An American Infidel

An Honors Creative Project (HONRS 499)

by

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EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

A swarm of elementary school children are leaving school for the day. They hurry out of the building to the fleet of buses that await them.

CLOSE ANGLE ON KIDS #1 AND #2

KID #1
No way! Dick Tracy is about as tough as my sister. He doesn't even have any special powers. The Turtles are cooler.

KID #2
That's why he's so cool. He doesn't need any special powers. Batman hasn't got any and you saw that movie eight times.

The pair climb onto their bus and take a seat together. We SEE that Kid #2 is carrying a Dick Tracy lunchbox. We HEAR the hiss of the doors and the squeal of brakes as the bus slowly pulls away.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - BUS

As the bus pulls out of the schoolyard onto the main road, a grey sedan turns off an adjoining street and follows directly behind.

INT. SEDAN - ON ARABS #1 AND #2

Arab #1 is driving while #2 opens a briefcase on his lap to reveal an automatic handgun and several sticks of dynamite strapped to a wide canvas band.

ARAB #1
When it stops at the next intersection.

Arab #2 nods in understanding.
KID #2
Just because he's old
doesn't mean he's no good.

KID #1
Dick Tracy's older than my
dad, though.

INT. SEDAN - ARABS #1 AND #2
Arab #2 pulls the dynamite out of the suitcase and slips the
canvas belt around his chest, fastening it in front.

EXT. BUS
The bus comes to an intersection and begins braking for the
red light.

INT. SEDAN - ARAB #1 AND #2
Arab #1 stops the car and puts it into park. He leans over
to Arab #2 and embraces him.

ARAB #1
Good luck, my friend. On
this day, Allah smiles on
you.

Arab #2 gets out of the car and runs to the back emergency
door of the bus.

CLOSE ANGLE ON EMERGENCY DOOR
Arab #2 breaks the bottom glass of the emergency door with
the butt of his gun and reaches inside to unlatch the door.

INT. BUS - ANGLE ON DRIVER
The driver looks up into his mirror to see what the
commotion is all about. We SEE Arab #2 open the back door
and jump into the bus. The driver stands to face him but
finds a gun pointed at his chest.
EXT. SEDAN

Arab #1 pulls the sedan into the right turn lane next to the bus and veers on around the corner quickly.

INT. BUS - ARAB #2 AND DRIVER

The children are screaming and crying at this point. Some move out of their seats.

ARAB #2

Silence! Silence! Take your seats! Or he dies.

Their din turns into a quiet whimper as the children finally begin to understand their situation. We HEAR the honking of cars behind the bus as the light turns green.

Arab #2 pushes the driver back into his seat and pulls up a little girl from the second row. Going to an open window on the driver's side of the bus, he speaks:

ARAB #2

Listen to me! Reform your blasphemous ways, America! The judgment of Allah is a swift and unmerciful one. Death to the American infidels. Glory be to Allah!

He steps back and throws the girl to the floor.

CLOSE ON DYNAMITE

Arab #2's fingers fumble for a second on the detonator before pressing a small green switch.

EXT. BUS

The front half of the bus blows into a storm of fire, glass and people. The cars nearby are littered with fragments of glass and other pieces of the bus's engine and front section. Drivers in other vehicles scream and cover their heads.
Beside the bus, surrounded by wreckage and fire, a Dick Tracy lunchbox sits dented and blackened by fire on the street.

FADE OUT.

INT. LECTURE HALL

TONY JOHNS, a 21-year-old college student, sits idly in biology class, obviously bored with the lecture. Over this:

PROFESSOR (V.O.)

... So the DNA sequence is replicated perfectly! Isn't that interesting...

Tony closes his notebook and looks morbidly at his watch.

CLOSE ON PROFESSOR

The professor is rather short and balding. Dressed in jeans and turtleneck sweater, he emphasizes his words with a pointed finger that shakes unnaturally.

PROFESSOR (V.O)

(continuing)

What ramifications does this have for us, then?

STUDENT

What about cloning?

PROFESSOR

I'm glad you asked! How interesting.

(glances at watch)

Unfortunately, we'll have to wait till next time.

We HEAR a loud shuffling as the students gather up their things before heading out.

PROFESSOR

(calling up)

Mr. Johns. Can I see you, please?

(CONTINUED)
Tony puts his notebook in his book bag and moves down to the front of the hall.

TONY
Yes, doctor?

PROFESSOR
Tony I hope you don't mind my asking, but I heard a rumor the other day that you've written a book of some kind?

TONY
(embarrassed)
Well, just as part of a senior thesis project last semester.

PROFESSOR
I heard from Dr. Heston over in journalism that it was quite good.

TONY
Uh, I got an A on it.

PROFESSOR
Is it true you've found an agent who's trying to sell it?

TONY
Yeah. Honestly he seems a bit of a flake, though.

