WALK THROUGH FIRE

Captured with a small group of contractors, Zach knows the longer he can keep his interrogator focused on him in a give and take contest of wills, the longer the others will live. While on the other side of the world, his mother and her misfit team scramble with (and against) billionaires, the media, the military and private security forces to get her son and the others out before the killing begins.

EXT. CITY STREETS DAY TIME

A woman in her early 60's is walking up the downtown street. She is visibly shaken, but determined, driven. Dressed in a business suit that doesn't fit her quite well and carrying a briefcase she looks at her watch, stops and tries to make a decision. ELISE looks up at a large hotel a block away and breathes in deep, setting her resolve and starts to march forward again. We see her walk past a strip of small businesses. She passes a nail salon, a lawyer's office, a pizza place. Then Elise stops and looks back at the lawyer's office. She looks ahead to the large hotel ahead, and turns back toward the lawyer's office. She checks her watch again and charges in.

INT. DAY LAWYER OFFICE

A chime goes off as the woman enters the office. It is a small lobby with a few cheap, mismatched chairs for a waiting area. Elise stands in the lobby, checking the place out quickly with a disapproving look on her face. There's a plaque on the wall from Loyola University and an inspirational poster saying "Only you can make you a better you." A small woman in her fifties sits behind the desk.

ELISE
I need a lawyer.

SHEILA
Well, that is what we do. What is this about, honey?

ELISE
What's his name? Is it this Thomas Silverene? (gesturing toward the plaque on the wall) That him?

SHEILA
Yes, but he has everyone call him Tommy.

ELISE
That's charming.

SHEILA
And I'm Sheila. What is your name please?

ELISE
Elise Becker. I need to talk to Tommy.

SHEILA
Of course. Let me get some information and we can find a time that works for you to meet.

ELISE
Now works for me. I need to talk with him now.

SHEILA
I don't know that he is available. We prefer appointments.

ELISE
I appreciate that. But I need him now. Is he back there?

SHEILA
What can I tell him this is about?

ELISE
Lawyer stuff.

SHEILA
Can you be more specific?

ELISE
Yes. Of course.

There is an awkward pause. Sheila is waiting for an answer and Elise is done talking with someone that can't help her.

ELISE (CONT'D)
With him. I'll be more specific with him. I'll just go tell him.

Elise moves past the desk and walks down the hall. Sheila shoots her a look but just sits there.

INT. DAY TOMMY'S OFFICE

TOMMY is sitting at his desk on his computer. His office is lightly cluttered and nothing extravagant. There's a pile of books and files on a corner table and a bulletin board full of post it notes. Cleary he is small time. He's clicking away on his computer and even as Elise walks in he doesn't look up.

ELISE
Hi. I need a lawyer.

TOMMY
Yeah, I heard you. For lawyer stuff. You're pretty loud.

ELISE
Well, time is ticking.

TOMMY
Who's in jail? What time is the arraignment?

ELISE
No. No, that's not it.

Tommy peaks out from behind his computer finally. He looks to be in his early 30's with a hint of dishelvedness about him.

TOMMY
Okay. What do you got?

ELISE
I have a meeting in fifteen minutes with corporate lawyers from Enhance Tech, The CEO of Wolven Security and the US Army top brass about trying to get a rescue operation in play to get eight Americans who have been captured in Afghanistan and will probably be executed any day. And there is a small chance I might commit treason on national TV later tonight.

TOMMY
Hmmm. Okay. Any of those people violate their parole? Maybe slip in a mall parking lot and want some money?

ELISE
No.

TOMMY
What about the Wolven guys? They feel like they might have been been fired unjustly? Want some compensation?

ELISE
No. Are you listening-?

TOMMY
There's lots of different lawyers. The kind you want doesn't live here. Miss, you seem very nice-

ELISE
I'll take any idiot with a law degree at this point.

TOMMY
-or not so nice, but I can't help you.

ELISE
I can't go into that meeting without a lawyer.

TOMMY
Probably not, no, but you should've probably thought about that before . . . Well, before now.

ELISE
I had lawyers. Something came up. And they can't make it. Sir if you could just give me a minute to explain-

TOMMY
You barged in here. You were rude to my assistant. Rude to me. I'm not just dropping everything to escort you into God knows what. You don't know anything about me. And you're only calling me "sir" cause you probably don't even know my name. You saw a sign that said lawyer and figured . . . What? . . . any idiot with a law degree?

