

"TERMITE"

Screenplay by

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Reg: WGA

FADE IN:

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

SUPER: Las Vegas 1980

Establishing shots of the famous neon strip of casino/hotels.

As we approach one famous hotel/casino the sounds of an animated fight crowd culminates in a huge ovation.

EXT. CAESARS PALACE HOTEL - NIGHT

Hold On CAESAR'S BILLBOARD announcing "The Last Hurrah," double World Championship: Larry Holmes vs. Mohammed Ali and Saul Mamby vs. "Termite" Watkins.

TV COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Will you listen to that fight fans,
it's the final seconds of round 14
and 25,000 fans outside the beautiful
Caesars Palace are showing their
appreciation for an exhausting bout
of violent and bedraggled beauty,
and, folks, this was just supposed to
be the warm up for the main event!

EXT. CAESAR'S PALACE OUTDOOR BOXING ARENA NIGHT

Two boxers, SAUL MAMBY, a tall, mid-30's, African-American world champion and MAURICE "TERMITE" WATKINS, a baby faced, white challenger, slug it out in the final seconds of the 14th round. The RING BELL signals the end of the round.

We follow Termite as he returns to his corner, sits and is quickly surrounded by an elderly Black TRAINER, and his alcoholic FATHER, both shouting directions, while working on him, at the same time.

FATHER

You OK?

TERMITE

I'm running on fumes, Dad, but I'll
make it. I just need a blow.

TRAINER

Deep breaths, deep breaths. Son, you
be letting that boy dance to the
championship.

(MORE)

TRAINER (CONT'D)

You gotta cut off the ring, keep him
in the corner, on the ropes.

TERMITE

I'm trying.

TRAINER

Then try a little harder!

TERMITE

He's hard to hit.

FATHER

Termite, listen to me, it's now or
never so stop allowing him to bully
you. You gotta do it, we've worked 15
years to get this chance; find a way!

A Caesar's Palace ring girl passes with a sign
announcing the 15th and final round. The BELL rings.

TRAINER

Take a drink, spit! It boils down to
this, in three minutes you're either
a winner or a loser. You want that
belt? Go take it from him!

Both fighters return to center ring and tap gloves.

TV COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

The reigning champ and his game
challenger tap gloves as they begin
the final round in a battle of wills
to determine the super light-weight
champion of the world. Stay tuned
folks, this one could go either way!

(Note: As fights are choreographed additional fight narrative
will supplement the existing dialogue.

Termite immediately throws a wild right trying to deliver a
knock-out punch. Mamby counter punches and dances away.

TV COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Sensing that he needs a big round to
dethrone the champ, Termite lunges
forward trying to tear the champ's
head off with an overhead right. As
he has all night, Mamby counter
punches and dances away, using his
reach advantage to avoid Watkins'
powerful punches to the body.

An exhausted Termite spins Mamby into the ropes and Mamby again dances away. Termite relentlessly pursues him.

TV COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

The veteran Mamby's elusive speed and counter punching continues to confuse Termite.

GUEST TV COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Termite's been chasing the champ since round one and thrown a lot of punches.

Termite chases Mamby back into the corner and flails away with body punches. The hopeful crowd encourages him on.

TV COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

True, but except for the seventh round when Termite had the Champ on the ropes not many of his punches have caused any damage.

Mamby again escapes from the ropes and hits Termite with several quick jabs. POP, POP!

The BELL signals the end of the fight. The fighters continue fighting until forcefully separated by the referee. The two fighters then embrace each other in a show of mutual respect.

CLOSE ON: Termite as he returns to his corner. The trainer cuts off his gloves.

TERMITE

What do you think, Dad?

FATHER

Son, you fought your heart out. Whatever the decision, I'm proud of you.

Termite turns to the trainer who looks across the ring at Mamby and his growing entourage.

TRAINER

King's boy be pissin' blood tonight.

Termite stands and hugs his father and trainer. The two exhausted fighters return to the middle of the ring to await the judge's decision. Long dramatic silence and then the decision.

RING ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentleman...the winner by unanimous decision and still your WBC Super Light-Weight Champion of the World: from the mean streets of New York City...Sweet... Saul...Mamby... Mamby!

CLOSE ON: Termite as the realization of losing hits him hard. Stunned, he stares at the wild celebration enveloping his opponent. He looks lost in the middle of the ring.

TV COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Final thoughts?

Termite's Father quickly grabs his dazed son and leads him out of the ring. We follow them as they make their way through the ringside crowd who shout encouragement.

GUEST TV COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Boxing since he was ten, it took Termite 156 victories as a professional and amateur to finally wrangle a shot at boxing's holy grail, the world championship, goes the distance giving a 110% effort, yet loses. Tonight, facing the biggest challenge of his boxing career, his best just wasn't good enough. Maybe this was his last hurrah.

As father and son exit the arena, the legendary champion and his entourage enter the arena and the crowd begins chanting "Ali, Ali, Ali. As the screen fades to black, the "ALI chant" fades and continues into next scene.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. HOUSTON, TEXAS - DAY

Super: 20 YEARS LATER

Establishing shots of the Houston, Texas skyline.

TV ANCHOR (O.S.)

To recap what occurred earlier this morning. Two commercial airlines crashed into the world trade center, a third targeted the Pentagon and a fourth hijacked plane crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. Trading on Wall Street has been stopped.

EXT. AUTOLAND CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

Establishing shot of an automobile dealership strangely absent of any activity.

TV ANCHOR (O.S.)

The Federal Aviation Administration has halted all flight operations at the nation's airports for the first time in history.

INT. AUTOLAND CAR SHOWROOM - DAY

We follow a YOUNG SOLDIER as he enters an empty automobile showroom looking for someone, anyone.

TV ANCHOR (O.S.)

Hundreds of New York City firemen and policemen sent to rescue workers at the Twin Towers are apparently dead after they collapsed.

INT. AUTOLAND SALES OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TERMITE WATKINS, now a car sales manager, mid-40's and 40 pounds heavier, watches replayed TV images of the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapsing. With Termite are two salesmen: a young Anglo man, BUDDY, and a middle aged Indian Sikh, AMAN, all transfixed by the televised images.

TV ANCHOR

Reaction from international leaders, including the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, was swift as world leaders reacted with outrage over the attacks. The Iraqi regime was the only government to dissent from the general condemnation, saying that the US was reaping the fruits of its crimes against humanity.

Buddy abruptly stands knocking over his chair.

BUDDY

Man, I can't watch this crap anymore. I'm gotta go grab a smoke and calm my nerves. Sum-bitches gonna get their butts kicked this time.

Buddy's look of contempt is not lost on Aman.

TERMITE

What kind of people would do this?

AMAN

Evil, deranged people. If you don't object, I think I should be at home with my family.

TERMITE

Sure go ahead. I don't reckon we'll be selling many cars today. Go on, we'll hold down the fort.

Aman stands and walks toward the door. Just as he is about to open the door, a LOUD KNOCK at startles him.

The soldier sticks his head into the room.

YOUNG SOLDIER

Excuse me, I'm looking for a Mr. Watkins? There's no one around and I'm supposed to pick up my new truck today.

Termite motions the soldier to enter.

TERMITE

Come in. I completely forgot with everything that's happened today.

YOUNG SOLDIER

Yes sir I understand, but I ship out tomorrow and my wife needs that truck. Can you help me out?

Buddy turns to leave.

BUDDY

I'll go check on his truck.
(Intentionally loud) Oh, and the answer to your question is it was those fucking "ragheads" that's who did this.

TERMITE

Now, Buddy, that's totally uncalled for. Go on, do something useful, get the man his truck.

Buddy and Aman leave, eyeing each other with new found distrust.

TERMITE

Sorry about that. Have a seat. I have your paperwork here somewhere.

(MORE)

TERMITE (CONT'D)

EXT. HOUSTON RESIDENTIAL AREA - NIGHT

CHRISTMAS MUSIC, "Deck the Halls." A middle class neighborhood. Christmas decorations adorn virtually every house. We follow the lights of a pick up truck as it enters a church parking lot.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

The pick up truck is driven by Termite who searches for a parking space. His wife, SANDRA JEAN, an attractive blond in her 40's, sits in the passenger seat staring blankly out the window.

TERMITE

I am not abandoning my family and what do you mean that I'm borderline certifiable?

SANDRA JEAN

It's Christmas Eve for God's sake. I said that I don't want to talk about it, in fact, I don't even want to think about it, because it's an insane idea. Look, there's your Dad's truck.

The truck pulls into a parking space beside A CHAMPION'S PEST CONTROL TRUCK. Sandra Jean turns to him before exiting.

SANDRA JEAN

When will you get it in that thick skull of yours that you can't save the world?

Sandra Jean opens her door and exits the truck, followed by Termite.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - NIGHT -CONTINUOUS

TERMITE

Wait a minute...maybe it's not a burning bush but I truly believe that I am being called to go to Iraq and help.

Sandra Jean stares at him and then cups her hand to her ear and looks up into the sky as if receiving a divine message.

SANDRA JEAN

Oh, really? I hear someone calling too, what's that? He's staying here?

RINGING CHURCH BELLS followed by ORGAN MUSIC signal the beginning of the church service.

SANDRA JEAN
 Saved by the bell. Come on we're
 late.

She turns and walks toward the church with Termite following.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BAGHDAD - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

SUPER: Baghdad, March 20, 2003. 5:30 AM

STOCK FOOTAGE of Baghdad. The streets are eerily empty. The pre-dawn "call to prayer" ("fajr") is interrupted by the SOUND "rat-a-tat-tat."

EXT. BAGDAD HOUSE BACKYARD - NIGHT

SALAH ALI, a man who looks much older than his late 40's, comes outside.

Reveal the source: A very small 21 year old man, NAJAH ALI, skillfully works a speed bag, rat-a-tat-tat. The courtyard of their modest home has been converted into a work out area.

(NOTE: All indications of Arabic language shall be indicated by being enclosed in brackets. On screen this text will appear in subtitles.)

SALAH
 (Najah! Please, come in, your family
 is still sleeping.)

NAJAH
 (but Papa, I don't want to be
 sleeping when the bombs fall.)

SALAH
 (Don't be stubborn. Please, come
 inside, my son.)

Suddenly, the whooping of the air-raid sirens begin. A few seconds after their first warning note, anti-aircraft guns open up across the city, sending streams of yellow tracer into the night. KABOOM! FLASH. Startled, they both pause to look.

Their POV of a sole explosion/fireball in the far distance, followed by...BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

The horizon begins pulsating with orange and red. Huge balls of fire lick and spit into the sky.

SALAH

(They burn the forest to kill the fox.)

INT. WATKINS HOME - NIGHT

The bombing images of the previous scene morph into similar images on a television in a darkened bedroom. Sandra Jean, lays asleep in bed while the TV news drones on.

TV ANCHOR

On the first day of spring, in what the military is describing as "Shock and Awe", hundreds of cruise missiles have rained down on Baghdad and the city is burning.

EXT. SOUTHERN IRAQ DESERT - DAWN

SUPER: Southern Iraq May, 2003

Multiple smaller bombardments light up the distant night sky. A tsunami sized sand storm bears down on and envelops a tent encampment. We pan down a row of tents.

INT. TERMITE'S TENT - DAWN

We pan down a row of military cots, some occupied, to find Termite, fully clothed and unshaven, sitting on top of his cot writing a letter. He looks over at a nearby foot locker upon which sits a framed picture of his family.

TERMITE (V.O.)

Hi honey, It's been hard for me to find time to write as they have us going 24/7. We got woke up this morning by another howling sand storm but as far as I know am still going outside the wire today on my first job. Don't worry too much; the people here seem to like us.

He pauses in his writing while his tent is buffeted by the sand storm. Then all hell suddenly breaks loose as the distinct sound of incoming mortar fire joins the sound of the wind. BOOM! BOOM!

MILITARY (O.S.)

(shouting)

Incoming. Incoming.

The concussion from a nearby explosion blows Termite off his bed, throwing him onto the ground and filling his tent with sand and smoke. Termite hugs the dirt as the bombardment continues. BOOM! BOOM!

INT. WATKINS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sandra Jean suddenly sits up in bed, awakened by a bad dream. She glances at the TV images and turns the TV off.

EXT. SOUTHERN IRAQ DESERT - DAWN

The sun rises like a red ball eerily illuminating the early morning sky. A three vehicle U.S. Army convoy emerges from the horizon and snakes its way across a vast barren desert. A call to prayer breaks the silence as the convoy approaches a razor wire surrounded prison camp in the middle of nowhere.

EXT. UMM QASR EPW CAMP - DAY

SUPER: Umm Qasr Enemy Prisoner of War Camp

Guard towers look down upon rows of tarp-covered, chain link enclosures patrolled by heavily armed BRITISH ROYAL MARINES, professional but distrusting of --

Iraqi PRISONERS of all ages who are finishing their morning prayers, some military, some criminals, some insurgents, some in the wrong place at the wrong time - all languish in the desiccating heat, stench and fly infestation as they line up for their breakfast.

INT. SUBURBAN TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Termite sits in the back seat. The convoy slowly approaches the gate, a British Challenger 2 tank trains its barrel on them.

TERMITE

They know that we're on the same team, right?

SOLDIER

Yes sir, we radioed ahead to let them know we're coming in.

As they pass the tank, Termite's POV of three bodies awaiting burial in graves being dug just outside the EPW camp.

EXT. UMM QASR EPW CAMP - DAY

The convoy enters the heavily guarded EPW camp and comes to a stop. Termite and his military escort exit.

Termite, covered from the searing morning sun by a sweat-stained floppy straw hat and protected by a Kevlar vest, swats off swarms of flies.

TERMITE

Argh, this place stinks worse than an outhouse.

His two armed military escorts press scarves against their faces to keep out the stench and the swarming flies.

A British Guard approaches.

BRITISH ROYAL MARINE GUARD

Good morning sir, you must be Mr. Watkins?

TERMITE

Yes sir, good morning to you too.

BRITISH ROYAL MARINE GUARD

The Colonel has been expecting you. Would you please follow me, sir?

TERMITE

Lead the way.

Termite turns to follow when he sees the smiling face of a young teenage boy pressed up against the fence staring at him.

BRITISH ROYAL MARINE GUARD

Don't be fooled by that angelic face, he's a stone cold killer. He topped 14 men. He would kill you too, given the chance.

Termite smiles and nods to the young boy as he passes.

INT. UMM QASR MILITARY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

They hesitate outside the closed door of the commanding officer. A heated, loud conversation is going on inside.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP (O.S.)

I'm sick and tired of your excuses, just bloody well get on with it.

BRITISH ROYAL MARINE GUARD

Good luck...he can be a bit of a grumpy bastard when things don't go as planned.

INT. EPW HEADQUARTERS OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A cocked pistol sits on top of his desk. ROYAL MARINE COLONEL STEPHEN BEAUCHAMP, a 40ish, athletic, combat officer, sits at a makeshift desk swatting at FLIES with a rolled-up magazine while he talks on a field phone.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

No, I bloody well can't! We're close to a riot here and the Red Cross is due any day. You promised to get someone here a week ago to clean up this mess...Who?...OK, if he's not here today, I will personally see to it that every bloody contract your company has in Southern Iraq is cancelled.

(Smashes at a fly)

Oh no, mate, that's not a threat, it's a promise!

Colonel Beauchamp SLAMS down the field phone. He slowly raises his magazine to kill another fly when - A KNOCK

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Enter.

Termite steps inside. Colonel Beauchamp glares impatience.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

(interrupts)

Take that damn coolie hat off when you're addressing me.

Termite removes his hat.

TERMITE

Colonel Bowchamp, they call me Termite. I'm supposed to check in with you about cleaning up the camp.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Termite, what kind of name is that?

Before Termite can answer, he swats at another fly.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Never mind...what the bloody hell took you so long getting here?

