELISSA:

Honey. It is not your job to fix it.

ALLISYN:

How can you say that?

MELISSA:

You have got to stop punishing yourself and forgive them.

ALLISYN:

What, like you did?

MELISSA:

Yes.

ALLISYN:

Well, I'm sorry if I'm not as evolved as you are, Melissa.

MELISSA:

You think that was easy for me?

ALLISYN:

Who am I supposed to forgive? Mom and dad? The boys?

MELISSA:

All of them. And me. And *yourself*.

(beat)

It's getting old, Ally. *We're* getting old; we are not little girls anymore.

Allisyn cries.

MELISSA (cont'd):

There was nothing you could've done.

(beat)

Is it because of the baby? Is that why you left now?

ALLISYN:

No.

MELISSA:

Are you sure?

ALLISYN:

No.

MELISSA:

Cause I think it is. I think its part of it, Ally.

You didn't need to be there for the delivery. I would've understood if that was too much for you.

ALLISYN:

I want to be there for you, Mel. I really do.

MELISSA:

Just come home. We'll figure it out.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

I think I really fucked up this time...

MELISSA:

Why?

ALLISYN:

This man, Ben. He- works with me. I mean- he's based in Cairo – but he's here.

MELISSA:

In Dubai?

ALLISYN:

No, Pakistan. Edward sent him because I couldn't get in and I-

MELISSA:

Yes?

ALLISYN:

I was awful. I said awful things.

MELISSA:

What did you say?

ALLISYN:

I lied. And I pushed him away.

MELISSA:

You're in love with him.

ALLISYN:

Do you think I'm selfish?

MELISSA:

You can be, yes.

ALLISYN:

Shit, Mel.

MELISSA:

Your choices are sometimes...misguided.

ALLISYN:
OK, OK. I get it.

MELISSA:
But God help him- if he's got your heart, he'll never get rid of you.

Allisyn's phone rings- she sees that its EDWARD.

ALLISYN:
I have to go. Right now... I'll call you later.

MELISSA:
Ally- is he in love with you?

ALLISYN:
He... was. I need to take this call. Sorry- bye---I'll be home soon.

MELISSA:
I hope so. Bye.

*She collects herself. The Skype switches off quickly and **she accepts the incoming call** from EDWARD.*

EDWARD:
Allisyn? This is pretty shocking material coming through. I assume you have connected with Ben.... You're running this out of Dubai?

ALLISYN:
I am. He's in the field and I'm translating- directing traffic on the ground.

EDWARD:
These claims are all substantiated? You have on the record statements for everything you uploaded?

ALLISYN:
The sources are solid. On the record. And live footage on most. The uploads are still coming in.

EDWARD:
So what do you want to do? You want to hold this for the front-page story tomorrow or do you want to run with what we have here?

ALLISYN:

Let's hold it. We have two police officers that are willing to talk. They've faxed me a copy of the first report that was filed and I'm just waiting on the follow up questions now.

EDWARD:

Get the quotes. Upload the files. I want this to be the front-page story in tomorrow's paper as long as it's all corroborated. The pregnancy?

ALLISYN:

It's speculation. There was no medical examination.

EDWARD:

And the previous attack?

ALLISYN:

Unreported.

EDWARD:

Two of the uncles and a few of the brothers have been taken into custody.

ALLISYN:

That's the first I am hearing of it. I want to include the police officer's testimonies and whatever they've released from her father's statement at this point.

EDWARD:

Ok, Allisyn. I am standing by.

ALLISYN:

I went to see the Pakistani Consulate, Edward.

EDWARD:

And?

ALLISYN:

It ended badly.

EDWARD:

What's the damage?

ALLISYN:

Unclear. But he didn't give me what I wanted. Let's just say he's not my advocate.

EDWARD:

As long as he's not your adversary, I'd take it in stride.
You want me to intervene?

ALLISYN:

No. I'm just giving you a heads up.

(beat)

ALLISYN *(cont'd):*

Edward, does Ben know? When I asked you to reassign me? That I flew to London from Cairo--- that I was with you?

EDWARD:

Of, course not. You were already back in New York by the time he called. He asked me where you were and I told him. The rest was one night. I'm not about to put my own marriage in jeopardy.

ALLISYN:

Good. Thanks, Edward.

EDWARD:

Stay safe, Allisyn.