ELISE
Thomas Silverene. But we call you Tommy. Went to Loyola. Clerked here and there but wanted to start your own thing, be your own boss, all that. You're probably what? Ten years in and you're surrounded by parole violators and mall walkers and old people making wills to pay the bills. You're right. I don't know you. I don't know if you're small time because you're lazy or just not that good. Either way, I don't care about that.
(MORE)

ELISE (CONT'D)
There are more important things. And if I was rude, I don't care about that either. There are more important things.

TOMMY
I can only assume your previously arranged lawyer bailed on you because you're getting into some crazy jackpot. And he probably had time to prep. I am not walking into something I don't know anything about.

ELISE
I'm not leaving without a lawyer.

TOMMY
I don't do what you want me to do.

ELISE
You can stand in one spot with a law degree, right?

TOMMY
Okay, I don't *want* to do what you want me to do.

ELISE
I'll do all the talking.

TOMMY
That kinda makes it worse. Mam, you need to leave.

ELISE
You can't just throw me out, we're not done talking.

TOMMY
Well I'm not throwing you out. That meeting is about to start soon. I'm guessing the only thing worse than not having a lawyer is not being there at all.

ELISE
Tommy.

TOMMY
Go. Do it on your own, it'll be an adventure.

ELISE
Just stop a goddamn minute and listen to me. Really listen to what I am saying. I am meeting with the US military, sir. There are eight lives on the line here. six of them are civilians. I intend to save them but I can't do that without meeting with the military and these other bullshit companies. And if I go in without a lawyer, I go in without any credibility. It has taken me three weeks to even get this meeting and I will not go in there unarmed. I need a lawyer. And so help me God I will get those people back.

TOMMY
I can't help you.

ELISE

I don't need you to help me. I'm asking you to help eight Americans that will die soon. But I can't help them, we can't help them, without information. Information the US military and Wolven and Enhance Tech has. To get that, I need them to take me seriously and for that to happen I need a goddamn lawyer next to me. Standing with me. Nodding with me. To get that done. You are window dressing for this meeting. Then you can scurry on back to your malpractice suits or whatever. But if you turn me away you lose the chance to save lives. When was the last time you ever had a chance to literally save lives? I need someone for an hour. Someone that has passed the bar exam. How much money for you to stand there and nod once in a while. So we can save American lives?

TOMMY
(let's all that sink in) Ok. I'm $250 an hour. $500 min-.

ELISE
-Deal.

INT. DAY LAWYER OFFICE LOBBY

Sheila is sitting at her desk as her phone buzzes.

SHEILA
Yes Tommy? Oh I heard. No she's not. Really? The whole day? What about court at 2pm? Yes sir.

A quick moment later they are walking past her one their way out.

TOMMY
Sheila, I guess we could have done that conversation face to face, sorry.

SHEILA
It looks more professional when you use the phone.

TOMMY
That was it.

EXT. DAY CITY STREETS

They walk in silence for a moment. Elise is walking fast, a bit ahead of him.

TOMMY
Are we going to talk about this at all?

ELISE
There's no time. Just stay with me and don't say anything stupid.

TOMMY
Weird, that's usually what I tell my clients.

ELISE
I gave you the backstory already.

TOMMY
I don't know what you are trying to do. Come on slow down a second.

ELISE
(turning toward him, tears in her eyes) We can't slow down.

INT HOTEL LOBBY

They walk in through the front and are greeted by a man in Class A uniform, standing with a man in a business casual suit. They shake hands and are escorted through the lobby to a conference room. Elise and Tommy are told to wait just outside of the conference room while the two men go inside.

TOMMY
So I want an extra $50 every time someone says “by the book.”

ELISE
Shut up.

As they wait by the bar, Tommy takes a longer look at the TV which is on Fox News showing eight American faces in eight graphic boxes as they talk. With the sound turned down Tommy can’t hear what they are saying. Then a picture of one of the civilians fills the screen. It cuts to footage of a burning Humvee and a small building in flames. He looks back at Elise who is purposely looking straight ahead. We see his face as pieces start to fall into place in his head.