PROFESSOR
How interesting. You know, I've always had a desire to be a writer. But no talent to back that desire up, I'm afraid. (beat) I really do envy you, Tony. I hope things work out.

TONY
Thanks, but I'm not counting on the book selling. It's a real longest.
INT. FARLEY'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

HARVEY FARLEY sits at his desk, giving instructions to his SECRETARY. In his mid-fifties, Farley has run upon hard time as a literary agent recently.

FARLEY
... so try to get him a seat on the next available flight to O'Hare after seven tomorrow night, okay? First class. Got it?

SECRETARY
Yes I got it, Mr. Farley.

The secretary turns and exits the office. Farley looks down at his desk and picks up a thick manuscript.

FARLEY
Thank you, God. Thank you for Tony Johns and this novel.

CLOSE ON MANUSCRIPT

We SEE the title page of the manuscript - "Poems Of The Glorious Prophet - A Novel By Anthony Johns."

Farley picks up his phone and punches in a number.

INT. TONY'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

Tony and ANNIE, an attractive woman of 22, are having sex when we HEAR the telephone ring. It rings several times before Tony answers.

TONY
Hello?

FARLEY
Tony? This is Harvey Farley. How are you this evening?

TONY
You know Harvey, if this is more bad news, I don't really want to hear it now, okay.

FARLEY
I'm afraid it is rather bad news.

(Continued)
TONY
Well what?

FARLEY
There's no reason to send your manuscript out anymore.

Tony sits silently for a second, stunned. Behind him, Annnie turns on a television with a remote control.

TONY
I see. So you're out then.

FARLEY
I'm just not going to send it to anyone else.

TONY
Do you mind if I ask why?

FARLEY
It's like this Tony: Eric Kensington at Kensington House would be as pissed as Hitler on D-Day if I re-sold his next literary blockbuster to a rival publisher . . .

(pauses)
He likes it, Tony. He wants to buy your book.

Tony rubs his forehead in confusion for a few seconds.

ANNIE
Tony, what's the matter?

TONY
(coversing phone)
Nothing. Hold on a sec.
(to phone)
Are you sure you aren't dicking me around here?

FARLEY
Tony listen to me -- Eric Kensington wants to pay you for the privilege of

(continues)
FARLEY (cont'd) publishing your novel. Shall I tell him that's okay with you?

TONY Of course! Shit, when did you find out?

FARLEY He called me just after lunchtime today. He wants to meet you as soon as possible.

TONY Fine, fine. Oh, God. Did you two talk money yet?

FARLEY No, I figured we could all discuss it together when you meet him.

TONY I don't know how to thank you. I really thought you were going to dump me for a second.

FARLEY (chuckles) What am I, an idiot? Would I dump a bestselling author? I'll call you tomorrow with the specifics about visiting Kensington.

TONY Okay, great. Harvey, thanks a lot.

FARLEY It's my pleasure.

Tony hangs up and paces nervously about the room.

ANNIE What's the story?
CONTINUED:

TONY
The story is that a guy in Chicago wants to publish my book.

Annie hops up from the bed and kisses Tony deeply.

ANNIE
I knew you could do it, baby.
(sultry voice)
I've never slept with a published novelist before.

Tony lowers her back to the bed and turns the television sound completely down with the remote control.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION

We can see a newscast that is covering the schoolbus explosion seen earlier. A reporter stands in front of the smoking bus wreckage, his mouth moving silently.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

President Thomas Penney is sits at his desk reading a Tom Clancy novel. His quiet time is interrupted by a buzz from his intercom.

PRESIDENT
(pressing button)
Richards! Do you now how long I've been reading this book?

RICHARDS
Uh, no Mr. President.

PRESIDENT
Going on five weeks. Do you know why I've been reading it that long, Richards?

RICHARDS
No, sir.

PRESIDENT
Because you keep buzzing me!

(CONTINUED)
RICHARDS
I'm sorry, sir, but Mr. Cady is here to see you.

PRESIDENT
Send him in.

The President sits back and puts his novel to one side. There is a loud CLICK as CADY comes through the office doors. Cady is in his forties and carries several folders. The President rises and shakes Cady's hand.

PRESIDENT
Good to see you, Jake. What have you got for me today?

CADY
The rundown on that bus bombing in Boston.

Cady puts his folders down and takes a seat across from the President.

CADY
It looks like it was a terrorist action for sure. We didn't get any film of the actual explosion, of course, but the Bureau has interviewed just about everyone who saw it and they all had the same story.

PRESIDENT
Which is what, exactly?

CADY
A grey Buick sedan pulled up behind the bus as it stopped at an intersection. One guy, who we believe must have been middle eastern, jumped into the bus via it's back emergency door. After yelling something out of a side window, ka-boom!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT
Do we have any clue as to his identity?

CADY
So far we haven't been able to I.D him. Still waiting for the forensics report.

PRESIDENT
What was it he said out the window?

Cady ruffles through a folder and pulls out a sheet of paper.