They hang up. The camera stays on Edward. BEN (is onstage,) Skypes EDWARD. EDWARD answers his call; we see the men both on the screens and live on stage.

EDWARD:

Edward Evans speaking.

BEN:

What, there's no caller ID in London?

EDWARD:

Sorry, I didn't recognize the number.

BEN:

I'm just messing with you- it's an unlisted line.

EDWARD:

What's up?

BEN:

Listen, I want you to take my name off this piece.

EDWARD:

Why? Did we get something wrong?

BEN:

No- no. The story is there- the facts are tight.

EDWARD:

Some conflict of interest with your work in Cairo?

BEN:

No, no. It's nothing like that.

EDWARD:

What is it then?

BEN:

It's just... this is Allisyn's piece. I think she deserves to take full credit for it.

EDWARD:

Since when did you become so altruistic?

BEN:

Listen, this story's gonna knock your socks off. I'm proud to have been a part of it.
It's just-

EDWARD:

You spontaneously don't care about the advancement of your own career?

BEN:

It's not my piece. We both know I wouldn't be here if she had gotten in.

EDWARD:

But she didn't. And when I called you, you asked be brought in. So why the back-peddling?

BEN:

I'm just trying to do the right thing here, Edward.

EDWARD:

By whom?

(beat)

EDWARD (cont'd):

We've known each other a long time now, Ben. You, me, Allisyn. If you think she's going to appreciate the gesture, I think you are mistaken.

BEN:

And why's that?

EDWARD:

Because Allisyn wants credit for
the work she does, nothing more- nothing less.

BEN:

I was trying to be respectful.

EDWARD:

You're smarter than that, Ben. Take off the God damn blinders and
learn when to be a reporter and when to be a man.

(beat)

We're running it tomorrow. Let me know what you decide.

They hang up.

Scene 11

Lights up on the hotel room in Dubai. Allisyn is seated on the floor with her laptop. She has showered and changed. She checks her watch. The screen is linked to her computer which is uploading files to the NY Times site. She texts ABBAS:

“Are you awake?”

One of the screens shows footage of The Pakistani People’s Party and the rioters, while another shows footage from 2008 of political activist Sherry Rehman giving the following speech:

“The current legislation on honour killings was bulldozed through the Parliament by the last regime that rejected all proposals to introduce clauses that could help in rooting out this crime. As it stands now, the perpetrators are able to obtain forgiveness or easier punishment through the nominal payment of blood money to the heirs or walis of the victims, via the qisas and diyat laws introduced in 1985. This is certainly unjust to the victims while also puts at risks the lives of other women who could be subjected to such crimes. In the past, the Pakistan People’s Party had moved consensus-backed legislation on Honour Killing in the parliament on several occasions. A legislation that denies indemnity to the perpetrators of such crimes is the most effective tool to fight this practice. We are working to facilitate institutional structures to ensure that all our policy actions are backed by institutional capabilities to respond to such crimes.”

Skype rings; ABBAS appears on Skype.

ABBAS:

Of course I’m awake.

ALLISYN:

Everything OK there?

ABBAS:

Your friend is sleeping like a baby, Allisyn.

ALLISYN:

That makes one of us.

ABBAS:

So, what’s up?

ALLISYN:

Abbas, remember the night Mehreen introduced us? It was just after you two came back from Pindi- when Bhutto was shot.

ABBAS:

I do! We went to that café where they played the loud Bollywood music. Faryal was with us, too, no?

ALLISYN:

She was, yes. You trusted me so fast, Abbas? Do you remember why?

ABBAS:

Any friend of Mehreen's is a friend of mine, Allisyn. And Faryal liked you.

ALLISYN:

I liked her, too. She's smart.

ABBAS:

Faryal has very good instincts about people.

ALLISYN:

I passed out in the bathroom.

ABBAS:

It was very hot that night.

ALLISYN:

That's very generous, Abbas.... You know that's not why.

ABBAS:

Faryal says you have the shell of a porcupine and the heart of a jellyfish.

ALLISYN:

Jellyfish sting!

ABBAS:

(Dismissively)

Maybe- but they are squishy and soft. You get the idea.
Fear does strange things to the body. Anyone who's paying attention knows this.

ALLISYN:

(beat)

I needed you to understand that
the Washington Post could only do so much to protect us once those articles got
published. I put you and Mehreen in danger.

ABBAS:

We knew you wouldn't use our names.

