

SLAVE CHILDREN

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FADE IN:

INT. LOUNGE - EVENING

Comfortably furnished.

MRS JENNY MACLEAN, 35, is fair, pretty, and cheerful looking. She wears a smart summer dress. She's about to close the French windows on:

Her sons, also fair, SIMON, 12, slim and good looking and DAN, 13/14, with long wavy hair, a future lady catcher. They wear pyjama bottoms.

JENNY

Have you got your flashlights, boys? Last time you camped in the garden, you woke me up in the early hours.

She smiles good-naturedly.

EXT. GARDEN - EVENING

Dusk approaches. A two man tent sits in the large, well-kept, high-fenced garden. The only entrance is through a smart five-barred gate. It has a padlock on it.

Simon dashes back to his mum. He gives her a quick kiss as she steps out through the windows.

SIMON

Love you, Mum.

JENNY

You too, Simon. Don't you wake me up, do you hear?

SIMON

Mum, what if I need the loo?

JENNY

Water the roses.

She shuts the window.

Dan mocks him.

DAN

I love you Mummy.

Dan laughs. Simon attacks Dan. Dan bundles Simon into the tent, both laughing.

The house light goes out--- An owl HOOTS.

INT. THE TENT - NIGHT

A small battery lamp lights the inside of the tent.

The boys are in their sleeping bags.

Dan picks up a book. Simon lies back with his hands behind his head, looking serious.

DAN

Scared?

SIMON

Course not.

SILENCE.

SIMON

Wish Dad was here.

DAN

We'll cope.

SIMON

I wonder what uncle Baxter's up to?
We hardly ever see him.

Simon turns over onto his side away from the light. Dan reads. BEAT It is quiet outside. Simon is asleep. Dan murmurs:

DAN

Baxter rocks.

Dan smiling, puts his book under his pillow. He turns off the lamp.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jenny, in her nightdress, opens a window. She looks out at the darkened tent, smiles and draws the curtains.

She picks up a photo from the bedside table. She sits, staring at her once whole family, wiping away a tear.

The photo shows her late husband with his arms around her and Dan. Jenny has her arm around Simon's shoulders.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

The interior is dimly lit by the street lights.

Simon stirs. He slowly sits up, pauses and listens. There is no sound outside.

Simon worms his way out of his sleeping bag and unzips the tent flap.

He looks outside. He wriggles out of the tent.

EXT. JENNY'S GARDEN - NIGHT

Simon walks across to the rose bed. He looks around. There is the SOUND of falling water. He giggles.

Simon returns to the tent. A street light illuminates part of the garden.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Simon's head and shoulders appear slowly, as his eyes become accustomed to the gloom, before getting into his bag.

Two shadows close on him. He GASPS and his mouth is covered by a hand reaching inside. Simon is silently extracted.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

CARL, 30's, tall, short fair hair holds Simon as he struggles, face down on the grass, away from the tent. WAZIM, 30, Arabian, smaller, dark, tapes his mouth, feet and hands.

They leave Simon wriggling and approach the tent. Dan SNORES.

Wazim eases into the tent. Dan mumbles. The tent shakes. Wazim exits it, gripping Dan, so he's given up struggling.

Wazim holds Dan face down and Carl ties him up plus gag.

Carl lifts Dan, onto his shoulder with ease.

Simon squirms like mad as Wazim grabs him. He squeaks through his gag.

SIMON

Ow!

Terrified, Simon stops struggling as Wazim lifts him.

They leave the garden and climb over the gate passing the boys over.

INT. JENNY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jenny, fully dressed, opens the curtains and the French windows. She sniffs the morning rose scent, smiling. She listens for sounds from the tent. SILENCE.

Jenny frowns. She steps outside.

EXT. JENNY'S GARDEN - DAY

JENNY
Dan --- Simon.

No reply.

Jenny taps on the tent, then sees the door tabs are untied.

She bends down and sees the empty tent. She jerks upright, looking around the garden.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Simon, Dan, what are you playing
at?

She looks behind bushes. A hint of panic.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Boys, it's not funny.

She runs round the back of the house.

JENNY O.S.
Simon, Dan!

She runs back again to the garden and looks down the empty street.

She runs into the house gasping with panic.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jenny snatches up a phone, hyperventilating, tears in her eyes.

EXT. MOOR LAND - DAY

Mist clears to reveal the rolling hills of Brecon Beacons. Sheep run, disturbed by the men.

ANGUS, 30, a PC wizard, a camouflaged mercenary detaches himself from the ground, and moves forward. He drops and merges with the landscape once more. JOCK, 35, hard and grey as granite, closer to us, repeats the action.

Four other MERCENARIES join up in the cover of a rocky outcrop and fall to earth, panting.

They face outwards -- sentinels. All have blackened faces and carry heavy packs.

BAXTER, 38, their leader, remains standing. Resourceful, determined, impatient, impulsive. He is about six feet tall, short hair.

He is well built, athletic, with hard but pleasant features. Baxter has charisma.

His cell phone rings. He holds it to his ear. His expression darkens.

BAXTER

I'll be there.

He ends the call.

Jock watches Baxter intently.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Well done, lads. That was faster, and I guess you'd have got in close before being seen. Bad news I'm afraid. The op's off. I've just...

Jocks swings round, his eyes wide.

JOCK

(In a Scottish accent) What the heil! After all the planning... What about the hostages in Somalia?

Baxter rounds on him, his face hard and uncompromising.

BAXTER

Hear me out, Jock. I've just been bleeped. It's my sister. Her youngsters've been kidnapped. Boys of twelve and fourteen.--- So young.

His face softens momentarily.

Angus, 30, Baxter's second in command, well built, swings round. He sounds vicious.

ANGUS

Where? When?

JOHNNIE, 25, athletic, good looking, has smile lines but ruthless.

JOHNNIE

We can't just leave the hostages in Somalia. They may be killed.

BAXTER

You guys make your own decisions. I'll get our boys back on my own, whatever.

JOHNNIE

We lose the Somalia job, we may never get another. Your kids'll turn up... Why were they taken?

BAXTER

Don't know yet, Johnnie. If it's a ransom, there's some chance of getting them back in one piece.

Baxter gazes into space for a moment, his face saddening.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Oh Simon, Dan... I promised Jenny when Sam was killed, I'd be there if needed.

JOCK

What about the mother?

BAXTER

Jenny'll be going spare.

He slips his pistol into his pack and whacks it shut. Then slings it onto his back.

JOCK

She'll have told the cops?

BAXTER

Not yet, Jock. Best I handle it. You know the fuss they made about those weapons they found. Can't work with them any more.

JOCK

The cops'll have the leads... on P.C.... Dinna rush off, laddie. Ye'll jump into trouble once again.

Baxter's voice tightens in worry.

BAXTER

Somebody usually finds the body while they're still knocking on doors. We'll do it my way.

ANGUS

Bugger Somalia. Where do we start?

BAXTER

I've got to find a lead and that's best on my own. You stay here and carry on, just in case I can wrap it up quick. I'll be in touch if I need you... Those that want to come.

Baxter eyes Johnnie and Jock coldly and disappears over the rocks.

JOCK

We won't just leave the guys to the pirates where they'll get their throats cut if no ransom.

JOHNNIE.

We'll never get a job again.

Angus look at them with disgust.

ANGUS

Do what you want, lads. I'm with Baxter all the way. He's our mate and we all know how he'll jump into trouble with or without support from us.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

Jenny sits in an upright chair by the phone, willing it to ring, her face tear stained.

The door bell RINGS. She starts, leaps up and exits.