CADY
According to one witness, he said something like:
(reading)
"Reform America . . .
the judgment of Allah is swift. Death to the
American infidels."

PRESIDENT
Oh lord, another Muslim crackpot out to save the world for Allah.

CADY
The grey sedan turned out to be stolen. It was found several blocks away. No clues about the driver, of course.

PRESIDENT
Of course. Shit! This is the second time we've had people killed by Muslim extremists in the past eight months.

CADY
Do you think Tariq Al'Bourdin is behind it?

PRESIDENT
I don't want to speculate, Jake. There was no direct
CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT (cont'd)
proof to link him to the
first killing in New York.
He's a zealot for Muhammed,
but I refuse to think he's
stupid enough to attack us
inside our own country.

CADDY
I don't know, sir. He's
mad as a hatter and loves
to kill for Allah.
(pauses)
Strange how he really
seems to believe God is on
his side. I hear he's
even got chemical warfare
plants to help do away
with us heathens.

PRESIDENT
There's no direct proof of
those plants either, Jake.

CADDY
Still, it wouldn't really
surprise me, you know?
Damn Muslim savages.

EXT. AMINAH VILLAGE - DAY

A group of reporters and soldiers are moving slowly around
the ruins of a small village destroyed by earthquake.
Leading the band is TARIQ AL'BOURDIN, the religious and
military leader of the country. Dressed in fatigues and
traditional headdress, he looks quite spry for his sixty
years. Next to him is HALIM SAAD, Al'Bourdin's personal
secretary.

The group watches as rescue teams make their way through
rubble looking for survivors.

AL'BOURDIN
(to Saad)
Is there yet an accurate
count of deaths?

(continues)
CONTINUED:

SAAD
First estimates make it seventy-five dead, four missing. It's quite shocking, Your Eminence. There have been no quakes in this area for hundreds of years.

AL'BOURDIN
Yes, quite shocking indeed.

One of the reporters in the group ventures forward with his microphone.

REPORTER
Your Eminence, it seems the village has been totally destroyed. Will there be financial appropriations for rebuilding and to aid survivors?

AL'BOURDIN
But certainly. This afternoon I am meeting with the Minister of the Treasury to make suitable monetary aid available. The entire village will soon stand again in the name of Muhammed, praised be his name.

We HEAR shouting from the rescue crews behind the reporters and both Al'Bourdin and Saad turn to see what the commotion is.

RESCUE WORKER
A survivor! A small child trapped.

Al'Bourdin rushes forward to the worker, who motions to a collapsed hut just behind him. Concrete blocks have caved in the roof of the hut. Al'Bourdin begins lifting the large broken blocks off the pile of rubble. We HEAR the cries of a small girl from beneath the pile.

AL'BOURDIN
Halim! Help us here.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Saad runs up to help. After a short time, more rescue workers and a pair of reporters lend a hand in digging out the girl.

CLOSE ON RUBBLE

Through the pile of broken wood and plaster and canvas, the blood-smeared hand of the girl appears. Al'Bourdin takes her hand as the others move away enough rubble to free her.

AL'BOURDIN
Call for the medic team!

The girl, around ten, is crying and both of her legs are covered in blood. The MEDIC appears and gives her a quick check. He and another worker lift her to a nearby stretcher and carry it to a jeep waiting close.

AL'BOURDIN
Her condition?

MEDIC
I think she will recover, Your Eminence. Thank Muhammed, praised be his name.

The medic hops into the jeep and it jerks away, covering those left behind in a fine haze of sand.

Saad walks up slowly behind Al'Bourdin and pats his arm respectfully.

INT. CHICAGO TAXI - DAY - FARLEY AND TONY

FARLEY
Remember Tony, don't agree to any dollar figures outright.

TONY
Right.

FARLEY
Answer all his questions honestly. But let me handle the sell. I promise to get the best deal for you.

(CONTINUED)
I know. Remember, I want a multi-book deal if possible. I'm willing to take a smaller than usual advance in return for his commitment to future books.

The taxi comes to a stop and the two pile out. Farley tosses some bills at the driver and they ENTER an attractive office building.

INT. KENSINGTON'S OFFICE

Farley and Tony are seated across from the desk of publisher ERIC KENSINGTON, a fashionable Englishman in his forties.

KENSINGTON
Honestly Anthony, I was quite impressed with your manuscript. The idea of a man discovering some ancient writings by the prophet Muhammed is wonderful.

TONY
Thank you, Mr. Kensington.

KENSINGTON
But to then turn that plot into a dark comedy! Most writers are afraid to satirize any subject, let alone Islam.

TONY
The recent troubles with terrorism made me sort of interested in the whole Muslim thing.

KENSINGTON
Oh quite a fascinating religion, I agree.

TONY
Then I read The Koran and some interpretive books about Islam. I wanted to know how a belief in (more)
TONY (cont'd)
Islam might drive someone to terrorism. I'm no theologian, but it seems to me these guys are taking themselves a bit too seriously.