ALLISYN:

But if anyone had found out you were involved – you-

ABBAS:

(Interrupting)

I've been an activist most of my life, Allisyn. These are my people. I love my country, but I don't love everything that happens here. Certain things are not acceptable. Selling girls for sex is not acceptable.

ALLISYN:

Thank you for trusting me.

ABBAS:

Like I said, Faryal has good instincts.

ALLISYN:

Have you spoken to Mehreen?

ABBAS:

We had a chat earlier today, yes.

ALLISYN:

She's not too thrilled with me.

ABBAS:

Sometimes Mehreen gets stuck on the little stuff and misses the big picture.

ALLISYN:

Maybe its not so little- what she's stuck on.

ABBAS:

Perhaps. Try her back again. I think you'll find her more receptive.

ALLISYN:

Oh, yea?

ABBAS:

The truth, Allisyn? Why I trusted you so fast? Yes, I could see that you cared very much about what was happening to our women here in Pakistan. But I could also see your fear- and it moved me. It made you humble- and yet you were doing something very brave. I have great respect for this.

ALLISYN:

Thank you, Abbas.

ABBAS:

Salam, Allisyn. I'm going to sleep.

ALLISYN:

Goodnight, then.

ABBAS:

Goodnight.

They hang up. ALLISYN shoots an email off to Edward. The subject line says: Check Uploads. An email response from Edward comes in:

"Are you ready to run with this?"

She emails back:

"Just waiting on statement from Prime Minister Sharif. Lets run as soon as he comments."

Allisyn mutes Sherry's speech. She pauses, and then she picks up her phone and Skype's Mehreen. The phone rings many times.

ALLISYN:

You answered.

MEHREEN:

Yes?

ALLISYN:

I've been thinking about what you said.

MEHREEN:

And?

ALLISYN:

And- maybe you were right.

MEHREEN:

I didn't think journalists did maybes.

ALLISYN:

I should've reached out to you on the op-ed. Gotten a broader perspective.

(beat)

MEHREEN:

What is it you are looking for?

ALLISYN:

I never meant to misrepresent you, or your people.

MEHREEN:

Is that your version of an apology?

ALLISYN:

I guess it is.

MEHREEN:

Well. It's a start. I'm sending you a link I'd like you to take a look at when you have a chance.

(beat)

MEHREEN (cont'd):

What do you see when you look at me, Allisyn?

ALLISYN:

I see a woman; a lawyer, an activist.

MEHREEN:

What you see is a *Pakistani* woman.

You seem to think I've accomplished these things *in spite* of being Pakistani. You don't understand that we do not aspire to be Western.

ALLISYN:

I should've said friend. When I look at you- I see my *friend*, Mehreen.

MEHREEN:

Lahore's changed a lot since you've been here.

Mum went back to school; she's got three more years of Residency. By the time she's finished she'll be the oldest Anesthesiologist in Lahore, but we're proud of her.

Dad was concerned at first but is now very pleased with himself for being so *forward thinking*. Women are more empowered and accepted every day, but we are still also targets- infiltrated in a society where a huge percentage of the male population uses Islamic Law against us.

So you see, Allisyn...we are a nation torn between those clinging to our old traditions, and those who are fighting to make new ones. Some of us- at any cost. Most of us don't see Samira as a victim. She fought. Our anger is not over her death specifically, but that despite all we've accomplished, these murders continue to be a commonplace occurrence.

ALLISYN:

Why are Sharif and the People's Party of Pakistan not doing more? Why are they unable to enforce the laws that are in place to protect you?

MEHREEN:

How? How do you change the minds of people who have been told that it is their right to treat women this way since the day they were born? They believe they are within their rights. This kind of violence is pervasive all over Pakistan, Allisyn. A disregard for human life.

(beat)

MEHREEN (cont'd):

You've seen Sharif's statement?

ALLISYN:

Actually no. I couldn't get through to his press secretary. What does it say?

Allisyn cocks her head holding the phone in place so she can type to record the statement:

MEHREEN:

They just released it.

(She reads)

"Prime Minister Sharif has taken notice of the 'brutal killing' in the presence of police. This crime is totally unacceptable and has to be dealt with promptly by law." You'd think they'd be more invested in protecting their residents. *All* of their residents...