TERMITE

Sir, We had a little dust up at base camp this morning. I got here as soon as I could.

The Colonel's attention is diverted to a fly that he is about to smash with a rolled up magazine.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

At the mere hint of a threat, the insects adjust their preflight stance to flee in the opposite direction, ensuring a clean getaway thus the best to swat a fly it to aim for the escape route.

"WHAM." He kills the fly and turns his attention to Termite.

TERMITE

Seems you have a bit of a fly problem.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

That shit house out there is the problem; what are you going to do?

TERMITE

Under normal conditions I'd use fly bait and calcium hypochlorite but since I don't have access to supplies without going all the way back to Kuwait, the honest answer is...I'm not sure.

The Colonel stands up and leans across his desk.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Listen to me, bug man, or whatever the hell your name is.

(slaps at a fly on his ear)

I'm tired of you overpaid civilians making excuses...

Termite turns and heads for the door.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Stand still! I haven't dismissed you.

Termite returns and leans into the Colonel's desk, eyes the loaded pistol and glares straight into his eyes.

TERMITE

Colonel, we need to get square on something: I'm not in your army so don't try to bully me.

(MORE)

TERMITE (CONT'D)

I obviously have a job to do so if
you'll excuse me I'll get to it.

Termite deliberately puts his hat back on and turns to leave.

The Colonel comes from behind the desk and intercepts
Termite.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Come back here and don't be so bloody
sensitive! Where the hell are you
from?

TERMITE

Texas.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Of course. OK, bug man, let me be
equally square with you...24 hours.
If both jobs are not done to my
complete and utter satisfaction, I'll
ship your cowboy "arse" back to Bush
country.

TERMITE

You do what you have to do, Colonel
Bowchamp.

Termite turns.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

My name is pronounced Beecham not
Bowchamp.

Termite pauses and turns at the door.

TERMITE

Thank you sir, and my name is Termite
not bug man.

Termite quickly exits.

EXT. NAJAF - DAY

Establishing STOCK FOOTAGE of one of Islam's holiest cities
built around the twin Shrines of al-Hussien and that of al-
Abass.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A US ARMY MECHANIZED PATROL slowly passes. Machine gunners
scan the damaged buildings, but see nothing suspicious as we
PAN UP TO...

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

We slip behind a shade to find a bearded ABAS AL-YOSSUFI, in a wheelchair, talking on a phone.

AL-YOSSUFI

(We believe that the wicked evil doers allowed the bombing of the Imam Ali Mosque and this apostasy cannot go unanswered. Do you understand? Good. May Allah protect you.)

EXT. UMM QASR EPW CAMP - DAWN

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP...followed by human grunts sounding like someone burying his fist in the stomach of another

Termite, led by another British junior officer, walks through parked MILITARY EQUIPMENT arriving at the source of the sounds.

In front of us, suspended from the barrel of a tank, is a make shift HEAVY BAG filled with sand and being pounded by Colonel Beauchamp. The HEAVY BAG is being worked by a junior officer in T-shirt and shorts. The Colonel and Termite make eye contact but the Colonel continues to hit the bag several more times before pausing to address Termite..

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

I'm still curious; how did you get that name Termite?

TERMITE

I was a very small baby and a family friend said I looked like a little termite. It stuck.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

(he resumes hitting the bag)
We did some research on you Watkins: impressive professional boxing career.

BRITISH JUNIOR OFFICER

61 wins, 5 losses, 42 wins by knockout. Lost his world championship bid and has since remained in obscurity in Texas.

The colonel pauses hitting the bag.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

I'm curious, why would you volunteer to come to this God forsaken place to kill bugs?

TERMITE

And snakes. Sir, I don't consider this to be a God forsaken place and maybe you can tell me why I'm here.

The Colonel continues hitting the bag.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Look Watkins, I've just about got the hang of combat, I was hoping you would instruct me and my boys to box. What do you say?

Termite walks over and relieves the junior officer behind the heavy bag.

TERMITE

I assume that means you're not going to ship "my arse" back to Texas?

He smiles at the Colonel, when unexpectedly, WHAM, Termite pushes the heavy bag into the unsuspecting Colonel, knocking him backwards onto his backside.

The surprised Colonel sits on his butt for a second, an angry scowl turns slowly into a big smile.

Termite smiles and extends his hand to the Colonel and assists him to his feet.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

What do you think, Thomas? Should we kidnap this no-nonsense Yank and take him along with us as a sports advisor when we move north?

The junior officers amused by what just happened nod their heads in agreement.

INT. EPW HEADQUARTERS OFFICE - DAY

TIGHT ON: roaches scramble as they are showered with a spray of liquid.

TERMITE looks menacing with a mask on his face, the floppy straw hat on his head and a canister strapped on his back. He sprays in a corner near a ceramic water dispenser. Leaning against the wall --

FRAMED POSTERS: a plaque commemorating the first Woman's Rights convention held in July, 1848. He picks it up. ZOOM IN ON THE INSCRIPTION which he reads aloud through his mask.

TERMITE

"That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right of the elective franchise".

IRAQI WOMAN (O.S.)

May I help you?

Termite, startled, turns with his spray gun in the "ready position" and faces a startled young woman wearing black pants, a thigh length black coat and a scarf covering her head. She carries an armful of file folders.

IRAQI WOMAN

You planning on exterminating me?

TERMITE

Oh sorry, ma'am.

She drops the files on her and sniffs the air.

She retrieves the plaque from him and sniffs the air again.

IRAQI WOMAN

Listen, do you mind, I've got a ton of paperwork. Can you come back another time?

TERMITE

I'm done here. If you want to keep those roaches from coming back, you might try...

IRAQI WOMAN

Thanks, but roaches are the least of my worries.

The woman sits down at her desk and looks up at Termite.

IRAQI WOMAN

Well, do you mind?

TERMITE

No ma'am, not at all; sorry to have disturbed you.

As Termite exits, the woman takes a bottle of Johnny Walker Red out of a desk drawer and pours herself a drink.

She then removes her head covering revealing herself to be FERN HOLLAND, a petite attractive blond, early 30's, American.

FERN
 (muttering to herself)
 I'm twenty years away from being a
 "ma'am" thank you very much.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

FILE FOOTAGE: Highway of Death. Charred and badly mangled hulks that were once tanks, armored cars, trucks, automobiles, and fire trucks litter the roadside.

WHOOSH! A US Army led caravan FLIES past us at 100+ mph. One Suburban has Gerry cans of gasoline strapped to its roof.

INT. TERMITE'S SUBURBAN TRAVELING - DAY

TIGHT ON THE SPEEDOMETER: 100 m.p.h.

MILITARY DRIVER at the wheel fighting to stay awake. A CIVILIAN CONTRACTOR riding shotgun is asleep.

IN THE BACK: Termite, half-asleep, unbuckles his seat belt to get comfortable and in the process knocks the Bible he had been reading onto the floor, the earlier family picture, sans frame, drops out of the Bible. ANOTHER CIVILIAN CONTRACTOR leans against the window snoring.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Sixty miles south of Baghdad the convoy exits to Al-Hilla onto a narrow asphalt road pockmarked by deep holes. Surrounded by small fields delineated by banks of irrigation ditches, the road leads to the fabled Babylon, the capital of ancient Mesopotamia.

Termite's Suburban slowly starts to drift towards A DITCH running alongside the road. The RIGHT FRONT TIRE catches the edge of the ditch. Goes flying wheel-over-wheel.

INT. SUBURBAN TRAVELING - DAY

Termite and the others thrown around. The civilian contractor in the front seat goes flying HEAD FIRST into the windshield...SPLAT!

EXT. FIELD NEXT TO THE HIGHWAY - DAY

The Suburban, engulfed in sparks, SLIDES on its roof to an eventual stop.

INT. SUBURBAN - DAY

Termite lays dazed on the ceiling of the now upside down vehicle. Restrained by their seat belts, the other occupants hang upside down.

Gas slowly drips down upon Termite wetting his shoes and Bible. He regains consciousness and grabs his shoulder in agony. Termite frees the man beside him, who drops with a thud.

EXT. SUBURBAN - DAY

Termite hauls the guy out of the now burning vehicle. He goes back for the badly injured civilian contractor in the front and pulls him out of the broken window to safety.

The other vehicles return. Soldiers pour out and form a perimeter as a crowd of curious Iraqis appear out of nowhere. They shout "Americhi, Americhi"! They give thumbs-up, vigorously wave and pump their hands in gratitude and appreciation.

ARMY SOLDIER

What happened?

TERMITE

I don't know; I was asleep. Take care of those two.

Termite attempts to return to the unconscious injured driver but is driven back by the growing flames.

ARMY SOLDIER

Sir, you cannot go back in there. That vehicle is ready to blow.

TERMITE

We can't let them burn to death.

The shooter returns his attention to the growing Iraqi crowd that moves closer.

ARMY SOLDIER

Kif, Kif! (Stop!)

Termite goes back for the injured military driver, now fully engulfed in flames. After several failed attempts, the flames miraculously recede for a brief moment and Termite drags the soldier out the open door in the nick of time as --

BOOM! The Suburban's gas tanks on the roof EXPLODE in a huge fireball licking at the back of his head and knocking them both to the ground.

EXT. AL HILLA - DAY

FILE FOOTAGE of the town which is every bit as rich in culture and activity as the fabled empire of Babylon on which it was built. This is fertile land surrounded by desert. It is curiously peaceful while armed conflict rages elsewhere.

A small British military convoy drives down 40 Street.

EXT. BABEL HOTEL/CPA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A three story luxury hotel, in disrepair as a result of looting, on the banks of the Euphrates has been converted into a Coalition Provisional Authority ("CPA") operations center.

Heavily armed BRITISH GURKHAS guard all points of entry. They stop and check the British convoy and wave it through. The convoy passes military and civilian personnel going about their business.

Termite stands out, in a sea of khaki, wearing neon pink, flowered surfing shorts, a tee shirt, boots and a Kevlar vest. He works alongside a group of IRAQI MEN who are finishing sweeping and cleaning debris from around the Hotel entrance.

One of the laborers, MOHAMMED, a young man wearing western clothing steps forward and attempts to take Termite's broom from him.

MOHAMMED

Mees-TAH Terminator, please, you boss man, no need work broom.

TERMITE

Mohammed, you watch too many American movies. I told you before, it's Ter...mite, not Ter...min...ator...
Ter...mite.

The British convoy arrives at the entrance near them.

TERMITE

Looks like we're about finished here so gather up the men and let's start cleaning that mess on the third floor.

Colonel Beauchamp along with his 16 year old daughter, EMILY, exit a vehicle, followed by Fern and her assistant, AMENAH, both covered.

TERMITE

Mo, I need to speak to the Colonel.
You boys go ahead. I'll be there
shortly.

Mohammed leads the Iraqi laborers into the hotel but not
before acknowledging Amenah with a nod and smile.

TERMITE

Colonel, Welcome to the Garden of
Eden.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

(stifling a laugh)
My, my, aren't you looking like a
pretty rose bush today.

TERMITE

Thanks, I feel mighty cute.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Termite, this is my daughter Emily.
She's come to get a few weeks of work
experience at Fern's new women's
center.

Termite takes off his work gloves and extends his hand to
Emily.

TERMITE

Hi Emily.

EMILY

So you're the Yank who has been
thrashing my father? Take it easy on
him, will you?

TERMITE

Trust me, your daddy can take care of
himself.

Termite nods to Fern.

TERMITE

Ma'am.

FERN

Ah yes, Darth Vader.

Termite is confused by her comment.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

I heard about your rollover mishap... quite the blessed man. Shoulder fully mended?

TERMITE

Yes sir, I'm fine...except for these.

Amenah looks at her watch and whispers to Fern.

FERN

Colonel, thank you for picking us up. Emily, get settled with your father and we'll discuss your duties tomorrow.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Promise me, no more riding around in those old bangers especially with my Emily.

Fern salutes and gets back into the military convoy taking her and Amenah to the Al Hilla Women's Center.

TERMITE

Who is she?

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Oh Fern? She's Mike Wallingford's point person for opening tribal democracy centers.

(checks his watch)

Well then, Emily has had a tiring trip, so if you'll excuse us.

TERMITE

Sorry, you go ahead. I just wanted you to know that we got some of the boxing equipment from Kuwait and I've started training some of your boys.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Splendid. I'll join your workout tomorrow.

TERMITE

Great. See you then.

EMILY

Remember your promise.

TERMITE

Yes ma'am. I surely will.

Father and daughter turn and walk to the entrance of the hotel.

INT. AL HILLA BOXING GYM - DAY

A converted indoor basketball court. Termite and Colonel Beauchamp sparring in a newly constructed ring, working up a sweat. Termite still wearing his hot pink shorts.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

I only have a few more minutes before
I need to prepare for a meeting.

TERMITE

OK, but before you go, let's try
this: I want you to throw two jabs,
feint right, then throw a left hook,
got it.

Termite then demonstrates. Colonel Beauchamp dances around.
POP! POP!

TERMITE

Better. Next time, step in, feint
with your right hand, but instead,
throw a left hook to my ribs.

The Colonel throws two left jabs. Feints right. Hooks left,
catching Termite in his injured shoulder area before he can
block.

TERMITE

Ouch, take it easy. You're learning
too fast.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

(spits out his mouth
piece)

Sorry. I thought that your shoulder
had healed.

TERMITE

(spits out his mouth
piece)

I'm alright, just give me a minute.

Termite walks around the ring rubbing his shoulder. Colonel
Beauchamp pulls off his headgear.

TERMITE

Where you going?

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Tribal jirga with your Mr. Wallingford; the locals are upset with you Yanks constructing a helipad on an archeological site. Care to tag along? Might be interesting.

TERMITE

Me? You don't think that the big boss would object?

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

No. You two should get along famously.

TERMITE

Great, I haven't been off base since we got here.

FERN (O.S.)

Time out!

They turn to see Emily and Fern, now wearing western clothes, enter carrying a neatly wrapped in newspaper.

FERN

I thought that you boys would have had enough fighting.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Look out, here comes the girl power.

Termite recognizes Fern for the first time as a western woman as he and Colonel Beauchamp step down from the ring.

TERMITE

I didn't know that you, I thought, I mean...

FERN

Stop stuttering cowboy...Fern Holland.

She extends her still hand. He quickly yanks his gloves off.

TERMITE

Oops, sorry about that. I thought that you were a...

FERN

An Iraqi? Good. A gift for you.

She hands him the package.

TERMITE

What is this?

BEAUCHAMP

That's not fish and chips you've got in there, is it Fern?

FERN

Afraid not, luv. Some clothes for the bugman.

Termite opens the package that contains 2 shirts, jeans, work pants.

TERMITE

This is so considerate of you. Thank you.

FERN

Don't thank me. My associate's father said the clothes are a small token of his appreciation for your giving his son Mohammed a job.

TERMITE

I can't take this for that. Mo's a good worker. How much do I owe him?

FERN

Nothing. It would be considered an insult if you turned his gift down.

TERMITE

Then tell him I said "thanks" - Shukran, from the bottom of my heart. Well, I guess I should change before the meeting.

EXT. JAZRA TRIBAL SCHOOL - DAY

A small one story adobe type structure.

MIKE WALLINGFORD, early 60's, large moustache, long flowing hair, wearing a white suit, broad hat, pistol and a large knife with a silver hilt presides over a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Head of the CPA for Southern Iraq, Wallingford, fluent in Arabic and Iraqi customs, stands next to Ahmad Jasim, early 60's, regal looking Iraqi man of apparent importance dressed in formal tribal attire. Colonel Beauchamp and Termite, dressed in his new clothes and other tribal leaders stand behind them. CLICK, FLASH...

MORPH IMAGE INTO A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CEREMONY followed by a series of large photographs. CLICK, FLASH...