FARLEY
I say we nail the damn Arabs and put a stop to it.

KENSINGTON
Mr. Farley you must realize there are over eight-hundred million practicing Muslims in this world.
(smiles)
Surely you don't think that many people are completely wrong?

FARLEY
If they resort to terrorism, I sure as shit do. These Arab PLO supporters are no different than an L.A drug gang.

TONY
Well I think that's a bit strong, Harvey.

FARLEY
You won't when it's your little sister's bus some Arab kook blows up.

KENSINGTON
I hate to stifle this exchange gentlemen, but I have another appointment in a few minutes.

FARLEY
(standing)
Of course, Mr. Kensington. I'll be looking for the contracts in a few days.

KENSINGTON
Right.

(CONTINUED)
Tony rises and Eric shows his visitors to his office door.

TONY
I want to thank you again
for having interest in me.

ERIC
(shaking his hand)
Thank you for that wonderful
book. It's one of the best
first novels I've ever read,
Anthony.

Farley and Tony exit the office and head for the elevator nearby.

FARLEY
Jesus! I can't believe he
offered thirty-thousand
upfront. This is gonna be
the biggest sell of my life.

TONY
(in a daze)
Thirty-thousand. Oh God.
I can't imagine being paid
that for something I wrote.

They enter the elevator.

FARLEY
He was really impressed with
you.

TONY
I hope I don't let anyone
down, Harv.

FARLEY
Relax man. You have nothing
to fucking worry about.
This is the beginning of
the good life for you.

The elevator doors close on them.
INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

President Penney sits at his desk in a darkened oval office. He is watching a slide presentation being given by GENERAL ELDON HALL, the president's adviser on middle-eastern affairs. We HEAR the click of the projector as another slide drops into place.

CLOSE ANGLE ON SCREEN

This slide shows a close portrait of Tariq Al'Bourdin. Over this:

HALL (V.O.)
And there he is, sir. He's mocking you. He's mocking me. He's mocking our entire way of life.

Another slide falls into place. This one is a map of the Middle East. We can clearly SEE Al'Bourdin's tiny country Aminah nestled in the Persian Gulf.

HALL (V.O.)
(continuing)
It's one of the smallest countries on the planet, sir. And they're trying to push us around.

WIDER ANGLE ON OVAL OFFICE

PRESIDENT
Of course they're anti-America. Of course they're anti-Israel. But that doesn't make Al'Bourdin a terrorist mastermind.

HALL
(exasperated)
Mr. President! There is strong evidence linking Al'Bourdin's government to that bus bombing last week. Not to mention the hit in New York.

(CONTINUED)
PRESIDENT
That "evidence" is about
as square as a golf ball.
There is no clear link
to Al'Bourdin.

Hall crosses the room and switches on the lights. He sits
near the president and gives a disgusted sigh. He's a
large man in his late forties.

HALL
Sir, how many deaths will
it take till you see?
Ten? A hundred?

PRESIDENT
(angrily)
Don't you tell me about
the sanctity of life,
general.

HALL
The fact is, a strong
president would have no
qualms taking Al'Bourdin
down a few notches.

PRESIDENT
Oh you've got to be kidding
me!

HALL
No I'm not kidding, sir.
And I don't mean any of this
butt-tickling shit, either.
I want to hit him hard and
knock him on his fucking
Muslim ass.

PRESIDENT
I can't just go attacking
countries on hunches and
suspicions.

HALL
The public is sick of these
Arab nuts, sir. They expect
us to do something. We hit
Libya for terrorism and it
shut them up.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT
There was proof against
Libya, Hall. But so far
I don't see any between
Aminah and these attacks.
(beat)
Conference finished.

HALL
With all due respect, Chief,
I think you need to stop
Tariq Al'Bourdin.

With a grimace, Hall rises and exits.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. CHICAGO HOTEL - NIGHT

Snow covers the ground on Michigan Avenue as a group of
well-dressed couples enter the hotel.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM

A large crowd fills the room for a book publishing reception
for Tony's novel. We can see Tony, Farley and Kensington
greeting guests and making statements to reporters and
photographers. Behind them on the wall is a huge
reproduction of the novel's cover.

CLOSE ANGLE ON KENSINGTON AND REPORTER

REPORTER
(holding cassette recorder)
Mr. Kensington, your company
has obviously gone to great
expense to promote Mr. Johns'
book. What kind of future
do you think he has in this
business?

KENSINGTON
From the second I laid eyes
on Tony's manuscript, I knew
I had something good on my
(more)

(CONTINUED)
CLOSE ANGLE ON TONY AND FARLEY

Standing close to Kensington, Tony is busily greeting guests and autographing copies of his book. SAM BOLT, a large man in his fifties, approaches and extends his hand to Tony.

BOLT
Mr. Johns? I'm Sam Bolt, literature critic at the Chicago Evening Press.