JENNY (O.S)

Baxter. Thank God you're here. After all this time, I wondered if you'd come.

A picture on the wall shows Simon in shorts and T-shirt. He looks adorable.

Baxter enters, dropping his rucksack on the floor, followed by Jenny. She hugs him enthusiastically and he responds, affectionately.

BAXTER

How could I not? Sam's legacy. Two years, isn't it.

He leans tired, against the table.

JENNY

My God. What're we going to do?
My darling boys. Who's taken them?

She wipes away a tear.

BAXTER

I'm here now. Cool it. I need you thinking clearly.

JENNY

What do they want with them?
What'll they do to them?

BAXTER

It's too early to tell, but they'll take good care of them. Did they leave any clues?

He looks towards the garden.

JENNY

Nothing. I only knew they were gone when I woke this morning. The cops have checked the garden.

She shakes with emotion.

BAXTER

The cops Jen? I told you...

Jenny explodes.

JEN

You tell your mercenary guys whatever. I'm not one of them. I'll raise Hell to get my boys back!

She breaks down in tears. Baxter hugs her awkwardly. He breaks away.

BAXTER

I'll check out the garden.
Make some tea.

He exits the French windows. Jenny watches through the windows.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

He looks inside the tent, top speed. He pulls out two sleeping bags and snatches them inside out. He looks at the gate and around the lawn.

He picks up a piece of black tape and pockets it, taking care not to smear finger prints.

Jenny enters the garden, watches, tense, impressed.

BAXTER

Not much to go on. I've a mate in the Met. One of the few I trust. He'll pass this to forensics.

Jenny wipes away a tear and sniffs.

JENNY

Not much to follow is there? What do you reckon they took them for? I'm not wealthy.

Baxter ignores this.

BAXTER

We'll be checking this and files of suspected child traffickers. Keep close to the phone in case there's a ransom call.

JENNY

I'll sleep by it. I'd like to catch the bastards. Watch yourself... Can't I do something?

She clenches her fists.

BAXTER

I'll let you know if you can in a day or so. Then you can join me in my London flat.

JENNY

I can't bear the waiting. Are they alive or dead?

BAXTER

They'll still be alive. No value dead. Not nice looking kids like them. I just need one lead. I'll have to go to London tonight. Got to start somewhere.

EXT. LANE - EVENING

The sun fades over the hills of the South Downs.

A Rolls Royce turns off the main road, into a lane leading up to a farm. Its lights reveal a line of trees hiding the buildings from the road.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - EVENING

The car draws up outside the farm house, close to a large barn. It backs up close to the barn door.

Pigs SCUFFLE as they bed down for the night.

MAX FADWELL, 38, of Arabian descent, gets out of the car. He is six feet tall, slim, powerful, and well dressed.

As he shuts the door, the farmer, CHARLIE LAMPTON, 52, wearing a tweed suit and barely visible in the dim light, approaches with a torch.

They meet some distance from the Rolls. A dim light glows on the barn wall.

MAX FADWELL

Evening, Charlie. Here are the tickets. Enjoy the theatre. Your wife ready?

CHARLIE LAMPTON

She's in the car, ready and rearing to go Mr Fadwell. Thanks very much, Sir.

MAX FADWELL

Right. Away. I need a change from the city.

Lampton gets into his car. He slams the door and drives off.

Fadwell opens the door of the farmhouse. He chuckles with enjoyable anticipation. He enters closing it behind him.

EXT. TREES - NIGHT

The wind RUSTLES in the trees. There is no other sound apart from a faint KNOCKING from the car boot.

EXT. FARM HOUSE DOOR - NIGHT

The door opens. Fadwell exits, wearing overalls, Wellington boots and a rubber apron.

He strides to the barn, opens the door and switches on the light.

Fadwell opens the car boot and lifts out a long, limp parcel covered in black plastic. It twitches.

He staggers into the barn with it.

The door to the barn closes. A bar CLUNKS across the door, then the HUM of a food pellet mill starts up.

The outside light dies; only shafts of light can be seen from within.

A long CRY, is partly DROWNED by the mill. The mill CHANGES tone to a harsher pitch as it has something fed into it.

INT. MILL - NIGHT

Barely visible through a dirty glass window, Fadwell feeds a long thin shape into the mill.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Baxter is dressed in jeans, a sweat shirt and light boots. He is just recognizable in the lights of a city street.

There are few PEOPLE about. In doorways lie VAGRANTS, some in sleeping bags, others in cardboard boxes.

Baxter carries a torch. He shines it in the face of a small sleeping BOY, ANDY, with no luck. The boy stirs.

ANDY

Piss off!

Baxter searches along a line of bodies. Only their shapes are visible in the poor light. They are all ADULTS.

Baxter walks away, slumping from exhaustion.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Baxter leans against a wall. He glances down the dark alley. It is full of shadows, where street lights can't penetrate.

A BOY, LYN 13, emerges from the shadows. He looks up at Baxter.

LYN

Want a good time, Mister?

BAXTER

Are there any others with you?

The boy backs down the alley.

LYN

Sure. Want to see them?

Baxter follows him down the alley. They walk into the shadows. There is a dead end to the alley some 30 yards further on. Various doors lead off it.

BAXTER

How old are they?

LYN

I'm the youngest.

Baxter turns to go.

HUGH, tall and broad blocks the way back to the road.

Baxter strides towards him.

Lyn vanishes into the shadows.

KHAN, short but wide, exits a doorway behind Baxter.

Baxter growls:

BAXTER

Bloody perverts!

HUGH

Pay the boy a hundred pounds for
half an hour and you can leave
quietly.

Baxter closes with Hugh as Khan comes up behind him. Hugh swings a club at Baxter.

Baxter catches the club and kicks Hugh in the groin. He shrieks. He falls to the ground clutching himself.

Khan grabs Baxter's arms behind him. TRIGG, tall and skinny comes out of a doorway in front of Baxter. He approaches cautiously.

TRIGG

Come on man. You can go for two
hundred pounds.

Trigg snatches at Baxter's pocket.

Baxter stamps his boot down Trig's shin. There is a CRACKING, followed by a yell. Trigg stumbles back.

Khan has his hand in Baxter's pocket.

Baxter head butts him. His nose spurts blood.

Baxter follows up with a finger jab to his throat.

Khan lies on the ground gasping for breath.

Baxter, breathing fast, turns to look at Trigg lying on the ground. He clutches his broken leg in agony.

BAXTER

Scum!

Baxter strides off towards the road. He pauses to note the name of the alley. FOGGINS LANE.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Baxter mounts the steps and strides inside.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Baxter talks with FRED MERSTON, 42, a police sergeant's emblem on his lapel.

Baxter sits on an upright chair. The black tape from the garden is on the table in a plastic bag.

BAXTER

Good to see you again, Fred. Before we go on, there's a nasty little hive of child prostitutes your mates should clean out. Foggins Lane.

FRED

Will do. I'll pass it on.

Fred writes in his pad.

BAXTER

There's a stream of kids disappearing, according to the Press.

FRED

Yeah, and not one's left a trace. Probably a powerful and very efficient concern. We've had guys looking all over.

BAXTER

I'm going to bloody well find our boys. If you could get me the list of known pervs, it'd give me somewhere to start. I'm lost.

FRED

Not a word to anyone. It'd be the end of my career. If my boss knew about this, he'd want to follow it up of course, but in past cases we ended up with bodies or nothing.

BAXTER

Right. There has to be a very well organized crew spiriting these kids away and I'm going to chase them down and smash the bastards behind it.