Termite bonding with his Iraqi labor team while painting the school, CLICK, FLASH... carrying books, CLICK, FLASH...Termite kicking a soccer ball with young boys, CLICK, FLASH...a young Iraqi girl gives Termite a kiss on the cheek, and CLICK, FLASH... sitting on the floor surrounded by men and their sons eating from a pile of food placed on a large cloth.

INT. CIVILIAN MESSHALL - DAY

Pull back to reveal Termite at a mess hall dining table looking at the last photograph.

WALLINGFORD (O.C.)

Beats the heck out of our food.

Termite looks up as Mike Wallingford and Ahmad, now dressed in western attire, stand in front of him.

WALLINGFORD

Termite, mind if we join you? You remember Sheikh Ahmad Jasim from Basra?

TERMITE

Of course, please, y'all have a seat in my office. How are you sir?

Wallingford and Ahmad sit.

Ahmad glances at the photograph of Termite receiving a kiss from the small Iraqi child.

TERMITE

Reminds me of my own daughter when she was little, thanks for these.

Wallingford studies Termite.

WALLINGFORD

You're welcome. There is something else I would like you to do.

TERMITE

Name it.

WALLINGFORD

We'll talk about that later but first I want you to take a short ride with us.

EXT. DESERT - DUSK

A US Army convoy drives in a desert and arrives at its destination: what appears to be mass grave site that reaches to the horizon. The convoy stops aside the road. The escort quickly form a defensive position. One of the soldiers motion to the remaining vehicle occupants that it is safe to exit.

Termite and Wallingford and Ahmad exit the Suburban. Termite surveys the numerous nearby dirt mounds. His view ends at a nearby mound upon which are what appears to be the sandals of an entire family.

He walks over and kneels down at the burial site and tenderly picks up a pair of little girls pink plastic sandals and pauses to offer a brief prayer.

TERMITE

Lord why did you bring me here?

BANG, BANG, BANG! The sound of nearby gunfire snaps him back to reality.

WALLINGFORD (O.S.)

Termite, Termite. We must leave, now.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Termite reverently replaces the shoes on the unmarked grave, and rejoins Wallingford and Ahmad as they hurry back into their vehicle.

WALLINGFORD

As you see, the people of Iraq have experienced horrific injustices and, now, they need something to give them hope, a sense of national pride and something to unify them as a free people.

TERMITE

I'm listening.

WALLINGFORD

What are the chances of your putting together a team of Iraqi boxers for the summer Olympics in Athens?

TERMITE

You can't be serious.

Wallingford shakes his head "yes."

TERMITE

OK, to be absolutely honest, slim to none, maybe one in a million.

WALLINGFORD

Perfect! One is all the Iraqis need.

TERMITE

Sir, it's going to take a miracle.

As Mr. Wallingford gets into his vehicle.

WALLINGFORD

Then you two better get started.

AHMAD

You two?

EXT. BAGHDAD-GREEN ZONE-MAIN GATE - DAY

SUPER: Coalition Provisional Authority Headquarters, Baghdad.

AN MP waves through an armored Humvee, with a baby faced soldier manning a 50 caliber. A Suburban with blacked out windows follows as does a second Humvee and soldiers pulling rear security.

INT. SUBURBAN TRAVELING - DAY

AN ARMY DRIVER at the wheel. A mid-20's Sergeant rides shotgun. His radio CRACKLES reports of possible Ali Babas in their sector.

SERGEANT

Oscar One, this is Kilo Three, the Goose is on board, ETA ten minutes. Copy?

RADIO

Roger Kilo Three. We are receiving reports of Ali Babas in your A/O. Keep your eyes open. Over?

SERGEANT

Oscar One we're good to go.

RADIO

Roger Kilo Three, Charlie Mike, Oscar one out.

SECOND ROW OF SEATS: Termite and Ahmad, both helmeted, wearing kevlar vests, look out through smoked windows.

TERMITE

I can understand your thinking being my "Terp" is a demotion.

Ahmad does not respond.

TERMITE

Did I say something wrong?

AHMAD

Mr. Watkins, I am your Interpreter not your "Terp."

TERMITE

Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you.

AHMAD

I am not offended. Mr. Wallingford's is correct: my people do need hope and perhaps sports can provide that. I am not convinced but will do my best to guide you through our ways and keep you alive.

He looks back at the third row of seats: TWO YOUNG ARMY SOLDIERS locked and loaded.

EXT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM - DAY

A handful of people scattered in concrete bleachers ignore the distant gunfire and watch a pick-up soccer game.

One player in a Manchester United shirt elbows a defender to the ground and eludes his pursuers with fancy footwork, dribbles the ball all the way to the goal. Shoots. All net. Cheers.

Suddenly - all activity on and off the field comes to an abrupt stop as ALL EYES are drawn to --

A convoy that enters the stadium. Makes a 360 pass. Machine gunners train their 50 cal's on the bleachers, ready for trouble. Lead Humvee pulls to a stop --

BEHIND THE GOAL NET

Soldiers pour out. Form a defensive perimeter.

SERGEANT

Everyone better be red direct, locked cocked and ready to rock. Move!

Suburban driver hops out. Opens the rear passenger doors. Termite and Ahmad exit, as do the remaining shooters.

One of the onlookers, MUSTAPHA, a 50ish IRAQI in a Ralph Lauren Polo shirt, approaches Termite and Ahmad.

The soldiers measure his every move.

MUSTAPHA

Welcome, you must be Mr. Watkins.

TERMITE

Yes, sir. Mr. Hasan?

MUSTAPHA

No. My name is Mustapha and I am secretary of the Amateur Boxing Association. Welcome, welcome to you both.

TERMITE

Thanks. They call me Termite and this is Ahmad.

MUSTAPHA

Yes, we know of Sheik Jasem. It is my honor to welcome you both here.

Ahmad smiles slightly and nod his acknowledgement.

TERMITE

Where did you learn to speak English so well?

MUSTAPHA

I attended St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. My friends, please, if you would be so kind to follow me? Mr. Hasan is waiting in his office.

Distant gunfire continues outside the stadium.

INT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM HALLWAY - DAY - TRACKING

Mustapha leads them down a poorly lit hallway. The very nervous soldiers have their guns in the ready position.

INT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM BOXING GYM - DAY - TRACKING

Mustapha escorts them inside a dark and dusty, large room in the bowels of the stadium. An old unpadded boxing ring sits on the concrete floor, a duct tape covered heavy bag and a speed bag are the only signs of this being a boxing facility.

MUSTAPHA

This was once our training facility.
Between Uday, your bombs and the
looting that followed, you will find
that our boxing program is currently
at minus zero. Please follow me.

An animated conversation, in Arabic, ECHOES from an office at
the far end of the room.

Termite's POV of A GLASS DOOR: Behind it, we can see the two
MEN having the heated discussion.

INT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM BOXING GYM OFFICE - DAY

TWO ARMED BODYGUARDS stand on either side of FALAH HASAN,
50ish, President of the Amateur Boxing Association, sits at a
desk wearing western clothes and dark sunglasses.

BOXING PHOTOS adorn the wall, including one prominently
featuring Hasan and Khan (later identified as head of the
Asian Boxing Association). A Saddam Hussein Presidential
picture hangs behind the desk.

HASAN

(Look around, we have nothing so what
can we do? For now, we must accept
this man or we will receive no money
from the Americhi.)

COACH HADEY, a 50ish bull with a metal whistle hanging from
his neck, can hardly contain his indignation.

HADEY

(But we have been boxing here for
5,000 years. Allowing this infidel to
coach our team, especially at the
Olympics will make us lose face with
our Arab brothers. Never! I
cannot...I will not do it.)

HASAN

(Patience, my brother. It is one
thing for this Americhi to be given a
job title; it is an entirely
different matter for him to do
something with it, acceptance is not
acquiescence.)

A KNOCK on the door interrupts their conversation. One armed
bodyguard takes his gun's safety off and goes and stands by
the door.

INT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM BOXING GYM - DAY

Termite, Mustapha, Ahmad, and the soldiers hesitate outside the office door.

TERMITE

What was that about?

AHMAD

They are, how shall I put it...

TERMITE

Never mind, I can guess. We have a job to do so let's get this over with.

MUSTAPHA

For your information. President Hasan speaks fluent English.

TERMITE

Great, that will make this a lot easier.

INT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM BOXING OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mustapha opens the door, leads the others inside. Hasan remains seated. A moment of tension as both armed groups eye each other for any sign of hostility.

MUSTAPHA

Sheik Jasem, Mr. Watkins, allow me to present Mr. Falah Hasan, the esteemed president of our Boxing Association.

TERMITE

Very pleased to meet you, sir.

Termite steps forward and offers his hand across the desk. Hasan declines to shake Termite's hand but rather touches his heart.

HASAN

Ah yes, Mr. Watkins. Please, be seated. We have been expecting your arrival but...

Termite sits down. Hasan points to the American soldiers.

HASAN

Is this necessary? You are our guest and safe here.

Termite motions the soldiers to lower their weapons as does Hasan with his security guards.

TERMITE

So you know why I'm here?

HASAN

Your last hurrah?

TERMITE

No sir, I'm here to help get your boxing team to the Olympics.

HASAN

A small joke, my friend. As a young boxer, I listened on radio to your title fight against that Jew monkey Mamby. You and Mohammed Ali both losing that night was such a big disappointment to the entire Muslim Ummah. And now, here you are.

TERMITE

Today is not about me and I'm told we don't have much time so let's get right to the business at hand, OK?

HASAN

Ah yes, the American way. May I introduce our boxing trainer Hadey.

Termite nods his head in acknowledgement. Hadey's cold expression conveys his resentment.

TERMITE

Please tell him in Iraqi exactly what I say. Tell him I understand he's not happy about my being here but I've asked to assemble and train the new Iraqi Olympic boxing team. I accepted but.

(Ahmad translates)

This is your country, your team and I am only here to help, share what I know.

(Ahmad translates)

And, last but not least, tell them that, in order for us to succeed, I'm going to need total commitment and support. (Ahmad translates)

Pregnant pause.

TERMITE

Why isn't he saying anything?

HASAN

Please, ask him. My associate speaks the Queen's English.

TERMITE

Why didn't you tell me?

HADEY

You didn't ask.

Mustapha breaks the tension.

MUSTAPHA

Shall we inspect the team? They are assembled on the field. We should now go and meet them, yes?

Termite gets up from his chair.

TERMITE

Yes, that would be a good idea. After you.

Hasan hesitates, looks to his security, uncomfortable with having the American soldiers behind them. Hasan finally smiles, stands and motions his security to go. Both parties exit the office; each side mistrusting the other.

EXT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM - DAY

TWENTY-FOUR IRAQI BOXERS, a "Bad News Bears" bunch of teenage boys and lumpy men, statuesque prospects and human punching bags, half of whom are not wearing shoes or other standard boxing equipment.

TERMITE

This is your team?

HASAN

What's left of it. Many of our best young men are not willing to risk their lives coming here.

TERMITE

Then we'll have to go with what we got. Shall we begin?

HADEY

(Put on your gloves and pair up.)

They pull tattered gloves out of bags, one step above bare knuckles.

Automatic weapons GUNFIRE goes off only blocks away. Termite has a worried expression on his face

HASAN

Afraid?

TERMITE

The only thing I'm afraid of are those gloves; I haven't seen them except in a museum.

CLICK, CLICK, CLICK. Safety's come off.

SOLDIER 1

Sarge...we have a situation here!

The soldiers direct their weapons at a figure in a gray jogging suit, hood up, who bolts out of the stadium portal and runs down the concrete steps toward them.

SERGEANT

Kif! (Stop!), kif! (Stop!)

The young man is Najah Ali, the Iraqi boxer from the earlier scene. His smile quickly evaporates as he stops, knowing that he is about to be blown away, holds up his gym bag, empties it. Boxing gloves and a water bottle fall out.

HASAN

(That's Salah's son. What's he doing here?)

Hadey doesn't know. Hasan nods to Hadey to proceed. Just then - BLEEEET! Hadey's whistle gets everyone's attention.

Najah runs over to the other boxers. Strips down to his shorts. Puts on his gloves. Tries to quickly loosen up.

HADEY

(through his bullhorn)
 (Attention! This is Coach Aurdha.
 (white ant).
 (Many snicker)
 He has been appointed by the
 occupiers to assemble a boxing team
 for the Summer Olympics in Athens.
 Gentlemen, assume your positions.)

Termite steps forward, expecting Hadey to hand him the bullhorn. But instead...

HADEY

(Begin!)

Suddenly - a melee breaks out. More gladiatorial combat than boxing as each fighter tries to outdo the other.

Termite looks at Ahmad who merely shrugs.

TERMITE

Stop, wait a minute!

WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! - jabs, uppercuts, hard-hitting combinations open BLOODY CUTS on unprotected faces. BAM! BAM! - straight rights CRUSH NOSES and close up SWOLLEN EYES. WHUMP! WHUMP! - body blows and kidney shots leave some staggering; bring others to their knees.

TERMITE

This isn't boxing, it's a gang fight.
That's enough. Stop them.

Termite rushes into the melee and gets between ALI, a 30 year old heavyweight, and another bloodied fighter. As he separates them, Termite sees whipping scars on Ali's bare back. Ali's not ready to stop.

TERMITE

Stop! Stop! Ahmad, I need your help!

Ahmad hesitates getting into the middle of the melee.

AHMAD

(Please order them to stop!)

Hadey blows his whistle. The brawling slowly comes to a halt. The confused fighters stare at Termite. He looks at their cut, swollen faces.

TERMITE

I can see how hard they're trying to show what they're made of but this is not my way of training.

(Ahmad translates)

TERMITE

Here's the deal. Anybody who can prove they're under 32 and wants a shot at being on this team needs to be here tomorrow morning at ten AM sharp. We'll have a bus here to take you to the Al Hilla Athletic Club where we'll train at better and safer facilities than what you have here.

(MORE)

TERMITE (CONT'D)

Then, over the next couple of weeks, I'll be able to see what you've got and then make my decision. Everyone will get a fair chance to make the team; I promise you that.

(Ahmad translates)

TERMITE

Did anyone understand what I just said?

Some boxers nod, including Najah, but others do not acknowledge nor move.

TERMITE

Make sure the others understand. OK then, I'll see you tomorrow.

They look to Hasan who gives his approval for them to disperse. A smiling, unmarked, Najah approaches Termite.

NAJAH

Coach Mister Aurdha, please?

TERMITE

Call me Termite. What can I do for you, son?

NAJAH

Coach Termite, I am Najah, son of Salah. I will be the one to go to Olympics and win for my country.

Termite gives the smiling, diminutive Najah a once over. Sees THE GLEAM in his eyes. Termite smiles at Najah. To Ahmad.

TERMITE

That's what I want to hear.

Termite turns to Hasan and Hadey.

TERMITE

Gentlemen, we have a lot of work to do and I sure could use your help.

Unexpectedly, Termite, consistent with Iraqi custom, kisses them on each cheek. They are shocked. Termite and Ahmad turn and walk off.

AHMAD

I see you're adopting our customs.

TERMITE

Just don't tell my boys back home.

As Termite and Ahmad approach the Suburban, an Iraqi TV reporter, covering the event, thrusts a microphone into Termite's face, as her cameraman records the interview.

IRAQI REPORTER

Excuse me Mister Aurdha, may we have a brief word with you?

TERMITE

Of course, but please, they call me Termite.

IRAQI REPORTER

OK. Mr. Termite. Many of our countrymen are sceptical that Iraqi sons and daughters will have the chance to compete in the Athens Olympics. What do you think are their chances?

At a loss for words after what he just witnessed.

TERMITE

Ma'am, I've been around boxing since I was ten years old, and I've never seen anything like that before... or fighters with more heart.

IRAQI REPORTER

But will having big hearts be good enough?

TERMITE

It's a good beginning. I will do everything to find a way to put together a team for next summer's Olympics and prove to the world that Iraq is back. Now if you'll excuse us.

AHMAD

Please excuse us; we must go now.