TONY
It's a pleasure, Mr. Bolt.

BOLT
I want you to know that I love your novel. It's one of the best first novels I've seen.

TONY
I'm very flattered, thanks.

BOLT
I was so impressed that I mailed it this morning on to a Muslim friend of mine at Northwestern. He's a philosophy instructor.

(smiles warmly)
Please keep up the good work. Maybe you might have time for an interview?

FARLEY
Why don't I give you a call next week, Sam and maybe we can set up something.

BOLT
That'd be great, Harvey.

(to Tony)
It was a pleasure.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

As Bolt moves away, GLEN and RUTH JOHNS, Tony's parents, move forward.

RUTH
(kissing Tony)
I can't believe I have to stand in line to see my own son!

TONY
Hi mom.

GLEN
This is some party. Are you sure my kid's worth all this fuss, Harvey?

FARLEY
Maybe not now. But if we keep working on him, he might get off the streets someday.

RUTH
(crying)
I'm so proud of you, Tony.

She reaches out and hugs him. Tony shyly nods and blushes.

TONY
Thanks mom. Thanks.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Clean-up crews are clearing away the aftermath of the book-signing party. Tony sits quietly at a table sipping a beer. Behind him, the large poster of his novel gleams. Annie enters from a side room and makes her way to his table.

ANNIE
Baby the limo's about ready to pull out. What are you doing in here, anyway?

TONY
Oh, basking in my newly-found literary success.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Tony grins and then giggles loudly.

ANNIE
(smiling)
What's the matter with you?

TONY
Nothing, Annie. I'm just sort of overwhelmed with all this.

Annie leans forward and kisses him.

INT. NORTHWESTERN OFFICE - DAY

SOHRAB DADFAR, an immaculately-dressed Muslim, sits in his cramped office opening a package. We can see the package is addressed to "SOHRAB Dadfar, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois." The return address reads "Bolt, Chicago Evening Press."

He finishes pulling off the wrapping to reveal Tony Johns' book, POEMS OF THE GLORIOUS PROPHET. Dadfar looks at the cover for a second and opens up to read the inside flap.

INT. CAIRO BAR

TOM HARGRO, an American journalist, sits drinking gin in a dingy bar filled with Egyptians. After a few seconds he rises and drops some money on the table. Slightly tipsy, he stumbles out into the white-hot light of day.

EXT. CAIRO BAR - ON HARGRO

As he makes his way through narrow, winding streets. He comes to the end of an alley when ARAB #3 appears, blocking his way. Hargro stops and turns back towards the bar. Halfway down the alley, ARAB #4 slips out of a door, blocking this end of the alley.

HARGRO
Now listen. I don't know what you jerk-offs want, but I hope it's worth a lot of personal injury for both of you.
As he pulls a throwing knife from his coat and hurls it forward.

WIDER ANGLE ON ALLEY

The knife sticks in Hargro's upper thigh and he drops to his knees with a scream. From behind him, another knife slams into his throat, splattering blood down the front of his tan suit. With a GURGLE, Hargro grasps at his throat and fumbles desperately in the dust. Arab #3 approaches and shoves a third knife deep into Hargro's chest. With a whimper Hargro slouches backwards.

The two Arabs slowly move away as a pool of blood gathers underneath Hargro's body.

INT. AL'BOURDIN'S STUDY - DAY

Al'Bourdin kneels on a small rug, praying towards Mecca. The room is furnished sparsely except for a large wooden desk.

    AL'BOURDIN
    . . . and give guidance in these tumultuous times.
    Bestow mercy upon me and absolve my sins.

He rises slightly and sits as if in deep meditation. We HEAR a loud knock.

    AL'BOURDIN
    (standing)
    Please enter.

The large wooden door opens and Saad enters.

    SAAD
    Do I disturb you, Eminence?

    AL'BOURDIN
    Of course not Halim.

Al'Bourdin crosses to his desk and sits. Saad approaches but says nothing, a somber expression filling his face.

    AL'BOURDIN
    Something troubles you.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SAAD
I have heard rumblings that . . . cause alarm.

AL'BOURDIN
About what, Halim?

SAAD
An American journalist was murdered in Cairo earlier today.

Saad begins pacing about the study.

AL'BOURDIN
Occupational hazard.

SAAD
Your Eminence I mean no disrespect, but the Americans will not be still much longer.

AL'BOURDIN
(sighs)
How many times have we had this discussion? Ten? One hundred?

SAAD
I fear American reprisals.

AL'BOURDIN
You need only fear Allah.

SAAD
How many Americans have you had killed? Reagan bombed Libya for much less.

AL'BOURDIN
I do not kill for sport! Nor for profit. I do these things to defend Allah's people.

SAAD
I know you truly love Allah. But must we live in such a state of violence?

(CONTINUED)
AL'BOURDIN
As long as the nonbelievers dominate the world politically and economically, then this is necessary.