FRED

Good hunting and say if I can help, further. I'll tell you if this proves positive.

He points to the tape.

FRED (CONT'D)

I'd start with Kings Cross station. Some have disappeared around there lately.

Baxter rises.

BAXTER

You're a good mate. E-mail it through, encrypted.

EXT. TRAIN - NIGHT

A train draws in to a platform at Kings Cross Station.

Baxter, half asleep, leans against a wall by the ticket barrier. He blinks and looks at the station clock: 1:30

Baxter yawns.

A handful of passengers sleepily arrive from the platform.

Through the barrier entrance walks NIGEL BEDDOWS, 13. He has longish dark hair, that hangs over his face, which would be good looking if cared for. His threadbare jeans and thin jersey are too light for the cool of the morning. He looks lost and tired.

Baxter gets up, stretches and trails Nigel from fifty yards.

Nigel attaches himself to an elderly PASSENGER to get past two POLICEMEN.

The Passenger appears disturbed by Nigel's proximity and mutters something.

Nigel splits away. He pretends to look at a paper shop. He stops, unsure of his next step.

Baxter stops and appears to look for his ticket.

The station is almost deserted apart from a line of waiting taxis.

STEVENS, 45, wearing a priest's dog collar, approaches Nigel. His face is shielded from security cameras by a wide hat. There is a brief conversation.

Nigel joins the priest in the nearest taxi.

Baxter hails a taxi to follow them.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Baxter, his face tense, leans forward, instructing the driver.

BAXTER

Follow that cab. Quick!

DRIVER

Can't, Mate. You'll 'ave to take one from the front of the queue.

BAXTER

Don't hang about. This is police business. Don't let him notice you.

He waves a card holder too fast to be scanned.

DRIVER

Okay! Right, you're on. What's it about?

BAXTER

Move it!

They back off the end of the queue and follow the other cab.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Baxter's taxi weaves in and out of the traffic till they are closer to the taxi ahead. They follow until the first cab stops near a tube station.

INT. TAXI (MOVING) - NIGHT

In the rear seat, Baxter's face is tense.

BAXTER

Drive round that corner and stop.
Great. Thanks. Keep the change.

Baxter leaps from the taxi as it slows. He sprints back to the corner.

EXT. THE STREET - OUTSIDE FADWELL'S FLAT - DAWN

Stevens helps a very tired Nigel into the doorway of an opulent block of flats.

Stevens speaks into the security speaker. The door opens. Nigel hesitates. Stevens pushes Nigel inside.

Baxter sprints across. He is too late to stop the door closing.

He looks around, frustrated.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE FLAT - DAY

The street is deserted. A large bush is nearby. Baxter walks beyond it and sits on a bench. From here he can observe any movements from the flats, partially screened from their windows.

INT. THE FLATS - DAY

Stevens pushes Nigel out of the escalator and across a landing. They stop outside a beautifully polished door.

Nigel starts to protest, his voice rising.

NIGEL

Why've you brought me here?

STEVENS

Just do as you're told.

NIGEL

You said I could spend a night at your place. This ain't no vicarage. What are you at?

Nigel looks around wildly for an exit. Stevens pushes a bell. He closes with Nigel, and grabs his arm.

Nigel struggles. He breaks away and runs down the passage. He tries another door, but it's locked.

STEVENS

A waste of time, son. This is your new home now.

NIGEL

Help, help, I'm being...

Stevens closes on Nigel. He covers his mouth with one hand.

The first door opens. Stevens drags Nigel into the flat, his arm round the boy's neck. The door closes behind him. All is quiet outside.

INT. FADWELL'S OFFICE/FLAT - DAY

Fadwell sits at his large desk, busy on his mobile. The office is expensively decorated and furnished.

FADWELL

Max Fadwell here... So it's just boys? Young and beautiful you want them? Bigger profit.

SHEIKH HASSAN O.S.

Yes, 11 to 14.

FADWELL

Adoption? Afghan Dancing Boys? No more body parts? ... Yes, we can deliver if the price is right.

SHEIKH HASSAN O.S.

No police interest? I'm not risking the British police.

FADWELL

It's okay, the guy in charge is one of us.

Fadwell laughs.

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE FADWELL'S FLAT - DAY

Baxter sits, watching the flats. He peers through the bushes, drumming his fingers on the bench.

A closed van stops outside the flats.

The driver, Carl and GEORGETTE, 35, an Arab masculine looking woman, get out and carry a large, seemingly empty tin trunk from the rear of the van into the building.

Baxter's mobile vibrates.

INT. JENNY'S LOUNGE - DAY

Jenny sits on the couch in tears, the phone pressed to her cheek.

JENNY

I'm out of my mind with worry.
So you've heard nothing, Baxter?

BAXTER O.S.

I might have a lead. Leave it to me. I can go where the police can't.

JENNY

I've already tried the local police again.

BAXTER O.S.

Shit! They'll just slow things up. I've tried them before. A disaster! Leave it to me, I repeat.

JENNY

Before I come up to town, I'm going to try the library and the Net. I'll search for past cases. At least it'll keep me sane.

BAXTER O.S.

Go for it. For one, you're not on a budget, counting man hours.

JENNY

Good luck.

Jenny puts the phone down. She brushes away a tear.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE FADWELL'S FLAT - DAY

Georgette and Carl leave the building carrying the same trunk, but this time much heavier. They set it down at the rear of the van and then load it. Closing the door, they get inside and drive off fast.

BAXTER

The boy?

Baxter grabs his keys from his pocket and dashes to his sports car. He jumps in and roars off.

EXT. A STREET - DAY

Baxter, tense, drives as fast as the traffic will let him, but already there are several vehicles between him and the van.

EXT. A STREET FURTHER ON - DAY

A bus pulls out in front of Baxter, maddened. It is impossible to overtake. Traffic lights bring everything to a halt.

EXT. SAME STREET - DAY

The van accelerates away on the far side of the lights.

Baxter gets out of the car to look round the bus.

The van disappears into a sea of traffic.

BAXTER

Shit!

Baxter manages to pass the bus. There is no sign of the van. He turns right at the next block, shaking his head in anger.

EXT. NUGGET STREET - NIGHT

The street lights come on. There are no people about in this poor residential area.

A door opens and ROLAND FRANCIS, 12, shuts it behind him. Roland is fair, slim and athletic. His collar length hair flops around showing a cheerful, attractive smile. He wears jeans, a T-shirt and trainers.

Roland holds a carrier bag and throws a coin up in the air, and catches it as he bounces along the narrow sidewalk.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Just round the corner from the last street: a fish and chip shop has its lights on but the sign on the door reads: "Open at 7:00."

No one else is about.

Roland slows as a Rolls Royce with tinted windows purrs up beside him.

Roland peers at it and the rear window opens.

Wazim sits alone in the back.

WAZIM

Hello. Could you tell me the way to the town centre, please? We've taken a wrong turning.

Roland points back the way they have come. Wazim opens the door, gets out and stands beyond him.

The driver, Carl, opens the other door behind Roland, boxing him in between the doors and the wall.

Roland suddenly realizes something is wrong. Wazim puts his hand over Roland's mouth and pulls him into the car, while Carl gives him a boost from behind. The door closes and locks.

The car PURRS away, leaving no witness to the event.

EXT. STANLEY STREET - NIGHT

The Rolls stops by a narrow alley. The men get out.

Carl picks up a roll of carpet from the rear seat of the car. He balances it on his shoulder. He walks down the alley to disappear through a doorway.

Wazim locks the car and follows, checking no one has observed them. The area is deserted.