Ahmad takes Termite's arm and guides him quickly into the Suburban and the convoy departs.

EXT. GREEN ZONE - DAY

Transportation center. Termite and Ahmad are sitting on a bench surrounded by military vehicles, SUV's and busses having a conversation.

Termite looks at his watch.

AHMAD

The driver confirmed that's our bus but where is our security? It should have been here already. Perhaps we go tomorrow?

TERMITE

No, it's only 9:15, if we hurry, we can still be there on time.

Termite stands and starts walking to the nearby bus.

AHMAD

Wait? Where are you going?

Ahmad follows but is intercepted by two covered Iraqi LADIES.

LADIES

(Sir, may we have a private word with you?)

Termite begins talking to a civilian Iraqi driver beside the bus.

AHMAD

Wait, Termite. I'll be there shortly.

The ladies excitedly speak to Ahmad in animated Arabic and then quickly walk off. Ahmad quickly walks over to Termite.

TERMITE

He doesn't know anything about our security detail but thinks we'd be safe today because its a religious holiday, "Eid something."

The bus driver shakes his head in agreement. Termite starts to board. Ahmad grabs his arm and whispers.

AHMAD

Yes, of course, but, my dear, those ladies have heard rumors that our lives have been threatened. We should not travel outside the green zone today...even with security.

TERMITE

But I promised the boys that I would be there at 10:00 a.m.

AHMAD

My dear, Baghdad is not Texas. Mr. Hasan will understand.

TERMITE

Come on, let's at least try.

Termite boards the bus and they depart.

INT. BUS TRAVELING - DAY

The bus drives through the streets absent of most vehicle traffic. Ahmad is nervous and peers out at a motorcycle apparently tracking them.

TERMITE

You worry too much.

Ahmad

It is our national past time.

TERMITE

It's a holy day for you too, isn't it?

AHMAD

Yes, my dear, all Muslims celebrate Eid. It's similar in some ways to your Christmas.

TERMITE

So, he was right, we should be OK.

AHMAD

My dear, you must not be so gullible.

TERMITE

But what would Hasan or those boys think if we just didn't show up.

AHMAD

I suspect Mr. Hasan would be pleased as he could stay home and feast with his family and friends.

INT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM OFFICE - DAY

No coaches or boxers. Termite sits fuming as he looks at the back of Hasan who rudely continues a telephone conversation ignoring his two guests. His two armed bodyguards stare stone faced at Termite.

Finally, he hangs up the phone, takes a deliberate drag from his cigarette and turns to Termite and Ahmad and smiles.

HASAN

My sincere apologies to you both. I assumed that you would not be coming. (To Ahmad) (The boys and coaches are at home celebrating with their families)....maybe tomorrow?

Termite stands and looks Hasan in the eye.

TERMITE

Maybe tomorrow? We risked our lives coming here today.

HASAN

Sir, I told you that today was Eid and I would do my best. (dripping sarcasm) I'm sorry if we have inconvenienced you.

TERMITE

Sir, let me be perfectly clear with you: if they're not here tomorrow at 10 am sharp, the deal's off, and I will find other boxers and coaches who will be happy to replace them.
(to Ahmad)
Let's go.

Termite storms out of the office. Ahmad nods apologetically to Hasan, and follows Termite. After they leave, Hasan picks up the phone and places a call to someone.

EXT. BUILDING ROOFTOP - DAY

A clothesline. Between sheets drying in the sun: An insurgent kneels holding an RPG on his shoulder.

POV THROUGH THE RPG SIGHT: The bus approaches in traffic.

INT. BUS TRAVELING - DAY

Termite sits beside Ahmad, agitated, fingering his prayer beads, staring out the window.

Ahmad

To disrespect a man of his stature in front of others is very dangerous; he could have had us shot and dumped in the Tigris.

TERMITE

I'm sorry if I was rude but he's just another bully. Don't you see what's going on? That man thinks I rode in on the back of a watermelon truck.

AHMAD

No, my dear, Mr. Hasan is at a crossroad, he's deciding which path to take.

TERMITE

Well, he should just get the heck out of the way until he decides.

AHMAD

Life in this country is not so simple. You will see.

EXT. BUILDING ROOFTOP - DAY

The Insurgent FIRES the RPG. And we follow its trajectory all the way to...

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Just then - WHOOSH! RPG zooms past the windshield. Continues across the street to --BOOM! Ordinance rips apart a storefront. Bad shot.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Uneasy silence. Mr. Wallingford sits at a desk, arms crossed, looking very perturbed at Ahmad.

TERMITE

Sir, I assumed that it being a religious holiday that we'd be safe.

WALLINGFORD

You cannot assume anything here, Termite, religious holidays don't protect you from some deranged "mooj" who would kill an American, or an Iraqi, just for the fun of it.

TERMITE

But what am I supposed to do, hole up in my room waiting for the military to show up and forget about putting this team together?

WALLINGFORD

Termite, you are not Lawrence of Arabia and you will never be one of them.

(to Ahmad)

(No offense intended, Ahmad.)

(back To Termite))

If you wish to continue to lead the boxing program, you will follow procedures. If not, you can go back to KBR cleaning toilets and killing bugs. Capeesh?

Termite isn't happy with the ultimatum but nods "yes."

WALLINGFORD

Great, now don't the two of you have a miracle to perform?

Termite and Ahmad get up and exit the room.

EXT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM - NEXT DAY

Bus and Humvees parked. The stadium is eerily empty and quiet.

Termite looks at his watch and paces under the watchful eye of the Army soldiers, on high alert, and growing increasingly uneasy.

TERMITE

I guess they're not coming.

SERGEANT

We're sitting ducks here. We should move out, sir.

Just then a flock of pigeons take off spooking them--

SOLDIER 1

I second that. I'm a two digit midget and promised my momma I wouldn't go getting my ass perforated today.

SOLDIER 2

I'm getting bad vibes too.

SERGEANT

Both of you, Just shut up and pay attention. Mr. Watkins?

Termite paces back and forth. He looks at his watch again. Ahmad fingers his prayer beads.

AHMAD

AST.

TERMITE

What?

AHMAD

Arab Standard Time. We Arabs cannot get to anything on time...not even our own funerals. Here...

(handing Termite his beads)

Maybe these will calm your nerves.

SERGEANT

We've got company!

Just then the boxers exit from the stadium portal and walk towards them. No Iraqi coaches accompany the team. Seeing the soldiers with their guns pointed at them, they stop and instinctively put their hands above their heads.

TERMITE

Guys, please, put your weapons down!

The soldiers lower their guns and Ahmad motions the boxers to come forward.

AHMAD

(Brothers, please, come. It is safe.)

TERMITE

No coaches, that's too bad. I guess it's just you and me.

Termite and Ahmad stand at the door greeting and shaking the hands of the fearful boxers as they board the bus.

TERMITE

Assalam Aleikom, Ali, Khalid, Wally, right?

Waleed a small shy boxer carrying a Koran nods but does not shake Termite's hand. He eyes the beads held by Termite.

WALEED

My name is Waleed.

He follows the others onto the bus.

TERMITE

I wonder what ever happened to that other flyweight, what was his name?

AHMAD

Najah Ali, his father Salah was an Iraqi boxing champion.

Gunfire suddenly explodes outside the stadium.

ARMY SHOOTER

Gentlemen, we need you to continue your conversation inside the vehicle.

The Army escort quickly ushers Termite and Ahmad into their Suburban as the nearby gunfire increases. The convoy quickly leaves the stadium.

EXT. BUS TRAVELING - DAY

The convoy heads south out of Baghdad and across the desert toward Al Hilla.

EXT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY

Termite, Ahmad and the team members exit the bus, stretch and look around, relieved to have arrived safely.

INT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY

Boxers enter and check out their new training facility: a speed bag, a heavy bag and one padded ring in the middle of the former basketball gymnasium.

Awaiting them - Hasan, his nephew HASHIM, Hadey, and the ever present bodyguards. Beside them, stands Colonel Beauchamp.

HASAN

Good morning to you, my friends. The Colonel has been showing us your new training facilities. I have brought along coach Hadey here to help you.

TERMITE

Why weren't you on the bus with the rest of the team?

Hasan ignores Termite's question and gestures to Hashim, who stands beside his Uncle

HASAN

I am pleased to introduce you to my nephew Hashim Kamel Noomah. He is our best junior flyweight.

Hashim seems a bit embarrassed, but extends his hand.

HASHIM

Mr. Termite. I am being very happy to be here with you.

TERMITE

Nice to have you, son. Is there anything else?

HASAN

No, except to remind you that in Iraq family is very important.

TERMITE

My friend, family is important everywhere.

HASAN

Yes, of course, and I would be very thankful if Hashim is a member of our boxing team.

Hasan's smile reeks of an implied threat.

HASAN

It is our way.

Termite looks at Ahmad and then Hasan, undaunted.

TERMITE

Well, sir, that's not my way. If Hasim's a better fighter than anyone else in his weight class then he'll be on the team. Now if you gentlemen will excuse us.

Hasan and his body guards depart. An irritated Termite and Ahmad walks over to the assembled boxers.

TERMITE

Can you believe that guy?

AHMAD

We Arabs have a saying "put yourself between the onion and its skin and you'll get a bad smell."

Termite addresses the team, including the chastised coach.

TERMITE

I know it's been a long, tiring trip so we'll wait until tomorrow morning to start your training. Go relax and get some rest. Oh and one last thing.

(MORE)

TERMITE (CONT'D)

I want to remind you of the words from a great Muslim boxer, Muhammad Ali: "If you are to be a great champion, you must first believe you're the best. And if you're not, pretend that you are." Ahmed will show you to your sleeping quarters. That's it for today, go get settled.

Ahmad leads them to their sleeping quarters as Colonel Beauchamp waves goodbye to Termite.

EXT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - TRACKING

Termite intercepts the Colonel as he bids farewell to Hasan.

TERMITE

Well, what do you think?

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

I can't recall which was more amusing, your lacing into Lord Muck or that sorry lot you bussed in from Baghdad.

TERMITE

Give the boys a chance. Any word from the IOC?

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

It's only been a few weeks.

TERMITE

I can't see why the IOC wouldn't allow us to compete, you?

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Yes, firstly: Iraq was expelled from the Olympic movement for torturing their athletes and secondly this is not the most popular war so we have to assume that it may have political repercussions.

TERMITE

Maybe, but it wouldn't be in the Olympic spirit to deny the boys that chance.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Ah yes, the eternal optimist. Oh, less I forget, Fern's women's center has proposed catering the meals for the team; what do you think?

TERMITE

Why not, beats the meals in a bag provided by the military.

As the Colonel departs, an old, beat up taxi arrives. Najah hops out followed by his father, Salah. They approach Termite.

SALAH

Excuse, please. I am Salah Ali, father of Najah. I so sorry, Mr. Coach Termite that we come too late. Bad men take my son for I don't know why. I come to say Najah a good boy, a good boxer.

TERMITE

I wondered what happened to you. Go inside and get yourself settled with your team mates.

NAJAH

Shukran. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Termite. Thank you very much.

As Najah passes Hasan, they exchange a cold stare, not lost on Salah and Termite.

TERMITE

Sir, he's going to be just fine. Your son told me that you were the former Arab boxing champion?

SALAH

Yes, but Najah be faster and stronger. His mother, she worry, no want him be boxer, like me. He be very smart boy, graduate university but only make furniture work.

TERMITE

Mr. Ali, I'll tell you what I told all the boxers, your son will be safe and get a fair chance in making this team.

SALAH

Thank you Mr. Termite. Barak Allah Feek.

EXT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAWN

A mangy stray dog paws through gutter trash beneath the glow of a lone street lamp as a mysterious figure passes. The dog growls as the person secretly enters the sports club.

INT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The person crosses the darkened gym and enters the boxers' sleeping quarters.

It's 5 A.M. and the boxers are all still sleeping.

Suddenly the bright lights are turned on, revealing Termite. He tacks a paper to the bulletin board. It is revealed to be the Olympic creed.

One by one, the startled, sleepy boxers jump up from their beds confused and rub sleep from their eyes. All except ALI, the older heavyweight who is still asleep and snoring loudly.

TERMITE

Good morning, gentlemen. From this day forward I expect you to be awake, suited up and prepared to train by the time I arrive at 5 AM.

Najah shakes Ali awake and he lumbers out of bed to find his team mates snickering at him.

TERMITE

All right, let's quiet down. Now that I have your attention I want to read something to you: "The important thing is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle, that the essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well." Gentlemen, that's the Olympic creed...are you ready? Because that struggle begins today: We don't have much time so six days a week you will eat, sleep and breath boxing.

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT/EXT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY

-- Termite, wearing body armor and helmet, leads the rag tag runners out of the gym and into the streets of Al Hilla. Some wear tennis shoes while others are still barefooted.

NAJAH (V.O.)

Beginning that day and every day thereafter, Termite led our team on a five mile run. Pride wouldn't allow us to show this American the pain our bodies felt.

The few Iraqis who are awake just look at each other in amused bewilderment. Children run behind them.

-- Termite demonstrates fancy footwork to the men who are lined up behind him. They one-by-one catch on to the steps. All except the solemn heavyweight, ALI, who lacks coordination but nonetheless tries. Thinking he got it; he smiles proudly and then stumbles and almost falls.

NAJAH (V.O.)

I had trained with my father since I was a child in hopes of going to the Olympic Games but most of the team had not boxed for years and competition outside the middle east had stopped being part of their expectations.

-- Termite directs the team in their training drills including press ups, burpees, squat thrusts, star jumps, plyometrics (jumping and hopping) and weight training.

NAJAH (V.O.)

Six days a week, he pushed my Iraqi brothers very hard and some grumbled about his strange methods. Would they ever box?

-- The team shadow boxes while moving in a circle around the ring.

-- Termite stands at center court of the gym as the team sprint back and forth, breathing and sweating hard. Ali, bent over, hands on knees, gasps for air.

NAJAH (V.O.)

After several weeks the promised boxing equipment that Coach Termite had promised us finally arrived. Our spirits were lifted as they opened the boxes.

-- The team is disappointed what the opened boxes reveal.

NAJAH (V.O.)

Unfortunately, the boxes contained Tae Kwan Doe gloves and boots.

(MORE)

NAJAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We were disappointed but agreed with Coach Termite that it was better than nothing.

-- The saddened boxers sit in the locker room being addressed by Ahmad.

NAJAH (V.O.)

The most difficult day of training was when the team received the sad news that our most pious team mate, Waleed, had been murdered while on his pilgrimage to Karbala, his throat slit as a warning to others about associating with the Americans.

-- Termite, obscured by two large boxes, enters.

NAJAH

Tired of the long boring of training and the threats, some of my brothers were thinking of quitting and returning to Baghdad until that day that Coach Termite arrived with our boxing equipment. Now, we really were a boxing team.

Termite begins handing out brand new boxing gloves, clothes, and shoes.

END MONTAGE

EXT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY

Iraqi police sergeant ZYAD ALABOODI, a late 30's bull with close cropped hair, moustache, deeply furrowed brow, and a permanent scowl, talks to another IRAQI COP.

A van pulls up to the entrance. A now uncovered Fern, Emily and THREE IRAQI WOMEN wearing traditional Abayas get out laughing and begin to unload boxes of food.

Alaboodi shakes his head in condescending disapproval.

ALABOODI

(Look at that. That infidel woman is spreading strange western ideas that don't belong in our culture.)

IRAQI COP

(Hmm, soon they'll be want to become boxers too, like Mohammed Ali's daughter.)

ALABOODI

(Yes, and look at how his life was ruined by this boxing. This can never be in our country. We must watch her very closely.)

Fern and the ladies carry the food into the sports club.

INT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY

The three smiling Iraqi women distribute their catered lunch to the ravenous fighters who jockey in line for their first locally prepared food since their arrival. Termite joins Fern who is standing at the end of the line.