ALLISYN:

The Anti-Honour Killing laws went into effect in 2008 -while I was there. Sherry Rehman pushed them through--

MEHREEN:

The laws are in place, Allisyn. It's about getting people to respect and enforce them. So, we fight. We continue to raise our voices. To take action. And we will lose some heroes along the way.

ALLISYN:

That's very Darwinian of you, Mehreen.

MEHREEN:

Surviving is not something we all get the luxury of. The heroes are the people who fight.

(Beat)

ALLISYN:

I want to include your point of view in this piece. Do I have your permission?

MEHREEN:

As long as you don't paint it as another white girl trying to save the poor brown people, it should be ok. And I want to read it before it goes to print.

ALLISYN:

(She smiles)

Understood.

They hang up and Mehreen exits. We see Allisyn cutting and pasting Sharif's statement into the final form of her report. She hits save on her document. Skype rings- it's Ben. We see him and Abbas on the screens driving in Lahore.

BEN:

Hey. I'm on my way back.

ALLISYN:

OK. Are you coming through Dubai?

BEN:

I don't think that's the best idea, Allisyn.

We see and hear the noise of a car pulling up very quickly behind them. Ben turns quickly.

BEN:

Shit. I'll call you back.

ALLISYN:

What was that? Ben? Ben?!!

We hear gunshots and the sound of a speeding car. Blackout.

Scene 12

It is the middle of the night. Allisyn paces the room hysterically. She calls Ben and Abbas's cell phones repeatedly- trying to reach them by Skype and text, as well, but gets no answer. She's on Skype with Edward.

EDWARD:

Allisyn, I assure you- I'm doing everything I can.

ALLISYN:

The Embassy? You've called the Embassy?

EDWARD:

They're moving as quickly as possible.

ALLISYN:

God, damn it- why isn't anyone talking?

EDWARD:

Give them a chance to do their jobs, Allisyn.

ALLIYSN:

It's been almost five hours, Edward.

EDWARD:

Try to remain calm.

ALLISYN:

I was on the phone with him and there were gunshots and now I can't reach either of them—how fucking calm would you be?

(Beat)

EDWARD:

Mehreen?

ALLISYN:

She's called her contacts at the hospital. Nothing yet.

Short silence.

EDWARD:

I'll call the White House if I need to, Allisyn. Let's give it til morning.

There's a knock on the door.

BEN:
(Knocks off-stage)
Allisyn?

ALLISYN:
Ben?!

She runs to the door.

BEN:
I'm OK. I'm OK.

ALLISYN:
He's here, Edward. He's here.

She hangs up the phone.

ALLISYN:
Oh, thank God.

She holds onto him.

ALLISYN:
Why the hell didn't you call me?

BEN:
Khan told me to ditch my cell.
He said he'd call you.

ALLISYN:
Khan? He didn't call----. What about Abbas? Why didn't *he* call?

Ben pulls up a chair next to her on the bed.

BEN:
He didn't make it, Allisyn.

ALLISYN:
No....no, no, no.

BEN:
He was killed, Allisyn. I'm sorry.

ALLISYN:
Wait, wait... I don't understand.

BEN:
Some guys- they pulled up in a car behind us. They pushed us off the road. Abbas got out and tried to talk to them- they seemed to know each other.

BEN (cont'd):

He turned to get back in the car, they shot him in the back of the head and sped off.
It was very fast. I don't think he was in any pain.

(Beat).

BEN (cont'd):

Al?... Allisyn. *(beat)*
I know he was your friend, I'm sorry.

ALLISYN:

You just left him there? In the street?

BEN:

Of course, not...I called Khan. He promised me he'd take care of his body.
But he was gone, Allisyn.

ALLISYN:

They just got married this summer.

BEN:

He was proud to do the work he did. You know that.
We'll call Edward and see what the protocol is in terms of helping them.

Allisyn collects herself.

ALLISYN:

You didn't have to come here. Thank you.

BEN:

I wanted to tell you in person.
(beat)
It was the right thing to do.

Ben walks to the table and finds a printout of the story.

BEN:

You included Sharif's statement?

ALLISYN:

Mehreen gave it to me.

BEN:

Mehreen? I thought you said she was out?

ALLISYN:

She was. We spoke a few hours ago. She signed off on it.
Edward's running it on the front page tomorrow.

She pulls up the PDF of the completed report with both of their names on it.

ALLISYN:

We good to go?

(Ben nods).