INT. FLAT - NIGHT

Carl, wearing a cheap suit and black shoes, enters the living room of the flat. It is a very basic room with old settee, table, upright chairs and a T.V.

Simon huddles closer to Dan, scared.

Nigel lies on the couch looking at the TV. He gets up, looking scared when Wazim enters, and switches it off.

Carl unrolls the carpet on the floor and out rolls Roland, looking scared out of his wits.

He sees the boys and looks relieved.

CARL

There you are; haf got another mate for you.

Carl turns to go, leaving the boys with Wazim, who looks speculatively at Roland.

WAZIM

Very nice.

Wazim reveals his knife. He shaves his face a little, smiling evilly at the boys.

He steps towards Roland. Roland shuts his eyes, fearing the worst but it is only his bonds that are cut.

Wazim pulls the tape off his mouth. Roland winces at the pain. Wazim pushes him onto the couch.

WAZIM (CONT'D)

Don't try calling for help. It's sound proof and empty on both sides. You are ours now.

He fingers his knife, looking as if he would enjoy using it.

Roland shudders and shrinks away. Dan looks ready to take on Wazim but backs down as he waves his knife near his groin.

INT. CAR (PARKED) - DAY

Baxter watches the flats from his sports car. Jenny sits beside him. He yawns.

BAXTER

Does the guy never go out?

JENNY

Is this really all we can do?
Follow someone else's child?
God how frustrating!

BAXTER

It's the only clue we've got.
The DNA my police mate's checked
led nowhere. These people are so
careful.

JENNY

Can't you just take him out?

BAXTER

We've got to track him to the kids.
If Dan and Simon are in his
clutches, I must know where.

JENNY

Be careful. I don't want to lose
you too.

Baxter looks like granite and reveals an ankle knife.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A Rolls Royce pulls up outside the flats. Fadwell appears and gets in. They drive away.

INT. CAR - DAY

Baxter hands Jenny a mobile from the glove box. He displays its twin from his pocket.

BAXTER

If they return, give me a ring immediately.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Baxter exits the lift and strides to the door of Fadwell's flat. He tries the voice box. No answer.

He tries the door but it is locked. He takes some skeleton keys from his pocket and tries them in the lock. Eventually the door opens. Baxter enters.

INT. FADWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Baxter tries out his keys in a desk and opens a drawer, switching on a dead laptop.

He removes a file and flips through its contents, taking care to leave everything as he finds it. He inserts a memory stick and presses Enter.

Baxter looks through an i-Pod. He whistles in surprise, then films various addresses with his cell phone, exultant. The phone rings in his pocket.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE FADWELL'S FLAT - DAY

Fadwell drives up in his Rolls. He gets out and makes for the door of the flats. He takes his time.

Suddenly, he spots Baxter's car. He steps towards it. Fadwell halts. He spins round and rushes towards the flats.

INT. CAR (PARKED) - DAY

Jenny rings again, frantic.

JENNY

Come on Baxter. Come on. Where the Hell are you?

INT. FADWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

The cell phone rings twice. Baxter puts the notebook and i-pod away neatly. He pockets the memory stick. He locks the drawer and sprints for the door.

INT. LIFT - DAY

Fadwell watches the floor indicators with impatience. The lift nears the top.

INT. FADWELL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Baxter tries to open the fire door. It refuses to budge.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Fadwell leaves the lift and strides towards his flat door. He puts his key in the lock and opens the door.

INT. FADWELL'S KITCHEN - DAY

After a brief struggle, the fire door opens. Baxter CLICKS it behind him.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Baxter stands and listens. He hears Fadwell's door close. He pads down the stairs to take the lift on the next landing.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Baxter enters the lift.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE FADWELL'S FLAT - DAY

Baxter strides to the car and enters.

INT. CAR - DAY

Jenny looks relieved.

JENNY

What took you so long? I thought he must've --

BAXTER

I've found more than I could hope for. This guy, Fadwell's running a huge child snatching scheme that's netting him millions from free labour to the sex trade.

JENNY

So where now? Has he taken my boys?

She seethes with impatience.

BAXTER

I don't know yet. I need Angus's PC skills to crack passwords, and to brief him.

JENNY

Surely I can help? You don't expect me to sit and do nothing?

BAXTER

Dear girl, we must find more clues. We don't even know that this is the man who's abducted our boys.

JENNY

Let's bloody well move it then.

Baxter looks at her, smiles and guns the car.

INT. WAZIM'S FLAT - NIGHT

Dan and Simon are on their own in Wazim's flat. Both wear clean white P.E. shorts and T-shirts. Their hair is trimmed to collar length.

They look frightened as they sit on the sofa.

Wazim enters with a camera. He produces a comb. Saying nothing, he advances on the boys and combs their hair.

DAN

What's this for?

Wazim does not answer as he yanks a knot out of Dan's hair.

DAN (CONT'D)

Ow!

WAZIM

Simon, you stand over there, back to the wall. Good... Now smile. Better than that.

Wazim scowls. Simon tries to smile but can't. Wazim goes over to Simon and squeezes his face into a smile.

WAZIM (CONT'D)

Nice.

Wazim takes two photos.

WAZIM (CONT'D)
Now a side view. Chin up. Good.
Now you Dan.

DAN
Why should I? What're they for?

Wazim pulls out his knife and fingers the blade.

WAZIM
Shall we do as we're told or what
part of our anatomy would we like
to lose first?

Dan winces and hurries to follow Simon's example.

Wazim photos Dan.

WAZIM (CONT'D)
Your photos will be sent to your
prospective master, and if he likes
what he sees, he will pay lots of
money for you.

Wazim pauses, enjoying the effect on the boys.

WAZIM (CONT'D)
If you don't do as he tells you, he
might send you back to me, one
piece ... at ... a time.

SILENCE as both boys take it in.

SIMON
Where will we be going?

WAZIM
Far away from this decadent
country. Where no one can reach
you.

SIMON
Our uncle will be after you.
You wait!

WAZIM
A nice old man is he? How's he
going to trace you, this uncle of
yours?

The boys digest this.

WAZIM (CONT'D)
So you will learn obedience.

DAN
I won't work for him.

WAZIM
I think you will.

Both boys shrink back.

Wazim fingers his knife again with loving care; then picks up the camera and exits, locking the door behind him.

INT. BAXTER'S FLAT - DAY

Baxter and Jenny are back in his flat. Baxter has changed into a fresh set of jeans and sweatshirt. He rushes through his notes at the table.

Angus studies Baxter's P.C.

Jenny pours them drinks.

JENNY
So, it was worth all the risk?

ANGUS
Too right. Just look at these. There's evidence of a wide network of safe houses, and clients in this country as well as abroad ... top civil servants, and the fees they'll pay. Ten of thousands, no problem.

BAXTER
So that's why it's all hushed up.

Jenny and Baxter look over his shoulder at his notebook.

JENNY
That much. What for?

BAXTER
Body parts for transplants for some. Adoptions, Slaves. Afghan dancing boys, other things.

ANGUS
Perverts.

JENNY
No! Not my lovely boys. Oh no!

Angus hates what he's just said.

BAXTER

No wonder the police catch so few.
Some heavy bribes, I'll bet.

JENNY

The police are paid to find people
who've disappeared. Why the Hell
don't we use them?

BAXTER

The police get too close, all we
get are bodies. For real. Believe
me. I know.

Jenny sees him through fresh eyes.

ANGUS

Raid Fadwell's flat when he's there
and squeeze it out of him.