FERN

Look at them, they're so filled with pride. Thanks for giving them this chance.

TERMITE

It was an easy decision. Thanks to the Woman's Center my boys are smiling for the first time since we arrived. Care to join us for lunch?

Fern and Termite make their way through the food line.

TERMITE

(Referring to his kevlar vest)
I hate wearing this, you?

FERN

I stopped wearing mine weeks ago; it was a trust issue between me and the local women. I'm curious, what possessed someone like you to leave his family to come here? The money?

TERMITE

My wife would get a big hoot out of that.

FERN

Why's that?

TERMITE

After I lost my shot at the championship I was always chasing some pipe dream or scheme. Finally, my wife threatened to leave me so I found a job as a car salesman and settled into a normal suburban life.

(MORE)

TERMITE (CONT'D)

Spiritually and financially I was a happy camper. Then came 9/11 and like so many it turned my life upside down. I felt this inner voice telling me that I needed to help, do something, so I prayed about it and... Let's sit over there.

They walk over to the bleachers and sit down. He takes off his Kevlar vest.

TERMITE

There, I feel better already.

FERN

So God's answer was your being the sole exterminator in the Garden of Eden?

TERMITE

No, apparently it is to teach boxing skills to men who I was warned would try to kill me.

FERN

What makes you think teaching boxing in a war zone will help them?

TERMITE

I know what it feels like to have your nose bloodied by a bigger boy, you feel like you're nothing, boxing can offer these boys a measure of self respect, and maybe a chance to get away from this war. Enough about me. The Colonel said you walked away from a cushy attorney job to come here, why did you do that?

FERN

Short story. I was born on a small farm in Oklahoma. Since I was a little girl all I have ever wanted to do is to make a positive difference for women so I became an attorney. I practiced corporate law but that world wasn't satisfying so I joined the peace corps and spent time in Bosnia, Guinea, Namibia...but being here, at this moment in time, is a fairy tale for a woman's right activist like me.

KABOOM!...A nearby large explosion rocks the gym and the lights inside the gym flicker and then go out.

Termite grabs Fern, knocking over their food plates onto her, while pushing her to safety under the bleachers. He squeezes in next to Fern waiting for the next explosion.

TERMITE

Do people die in your fairy tales?

Their POV of the team, illuminated by the fading afternoon light that filters in through grimy, broken windows. The team continues their lunch oblivious to the nearby explosion. Ali gets more food. Najah walks over to them carrying Termite's vest.

NAJAH

Don't be afraid Coach Termite, is just electric box.

Termite and Fern emerge from under the bleachers.

TERMITE

I won't need that anymore. Najah go tell the boys to finish up lunch and get some rest.

Najah smiles and walks off with the vest.

FERN

To answer your question: I love my work and even if I died today...

TERMITE

Hush, it's bad luck to even talk like that.

FERN

I'm just saying that it would be doing precisely what I wanted to be doing. Now, if you'll excuse me I need to clean up.

Fern departs as Termite walks toward the boxers finishing up their lunch.

TERMITE

Let's finish up, guys. You need to get your beauty rest. Big night tonight.

EXT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - NIGHT

Detective Alaboodi supervises Iraqi police who, one by one, frisk and inspect those entering.

Hasan's car pulls up. Hasan and his bodyguards get out. Walk to the head of the line. Alaboodi nods at Hasan, lets them pass without even patting them down.

INT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - NIGHT

US SOLDIERS are posted around the gym. An enthusiastic crowd of local dignitaries, coalition soldiers and CPA workers watch the fighters warm up. CNN and Iraqi TV news crews capture the story.

Hasan and his two bodyguards make their entrance and sit in reserved seats ringside.

Mike Wallingford climbs through the ropes and addresses the crowd in Arabic.

WALLINGFORD

(Can I have your attention, please. Mr. Hasan and all of our esteemed guests, welcome and thank you for coming. I'll be brief with my comments as I know that everyone is anxious to see these young men compete. A short time ago this group of aspiring Olympians were assembled in Baghdad by Mr. Hasan and his staff along with our Mr. Termite Watkins. The winners of tonight's competition will secure the final eleven spots on your new Iraqi Olympic boxing team which we hope will be able to compete in the Olympic qualifiers for the first time in many years. It has been too long since the Iraqi flag has proudly flown at an Olympic games so let's give them some encouragement and as they say in the states) "Let's get ready to rumble."

RINGSIDE, Termite, Ahmad, Hadey and the boxers prepare as Wallingford exits the ring

TERMITE

We're going to start with the flyweights and then move up in weight. Najah and Hashim will go first.

(MORE)

TERMITE (CONT'D)

OK...let's give them a show but before we get started, Ahmad, can you say a few words?

Termite bows his head and takes Ahmad's hand. The boxers are reluctant but slowly bow their heads and join hands.

AHMAD

(In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the ever merciful, Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, The most merciful, the ever merciful, Owner of the day of judgment, Thee we worship and thee we ask for help, Show us the straight path, Path of those thou hast favoured, and not of those who go astray. Ameen.)

The image of an American Christian praying with an Iraqi Muslim team is not lost on the crowd or a TV crew as it captures the team praying together.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Al-YOSSUFI sits with his grandchild on his knee watching the TV. Several men fingering "prayer beads," are seated nearby.

AL-YOSSUFI

(This is an example of what we must stand against. Look at that infidel praying with this so called boxing team.)

The two smallest boxers, Najah and Hashim, enter the ring, touch gloves and begin their box-off.

AL-YOSSUFI

(Do they not know that hitting in the face is forbidden according to the Hadith of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. This Amerechi is leading our brothers into self-destruction.)

Al-Yossufi turns the TV off.

INT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Termite stands in the ring with the chosen eleven.

Hasan and his bodyguards prematurely leaving the gym is not lost on Termite or the Colonel.

TERMITE

Choosing this team has been one of the most difficult decisions that I have ever had to make. What these eleven young men have accomplished in a short time is really remarkable. So here they are: your Iraqi Olympic boxing team! And now I just have one last thing to say to the world...Iraq is back...Iraq is back...

Ahmad looks at Mr. Wallingford and shakes his head in disapproval. Najah is the first to join in and then Ali, Khalid and the rest of the winning boxers start chanting, laughing and dancing around the ring.

TERMITE & FIGHTERS

Iraq is back...Iraq is back...Iraq is back!

INT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY

Boxers training and sparring. Termite paces and fingers his prayer beads as he talks on a cell phone. Ahmad follows closely behind him.

TERMITE

Yes sir I understand. That's great. No, I won't get my hopes up. Today, really, what time?

An excited Termite pumps his arm, turns and gives a surprised Ahmad a bear hug.

TERMITE

Ahmad, is it possible to get us to Baghdad? The Olympic committee wants to speak to us.

AHMAD

Today? Have you cleared this with Mr. Wallingford?

TERMITE

Who do you think I was talking to? I'll talk to coach Hadey and have him take over while we're gone. Go!

Ahmad reluctantly departs as Termite returns to the boxers.

INT. MIKE WALLINGFORD'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Wallingford at his desk lights up a Montes #2 cigar and stares across his desk at Termite and Ahmad in nearby chairs.

AHMAD

It is my mistake as I was told that you wanted us here today. I allowed Termite's enthusiasm to overcome my good judgement.

TERMITE

I thought that I should be here for the call in case the IOC had any questions. I was also thinking that you'd be able to arrange their visas at the same time?

WALLINGFORD

Visa's? Termite, you have the tenacity of a Bear after a lean winter. What led you to assume that my IOC call was about an invitation.

TERMITE

I had a good feeling.

WALLINGFORD

Your good feeling could have gotten both of you killed, again I might add.

The phone on Wallingford's desk rings as he looks at his watch.

WALLINGFORD

Saved by the bell. You gotta love the Swiss, right on schedule. Since you're here, please, you do the honors

Wallingford hits the speaker button.

WALLINGFORD

Hello, Wallingford here.

IOC OFFICIAL (O.S.)

Bon jour, Mr. Wallingford, this is Lawrence Chouinard calling from the International Olympic Committee in Switzerland.

WALLINGFORD

Bon jour, Mr. Chouinard. Mr. Watkins, our boxing coach, is also here. Please, go ahead.

TERMITE

Good morning, sir. I hope you're calling with good news.

IOC OFFICIAL (O.S.)

Ah yes, as a matter of fact I am. The credentials committee has unanimously voted to lift Iraq's suspension and welcome it back into our Olympic family.

TERMITE

Yes!

Termite grabs a surprised Ahmad in a bear hug.

WALLINGFORD

Thank you Mr. Chouinard. Your decision will mean a great deal to the Iraqi people.

IOC OFFICIAL (O.S.)

That is our hope but the Iraqi team must still qualify their athletes in order to be invited to Athens.

TERMITE

Yes sir, I understand. Thank you. You won't be sorry. We'll see you in Athens.

EXT. KUWAIT AIRPORT - DAY

Establishing. A military transport plane lands.

INT. KUWAIT AIRPORT GATE - DAY

Members of the team sit waiting as Termite has an animated conversation with an angry Kuwaiti security official. The official adamantly shakes his head "no" while Termite smiles and shakes his head "yes."

AHMAD (V.O.)

Overcoming logistical problems, we succeeded in getting most of the team into Kuwait but leaving proved to be a far bigger challenge. Our two countries did not have diplomatic relations and our Qadha brothers in Kuwait, still stinging from Saddam's humiliation, refused us permission to transit their country.

When the security official is finally finished admonishing him, Termite extracts a card from his wallet and hands it to the security official.

The gate is closed and the plane begins to back out.

The official suspiciously looks at the business card and then places a phone call and speaks to someone briefly. He hands the phone to Termite and shouts to the gate agent.

AHMAD (V.O.)

Surprising even me, Termite succeeded in contacting the Minister of the Kuwaiti Olympic team who stopped the plane and we were finally permitted to board our flight to the Philippines.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PUERTO PRINCESSA HOTEL - DAY

Termite and his team enter the hotel and approach the front desk. A young female DESK CLERK converses with a 30ish Philippine FEMALE REPORTER.

DESK CLERK

Good morning. You must be the Iraqi team.

TERMITE

Yes ma'am That's us.

DESK CLERK

I'm sorry, Mr. Watkins, but there is a small issue that needs to be resolved.

TERMITE

What's that?

DESK CLERK

The rooms were to be paid for in advance.

TERMITE

That wasn't already taken care of?

DESK CLERK

No, I'm sorry Mr. Watkins.

TERMITE

Here...

(hands her a credit card)

(MORE)

TERMITE (CONT'D)

Hopefully this will work for one night until this can be straightened out.

He hands her a credit card and she begins registration.

FEMALE REPORTER

Excuse me, Mr. Watkins, Maria Arroyo with Tanikalang Ginto, this country's largest newspaper.

TERMITE

Good morning, how can I help you, ma'am?

FEMALE REPORTER

You were not at this morning's press conference so I thought that I might be able to ask you and your team a few questions for an article I'm writing about the Olympic trials?

TERMITE

I'm sorry but we weren't there because of visa problems getting into and out of Kuwait. I'll be happy to answer anything you want to know as soon as we check in and I get the boys settled.

The desk clerk returns with a package of information and the check in paper work.

DESK CLERK

Here you are Mr. Watkins. It worked. Please fill this out and we'll have you on your way.

FEMALE REPORTER

Then you won't object to my asking a few questions of the boxers while you finish registering?

TERMITE

Fire away. I'll be with y'all in just a minute.

The female reporter turns to the gathered Iraqi fighters.

FEMALE REPORTER

OK boys, Just a few comments. Let's start by your telling me what you think about trained by an American coach.

TERMITE

Go ahead, give her all the dirt.

They shuffle about, unaccustomed to sharing their opinion.

FEMALE REPORTER

What about you?

HADEY

I am just a coaches, here to support our Iraqi team.

FEMALE REPORTER

But being a part of this team led by an American, aren't you afraid for your families.

HADEY

It is true that some of our Iraqi brothers view us as collaborators but we are just trying to bring honor to our country.

FEMALE REPORTER

Is it true that one of your team members was murdered?

HADEY

Yes, sadly some of our brothers view boxing as evil. We try to teach the boys how to defend themselves... but what can you do against an assassin's sword?

FEMALE REPORTER

And what about you?

She turns to Najah who flashes his big smile.

NAJAH

I am not afraid of my life coming to an end, I am worried that it will never start.

FEMALE REPORTER

It's been a long time since Iraq has competed at international events, do you realistically think that they can compete at this level?

AHMAD

They have made great strides. Our goal is to see the Iraqi flag fly at the Olympics and achieve something for our wounded country.

FEMALE REPORTER

Many think that is wishful thinking.

NAJAH

Coach Termite makes us believe in ourselves...we believe we're ready. We train very hard for at least six hours every day. We will do it for all Iraqi peoples.

FEMALE REPORTER

Coached by what many see as an infidel occupier?

NAJAH

Miss Reporter, I was told by those people that all Americans are bad but I believe that we should all try to live as brothers living in peace. Don't you?

FEMALE REPORTER

Thank you; I'm finished here.

TERMITE

Short article?

FEMALE REPORTER

No, it's apparent that they have been coached what to say.

TERMITE

What are you talking about?

FEMALE REPORTER

Isn't this charade little more than a propaganda campaign by your government.

TERMITE

Ma'am, I'm sorry but I have no idea what you're talking about.

FEMALE REPORTER

This is Joe Lewis vs. Max Schmelling all over again. Thank you for the interview.

She turns to walk away but is stopped by Termite.

TERMITE

Wait just a minute. You asked for an interview and then make accusations. Ali, come over here.

Termite lifts an embarrassed Ali's shirt revealing his scars.

TERMITE

Let me ask you a question. Where were you and the rest of the world when Uday was torturing them?

FEMALE REPORTER

And your point is?

TERMITE

They're just amateur boxers, normal guys chasing a dream, not politicians or soldiers. They deserve a chance. Don't attack them for what you think of me or my country. Put that in your story.

Shocked at what she sees.

FEMALE REPORTER

I will...thank you.

TERMITE

Now, if you'll excuse us. Let's go.

Termite leads the team off to their rooms, passing the swimming pool being enjoyed by other hotel guests.

TERMITE

You boys want to go swimming later?

To the surprise of Termite and the hotel guests, the boys immediately strip down to their underwear and begin jumping into the pool like little children.

TERMITE

Wait, wait you can't do that.

As the boys frolic in the pool, a bemused Termite and Ahmed look on.

EXT. SPORTS COMPLEX - DAY

Banners fly from a modern building complex announcing the Olympic Trials.

INT. SPORTS COMPLEX BOXING ARENA - DAY

Flags of participating nations hang from the ceiling of a world class boxing facility. Enthusiastic FIGHT FANS waving respective national flags fill the seats.

THE MIDDLE OF THE ARENA

Seated in the "OFFICIALS BOX" is ANWAR KHAN, 70ish, distinguished man in a silk suit, regally sits in a high-back chair surrounded by his heir apparent son ABDUL KHAN, 50ish and other OFFICIALS, being interviewed by the same female reporter.

The crowd starts CHEERING. Khan turns to watch the entrance of the Iraqi team as it enters the arena to an enthusiastic crowd welcome.

KHAN

Which team is that?

FEMALE REPORTER

The Iraqi team. Care to comment on their participation?

She writes as he comments.

ABDUL KHAN

I should not introduce politics but it must be so humiliating for them. The Iraqis have good coaches so why do they need him?

FEMALE REPORTER

He has an impressive background.

KHAN

A washed up boxer? His involvement is just another heavy handed American attempt to distract from what they are really doing to our Iraqi brothers. The IOC should never have sanctioned their participation but what can I do? I just hope that no one gets hurt.

INT. BOXING RING

Sequence of shots of the referee signaling victory of the opponents of Ali and Khalid

AHMAD(V.O.)

As the night progressed it became painfully clear that our boys were not yet prepared to compete on an international stage. Our last chance rested with Najah.