The TV cuts to a casual group photo of a group of marines. The text at the bottom of the screen reads “14 Killed in Traitorous Attack”

TOMMY
Elise. We are talking about the group on the news that was captured a few weeks ago, right? And one of them gave up a military strike and got those marines killed. The American Traitor everyone is talking about. The group he was captured with, those are the people we’re talking about?

She stands quietly looking ahead. The TV behind the bar cuts away from the dead soldiers and to the face of one of the civilian hostages that was up before, with the heading, American Traitor.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Those people. One of them is family?

ELISE
Yes.

TOMMY
Which one?

ELISE
The wrong one.

The soldier in the Class As comes out to escort them in.

INT. TIME OF DAY UNLCEAR. THE INTERREGATION ROOM

Subtitled onscreen it says Three Weeks Earlier

ZACH is the man who's face was on TV as The American Traitor. He sits behind a large, heavy wooden table. He is blindfolded and handcuffed behind his back. There is a collar around his neck with a chain attached. In front of him sits ANSAR, his interrogator. A large Arab man stands behind Ansar and another Arab man stands behind Zach, holding the end of the chain. There is a lit candle on the table. A boxcutter. Some toothpicks and pair of pliers. A single lightbulb dangling from a cord above the table and a small video light a few feet away provides the only light. Since the rest of the room falls into shadows, it is impossible to tell how big the room is, it just fades into blackness. The Arab man behind Zach removes his blindfold. He blinks a bit and takes in his location, cautiously studying everything slowly. He notices a cup from a coffee store in the trash. The video camera in the corner. The wooden table.

ANSAR
My people, they told me things about you that made me curious.

ZACH
Great. So I get to be tortured first now? Is that it?

ANSAR
(pauses) Yes. That's exactly what it means. I want you to know that I am the one that's going to hurt you. I'm going to hurt you today and I'm not even going to ask any questions. I just want you to know who I am.

ZACH
That's not a good way to start off our relationship.

ANSAR
I think it is exactly how we should start off our relationship. You need to know, and not just understand, know, in the core of your being, that you are powerless. That I control everything that will happen to you. I decide whether there is pain today and if so, I decide how much. I decide if you sleep. Eat. Your freewill is gone. It is me. You won't surrender to me today. Probably not tomorrow. But you will. Everyone does. It is a matter of physiology and psychology. A human being can only endure so much.

ZACH
Yeah ok. You even know my name?

ANSAR
I don't care. I don't even want to know today. Tomorrow we will do names. Nothing you do or say today matters.

ZACH
Ok, if nothing matters today, then you can go fuck yourself.

ANSAR waves his hand and the man behind ZACH slams a pipe down on his left shoulder. The scene fades to black as two guards shove him into the table, pull his hands up behind him and one of them fumble for the toothpicks as Zach struggles.

Fade up, time has passed. Zach is drenched in sweat and breathing hard. The handcuffs are off, but the guard has his foot in his back and is pulling on the chain, choking him. Then he releases him and ZACH grabs the table and hunches down. His left hand is a bloody mess with blood pouring from his fingernails. There is a gash over his left eye and it is already bruising. He has taken a beating.

ANSAR
We are done for today. Now you know me. Tomorrow we talk. And we will talk. If I don't like your answers, this (gesturing around the room) this gets worse. And longer. Think about that tonight. Think about how much your body can handle before it simply breaks.

Ansar stands up as the guard clicks on the left bracelet of the handcuffs.

ZACH
I'm Zach Kanter.

ANSAR looks back at him, showing his curiosity.

ANSAR
Tomorrow we will do names.

Zach locks eyes with Ansar and shifts forward placing his right forearm over the candle. It hisses gently as it burns the skin. Zach, in obvious pain, holds it there, shaking slightly.

ZACH breathes in slow and exhales slow as ANSAR can only watch. His arm shakes more, tears drip from his eyes. But in his eyes are a rage. The guard looks confused but does nothing. Finally Zach slowly pulls his arm from the fire.

ZACH
Now we're done for the day. And now you know me. I'm Zach Kanter. And I decided to do names today . . . Ansar.

Ansar shows his surprise that he knows his name for the briefest of moments. Then tries not to show his displeasure from what just happened, but he is angry, upset. He glances at the guard, really not liking that they witnessed it too. He stands a moment, deciding what to do, mumbles something in Pashto and walks out.