SAAD
What happens when the United States bombs us? Is that what Allah wants?

AL'BOURDIN
(stands)
Don't you question Allah with me, Halim!

Al'Bourdin takes a large, lavishly decorated Koran from the desk and holds it towards Saad.

AL'BOURDIN
Does it not say the unbelievers and pagans will burn forever? The holy book tells us they are the vilest of creatures.

SAAD
But what of the hadith? It says God has no mercy for those who have no mercy for their fellow men. . . It says the truly strong man can control his anger.

Al'Bourdin puts the Koran down and sits.

SAAD
I love Allah like you. But I do not think he looks favorably on this bloodshed. Please consider what I have said, your Eminence.

Saad turns and exits, leaving Al'Bourdin to contemplate his actions.
INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

President Penney looks at a photograph. Hall stands nearby.

HALL
Tariq Al'Bourdin has done
it again, chief.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH

The journalist Hargro smiles back at the president in black and white.

HALL (V.O.)
Three knife wounds on him.
Leg, neck and heart.

WIDER ANGLE ON OFFICE

The president puts the photo aside with a frown.

HALL
The good news is that the
Egyptian government was able
to trace one of the knives
to a Cairo street thug.
They picked him up and
he swears he was paid
by a foreigner from
Aminah to make the hit.

PRESIDENT
How reliable is their
intelligence?

HALL
We had one of our boys
helping them out -- it
seems legitimate.

PRESIDENT
All right, Hall. Draw
up a possible air strike
plan against Aminah.

HALL
(grinning)
A good choice, chief.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT
I said possible. Military
and known terrorist targets
only.

HALL
I'll get on it immediately,
chief.

Hall moves to the door.

PRESIDENT
General, this is merely
one of several options I'm
exploring.

HALL
Of course, Mr. President.

Hall exits.

EXT. AL'BOURDIN'S PALACE - DAY

The white building gleams in the bright morning sun as we
HEAR the Muslim call to prayer blasting through the sky.

INT. SAAD'S OFFICE

Al'Bourdin and Saad sit around a small wooden desk. Saad's
office is more cluttered and cramped than his superior's.

SAAD
It seems, I'm afraid, the
boys were caught with
pornography.

AL'BOURDIN
Ah, the Western influence
strikes again. These
students are young, but
that cannot always be
their defense. They
know such filth is
unlawful.

As Saad shuffles papers and files on his desk, Al'Bourdin
notices a copy of Tony's book on the desk. He picks it up
with interest.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

AL'BOURDIN
What is this?

SAAD
(alarmed)
Oh, a book sent me by
my distant cousin Sohrab
in America.

Al'Bourdin looks at the cover and reads the inside flap.

AL'BOURDIN
An American novel about
Muhammed?

SAAD
It's nothing really. My
cousin thought I might
find it amusing.

AL'BOURDIN
This intrigues me, Halim.
I will read this book.

Dissolve to:

INT. AL'BOURDIN'S STUDY - NIGHT

Al'Bourdin sits at his desk, reading Tony's book. As he
reads, his expressions range from casual curiosity to
outright disgust.

Dissolve to:

CLOSE ANGLE ON BOOK

We can see Al'Bourdin has read nearly the entire novel.
After a few seconds, the pages turn as he moves on.

WIDER ANGLE ON ROOM

As Al'Bourdin comes into view, we can see tears
streaming down his face. He closes the book and covers his
face with his hands, openly weeping now.

He fumbles to the floor in the kneeling position seen
before, Tony's books nearby.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

AL'BOURDIN

(whispers)
God is great! God is great!
There is no deity to be
worshipped but Thee . . .
This book. The way it
defames your beautiful
prophet Muhammed. How long
will the Americans scoff?

Al'Bourdin rises slightly and speaks with arms
wide to the heavens above.

AL'BOURDIN
You know I hate the killing
as much as Halim. But
the unbelievers never learn!
And now this pornography
book that slanders Muhammed.
Please, God. Show your
servant the way to avenge
your prophet's name in
the eyes of America.

CLOSE ANGLE ON BOOK

As Al'Bourdin starts tearing pages out of Tony's novel and
tossing them around the room.

INT. TONY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tony and Annie are asleep when we HEAR the shrill ring of
the phone next to the bed. Tony pops up and gropes around
blindly before finally finding the receiver.

TONY
Hello.

FARLEY
(filtered)
Anthony, I'm sorry to call
so late, but something's
come up.
INT. FARLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Farley, clad in pajamas and robe, sits on the edge of his bed. He smokes a small cigar as he talks.

FARLEY
I got a call just a bit ago from Eric Kensington.

TONY
(filtered)
What's wrong?

FARLEY
You have heard of Tariq Al'Bourdin, the imam of Aminah?

TONY
(filtered)
Of course I've heard of him. He's been all over the news the past few months. So what?

FARLEY
He held a press conference several hours ago. He sort of condemned your book.