-- Najah enters the ring and totally outclasses his opponent, flooring him in the first round and scoring apparent point after point for three rounds. He returns to his corner for the final round.

INT. RINGSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Najah sits down on the stool provided by Ahmad.

TERMITE

OK Najah, you got him on points so play it safe in this last round. Be careful when going inside, make him chase you and then counter punch.

AHMAD

Yes, and hit him harder!

Najah returns for the final round with his opponent who knows that he needs a big round to win. Najah back pedals and effectively counter punches. The bell sounds and the fighters return to their corners to have their gloves cut off. A happy Najah jumps back to his corner.

TERMITE

You did it son...what did I tell you?

The two fighters return for the decision. Najah is beaming while awaiting the decision...the ref gives the fight to the other guy. Scattered boos.

In disbelief and sorrow, Najah drops to his knees in tears and pounds the canvas.

NAJAH

(Why? How can this happen?)

Termite rushes to Najah's side and lifts him to his feet.

TERMITE

Collect yourself, Najah and be a good sport. Go back to your corner. I'll see what I can do.

Termite hops down out of the ring and makes his way over to THE HEAD JUDGE, a 40ish, implacable Indonesian.

TERMITE

Excuse me sir, there must be a mistake. My boy clearly won the bout.

HEAD JUDGE

No mistake. Would you like to see the scorecards?

TERMITE

Yes sir, I would. Thank you.

Head Judge reaches into a folder. Shows the card: 21-8.

TERMITE

21-8...That's ridiculous, that can't be right.

HEAD JUDGE

I know what we saw, losers always see different fight.

TERMITE

Loser? If you believe that then you don't know a left hook from a fish hook. How do I file a formal protest?

HEAD JUDGE

You protest? That will require a fee of \$100 payable in cash to each judge on the panel, and another \$100 to be paid to the referee.

TERMITE

A bribe?

HEAD JUDGE

No, No, it is a conference fee. Is same for everyone.

TERMITE

We'll see about that. Excuse me.

Termite makes his way to the "Official's Box."

INT. OFFICIALS BOX - CONTINUOUS

TERMITE

Sir, may I speak with you?

Khan turns. The reporter inches closer to listen.

KHAN

Of course, how may I help you?

TERMITE

I'm the coach of the Iraqi team
and...

KHAN

We know who you are. You look
unhappy.

TERMITE

Sir, I understand that you are the
top official here. Did you see what
happened in that last fight? I mean,
21-8, that must be a mistake, don't
you agree?

KHAN

I assure you that my events are
always fair but even if I were to
agree on the merits of your
allegation, specious as it is, such
an inquiry could take weeks, months.

TERMITE

We don't have time what else can I
do?

KHAN

If I were you, I would be a good
sport and ...

TERMITE

...and pay a bribe?

Khan looks at the female reporter as she sticks her recording
device near them to capture their conversation.

CROWD ROAR. They momentarily return their attention to the
ring where the referee is raising the hand of HONG GILDONG, a
tall North Korean boxer who has just knocked out his
opponent. Khan returns his attention to Termite.

KHAN

That is a very serious allegation. I
have honorably served as the head of
Asian boxing for 30 years and my
integrity has never been questioned.

TERMITE

Look, I'm sorry if I offended you in
any way but I just want my boys to
have a fair chance and they didn't
get one tonight.

KHAN

Enough! Mr. Watkins, If you expect the Iraqi team to continue to participate in future qualifiers and have the same, fair chance as everyone, you will play by my rules. Do you understand?

TERMITE

Yes sir, I most certainly do.

KHAN

Good. Now, please excuse us.

Termite leaves and Khan picks up where he left off with his cronies. The female reporter who has witnessed the heated exchange, smiles at Khan and follows Termite for further comment.

EXT. SPORTS COMPLEX-HALLWAY - LATER

Termite stands outside the dressing room near a pay phone awaiting a call. Boxers and officials come and go. Finally the phone rings.

TERMITE

Hello. Yes, ma'am this is Mr. Watkins. Thank you. Sandra Jean? Hi honey, can you hear me?

SANDRA JEAN (O.S.)

Termite, what wrong, you don't sound like yourself.

TERMITE

That obvious, huh? I'm really bummed out about our performance tonight. We didn't fight as well as I thought we would and when we did it seemed like the fix was in. I've never seen anything like it.

SANDRA JEAN (O.S.)

So what are you going to do?

TERMITE

What can I do. I'm beginning to think that you were right, I can't change the world.

SANDRA JEAN (O.S.)

I can't believe what I'm hearing. You sound like you're giving up.

(MORE)

SANDRA JEAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 What about what you always preach to
 our children.

TERMITE
 Honey, I know what I tell our kids
 but maybe Ahmad is right, my ways
 don't work here.

SANDRA JEAN (O.S.)
 I'm really disappointed in you
 Termite. When you find your way, call
 back.

The phone line suddenly goes dead.

TERMITE
 What?... Sandra Jean? Sandra Jean?

The female reporter approaches Termite as he stares at the
 phone in disbelief.

TERMITE
 (to himself)
 Call back when I find a way?

FEMALE REPORTER
 Mr. Watkins, can I speak to you?

Still confused about what just happened.

TERMITE
 She hung up on me.

FEMALE REPORTER
 I'm sorry, what did you say?

TERMITE
 Sorry, what were you saying?

FEMALE REPORTER
 I want to apologize for my earlier
 comments.

TERMITE
 Ma'am, we all have the right to our
 opinion, even if it's the wrong one.
 What can I do for you?

FEMALE REPORTER
 Can we start over? Can I buy you a
 drink or coffee as a peace offering?

TERMITE

Sure, I think I could use one about now. What made you change your mind?

FEMALE REPORTER

That's what I want to talk about. Shall we?

Termite and the female reporter walk down the hallway talking.

EXT. CHINA - DAY- WEEKS LATER

Establishing shots of the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, Beijing landmarks, people riding bicycles.

AHMAD (V.O.)

After the team's failure in the Philippines, and Termite's comments to the lady reporter, all hell broke loose and I was concerned that our invitation to China would be rescinded and it was. Surprisingly Termite was successful again in finding a way of convincing the Chinese authorities that the team deserved a chance and we arrived in this ancient country with renewed hope.

INT. CHINESE BOXING ARENA

Flags of participating nations hang from the ceiling. Enthusiastic FIGHT FANS fill the seats.

And once again...a sullen Khan sits in a high-back chair surrounded by his surrogates.

AHMAD (V.O.)

Hoping our results would be better.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE:

- MATCH CUT gloves of different Iraqi fighters scoring point after point against different opponents. The CHINESE REFEREE gives wins to almost every opponent.

- Termite, Hadey and Ahmad yelling instructions to Najah who is slugging it out in a tightly contested fight.

The decision is awarded to Najah's opponent. Najah pulls his arm away from the referee and throws his head gear to the floor in frustration. He is forcefully escorted back to his corner by the referee.

AHMAD (V.O.)

Sadly, victories were elusive and we again failed to qualify any boxers.

END MONTAGE.

INT. RINGSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Termite's POV as Khan stands, makes eye contact with Termite, and smiles condescendingly, "I warned you," and exits, followed by his entourage.

Termite grabs Najah and leads him out of the ring.

EXT. BAGHDAD AIRPORT - DAY

MILITARY TRANSPORT PLANE sits at end of runway awaiting permission to take off.

INT. MILITARY TRANSPORT - DAY

Termite and Ahmad sit beside each other. Boxers throughout the cabin try to sleep.

Termite finishes reading a letter and looks at family pictures, he smells the letter and puts it inside his jacket. Termite shouts over the whine of the C-130's engine as it awaits takeoff.

TERMITE

My little girl is going to get married.

Ahmad is trying to sleep and ignores Termite.

TERMITE

You asleep?

AHMAD

Yes, I am sleeping.

TERMITE

Look at them...I wish there was more I could do for them.

Realizing that Termite wants to talk, Ahmad sits up.

AHMAD

Perhaps, then, we should bring President Khan a gift. It is customary.

TERMITE

There you go again. Why should I fatten his Swiss bank account?

AHMAD

Because, my dear, this is their last chance at qualifying and your critical comments to the lady reporter and others in the media has not helped their chances.

TERMITE

I just told the truth: the qualifying process is corrupt.

AHMAD

My dear, that may be true but some are whispering that you are a shameless self promoter.

TERMITE

They're right. I made a commitment to try to get the team to Athens and I'll do whatever it takes.

AHMAD

Yes, of course, my dear, we must try, but what makes you think anyone really cares what happens to us?

TERMITE

I care. You wouldn't be here if you didn't care. I believe the good people of Iraq care.

Ahmad

My dear, your optimism truly may get us killed this time. Your government has provided us no security and your embassy in Karachi warned us not to come.

Suddenly, the engine noise increases and the plane lurches forward.

TERMITE

(shouting)

Don't worry, the Lord wouldn't take us to a place where he wouldn't protect us.

AHMAD

Tell that to Daniel Pearl.

EXT. - BAGHDAD AIRPORT

The C-130 transport plane rumbles down the runway and lifts off. Suddenly, the airplane violently lurches into a cork screw maneuver as the departing military plane successfully avoids ground fire directed at it and heads to Pakistan.

INT. KARACHI RESTAURANT - LATER

A welcoming dinner for all of the boxing teams. Middle East Pop Music. A reception line of people line up to pay their respects to Anwar Khan. Termite, Ahmad and the team are seated at a long table watching a belly dancer perform. The dancer attempts to get Termite out on the floor.

TERMITE

No, no. I can't do that, bad hips, you boys go have fun.

Rebuffed, she lures the Najah and Ali onto the dance floor and they begin dancing. Termite smiles at the boys having fun and turns to Ahmad and motions toward the nearby reception line.

TERMITE

I can't stop thinking about what your advice about Khan. It just goes against everything I believe.

AHMAD

Yes I understand, my dear, but perhaps your beliefs do not work in this part of the world. Come, let's pay our respects too.

TERMITE

Maybe you're right, I should roll with the punches but I just can't bring myself to get in that line.

AHMAD

Your stubbornness and principles won't win us any favors or victories. Ah, our dinner has arrived.

Seeing that their food has arrived, Najah and Ali quickly return to their tables. Najah slides in beside Termite.

NAJAH
Smells good, huh?

TERMITE
Yea, I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.

Termite takes a generous portion and he and the boys begin their feast.

NAJAH
Mr. Termite, no horse, is sheep. I warn you Pakistani food very hot.

TERMITE
Don't worry, Najah. I grew up with Mexicans eating jalapeno peppers for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

INT. KARACHI RESTAURANT BATHROOM - LATER

Termite bursts through the door and runs toward the toilet. He is standing over the toilet "heaving" when Najah and the others enter.

NAJAH
(Trust me, he brave cowboy from Texas, eat hot peppers every meal.)

The boxers find Najah hilarious and laugh.

TERMITE
What's so funny?

AHMAD
My dear, he was expressing his sympathy for your condition.

Ahmad stifles a laugh.

TERMITE
Oh just shut up and hand me a wet towel.

Termite flushes the toilet and wipes his face with the towel handed to him by Najah and then suddenly feigns vomiting in Ahmad's direction. Ahmad reflectively jumps back.

TERMITE
Got 'cha!

Everyone laughs.

INT. KARACHI SPORTS COMPLEX LOCKER ROOM - DAY

A dejected group of Iraqi boxers sit in their street clothes watching while the remaining boxers, Najah, Khalid and Ali are being taped.

The SOUND of a TOILET FLUSH interrupts the silence. Termite walks into the room wiping his face. He still looks ill.

He walks over to check Najah's wrapped hands. Still weak, Termite sits down beside Ahmad who also looks ill.

TERMITE

Whew, I didn't think I had anything left in me. That food affect you too?

AHMAD

No, I'm just tired but my dear. Perhaps you should not have come tonight. You still look very ill.

TERMITE

Three days in my death bed is enough. This is the boys last chance; I had no choice. Gentlemen, listen up.

Everyone turns their attention as Termite stands to address the three remaining boxers.

TERMITE

Tonight we change tactics, I want you to get in close and make it a street fight, focus on punishing the body, the hands will drop and then, BAM, the head will follow. It's obvious that we won't win on style points. You gotta come out swinging...we need knockouts.

INT. KARACHI SPORTS COMPLEX BOXING ARENA - DAY

Flags of participating nations hang from the ceiling. Enthusiastic FIGHT FANS waving respective national flags fill the seats.

INT. KARACHI SPORTS COMPLEX - RING

Najah enters the ring. He sees Khan with his son Abdul in the "Officials Box."

TERMITE

Son, look at me. It's not about him. Once the bell rings it's just you and your opponent in that ring so just go do your best.

The BELL signals the start of the fight. Najah goes on the offensive and skillfully outclasses his opponent for the first two rounds. He returns to his corner.

TERMITE

You're doing great. Najah, he's yours to be had but to be safe you gotta take him out. Press the action, stay inside and continue the combinations and then that big hook of yours.

Najah returns to the center ring and is immediately on top of his tired and clinching opponent throughout the final round. POP! POP! Najah's goes inside and his combination staggers his opponent who retreats into the corner. Najah is all over him. BAM! A devastating hook catches the guy ON THE JAW and drops him like a stone just seconds before the end of their bout. Najah jumps for joy all the way back to his corner, where Termite and Ahmad congratulate him.

TERMITE

Great job! You did it!

Just then a stunned look crosses Ahmad's face. Termite turns to see the referee waving his hands. The ref picks Najah's opponent up off the mat and holds up his arm up in victory.

AHMAD

What is he doing?

Termite leaps into the ring and approaches the ref.

REFEREE

(points to the corner)
What you doing in ring? D.Q. Your fighter head butt. Now, you go back to your corner.

TERMITE

Najah's hook dropped him not a head butt!

Already exasperated, Termite turns to see Khan smugly smiling from his box while having his picture taken with Hadey.

INT. KARACHI SPORTS COMPLEX -OFFICIAL'S BOX - CONTINUOUS

Termite makes his way to the "Official's Box."

KHAN

Ah, Mr. Watkins again. I am surprised to see you here tonight, my friend, Coach Hadey, tells me that our local food does not agree with you.

TERMITE

I need a private word with Mr. Khan.

Hadey sensing Termite's anger quickly leaves.

KHAN

Don't tell me; you want to file another protest?

TERMITE

No sir, I ain't going to file no protest with your stooges. I'm going to take this all the way to the IOC in Geneva. If you think I'm throwing in the towel, you're nuts.

KHAN

Yes of course, by all means if that makes you feel better...

CROWD CHEERS. Khan temporarily returns his attention to the ring. The referee again lifts the hand of HONG GILDONG in yet another quick knock out victory.

ABDUL KHAN

I have a better suggestion, if you're interested?

TERMITE

And what's that?

ABDUL KHAN

Come back in four years with young men who are better skilled and coached.

An incensed Termite moves menacingly toward the younger Khan but is intercepted by his SECURITY DETAIL who restrain him. Termite pulls his arm free and points at Khan.

TERMITE

You just stole that boy's dream. You ain't seen the last of us.

Termite turns and is escorted away by security.

EXT. KARACHI SPORTS COMPLEX PARKING LOT - DAY - LATER

A demoralized Termite, Ahmad, Najah and the Iraqi boxers and coaches stand outside their bus. Ahmad does not look well.

TERMITE

You feeling alright?

AHMAD

Yes, I'm fine, just disappointed that we came all this way and failed.

TERMITE

Hey, c'mon, no one failed. They're all winners as far as I'm concerned.

Ahmad checks the bus number.

AHMAD

I am certain that is our bus but where is our driver and security?

TERMITE

I don't know or care right now. I need to sit down and get out of this dadgum heat.

AHMAD

Yes, me too. I must sit down.

They board the empty bus, the boxers in the back, Termite and Ahmad toward the front.

