

Scene 6

Lights up, same scene, later that day. CELIA and DAN at same table in Iraqi restaurant that CELIA sat at in previous scene. At an adjacent table the THREE IRAQI MEN from previous scene are seated together, playing dominoes, smoking nargilabs, drinking coffee.

CELIA

[Fuming] That was beyond mortifying! Cultural ambassadors, my eye. They are so full of themselves I can't stand it.

DAN

They just want to stop a war, and they're doing it in the best way they can.

CELIA

[Increasingly agitated, her voice rising through the next speech] You're spending too much time with them if you're falling for their nonsense. They're just out for themselves and their stupid Orange Alert-wants-to-be-on-CNN campaign. They're jonesin' for recognition. They don't care about the Iraqi people. What if some imam hears about their sexy little dance? It could get these men killed!

DAN

Calm down, Celia, will you? There was no harm done. And look, they're paying me, they're covering all our costs. God knows we'll need the money, with you giving out ten-thousand-dinar notes everywhere we go.

CELIA

Ten thousand dinars is less than four bucks. These people have nothing. How can I *not* give out money?

CELIA does not see ANDY entering, carrying a silver pot of coffee, a silver dish of sugar, and two tiny Arabic coffee cups on a tray. He is dressed nicely in a polo shirt and dress slacks, and is shy and polite.

DAN

[to ANDY] Salam aleikum.

ANDY

Aleikum al-salam. Welcome. You are Americans, yes?

DAN

Yes. You speak English?

ANDY

Yes. Well, not perfectly, but not too shabby.

CELIA

They didn't teach you how to say "not too shabby" at school, did they?

ANDY

No, that was *Three's Company*.

CELIA

The TV show?

DAN

The one with Jack and Janet.

ANDY

And Chrissy! [*Grins, then blushes*] You would like coffee?

DAN

Yes, please. [*In Arabic*] Hers with no sugar, mine with sugar.

ANDY

[*In English*] No sugar! Yes, ma'am. As you like it.
[*Smiles, pours coffee*]

CELIA

That's a Shakespeare play.

ANDY

I know. [*Shyly*] I have a degree in English literature from the University of Baghdad. I hope to teach English someday. [*to DAN*] You speak Arabic well.

DAN

A little rusty, but not too shabby. [*They laugh*] I studied in Morocco for a year in college. I'm Dan.
[*Offers hand, ANDY shakes it*] This is Celia.

CELIA

Hi.

She proffers her hand, but he politely refuses, raising his hands as if to apologize.²

² Muslim men do not touch women outside their own immediate family.

ANDY

I'm Andy. Pleased to meet you.

CELIA

That's an unusual name for an Iraqi.

ANDY

Yes, well, my father studied in the USA. University of New Mexico. Engineering. I am named for his dissertation advisor, Andy Goldblum. He and my father have been pen pals for many years now.

DAN

So you learned some English from your father, too?

ANDY

Yes, from my father, from Shakespeare, from lousy '80s American TV shows, from REO Speedwagon.

DAN

REO Speedwagon!

CELIA

"I Can't Fight This Feeling."

ANDY

Yes, and "Take It on the Run," "Keep on Loving You," lots of good songs.

DAN

[Laughs] I think I'll have to introduce you to some Pearl Jam, Andy!

CELIA

Ani di Franco!

ANDY

Those are newer groups, yes? *[They nod]* Everything here is very old, we're about thirteen years behind the rest of the world. In everything. We used to be modern.

CELIA

I'm sure you would be a great English teacher, Andy.

ANDY

Thank you. Maybe someday. After . . . Why did you come to Iraq, for a romantic vacation? *[They laugh, then]* Do you work for the U.S. government?

CELIA

Heavens, no, I'm a journalist. Dan is a filmmaker. Will you sit with us? *[ANDY scans other patrons, then nods, puts down tray, sits next to DAN, not close to CELIA]*

We're trying to draw the world's attention to the lives of Iraqi people, especially now, if . . .

ANDY

I do not think . . . the invasion would be a bad thing. *[Glances around quickly]* Never mind. Where is your government escort?

DAN

We have two men assigned to our group, but there are thirteen of us. They can't keep track of everyone.

CELIA

[Suddenly] Andy, would you be my translator? Sometimes Dan is busy with his other work.

DAN

[Surprised; sharply] Celia, I don't think that's necessary. Besides, you don't want to put Andy on the spot.

CELIA

Oh, of course not. I'm sorry. Could you be in trouble just for talking to us?

ANDY

No, no, I am sure everything is fine. Much ado about nothing.

CELIA

Good one! *[Laughs; DAN is silent]*

CELIA

Andy, I could pay you pretty well, say, twenty-five thousand dinars a day. And you could practice English, even help with some videotaping.

DAN

Excuse me?

CELIA

[to DAN] Not with your camera, with my little one.

DAN

[Annoyed] I don't think this is such a good idea, Celia.

ANDY

Please, Dan, it's fine. I would like to.

DAN

Your decision, of course. Would it be okay for me to take video in here?

ANDY

Okay with me, but I'd ask the others first.

DAN takes out camera, walks over to the other table, speaks quietly to men, who nod. He begins shooting, handheld, around the shop.

CELIA

[Watching him for a moment, then, to ANDY] Dan's a filmmaking genius. This is what he calls "shooting color." He might use it under some voice narration. Andy, could you be in any trouble if you work with me?

ANDY

I think it would be fine.

CELIA

It would be okay with your wife?

ANDY

I am not married.

CELIA

Oh. Your . . . parents, then?

ANDY

They like Americans. They would be pleased, especially if I bring home some extra income.

CELIA

The video would be pretty easy stuff, just me talking for a few minutes here and there, for reports I send back.

ANDY

It's for TV?

CELIA

No, Internet. And radio.

DAN returns to table, stands impatiently; finishes coffee.

ANDY

People watch it on their computer?

CELIA

Yes. *[Laughs wryly]* Not many people. More people listen to the radio. Not that many of *them*, either. But some.

ANDY

It would be good for me to learn this skill.

CELIA

Could you start tomorrow, say seven a.m.? There's so much to do, I want to start early, before Dan's . . . dance partners –

DAN

Cut it out, Celia.

ANDY

Dance partners?

DAN

She's just giving me a hard time. *[Pointed]* She likes to do that lately.

ANDY

[Uncomfortable] Oh. Well, seven a.m., yes, that's fine.

CELIA

Meet me in front of the Palestine Hotel?

ANDY

[Pause] I'll be there.

CELIA

Wonderful. I'll see you tomorrow, then.

ANDY

Insh'allah!

Lights down.