CLOSE ANGLE ON TONY

He laughs for a few seconds.

TONY
Wait, wait. Tariq Al'Bourdin didn't like my book so he held a press conference about it?

FARLEY
(filtered)
He did more than that, Tony. He uh . . . don't get bent out of shape about this, yet.

TONY
What are you talking about? What happened?

(CONTINUED)
FARLEY
(filtered)
Eric heard through a guy at the BBC that Al'Bourdin has condemned you to death.

TONY
I don't understand.

FARLEY
(filtered)
This guy at the BBC was covering the press conference. As soon as it ended, he called Eric -- I guess they're old friends. Anyway, he told Eric Al'Bourdin felt your book defamed Muhammed and Islam.

TONY
But it's a joke. The book is a comedy. I never meant --

FARLEY
(filtered)
You and I know that. Maybe Al'Bourdin doesn't. He called on Muslims the world over to kill you.

TONY
Well where does this leave me? A fanatical Muslim wants me dead!

FARLEY
(filtered)
Tony, Eric's trying to get all the info he can from his contacts in the Middle East. I just wanted to let you know about this before you saw it on Donahue.
TONY
Gee thanks.

FARLEY
(filtered)
We're going to get a shitload of interview requests as soon as this news breaks. I think it would be best if you were quiet for awhile.

TONY
Whatever you think, Harvey.

FARLEY
(filtered)
I'll get back to you as soon as I know more from Eric.

TONY
Yeah.

Tony hangs up and shuts off the light. As Annie stirs in next to him, he cuddles up next to her in the darkness.

INT. RACQUETBALL COURT - DAY

President Penney and Jake Cady dart back and forth across the court in a high-powered match. We can HEAR the squeak of tennis shoes on the wooden floor and the odd sounds of the blue ball bouncing off the walls. Behind the two, we can SEE Eldon Hall behind the rear glass doors of the court.

Cady serves and as the president begins to return, he notices Hall. As his attention is diverted, the speeding blue ball slams into the president's right cheek.

CODY
Shit! Are you okay, Tom?

PRESIDENT
(rubbing cheek)
Yes. What the hell does Hall want?

The president opens the glass door and leaves the court, Cady close behind.

(CONTINUED)
HALL
That was quite a slap, chief.
Want some ice?

PRESIDENT
No no, I'm fine.

HALL
I'm sure you are aware of Tariq Al'Bourdin's newest antics?

PRESIDENT
Jake was just filling me in.

HALL
And what are we going to do, sir?

PRESIDENT
Well I don't know yet.

HALL
A death threat on an American citizen is nothing less than terrorism, sir.
(pauses)
Just one more entry on an increasingly long list of terrorist activities.

The president and Cady pick up their gym bags and the trio head down a long hallway.

CADY
The guy isn't in any real danger. Local Bureau agents are going to offer him protection later today.

HALL
Chief, is that all we're going to do? Offer Tony Johns protection.

PRESIDENT
I can't attack a country because their leader gave a negative book review.

(CONTINUED)
Sir, he did a lot more
than that. And the
American public is not
going to take any more
bullshit from this two-bit
Muslim Hitler.

I've scheduled a news
conference today to
address the issue. I'm
going to take a tough
stand, Eldon.

Al'Bourdin wouldn't dare
lay a hand on Tony Johns.
He doesn't have the balls.

He's had the balls to kill
Americans on our on soil.

The president stops and puts his hand on Hall's shoulder.

Trust me. If anything
happens to Tony Johns,
we'll give a military
response to Al'Bourdin.

Tony sits typing away on his computer keyboard. After a few
seconds we HEAR the chime of a doorbell and Tony stops
typing. He exits into an adjoining hallway.

As Tony opens his front door to reveal NEVISON and MOORE,
two dark-suited FBI agents.

Mr. Anthony Johns?
(flashes I.D.)
I'm Special Agent Nevison
(more)
Tony backs up and opens the door to allow their entrance. He stands around nervously waiting for them to speak.

NEVISON
This is Agent Moore behind me.

MOORE
Hello, sir.

TONY
Well hi. I guess I know what this is about, right? Would you gentlemen care to sit or have something to drink? I have Coke in bottles.

MOORE
No thank you, sir.

NEVISON
Mr. Johns, we've been sent to tell you about a special protection service you might want to look into.

TONY
Oh. What kind of service is it, exactly?

NEVISON
Basically, we take you into hiding for a couple of weeks until the situation dissipates.

TONY
Hiding. Where?
MOORE
We have special safe houses all across the country, sir.

NEVISON
We think it would be best if you put yourself under our care until this connundrum with Tariq Al'Bourdin can be worked out.

TONY
Do you guys really think I'm in danger?

NEVISON
Well, strictly off the record, our government does suspect Al'Bourdin has been behind recent terrorist acts inside this country.

TONY
But those things were in New York and stuff. This is Indianapolis. How many Muslims can there be in Indy?