BAXTER

Not sure we'd succeed in time.
What about this new one in Devon?
Brands Hall. It looks like they
intend holding dozens of kids
there.

He points to a photo of a large old mansion. Its picture
shows three stories and crenellations. He zooms to show
barred windows.

JENNY

I'll go to the ends of the earth to
find them. How long have we got
before they disappear to wherever?

BAXTER

No idea ... more like days than
weeks. They'll hold them till they
've found a buyer so we must get
cracking like now.

ANGUS

Bring our lads in?

BAXTER

No. The kids might get hurt if
there's resistance, and he'll have
some heavies. I'll do a recce and
when we've checked for any kids,
then the lads come in. Drive a
wedge between kids and captors.

ANGUS
I'm coming with you.

Baxter smiles in appreciation. They hand clasp.

EXT. BRANDS HALL - DAY

An ancient mansion stands overlooking a lake, surrounded by a beautiful deer park. It is a perfect day - peaceful.

INT. BRANDS HALL - DAY

In the entrance hall of a stately home, a few portraits hang between gaps where others have been. The room is decorated with heavy, antique furniture.

Windows are barred. The doors have heavy bolts and locks.

MILES BLUNT, 30, a thickset man with a beer gut, talks on the phone. He wears jeans, a sweat shirt and trainers. He looks agitated and servile.

BLUNT
Yes, Mr. Fadwell. I guess you'll be very pleased with him. No trouble in finding him a placing. About twelve. Fair. Might suit you, Sir?

FADWELL O.S.
Any blemishes?

BLUNT
No Sir. I've checked. A perfect specimen and with a brother, nearly fourteen, in excellent shape.

FADWELL O.S.
Make that one a quick sale, for the Afghanis. He'll suit them. -- A dancing boy, unless the African bids higher... Er and Blunt.

BLUNT
Yes Sir.

FADWELL
I'll have a look at the younger one.

BLUNT
Yes Sir.

Blunt hangs up. He looks disgusted. He exits.

INT. BRANDS HALL - DAY

Blunt has Simon, Dan, Nigel and Roland in a room lined up wearing just shorts.

Fadwell enters. He looks at the boys with pleasure. He walks up to Simon. He inspects all features and then spins him round and inspects his rear. He spins him round to face him.

FADWELL

Beautiful. Innocence itself. Your name, boy?

Simon is frozen with fear. Fadwell places his hand on Simon's head.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

It's okay. I won't eat you. Name?

SIMON

Simon, Sir.

Fadwell nods and moves to Dan. He gives him a more superficial inspection.

FADWELL

The Africans'll pay top prices for these beauties. Simon... Hm.

He takes another look at Simon.

Blunt nods.

Fadwell looks at Roland and then Nigel, taking his time.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

These two for the Sheikh. What a nice haul. They'll sell very well. Hm, no we'll send Simon to the Sheik with this little fellow.

He fondles Roland's head.

Dan and Simon are aghast. Dan steps forward.

DAN

You can't split us. We're brothers.

Blunt hauls him back, struggling.

FADWELL

A young spitfire! I like it. I can do whatever I like, Danny. Ever since I found you both on the Net, I saw the dollars rolling in.

INT. BAXTER'S FLAT - DAY

Baxter and Jenny are at a table, looking at a map. He traces a road with his finger.

BAXTER

Brands Hall now. We'll go down and check it out. If it really is a staging post for children, I'll confirm with Jock if he's on side, and the others.

JENNY

Take care. Fadwell could be dangerous. Without you...

She shrugs in despair.

BAXTER

We know he's in London and there are only going to be a few carers or thugs down there. We can deal with them.

He rises to leave.

EXT. SERVICE STATION/CAR - DAY

Baxter is on his cell phone by his car.

BAXTER

Okay, Johnnie. You have a dry run for Somalia without Angus and me. We're just checking out Brand's Hall in Devon for our boys. Be in touch if we need back-up.

Baxter gets into his car and drives off.

EXT. VAN (MOVING) - DAY

A small van with no side or rear windows approaches the New Forest. It passes a sign pointing to Ringwood.

INT. VAN - DAY

Stevens and Wazim sit in front. Roland and Simon lie in the back on an old mattress, their hands tied, mouths taped.

Simon sneaks a look out of the windscreen at the thickening forest.

INT. VAN - DAY

Simon whispers something to Roland, who nods. This goes unnoticed by the adults.

Roland starts to heave, as if he's about to be sick.

Stevens takes notice. He points to Roland.

Wazim opens his window quickly, while Stevens drives onto the hard shoulder.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Wazim jumps out and opens the rear door of the van. Roland keeps heaving. Stevens joins them. They help the boys down.

WAZIM

You shout and I cut it out.

He points to his own tongue.

Roland staggers to the side of the road as if to be sick. Wazim follows closely.

Simon sees a gap in the traffic. He suddenly darts through it to the other side of the road and runs into the forest.

Simon nearly causes a large lorry to crash. The driver HOOTS, HOOTS... HOOTS.

Wazim dances from one leg to the other, trying to find a break in the traffic. Stevens bundles Roland into the van and locks the door on him, before getting into the driving seat.

Wazim dives between the traffic. He follows the flattened path Simon made through the bracken.

EXT. BRACKEN - DAY

Simon ploughs through head-high bracken towards trees uphill. His breath comes in gasps.

He holds his bound hands out in front to stop branches hitting him in the face.

Wazim SOUNDS closer. Simon sobs - his capture seems inevitable.

Simon stops and looks behind him, then in front. He sees a track, which forks. He hesitates. He takes the right fork.

EXT. TRACK FORK - DAY

Wazim arrives, panting and swearing. He hesitates and looks at the ground.

Faint marks on the earth reveal where Simon has passed.

Wazim smiles. He trots after Simon.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Simon runs and PANTS, exhausted. He stops and looks back along the track. Wazim's feet POUND closer.

Suddenly Simon jumps sideways into the bracken and hides, squatting down.

Simon PANTS, trying to quieten his gasps.

EXT. TRACK - DAY

Lower down the hill, Wazim also PANTS. He stops every so often to search for signs of Simon. As the trees increase and the bracken thins, it becomes harder to find his tracks.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Stevens drives off. He turns the van and stops in a lay-by. The van is shielded from the road by trees, so that they will not have to cross the road again.

INT. VAN (PARKED) - DAY

ROLAND

Please God let him escape. Our last hope.

STEVENS

Not a chance, Roland. Your friend is no match for Wazim.

ROLAND

I bet Simon can run faster.

STEVENS

He'd better. When Wazim catches him...

EXT. BRACKEN - DAY

Simon lies motionless. His breathing is quieter. He presses himself to the ground, his cheeks wet with tears.

EXT. BRACKEN - DAY

Only a little lower down the hill, Wazim stops. He listens intently. He sniffs the air like a gun dog. He shakes his head.

He calls out persuasively:

WAZIM

Simon, come out of there now and I'll be kind to you. I might even forget this all happened. Just a joke eh, that you played on your uncle Wazim. Ha.

Simon raises his head a little, unsure what he should do.

WAZIM (CONT'D)

Out you come, boy. I can see you lying there. You never had a chance.

Wazim takes several steps up the hill, as if he has seen Simon.

Simon slowly rises to his feet, tricked. Simon reluctantly steps towards Wazim, who smiles, friendly, upon seeing him.

Once within an arm's length, Wazim grabs him and forces him to the ground, facing downwards.

WAZIM (CONT'D)

You stupid little puppy! Now I've got you, for a long, long time. Never, ever think you can outwit Wazim.