She hits send and texts Edward: "Run it." The screen shows the up-loading document.

BEN:

Listen, I'm gonna head back to the airport. Try to get a flight back to Cairo.

He reaches in his bag.

BEN (cont'd):

This is for you.

He hands her Samira's scarf.

ALLISYN:

Abbas is dead, Ben.

BEN:

He knew what the risks were. Abbas knew.

ALLISYN:

We tell ourselves that, don't we?

BEN:

We live with it, Allisyn.

She holds the scarf in her hands.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

It was me. It wasn't Melissa. It was me.

BEN:

What?

ALLISYN:

It was - easier. So I said it happened to her instead.

BEN:

Allisyn, Allisyn....
(he takes her face in his hands)
The whole story you told me?

ALLISYN:

All true. Just- the other way around.

BEN:

I'm... so sorry.

ALLISYN:

I know.

BEN:

I wish you'd told me.

ALLISYN:

I wish a lot of things, too, Ben.

(beat)

What was I supposed to do?

Let you fall in love with a damaged, defective woman who can't even have children?
Who puts all her energy into her work because that's all she has?

BEN:

You have no idea what I want. Other than you. That, I think, I have made clear.

ALLISYN:

And you would've stayed?

BEN:

I don't know what I would've done, Allisyn. But I'm here right now.

(beat)

ALLISYN:

Every day I take off all my clothes and stand in front of my mirror. And I search my body for where the bruises were- the parts of my skin that are still a different color than the rest. I didn't want them to leave me. Those scars and bruises. I needed them to be there. They were all I had. What they took from me- you can't see it. And that terrifies me.

BEN:

You need me to see it?

ALLISYN:

No, *I* need to see it, Ben. Me. So I don't forget.

She gets light headed and has to sit down.

(Beat)

BEN:

You know, I met this woman in Cairo. She showed up to cover a story with me. And from the second she got there, all I wanted was to be next to her. The way she looked and talked. Goddamn it- she was smarter than me. We made love for almost two weeks. She started to tell me things about her life- her parents and family. Really open up. She had her own shit. I knew that. But I was more honest with her than any woman for as long as I can remember. And you know what she did? She left me. She got up in the night, without a single word of explanation, and she left. Didn't just leave *me*- but left the country. I had to call Edward and ask if something had happened to her. When I found out that she'd asked to be reassigned- I was knocked out. And when I realized she wasn't going to give me the explanation that I was looking for- you know what I did? I forgave her.

And *then* when I realized that she had actually sabotaged the promotion I busted my ass for- which would've allowed us to be together- I forgave her *again*.

Because as much as I wanted her- and still want her- I can't let that claim me.

I forgave her for *me*.

She cries.

BEN (cont'd):

You're the strongest woman I've ever known.

ALLISYN:

I did call. Last summer. I called from the airport. It went straight to voicemail. I was hoping you'd tell me to come back.

BEN:

Should I stay?

Allisyn shakes her head no.

ALLISYN:

I think I need to go home for a while.

(beat)

BEN:

The Times is lucky to have you.

ALLISYN:

No, *home*. To Melissa. She's due any minute.

BEN:
Of, course.

ALLISYN:
Maybe she'll let me help her with the baby. You know, be an Aunt.

BEN:
Aunt Allisyn.

ALLISYN:
Maybe she and I can talk. I think I need to talk to her.

(beat)

BEN:
I'm not proud of how I reacted when you told me, Al. I keep replaying our conversation.

ALLISYN:
That's what I live with every day, Ben.

BEN:
They should've fought for you. Your parents.

ALLISYN:
People have different ways of protecting their kids.

She reaches the scarf out towards him.

ALLISYN:
Keep this, please. I want you to have it.

He takes the scarf, kisses her forehead. They hesitate and the kiss lingers.

BEN:
I hope you'll call.

(Beat.)

ALLISYN:
I hope so, too.

Ben exists. Allisyn sits alone and stares at her computer and the continuously uploading document. She opens an email from Mehreen- clicks on the link she's sent. The screen shows the video of a beautiful afternoon in Pakistan, Abbas and Faryal's wedding. Everyone is clearly enjoying themselves. Men, women,

children- with such joy and simple pride. She turns the news back on. The screens show a medley of international violence; the reporting grows louder and louder until the screens go to black except the bold words:

FILE UPLOAD COMPLETE.

END OF PLAY