INT. IRAQI TEAM BUS - DAY

Termite and Ahmad seated at the front of the bus. He looks back at a jubilant Khalid.

TERMITE

Oh, by the way, what got into Khalid tonight?

AHMAD

Love was in the air. He is hopeful that he will now be rewarded and be able to marry his betrothed.

Termite looks back at the team. Coach Hadey avoids eye contact.

AHMAD

My dear, do not be angry with him,
it is very common to have a picture
taken with important people.

Ahmad looks out the window with concern as a van carrying a group of bearded men stops suddenly beside the bus.

EXT. IRAQI TEAM BUS - DAY

Three AL QAEDA men exit the van, force open the bus door and enter the bus.

INT. IRAQI TEAM BUS - DAY

Their LEADER, a tall, wiry, bearded, 30ish zealot walks past Termite and Ahmad down the aisle to where the team is seated. The boxers and coaches freeze in fear. The other two Al Qaeda stand guard in the front.

AL QAEDA LEADER

(You my brethren, are you the
slaves of this Kafir harbi?)

The intimidated boxers and coaches shrink further into their seats. The Leader turns and walks slowly back to the front looking at each boxer and coach. He stops when he gets to Termite and Ahmad. Looks right at Termite, and then suddenly makes a pistol hand gesture at Ahmad's head.

AL QAEDA LEADER

You...I think maybe you are an
Amerikee collaborator.

Ahmad turns to Termite and whispers.

AHMAD

I will handle this.

Instead, Termite stands defiantly. The leader is at least a head taller. He suspiciously eyes Termite's prayer beads which he is still holding.

TERMITE

I am the Iraqi coach. What do you
want?

AL QAEDA LEADER

You are an infidel whose country
enslaves these poor sheep. Saddam good
Muslim.

(MORE)

AL QAEDA LEADER (CONT'D)
Fortunate are we to serve Allah, the
Beneficent, the Merciful and help
punish you who wage war against
Islam.

TERMITE
What? These men are good Muslims and
there are no infidels on this bus so
please don't come in here threatening
us.

Surprised by his defiance, the Al Qaeda turns to Ahmad.

AL QAEDA LEADER
(Is this Amerikee a believer?)

TERMITE
You speak English better than me.
You got something to say, say it to
my face.

The Al Qaeda glances again at the prayer beads that Termite
is holding.

AL QAEDA LEADER
You are fortunate, as it is not
permitted for a believer to kill a
believer... unless it be by mistake.

Najah who is sitting in front of Termite stands up to defend
Termite. Ahmad stands up.

TERMITE
Najah, Ahmad, sit down. His beef is
with me.
(to Al Qaeda leader)
These men are not your enemy.

Al Qaeda LEADER
You wage war against Islam.

TERMITE
Son, the only war I've been
fighting is trying to get this team
into the Olympics and, Inshallah,
we'll make it there. Look at them;
don't you think that they deserve
that chance?

The Al Qaeda leader pauses to contemplate what Termite asked.

AL QAEDA LEADER
Amerikee, I am not your son.

An approaching police siren. The Al Qaeda leader orders his men off the bus. He pauses and turns at the door.

AL QAEDA LEADER

This time, little man, your neck is spared, next time I will kill you.

The Al Qaeda leader makes a throat slitting gesture, quickly exits, and joins his men in the van that disappears into the traffic.

Termite collapses back into the seat and turns to Ahmad.

TERMITE

I'm sorry, I almost got us killed this time, didn't I?

AHMAD

Perhaps, my dear, but you should not have had to defend us. It is we who should be sorry.

Ahmad slowly stands and addresses the team.

AHMAD

(My brothers, what is wrong with you? We should all be ashamed of the injustice that just occurred. This friend has risked his life and spent his own money so you could box and realize your dreams, never asking anything in return. We will never have true freedom until...we will...

Suddenly Ahmad pauses, the blood draining from his face, he suddenly collapses, unconscious, into the seat. Najah and other team members gather around. Termite cradles Ahmad's limp body.

TERMITE

Ahmad, what's wrong? What's wrong. Oh my God.

The door suddenly reopens, momentarily startling everyone. A smiling driver boards the bus.

BUS DRIVER

As-salaam alaykum. Everyone happy?

NAJAH

(No, we need a doctor; this man is dying!)

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BABEL HOTEL/CPA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A Shiite demonstration outside the CPA complex is about to turn violent.

INT. BILL WALLINGFORD'S OFFICE - DAY

Mike Wallingford observes from the window. A KNOCK on his opened door. A smiling Termite sticks his head around the corner.

TERMITE

You wanted to see me, boss?

WALLINGFORD

Oh Termite, come in. A smiling face is such a rarity these days.

Wallingford goes to greet him and escorts him to a chair.

WALLINGFORD

Please come in. Quite a commotion out there, huh? Come. Sit down. Ahmad has already briefed me on your experience in Karachi.

TERMITE

How's he doing? I was really worried about his making it back alive.

WALLINGFORD

He's fine, He had a minor stroke, but you know Ahmad, he insisted on returning to work so he could take care of a few things.

TERMITE

That's great news. I hope that he will be able to continue working with me and the boys.

Wallingford ignores the questions by changing the subject.

WALLINGFORD

Quite the dramatic ending in Pakistan.

TERMITE

It sounds like a broken record but the only way we could win was by knockouts.

WALLINGFORD

I was talking about the bus incident. You are very fortunate, my friend, that your head is still attached.

TERMITE

Bully's are the same all over the world. Ahmad's prayer beads saved me.

Wallingford checks his watch.

WALLINGFORD

Listen, I only have a few minutes before meeting with the Inspector General so I'll get right to the point. As you can see outside, we are trying to stop a civil war from enveloping the entire country.

TERMITE

My boys don't seem to have any problems getting along with each other. Maybe you could hold them up as examples.

WALLINGFORD

The folks in Washington have put the kabosh on all non-essential projects.

TERMITE

What's that mean?

WALLINGFORD

It's finished...your boxing team, but isn't it a moot point anyway since none qualified?

TERMITE

It may take a miracle but we still have a chance for a wild card invitation! We can't just abandon them now.

WALLINGFORD

There is an Arab saying "Do not stand in a place of danger trusting in Miracles."

Wallingford stands signaling that the meeting is over.

WALLINGFORD

I'm sorry to rain on your parade but the decision is final. Another casualty of this crazy war.

TERMITE

What about hope and something to be proud of? This is not fair.

Wallingford escorts Termite to the door.

WALLINGFORD

I would have thought would have learned by now that there is no fair in warfare ...especially in this part of the world.

TERMITE

What do I tell the boys?

He opens the door for Termite.

WALLINGFORD

Ahmad's taking care of that as we speak.

TERMITE

But what do I do now?

WALLINGFORD

In case we don't see each other again...thanks for trying and have a safe trip home.

Termite is ushered out the door.

INT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY

Ahmad enters the training room as boxers and coaches go through their daily routines. The team members individually welcome Ahmad. Ahmad then walks over and drops an envelope onto the lap of Khalid who is doing sit ups.

KHALID

(What is this?)

AHMAD

(From coach Termite. For your dowry.)

Khalid stands and looks into an envelope that contains five \$100 bills. He is shocked.

KHALID

(This is a lot of money. Why would Coach do this?)

AHMAD

(So you could buy your bride her wedding ring. He didn't want you to wait any longer to marry your her. Congratulations!)

KHALID

(Look brothers, I can now speak to Sarah's father and announce our engagement at "Khutba")

Khalid excitedly waves the bills over his head and excitedly dances around. The team and coaches congratulate him.

AHMAD

(Brothers, please, quiet. We are all happy for Khalid and wish him well but I am also here to deliver less happy news.)

KHALID

(How can that be so?)

AHMAD

(I am very proud of what the team achieved not only for you individually but for our country...but we... our country did not receive an invitation to the Olympics.)

Their individual faces show their surprise and disappointment. Najah steps forward.

NAJAH

(There must be some mistake. Is big joke, yes?)

AHMAD

(I wish it were so.)

NAJAH

(Where is Coach Termite? How come he no tell us?)

AHMAD

(Truly, It was not his decision. Termite is being sent home. A bus is on its way to fetch you so please begin packing your clothes and equipment.

(MORE)

AHMAD (CONT'D)

I am told, that you may resume your training in Baghdad.)

They slowly scatter to their lockers and begin packing, some seem happy, most are dejected.

EXT. BABEL HOTEL/CPA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Gunfire echoes in the distance.

INT. BABEL HOTEL DINING AREA - DAY

Termite, Colonel Beauchamp and Fern at a table finishing a small farewell lunch of sorts.

TERMITE

I've never been fired so fast. I wasn't in his office two minutes.

FERN

He's a good man with a thankless job.

CLINK! CLINK! - Colonel Beauchamp TAPS a water glass with his knife. He stands and raises his glass in a toast.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Sorry to interrupt but I have an orientation meeting with new staff members so before I leave, a toast to the little Texan with big dreams whose "arse" I threatened to send back to Texas: "May the road rise up to meet you, May the wind be ever at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and the rain fall softly on your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the hollow of his hand. Cheers."

They all raise their water glasses and toast.

Termite stands and shakes hands with the Colonel.

TERMITE

We got off to a rocky start but thank you for always being there for me and the team. We could never have done what we did without you.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Thank you, Termite. I am very proud of what we achieved and the memories, as bitter sweet the ending, are something I will always cherish. Stay in touch, and keep fighting the good fight.

TERMITE

You can count on that.

The new PR person comes into the dining area. Fern takes a last sip of coffee and gets up from the table to join him.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

You've got a few minutes, Fern, finish your coffee. I'll brief your rookie PR person.

The Colonel turns and walks away. Termite sits back down with Fern and pokes at his food.

FERN

What is this the "last supper"? You should be celebrating. What's bugging you?

TERMITE

They trusted me and I let them down.

FERN

Oh come on Termite, don't you think that you're being overly dramatic?

TERMITE

I didn't find a way.

FERN

But you tried and that certainly rocked those boys world for a few months.

TERMITE

Or did I selfishly offer false hope? Enough about me; how are you doing?

FERN

Other than my brain being in overdrive trying to hold these fragile groups together, I'm OK. Tomorrow is the national women's conference in Karbala and there might not be any more tomorrows for them.

TERMITE

Promise to be careful, OK?

FERN

Don't worry, Paul Bremer will be there so they'll have the whole city locked down. I gotta scoot so give me a hug.

The two share an embrace. A soldier approaches them.

SOLDIER (O.C.)

Excuse me, Mr. Watkins, your ride has arrived.

TERMITE

Be safe.

Fern departs.

EXT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY

A Suburban pulls up and parks. Termite hops out. He hesitates as he sees equipment bags being loaded onto a waiting bus.

TERMITE

I'll be quick.

Termite walks toward the entrance where Ahmad stands waiting.

TERMITE

Ahmad, my friend, I'm happy that you were able to meet me. You feeling better?

AHMAD

Yes, yes, strong as a lion.

TERMITE

The boys?

AHMAD

They're inside packing their personal items.

TERMITE

How'd they take it?

AHMAD

We Iraqis are accustomed to disappointment.

TERMITE

I'm sorry I got their hopes up...it's just not right.

AHMAD

Do not apologize, my dear. For most of them, to travel and to dream for a few months...it was all worth it.

TERMITE

I hope so. Well, let's get this over with. I only have a few minutes.

INT. AL HILLA SPORTS CLUB - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Termite and Ahmad enter.

AHMAD

(Everybody! Come on over. Coach Termite has come to say farewell.)

Boxers and coaches stop what they're doing and gather around Termite and Ahmad. This is not a happy bunch.

TERMITE

I only have a few minutes to say goodbye. I am heartbroken that our journey together has ended short of our goal. Gentlemen, pick your heads up; you have nothing to be ashamed of. You need to keep training, listen to your coaches and never, ever stop believing in yourselves and each other. I love all of you and will never ever forget our times together. Ali, Khalid, Najah...

Tears trickle down his cheeks as he struggles to maintain composure. The team crowd around him to offer comfort and say goodbye to their friend.

ALI

Is OK. Thank you, coach Mr. Termite, making Iraq is back.

TERMITE

I'll never forget that KO in Karachi. You too Khalid.

KHALID

Thanks be to Allah for you, my brother, from another mother. I can marry now. Coach, I be calling first child Termite.

Termite wipes away tears. Hadey extends his hand in friendship to Termite and then hugs him.

TERMITE

I'm sorry.

HADEY

We Iraqis are emotional. You are like us. We are a family. If you are not here, we will feel like something is lost.

TERMITE

Shukran. We would never have got as far as we did without your efforts and those this good man who taught me that an American and an Iraqi could see not only eye to eye but heart to heart. Thank you, my dear.

AHMAD

My dear, it wasn't a Hollywood ending but you have planted trees that you will never get to sit under. My prayer is that you will be blessed with the memories.

Everyone takes note as Najah abruptly leaves the group and sits down in front of his nearby locker.

TERMITE

Well, I guess this is it. I don't like long good-byes so to all of you: God bless you, be safe and take care of yourself. I'll never forget you, and pray we'll all meet again.

Termite shakes hands and hugs various team members and then walks over to where Najah sits and sits down beside him.

NAJAH

It really was just a dream wasn't it?

TERMITE

I can't blame you for being angry and disappointed.

NAJAH

Truly, what do you know of being disappointed? You go back to normal life in Texas. What about me, the team, what about Iraq is back?

A distraught Najah holds back tears.

TERMITE

Son, this is just the beginning for you and your country so put that big smile back on your face. They can ship me back to Texas but it's not over for you and me, not by a long shot.

NAJAH

I know you try. Thank you Coach for all you do for me...for us.

Najah grabs Termite and hugs him for the last time.

NAJAH

I always remember you as father of Iraq boxing.

Close to tears, Termite stands and quickly walks toward the door but before he can exit, the boxers, led by a smiling Najah, Ali and Ahmad, begin chanting "Iraq is back, Iraq is back." Termite forces a smile, waves goodbye and exits.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KARBALA HIGHWAY - DAY

POLICE ROADBLOCK. TWO UNIFORMED IRAQI cops inspect a small line of vehicles while Alaboodi remains seated in the police pick up. Fern's private sedan approaches the check point.

INT. FERN'S SEDAN - DAY

Amenah behind the wheel. Fern in the passenger seat quickly recovers her head. The new male PR person sits in the back seat.

PR PERSON

I'm just suggesting that after seeing the tepid response at the Karbala conference maybe Forester was prophetic in saying "Not yet, Not now."

AMENAH

This is not colonial India; we are a proud people. The day will soon come when the world will witness Iraqi women rebuilding Iraq.

PR PERSON

Hopefully in our life time, but to be honest, I just don't see your vision for the Iraqi woman in the foreseeable future. What's up ahead?

FERN

The usual police security check. Get your papers ready.

AMENAH

I just pray that our sisters in the west will not abandon us. I know our customs are slow to change but we will do it, you will see.

FERN

Pay attention, Amenah, watch the road, he's waving us through.

POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD: Cop #1 waves for them to approach. Amenah pulls up a few feet. Reaches in her purse for her ID. Shows it to Cop #1 who takes her ID. Cop #2 walks up to the passenger window. Fern produces her ID and hands it to Cop #2.

COP #2

Shukran.

He compares the picture on the ID to Fern and smiles. Without a word, Cop #2 draws his pistol. Points it at Fern's head. Point blank. BANG! Fern falls back with her brains leaking out. Amenah begins screaming. In a flash, Cop #2 aims the gun at Amenah. BANG! She meets the same fate. The PR person cowers and pleads for his life.

PR PERSON

Please, please don't kill me I have a wife and two children.

Alaboodi exits the truck and walks over with his AK-47 and sprays the car with gunfire killing the PR Person and insuring that the occupants are dead. A tear forms in his eye as he surveys the carnage.

ALABOODI

Forgive us for what we have done.
Let's get out of here.