With each syllable he BEATS Simon on his backside with his hand. Simon SOBS helplessly.

Wazim pulls him roughly to his feet, threads a cord through his tied wrists and leads him at a stumbling trot towards the van.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Wazim hides in the bracken, waiting for the traffic to disappear. He WHISTLES twice.

Stevens gets out of the van and casually goes to the back door which he opens. He waits a moment. He WHISTLES twice.

Wazim hauls Simon to his feet and bundles him across the verge to the van.

Stevens and Wazim lift Simon under the armpits and catapult him into the van. Wazim jumps in with him.

Stevens shuts the door, strides to the front and gets in.

INT. VAN FRONT (MOVING) - DAY

Stevens starts up the engine and drives off.

STEVENS

Well done. Go easy on the kid. We can't afford any bruises. He's worth a fortune or Fadwell would've kept him.

SIMON

Ow!

Stevens turns and joins the traffic for the South Coast.

WAZIM O.S.

There won't be any left by the time we reach North Africa.

INT. VAN REAR (MOVING) - DAY

Wazim lifts Simon face up from the mattress.

WAZIM

Besides we're such good friends, now Simon's little joke is over.

He pretends to kiss him.

Simon shudders.

INT. CAR - (MOVING) - DAY

Baxter drives, Angus beside him, through empty country lanes, with high banks of primroses on either side and no other traffic. He wears casual clothes.

He listens to the GPS from time to time.

BAXTER

I can see why he chose this neck of the woods to hide them away.

A large sign by the road reads: PRIVATE: CENTRE FOR RELIGIOUS RETREAT.

ANGUS

Going to become a monk?

Baxter laughs.

BAXTER

I don't anticipate much opposition
but just in case, you keep outside
while I case the joint.

ANGUS

Take care.

He looks as if he doubts Baxter will.

EXT/INT. LODGE - DAY

Baxter drives in by a lodge and has to wait for the barrier
to be lifted. He HOOTS.

A thickset MAN, the lodge keeper, comes out and chains up two
Dobermans before coming to the car.

LODGE KEEPER

You can't go in there. Private!
Bloody Tourist! Can't you read the
sign?

BAXTER

I'm just delivering a parcel to
Brands Hall. Mr. Fadwell. It's
urgent.

He points to a package in the back.

LODGE KEEPER

Sorry. No one enters without
permission.

Baxter shrugs, reverses and drives off.

EXT. OLD LODGE - DAY

Baxter drives up to another lodge, clearly unoccupied. There
is a gate with a rusty chain. Angus exits the car, opens the
boot and pulls out bolt cutters. He cuts the chain and
returns the cutters to the boot.

He opens the gate and Baxter drives through. Angus closes the
gate behind him and places the chain as if intact.

EXT. CAR/MOVING - DAY

Baxter drives on through wild, unkempt wilderness.

ANGUS
Remember those kids we lost in
Yemen?

Baxter is jolted by the memory and angry.

BAXTER
I'm trying to forget them. My
fault. Insufficient Recce. We're
not making that mistake again.

This drive joins the smart one.

An uncomfortable SILENCE...

ANGUS
Over the first hurdle.

Baxter grins.

BAXTER
Listen, Angus, just in case
something goes wrong, you take off
and collect the guys. A little
plastic and you're in. Use stuns
and watch out for the kids.

ANGUS
Sure, Boss.

BAXTER
But give me some slack. It'll take
you time to be ready.

ANGUS
Watch yourself.

BAXTER
I intend to.

EXT. BRANDS HALL - DAY

Coming round a bend, Brands Hall appears in front of them, with its massive wooden studded entrance door, a smaller one inset.

Down below on the left there is a large lake and all around, well-kept park land spread with old trees.

INT. CAR - DAY

Baxter drives up to the front door and parks the car.

Baxter exits the car, carrying the parcel as he approaches the wicket door. It opens as he reaches it.

BLUNT comes out, wearing baggy trousers and a rugby striped top, looking at him with suspicion.

BAXTER

Hi. I was coming this way and friend Max asked me to drop this to await his arrival.

BLUNT

Oh, right.

He takes the parcel and looks more friendly. He gives Angus a suspicious look.

Angus gives a spectacular performance as a mongol. He giggles and chatters.

BAXTER

Beautiful place you have here.
So quiet.

BLUNT

A bit too much. I only look after it for Mr. Fadwell.

BAXTER

Could I come in for a minute and look around? I'm sure Max wouldn't mind.

BLUNT

I'm not allowed to show people round. You could be a burglar.

Baxter smiles.

BAXTER

Look like a burglar? I'm dry as dust.

BLUNT

Okay, just for a minute or two then. He stays here.

Baxter nods understanding and points to Angus to stay.

Angus remains in the car.

Blunt leads the way inside. He pauses and texts his cell phone, listens and pockets it.

Baxter notices. He stops by a picture and pretends to study it. He adjusts his jersey over the bulge of his pistol in the back of his belt.

INT. BRANDS HALL - DAY

Baxter follows Blunt into a large courtyard, with the house built round it. Further in they walk through a heavy wooden door to an entrance hall.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Blunt shows Baxter into the office. It is modern and businesslike, with a computer running.

BLUNT

Cuppa?

Baxter nods.

Blunt switches on a kettle and takes cups from a cupboard. The sound of children's VOICES echoes in the distance.

BAXTER

Not on your own?

BLUNT

No, I've got family staying. Good place for their holidays. Just go down and get some milk. Won't be long.

He exits. Baxter listens to his departing FOOTSTEPS.

BAXTER

Yes!

Baxter dives to the PC. He is stopped by the password entry.

He listens to the children's VOICES. Too faint to pick. He strides into the corridor. Pauses. They are louder.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Baxter sprints down the corridor towards the voices as Blunt's returning FOOTSTEPS approach from the other direction.

EXT. DRIVE - DAY

A blue Rolls Royce draws up at the front of the Hall. Angus sinks below eye level. Fadwell gets out with Carl. Carl closes the huge door. They enter the house.

Angus peeps over the door rim.

ANGUS
Baxter, where the fuck are you?

He clicks his cell phone. No reply.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Baxter runs from door to door, trying each. Some are locked. Others lead to nothing of interest.

At last he reaches one which is locked. He listens.

DAN (O.S.)
I wonder where they're taking
Simon?

NIGEL (O.S.)
Wouldn't tell --

BAXTER
Dan! I'll be with you in two
shakes.

He is beside himself with joy.

DAN
Baxter!

Baxter hurls himself at the very solid door. He bounces off, clutching his shoulder. He pulls out a stick of plastic explosive from his pocket plus a detonator and short piece of fuse. He quickly moulds the plastic round the door lock, squeezes the fuse into the detonator, and inserts the detonator into the plastic.

Fadwell, padded shoes, approaches from down the corridor, his pistol at the ready. Carl is just behind him, carrying another pistol and a rope over his shoulder. Blunt follows him.

FADWELL
Save your efforts, my friend. It's
built to keep the kids in and you
out.

BAXTER
Oh Dan!

Baxter restrains himself from diving at Fadwell.

FADWELL
Against that wall. Legs apart. Now!

He points his pistol from two yards distance at Baxter's groin.

Baxter obeys, furious. Fadwell relieves him of his pistol.

Carl binds his wrists behind him. Then a noose around his neck.

A despairing CRY from Dan:

DAN

Baxter!

BAXTER

Simon?

Fadwell ignores this.

FADWELL

Carl, drop him off in the cell in Dunsford.

Carl nods.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

Blunt, go and feed the kids. I'll just dispose of Mr Baxter's mongol.