INT TIME OF DAY UNLCEAR. THE INTERREGATION ROOM

Same set up as before. Zach, sitting in a chair, chain leash on with a guard behind him. Another guard stands behind Ansar. There is a candle on the table, a wrench, a leather belt and a thin stick. A bucket of water is on another table. And just off in the blackness where the light falls off, a . .. RADIO? . . . some kind of box with . . . hard to see . . . Large ALLIGATOR CLAMPS?

ANSAR
Yes, you see that?

ZACH
You want to start with the questions or do you want me to?

ANSAR
You have questions for me?

ZACH
Yeah.

ANSAR
Too bad. I'm the boss in here.

ZACH
Maybe I should talk to your boss since I am not happy with customer service.

ANSAR
Who's your boss out there?

ZACH
I'm my own boss. You'll see.

ANSAR
Maybe boss was the wrong word. Handler. Isn't that what you people call them? Your handler? Tells you your orders. Gets you things. Who is that?

ZACH
Handler? I don't know-

He is cut off as he is yanked back from the leash and the two guards lift him and shove his head into the bucket of water. They take him up fairly quickly but immediately one of them punches him hard in the stomach, knocking the wind out of him. They let him lie on the floor, struggling for breath.

ANSAR
You'll find I rarely ask things twice.

ZACH
You should have told me that before.

ANSAR
Handler. Name.

ZACH
I won't insult you by giving you a fake name. That being said, I am keeping names to myself.

ANSAR
So you have a handler?

ZACH
I didn't say that.

ANSAR
Yes you did. The handler, a man or a woman?

ZACH
I'm not . . . I don't have . . .

The leash is pulled again and we fade to black as he yells out.

INT TIME OF DAY UNLCEAR. THE INTERREGATION ROOM

Fading up, Zach is n bad shape. A hard beating. He can barely lift his head up.

ANSAR
I gave you a lot of time with no questions. Please answer accordingly, I would not like to repeat the last two hours. Handler. Where?

ZACH
I don't know.

ANSAR
Mr. Zach we-

ZACH
I mean I really don't know. It depends on the day. It depends on the day. What day is today?

ANSAR
Tell me all the days. All the locations.

ZACH
No. One day. One location. For today.

ANSAR
All the days. All the locations.

ZACH
I can do another two hours. But I'm gonna try to hold my breath a little longer. You fuckers. One day. One location.
(MORE)

ZACH (CONT'D)
Tomorrow I'll give you another. Unless you want to waste two more hours.

ANSAR
It's your time to waste. I can start with the others.

ZACH
Start with the others and you can just kill me, cause I'm not talking at all.

ANSAR
I don't care if you die.

ZACH
Here's the thing. Neither do I.

Ansar eyes him curiously. He again, doesn't like the direction this has taken, but he is not showing it.

ANSAR
All the days. All the locations.

ZACH
Who's your boss out there? He's gonna want something. You can give him one little thing now or nothing in two hours.

ANSAR
Or I give him a dead body and move on.

ZACH
Whatever. But I know those people I'm locked up with. They have nothing for you. So it's gonna just be eight bodies and no info if you kill me. Or, one name, one location today.

ANSAR
(pauses trying not to show his frustration) Where is he on Tuesdays?

ZACH
He's with your mother.

ANSAR
(unfazed) Ah, she's in Kabul. Is that where he is, in Kabul?

ZACH
Yes, in Kabul. In your mother.

ANSAR
I'm going to tell the man behind you to rip off your ear with the pliers. It will not affect your hearing very much, all things considered.

ZACH
Okay, okay. If you're gonna be a dick to me, I'm going to be a dick to you. Okay. So I have a friend, I only know him as Frank. He's in San Diego and sometimes flies out here usually the middle of the month. He is usually meeting with me in Herat. Other than that we talk on a phone.

ANSAR
The phone we took from you?

ZACH
Nope. The one I threw in the bushes before you took us. I'm quick like that.

ANSAR
My men searched the area.

ZACH
Yeah ok.

ANSAR
They would have found it.

ZACH
Maybe they did find it. How much can you sell a satellite phone for out here?

ANSAR
We are done for today. Tomorrow you will start. You will tell me more about Frank. And then I will cut part of you off. We will see which part tomorrow. But no matter what, tomorrow you will change forever.

He stands up to leave, but turns back for a moment and blows the candle out.