NEVISON
Mr. Johns, please don't refuse us so quickly. You could be in very serious danger.

TONY
No one is going to kill me because of a book. That's crazy.

NEVISON
Is this your final decision?

TONY
Yes. Look, I appreciate the concern, but this'll blow over in a day or two. (more)
CONTINUED:

TONY (cont'd)
How dangerous can these people be?

EXT. AL'BOURDIN'S PALACE - DAY

Hundreds of Aminah citizens stand in the large courtyard before the palace. Many carry large blown-up photos of Tony Johns. Others hold copies of his novel which they rip apart and set on fire. Some demonstrators rip and burn American flags.

CLOSE ANGLE ON PALACE BALCONY

Al'Bourdin, flanked by Saad and several uniformed soldiers, overlooks the demonstration against Tony Johns below. With a smile, Al'Bourdin steps to a microphone set up nearby.

AL'BOURDIN
Great people of Allah -- praised be the name of Muhammed.

A great roar of approval comes from the crowd.

AL'BOURDIN
Death to the American Infidel!

Another cheer of approval from below.

AL'BOURDIN
Our grievance with this book is just. As I said yesterday, Muslims the world over should try to put this writer to death.

The crowd below goes wild, putting more fervor into the destruction of their props.

AL'BOURDIN
To facilitate this end, I have decided to reward the person who brings me the head of Anthony (more)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

AL'BOURDIN (cont'd)
Johns with the equivalent
of one million American
dollars.

Saad looks on nervously, uncomfortable with the whole
situation.

AL'BOURDIN
The sum will be handed
over from the national
treasury. Death to the
American infidel and
glory unto the name of
Muhammed!

Al'Bourdin moves back from the mike and steps inside with
Saad as the crowd below again screams their approval.

AL'BOURDIN
(smiling)
America will see, Halim.
The followers of Allah
are not to be trifled
with.

Al'Bourdin exits. Alone, Saad imagines the unrest that
could befall them all.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Print reporters, broadcast journalists and their
equipment pack the seats in the small briefing room. A
podium stands in front of them.

A few seconds later, President Penney emerges from behind a
curtain. We can HEAR the snapping and buzzing of dozens of
cameras as he makes his way to the podium.

PRESIDENT
Afternoon, everybody.
I want to fill you in
on a few new
developments. It seems
earlier today Al'Bourdin
offered a bounty of one
million American dollars
(more)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:
PRESIDENT (cont'd)
for Mr. Johns' head.
(pauses)
This kind of naked psychological terrorism will not stand. Tariq has no right to make such a decree on an American citizen. We condemn this cowardly act and the rest of the world condemns this outrage. This you can be sure of -- anyone attempting to cash in on Tariq's mad offer will be dealt with.

REPORTER #1
Have you had any direct contact with Tariq Al'Bourdin concerning this issue?

PRESIDENT
No. Al'Bourdin severed formal diplomatic ties with us several years ago.

REPORTER #2
What about Tony Johns? Is he under government protection?

PRESIDENT
I'm sorry, but at this point I can't reveal anything about Mr. Johns except that he is safe.

REPORTER #2
Is it true that Johns has refused FBI protection? And if he did refuse, how can you say he's safe?

PRESIDENT
(agitated)
Again, I can't comment in that area. Thanks and good afternoon.
CONTINUED:

As Penney exits, he is hit with a hail of questions from the press.

INT.  TONY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony and his father are putting together dinner.

TONY
So how has mom taken the news?

GLEN
What do you think?

TONY
She's driving you mad.

GLEN
(smiles)
That's true. All she's done is cry since the bounty news was released . . . but honestly, Tony, I'm concerned, too.

TONY
There's nothing really to do, pop.

GLEN
You could let the FBI help.

Tony breaks off with a sigh and takes a dish from the oven.

TONY
I'm not giving in to this hysteria.

Annie enters from the dining room.

ANNIE
Are you about ready, Tony?

TONY
Yes we are.

Tony brings the dish as he and Glen follow Annie back into the dining room.
INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony places the dish on the table and sits next to his mother Ruth. There is an uncomfortable silence. Tony tries to break the gloom and starts filling his plate. Glen and Annie do the same, but Ruth only sits quietly.

TONY
Mom you have to eat.

RUTH
There's no sense in you being stubborn about this.

TONY
Oh God.

GLEN
Ruthie, why don't we just eat and discuss things later?

RUTH
I'm so scared, Tony. Why won't you let the FBI help you?

TONY
First, I don't believe Tariq Al'Bourdin is serious. He would never provoke the U.S. in such a way. Second, if I run and hide I'd only be giving power to Tariq's methods. Terrorists have no power unless we play their game. (pauses) I'm not going to play.

RUTH
Then can't you at least cancel that stupid book tour next week?

TONY
Mom, every newspaper and television station wants to interview me. Do you know what kind of publicity that means for the book?

(CONTINUED)