He looks at Baxter loving it.

Baxter contains his fury.

Blunt exits. He looks glad to get away.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

Mr Baxter, now slave Baxter. We have your angelic Simon just setting off for foreign parts.

Baxter scowls.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

Your picture was very clear on our flats' security camera.

Baxter presses his belt buckle without Fadwell noticing.

EXT. BRANDS HALL - DAY

Angus hears Baxter's BLEEP and drives off down the unkempt drive.

ANGUS

Shit! Trouble again.

EXT. A BAY - DAY

Wazim and Stevens have arrived at a high point, in the van, parked in a gateway.

Looking down on the bay, it is framed by deserted countryside. A solitary motor yacht is anchored about two hundred yards out. It is an idyllic scene. The sea is clear and calm in the evening sun. The beach is deserted.

INT. VAN (PARKED) - DAY

Simon and Roland sleep in the back. Wazim climbs over them into the front.

WAZIM

Better hole up here, out of sight till nightfall.

STEVENS

That's right. Little angels.

WAZIM

They won't be for much longer.

Wazim grins evilly.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Jenny sits in an interview room facing P.C. PERCIVAL, 24, fresh faced.

JENNY

Yes, Constable Percival. I'm with you. Very few turn up again after this time. And once they leave the country?

CONSTABLE PERCIVAL

Once they leave the country, I have to say, there's next to no chance of getting them back.

JENNY

What about Interpol? Why aren't you doing more!

She is tearful and frustrated.

CONSTABLE PERCIVAL

We've had everyone we can spare on your case, but there're no traces. We're doing our best. We're also very busy on other cases. Murders.

JENNY

In other words you haven't the time
for my boys! You're a fucking waste
of space, all of you.

Constable Percival is shocked by her explosion.

CONSTABLE PERCIVAL

If we find them, I'll let you know,
personally.

JENNY

But you'll keep looking. Thank you
So much.

She grits her teeth. She takes from her purse a school photo
of her two sons.

Constable Percival is embarrassed.

The boys have their arms round each other and smile
cheerfully.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Simon, Dan, will I ever see you
again?

She passes the photo to Percival.

INT. ROLLS - (MOVING) - DAY

Carl drives. Baxter is in the back, trussed up like a bacon
roll. Fadwell rests his feet on Baxter's shoulders.

BAXTER

How can you sell kids like toys?

FADWELL

Why shouldn't I? If they stayed at
home, most would never come to any
harm. I must admit to one or two
prize items being persuaded away.

BAXTER

Who buys them?

FADWELL

Some people in high places,
countrymen of your own. They like
toys.

BAXTER

Bastard!

FADWELL

Where you're going, you'll only
have your own future to worry
about.

BAXTER

Where's that?

FADWELL

You'll see soon enough.

INT. VAN (MOVING) - NIGHT

Stevens drives down to the beach.

They cruise to a halt, close to the shingle. The engine cuts.

EXT. BAY - NIGHT

The yacht rides at anchor out in the bay, lifeless.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Stevens switches on a torch, enclosed in a rolled up
newspaper. He aims it at the yacht for five seconds.
Then turns it off.

EXT. BAY - NIGHT

The sea LAPS in small waves on the beach.

The silent, ghostly shape of a rowing boat approaches.
It comes to rest just back from the shingle.

A tall shape detaches itself and strides to the van.

Wazim opens the back of the van and lifts out Roland.
He squirms a moment, then stops.

Wazim drops him heavily into the boat.

CAPTAIN O'HAGAN, 50, large, lifts up Simon and places him
gently in the boat. Wazim also gets into the boat and sits.

The boat backs off from shore and disappears into the
blackness round the yacht.

INT. CELL - DAY

Baxter sits morosely in an underground cell. A mattress and a
chair line one wall. In one corner there is a tap and a hole
in the floor for a toilet.

Carl brings Baxter his meal on a tray. He shuts and locks another door behind him first.

CARL

Get back to the other side.
Put your arm through the bars.

Carl clamps the other half of Baxter's handcuffs to a bar, locking his right wrist to it. He enters the cell with the tray, which he places on the floor.

Then Carl exits, locks the cell door and unlocks the handcuff.

CARL (CONT'D)

The boss thought you'd like to know
your boy sailed last night. You've
wasted your time.

BAXTER

You bastards!... Oh boys, don't
give up yet.

CARL

Enjoy.

Carl exits.

Baxter rages at his helplessness. He pulls himself together.

He bolts the meal.

Baxter pulls out a piece of wire from the waist of his jeans, stops and listens.

Satisfied no one is around, he strides to the bar Carl locked him to and saws with the wire at the point where it is hidden by a cross section.

Baxter saws steadily, stops for a rest, and then inspects his work. It is sawn part way through.

He goes through a series of exercises and karate chops, working particularly with his feet. He does press-ups, sit-ups and hammers the wall of the cell with vicious hand chops.

He returns to the sawing.

EXT. SEA - DAY

The yacht sails smoothly in an almost deserted sea. Roland appears from the companionway and looks in each direction in turn.

No sign of land. The nearest vessel is far away.

Roland looks shattered.

ROLAND

Oh, God... Mum, Dad.

Captain O'Hagan appears from the wheel house. He is large, bearded and has a friendly expression. He wears jeans and a striped T-shirt displaying his tattooed arms.

O'HAGAN

That's right, laddie. You might as well enjoy your cruise. Free, courtesy of Mr Fadwell.

He laughs in friendly fashion.

ROLAND

Dad would pay you lots to bring me back to them.

O'HAGAN

It'd be more than my life's worth; besides, there's all the others I'll be bringing in the future.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Simon wakes, and looks around the cabin. It has two bunks and a cupboard only. He rolls over and gets down from his bunk, still dressed in a T-shirt and brief white shorts.

He shudders with cold.

Wazim enters and throws him a pullover.

WAZIM

Here, you'll be needing this. We're not far from your filthy British climate.

Simon takes it and puts it on, saying nothing.

WAZIM (CONT'D)

Manners! I'll teach you those and a lot more besides, before this trip is over.

SIMON

Thank you.

WAZIM
 And you'd better look cheerful
 about it.

Wazim studies Simon.

WAZIM (CONT'D)
 You're too good for the Sheikh.

He pinches Simon's face into a parody of a smile, and brings his own face close.

Simon pulls away and goes quickly up the companionway to the deck.

EXT. YACHT - DAY

As Wazim reaches the deck, Simon scuttles back to his cabin.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The boys play a game of cards. Wazim enters and shuts the door behind him.

WAZIM
 Let's have a little fun with you.

He seizes Roland and rolls him onto a bunk.

WAZIM (CONT'D)
 Don't you say a word, Simon, or
 I'll throw you overboard tonight.

Simon cowers in the corner. Wazim pulls out a knife and sits beside Roland.

WAZIM (CONT'D)
 Right, slave boy, I'm going to make
 you ready for your buyer.

Wazim pricks Roland's shoulder with the point of his stiletto.

WAZIM (CONT'D)
 We'll tattoo you in the old
 fashioned way. Some pretty pictures
 to make up for what you both did in
 the forest.

Roland YELLS.

O'Hagan flings open the door, his face red with rage.

O'HAGAN
 What the? ... Stop that now, will
 you. Hurting the wee kiddies.

WAZIM
 They're my goods and I can do what
 I like to them.

O'Hagan clenches his huge fist.

O'HAGAN
 Not on my boat you don't.

Wazim waves his knife.

WAZIM
 One word to Mr. Fadwell from me,
 and you're finished.