The men enter the truck and quickly drive away.

EXT. AL HILLA COALITION HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Soldiers and civilians come and go performing their daily routines. Life as normal.

INT. COLONEL BEAUCHAMP'S OFFICE

Termite sits with his head in his hands in front of the Colonel. Termite looks up and quickly wipes his eyes.

TERMITE

Want to hear something crazy? Fern told me they would ultimately get one of us. Of all people, why Fern?

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Your FBI is investigating but I doubt that we'll ever really know the truth. She was advised many times not to drive around without security.

TERMITE

She loved these women and they trusted her for what she was trying to do.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Unfortunately, fear trumps trust. It's may be a small consolation but she and Amenah died for something they truly believed in.

TERMITE

She said those exact words to me and I didn't want to hear it. My mind just keeps replaying her last words to me: "I can't walk away"...I did.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

There is nothing you could have done. Her good intentions like many others have gotten lost in this insane sectarian violence.

TERMITE

Makes me wonder why we ever came here.

Termite stands to leave. He offers his hand in friendship.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Where are you going?

TERMITE

Home.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Termite turns to leave.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

Stand still! I haven't dismissed you.

Termite turns and The Colonel smiles and hands a letter to him.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

As fate would have it, you seem to have some unfinished business.

TERMITE

What's this?

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

A second chance it seems...

TIGHT ON: the letter on official IOC stationery stating that the IOC has granted the Iraqi boxing team a wild card spot to the Athens Olympiad.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP

...if you're willing.

TERMITE

Am I ever.

INT. AL-SHAAB STADIUM BOXING GYM - DAY

The boxing area has only been slightly improved. Termite stands in the ring in front of the boxing team.

TERMITE

Okay, listen up everybody, I know that you must be confused seeing me again but I bring good news and bad news: Iraq has been granted a wild card spot to the Olympics!

Shock and then cheers, jumping up and down, hugging. Termite motions for them to quiet down.

TEAM

Iraq is back, Iraq is back.

TERMITE

Hold on now, y'all don't go getting too excited.

(MORE)

TERMITE (CONT'D)

The bad news is that the invitation
is for only one boxer.

They look at each other, uncertain what he means.

TERMITE

It just breaks my heart that all of
you can't go to Athens but, hey,
one's sure better than none. Now it
is up to you to select who you
think will best represent Iraq.

Termite exits the room. The boxers warily look at each other
trying to decide.

EXT. MEDITERRANEAN OCEAN - DAY

A huge commercial jet skims over the water approaching the
Athens airport.

EXT. ATHENS - DAY

Establishing STOCK FOOTAGE of the Parthenon, Acropolis, and
finally the Olympic Village alive with athletes and officials
and a nearby street filled with tourists celebrating the
Athens Olympiad.

INT. BOXING ARENA - TEAM WEIGH - DAY

Athletes and coaches from all competing nations assemble.
Termite mingles with athletes, shaking hands with them and
coaches. He embraces IBRIHIM, a black Muslim coach of the
American boxing team, who joins them for the weigh in. HONG
GILDONG steps off the scale and sneers as he passes the
shorter Najah.

OLYMPIC OFFICIAL (O.S.)

From the Democratic Peoples
Republic of Korea, Hong Gildong...
107 pounds.

TERMITE

Thanks for joining us.

IBRIHIM

I figured you might need some help.
Your boy has drawn a tall and
experienced opponent.

TERMITE

Don't remind me. We saw him in the
qualifiers.

Najah steps onto the scale.

OLYMPIC OFFICIAL
From the Republic of Iraq, Najah
Ali...105 pounds.

Najah steps off the scales and is immediately confronted by
Khan's son, Abdul and an IOC OFFICIAL.

IOC OFFICIAL
Mr. Ali, may we have a word with
you?

NAJAH
Yes, of course.

IOC OFFICIAL
Are you aware that your medical
book is not in order?

NAJAH
I'm sorry I don't understand
medical book. Coach Termite?

TERMITE
What's going on here?

IOC OFFICIAL
Ah, Mr. Watkins. We have been
attempting to locate you all
morning to discuss this problem.

TERMITE
Another problem, great. I'll take
care of this, Najah. Go back to
your room and get some rest.

Najah grabs his bag and leaves as Termite returns his
attention to the IOC official.

TERMITE
Now, what's the problem?

IOC OFFICIAL
There is a missing medical entry
and according to the rules...

TERMITE
What rules, what are you talking
about?

IOC OFFICIAL
Olympic boxing rules. Najah can't
compete.

TERMITE

Whoa, just a darn minute, all the rules were followed and the paperwork was presented, on time, and in order.

ABDUL KHAN

Even if that were true, the fact is that Najah did not qualify and is only here because of the media sympathy you promoted.

TERMITE

The only reason Najah didn't qualify was because of your judging system.

ABDUL KHAN

A system that produces winners and protects our boxers. Najah is the smallest boxer here and is not prepared to face an experienced fighter like Hong Gildong.

TERMITE

Mr. Khan, if you prevent Najah from competing I will make it my life mission to see that people like you are run out of boxing.

ABDUL KHAN

Are you personally threatening me, Mr. Watkins?

TERMITE

Yea, I guess I am. I should have kicked your ass a long time ago.

Ibrihim steps in between the two men before Termite can do anything.

IBRIHIM

Whoa, both of you...just chill. What can be done?

IOC OFFICIAL

I understand his frustration but my job is simply to confirm that everyone's paperwork is in order and, Mr. Khan is correct, it appears that Najah's is not. I'm sorry.

IBRIHIM

Sorry doesn't describe the heart
breaking road back to Baghdad for
Najah. Can you at least check again?

IOC OFFICIAL

I will be happy to do that but
until I get some clarification,
Najah is ineligible to participate
in the games. Do you understand?

TERMITE

We understand sir, we really
appreciate your double checking.

The IOC official and Abdul Khan turn and walk away. Termite
turns to Ibrihim.

TERMITE

Why now? We are so close. Can you
help us?

IBRIHIM

I'll see what I can do, but don't
get your hopes up. The Germans
helped before but it's a long shot.

TERMITE

Yea, a million to one.

EXT. ATHENS OLYMPIC STADIUM - NIGHT

NEWS FOOTAGE of the capacity crowd at the end of the opening
ceremonies as they await the parade of nations to begin. From
a tunnel, athletes from all nations begin filing into the
stadium as the name of their country is called. A THUNDEROUS
OVATION as the initial Greek contingent enters.

EXT. OPENING CEREMONIES STAGING AREA - NIGHT

And we ZOOM IN and find... Athletes are gathered inside a
secure fenced area. Outside the fence wait Termite and Najah.
Termite is on his cell phone.

TERMITE

I can hardly hear you too. Yes, I'm
excited. Listen, they're announcing
the countries. Are you watching? I'll
throw you a kiss. Najah too. I love
you. I have to go now.

They listen to the nations being announced over the PA system
getting closer to the announcement of the Iraqi delegation.

Najah paces back and forth. Ibrihim comes running out the tunnel, waving a credentials package.

TERMITE

Finally.

IBRIHIM

I'm glad I finally found you; I almost gave up. Your guy is in but...

Turning to Najah.

TERMITE

Yes! See what did I tell you.

IBRIHIM

Najah, here, you go ahead; I need to speak to Termite.

TERMITE

Go on! I'll catch up.

Najah takes his badge and runs to the secured area.

TERMITE

What's up?

IBRIHIM

I know how much marching together means to you but...

Ibrihim looks over at Najah and then back to Termite.

IBRIHIM

The Iraqi officials think that the image of you two marching together at the opening ceremony will send the wrong message to the world.

Termite looks over at a beaming Najah who is welcomed by the Iraqi delegation. Najah motions for Termite to hurry and join him.

IBRIHIM

Hey man I'm sorry.

TERMITE

About what? This was never about me.

IBRIHIM

Dude, you're talking to me. I know how much sweat and heart you two put into this.

TERMITE

Can I be in his corner at tomorrow's fight?

IBRIHIM

They didn't say nothing about that. I would be honored to be your corner man.

TERMITE

That'd be great. Thanks.

Najah returns to where they stand.

NAJAH

Come coach Termite, we must hurry.

IBRIHIM

We'll show them tomorrow, right Najah?

NAJAH

Yea, we show them.

Ibrihim slaps Najah on the back and hurries off.

Coach, why you standing here with sad face?

TERMITE

That obvious, huh? I cannot be seen alongside you tonight.

NAJAH

What you mean? Who tell you that?

TERMITE

Najah, I've been told that our being televised together could place you and your family back home in danger. Anyway, you'll be on your own sooner or later.

NAJAH

But Coach, I know how much this means to you. I cannot go.

TERMITE

Son, we've gone through too much for the world not to see you. Tonight is about you and your country. Don't worry about me. Now hurry. Go on. Now.

Najah hesitates but relents, hugs Termite and runs to join the Iraqi delegation. Najah looks back and touches his hand to his heart. Termite, tears slowly forming, does the same.

PA SYSTEM (O.S.)
The Republic of Iraq.

He watches until Najah and the Iraqi delegation disappear into the stadium tunnel.

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE. Termite smiles and then turns and walks in the opposite direction...alone.

INT. NAJAH'S FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

NEWS FOOTAGE of the Iraq delegation entering the stadium.

Najah's parents celebrate and cheer along with OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS and FRIENDS as they watch their TV.

SALAH
(There's Najah. Where's coach
Termite?)

INT. WALLINGFORD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mr. Wallingford, Colonel Beauchamp and Ahmad crowd around a computer watching the ceremony via the internet.

COLONEL BEAUCHAMP
That's strange seeing Najah without
Termite.

INT. WATKINS HOME - DAY

Termite's family and friends gather around the TV watching the opening ceremonies as Sandra Jean finishes a conversation on her phone.

SANDRA JEAN
I'm so sorry sweetheart. Yes, I can
see him now. Yes, he does look happy.
I love you too. I'll see you soon.

Tears form in her eyes as she watches Najah walk in alone. She hangs up the telephone.

INT. OLYMPIC BOXING ARENA - NEXT DAY

The SOUNDS of the crowd as the fight is about to begin.

PA SYSTEM (O.S.)
In the red corner from the Republic
of Iraq...Najah Salah Ali.

SUBDUE, POLITE APPLAUSE.

RINGSIDE: Termite, Najah and Ibrihim in the red corner. Najah is very nervous, looking around.

PA SYSTEM (O.S.)
 In the blue corner from Democratic
 People's Republic of Korea...Hong
 Gildong.

A large flag waving Korean contingent cheers the announcement of their countryman.

TERMITE
 What's bothering you?

NAJAH
 I'm scared.

TERMITE
 Of what?

NAJAH
 Of losing.

TERMITE
 You remember what Mohammed Ali said?

The taller Korean fighter glares menacingly across the ring at Najah.

NAJAH
 Yes, I remember. Believe you can win.

TERMITE
 Najah, Look at me...concentrate.

The referee motions both contestants to center ring. Najah stands and Termite kisses Najah on both cheeks.

TERMITE
 You can win. Now, we've seen what your opponent can do, so keep him in the center of the ring, jab to the head, jab to the body, don't throw any hooks, all straight punches, work the angles, use your foot speed, keep him turning. Don't be an easy target. Keep him turning, son.

Najah smiles and slaps his gloves together.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE:

Najah meets Gildong at center ring and goes on the offensive, staying inside, constantly turning, confusing the Korean fighter. Najah employs the same strategy in the first, second, third rounds, clearly dominating the contest.

(NOTE: dialogue will be added here after fight is choreographed.)

END MONTAGE.

INT. RINGSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Najah returns to his corner for the final round temporarily distracted by a small Iraqi contingent screaming "Ali, Ali, Ali" and proudly waving their new Iraqi flag.

NAJAH

Listen, Termite, my Iraqi brothers are here too.

IBRIHIM

Najah, pay attention! You have two minutes left so play it smart, stay inside and don't be careless. Deep breath, take a drink, spit.

TERMITE

Look at me, son! Focus! Keep doing what you're doing, use your speed, keep turning him, don't leave nothing out there.

The RING BELL sounds and both boxers return to center ring and touch gloves for the final round.

INT. RING - CONTINUOUS

Gildong immediately goes on the offensive rocking Najah with a hard right that surprises him. The Korean contingent erupts sensing a victory. Najah clinches, regains his legs and dances away. The Iraqi partisans offer their encouragement..."Ali, Ali, Ali."

Gildong chases Najah attempting to deliver a knock out punch but misses badly, almost falling down. The final round finds the Korean chasing Najah, trying to trap him in the corner as Najah regains his senses and effectively scores with a flurry of counter punches until the bell ends the bout.

Najah bows and congratulates his taller opponent. "Ali, Ali, Ali" follows Najah to his corner.

TERMITE

Will you listen to that. The whole world knows your name now.

NAJAH

How did I do Termite?

TERMITE

Son, you fought your heart out and no one can ever take this moment away from you.

Najah is very serious as his gloves are cut off.

NAJAH

But, Coach Termite, you think I be winner?

TERMITE

Yes, regardless of the decision.

They towel him off and Najah returns to the center ring to await the judges decision. The crowd noise softens to near silence. Minutes seem like hours. Finally, the PA system crackles to life.

PA SYSTEM

Ladies and Gentlemen, by a score of 21-7, in the red corner, from the Republic of Iraq...Najah Salah Ali.

The referee holds up Najah's hands in victory. Termite runs to center ring and embraces a stunned Najah. Termite lifts Ali up over his head and we FREEZE FRAME on that image as the "ALI", "ALI", "ALI" crowd noise builds and then fades.

TERMITE(V.O.)

Olympic folk lore is filled with heroic stories of personal sacrifice and achievement so I don't know if Najah's victory in Athens will be recorded as one of those shining moments but for me my calling was confirmed when I was later told that for several hours, during the darkest hours of the Iraq war, fighting stopped, as people forgot about their differences and swarmed into the streets of Baghdad and peacefully celebrated an Iraqi victory. My hope is that our example will send forth a tiny ripple of hope that one person, be they mighty or small, can change

(MORE)

TERMITE(V.O.) (CONT'D)
the world for the better, if but for
a few precious hours.

FADE OUT.

HIS VOICE STARTED TO TREMBLE AS HE RECALLED THE INSENSITIVE QUESTIONS OF A JAPANESE JOURNALIST SHORTLY AFTER ALI WAS DEFEATED IN ATHENS. "HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE A LOSER IN THE BIGGEST EVENT OF YOUR LIFE?" ALI WAS ASKED.

"DID I LOSE?" AN INCREDULOUS ALI RESPONDED.

WHEN TOLD THAT HE DID, THE DIMINUTIVE ALI SUDDENLY TOOK ON THE PERSONA OF A LITTLE GIANT AS HE REPRIMANDED THE WRITER. "MY COUNTRY IS FREE, AND I REPRESENTED THEM," HE RETORTED DEFIANTLY. "I GOT TO COME TO THE OLYMPICS, AND THE WORLD LOVES ME. AM I A LOSER?"

THE WRITER WAS TAKEN ABACK, AND IT TOOK HIM A MOMENT TO COLLECT HIS THOUGHTS BEFORE RESPONDING. "NO," HE SAID. "YOU MIGHT JUST BE THE BIGGEST WINNER HERE."

CRAWL:

--Following the Athens Olympiad, Anwar Khan was sanctioned by the International Olympic Organization and subsequently voted out of office amidst allegations of financial and other judging irregularities.

--Mr. Mike Wallingford remains in government service.

--Colonel Beauchamp completed his service in Iraq and returned to England where he now practices medicine.

--Ahmad was unable to accompany Termite and Najah to Athens. He retired to his home in Southern Iraq.

--Najah returned to Iraq where death threats forced him to seek political asylum in the UK where he pursues a professional boxing career.

--Termite returned to Texas where he continues "to make a difference" in business and as a public speaker motivating others by his example.