O'HAGAN
 Put that toy away unless you want
 to fall overboard. Then there'll be
 nothing for your Mr. Fadwell to
 know, will there?

Wazim sheaths his knife reluctantly. He glares at O'Hagan
 glowing with hatred.

WAZIM
 You'll pay for this.

O'HAGAN
 Get up on deck. Now!

Wazim gives him an evil look but obeys.

Roland is relieved.

O'HAGAN (CONT'D)
 It's all right. You'll be safe on
 my ship.

O'Hagan looks at Roland's shoulder and dismisses the little
 graze marks with a shrug. Simon relaxes.

INT. CELL - DAY

Baxter saws away at the bar with the wire. He stops and
 twists the bar.

It gives. Baxter raises a clenched fist of triumph.
 He carefully puts the bar back as it was and goes to his
 chair.

INT. BRAND'S HALL - DAY

Dan is on his own in a tiny room lying on the bed.

Blunt enters with a tray of food.

DAN
Not hungry.

BLUNT
Eat. We want you in good condition.

DAN
I'm not a cow to be jointed.

BLUNT
No, unless you don't do as you're told.

He draws his hand across Dan's neck like a knife.

DAN
Let me go. My uncle will pay you well.

BLUNT
He's in no position to bargain.

DAN
Eh?

BLUNT
We've got him. He couldn't escape.

DAN
No! No! No!

Blunt smiles.

BLUNT
So slavery comes your way.

INT. CELL - DAY

Carl brings in a meal, locks Baxter to the bar and unlocks the door.

CARL
Your boys'll soon join their new masters. Simon's gone to Sheikh Hassan in Algeria, so you'll never see him again. And Dan, they love fair European boys in Afghanistan.

Carl laughs and gloats.

Baxter ignores him.

Carl enters with the tray and is about to set it down when Baxter pulls out the bar.

Baxter springs across the cell, to kick Carl in the groin. Carl collapses in agony but drags himself across the floor to try to grab Baxter.

Baxter sidesteps his hands and chops Carl on his upper arm. There is a sharp CRACK and Carl nurses his broken arm with a HOWL.

BAXTER

One for the boys.

Baxter spreads him face down on the floor and feels in his pockets for a key. He finds it and unlocks his handcuff.

He transfers the cuffs to Carl.

He also finds Carl's wallet, stuffed full of bank notes. He puts them in his pocket. He pockets Carl's cell phone.

He lifts Carl's head and chops him across the windpipe. Carl makes a rasping NOISE when he tries to talk. Baxter lets his face fall to the floor.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Enjoy.

Baxter waves his fist in triumph. Baxter creeps from the cell locking the door behind him. He keeps the keys.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jenny paces up and down, staring at the phone, willing it to ring. Her eyes are red from tears.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Baxter is on the cell phone.

BAXTER

Are the lads with us, Angus? ...
Great! Have them tooled up, ready
to go. I'll be at the station to
meet you. We've got to get Dan
PDQ.

ANGUS O.S.

No problem.

Baxter rings another number:

BAXTER
Is that Mind All Minibuses? ...
That's right.

INT. BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

Nigel is in a simply furnished bedroom, with only one bed, a little chest of drawers, and a chair. He is in pyjama bottoms and lies on his tummy on the bed reading a book.

He shakes his hair back out of his eyes. The door opens and Dan enters. Nigel is surprised. Dan whispers:

DAN
How's it going?

NIGEL
Get back to your room. If he finds
you here, we'll both get beaten.
He loves it.

Nigel sits up, legs over the edge of the bed.

DAN
It's worth the risk. I think
they're going to send us somewhere
else soon. I heard Blunt talking.
Make a break for it.

FOOTSTEPS approach along the passage. Dan nods. Nigel is unsure.

The door opens. Blunt enters. Dan rugby tackles him, so both hit the floor.

Nigel is frozen.

DAN (CONT'D)
Run!

Nigel sprints out, his FOOTSTEPS FADING along the passage.

Dan tries to follow but Blunt has him by the ankle. He stands, smiling grimly. Dan lies on his shoulder.

BLUNT
Silly boys. There's no way out.

Dan tries to jerk his ankle away but Blunt holds him firmly, dragging him to the bed. He bends Dan over the edge of the bed and whacks his backside with his hand.

INT. PASSAGE - DAY

Nigel, panic stricken, tries door after door but they are all locked till the one next to their bedrooms. He hears Dan's pain ending in a SHRIEK.

Nigel opens the door to find the shutters are over the windows and all is black apart from the odd crack of light. He stumbles over furniture. He knocks over a chair. He pauses, listening.

He searches for the light switch and his hand meets Blunt's.

NIGEL

Ah! No!

Blunt hauls him into the bedroom where Dan lies face down on the bed, trying to stifle his tears. Blunt starts on Nigel with the same treatment.

INT. BAXTER'S FLAT - DAY

Jenny faces the computer searching for past police cases, without success. She homes in on Newspaper pages of past incidents and saves files.

She zooms on a case with Headlines: BOY LAST SEEN AT KING'S CROSS STATION.

She mutters to herself.

JENNY

Come on Baxter. Where the Hell are you?

She tries her cell phone, without success.

INT. DAN/NIGEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door opens and both boys shrink. Blunt enters with a cruel smile. He pulls Nigel off his bed and grasps Dan round the neck, shaking them both.

BLUNT

Right, my beauties. You still have to learn obedience. I've got just the place for you.

He leads them to the door. They exit, Nigel with bare feet.

INT. BRANDS HALL - ROOM - NIGHT

Blunt leads Nigel and Dan into a larger room with several bunks.

BLUNT

You want to play Happy Families;
you can spend the night in there,
in the turret, between floors.

INT. BRANDS HALL - TURRET - NIGHT

Blunt opens a trapdoor in the floor, while the boys wait shivering. Blunt gestures to it and Dan descends, followed by Nigel, frightened. Nigel turns and faces Blunt, his shoulders level with the floor above.

NIGEL

Please, Mr Blunt, we've learnt our
lesson.

Blunt pushes him down, pausing before he shuts and bolts the trapdoor.

BLUNT

You can have the whole night to
chat and the rats will keep you
company.

Blunt leaves the turret, CHUCKLING.

INT. TURRET - NIGHT

It's almost pitch black inside the turret.

NIGEL O.S

Rats! Do you think he meant it?

DAN O.S.

Sure. He'll be loving this, the
bastard.

NIGEL O.S.

Will they bite us?

Dan laughs.

DAN O.S.

If they're hungry.

Silence... There's a CRUNCHING sound.

NIGEL O.S.

Oh, Dan.

DAN O.S.

It's okay Nigel. They're fussy what
they eat.

INT. BRANDS HALL - HALL - NIGHT

Blunt is on the phone.

BLUNT

Yes, Mr. Fadwell. Ready to move out when you need 'em.

FADWELL O.S.

You've broken them in?

BLUNT

Yeah, nice and obedient.
(under his breath)
Least they should be.

EXT. CAR - (MOVING) - DAY

Baxter hurtles a car along a motorway. He has his cell phone on. Angus is in the passenger seat.

BAXTER

It's okay Jenny. Yes, I'm fine.
(grins) You should see the other guy.

JENNY O.S.

I've been in touch with the police. They sound a wash-out. Too busy! And the Protection of Data nonsense is on the side of crooks.

BAXTER

We'll check out the place, their numbers. No time to lose. A snatch job.

JENNY O.S.

Do take care.

BAXTER

When we know what we're up against, I'll bring in the cavalry if needed. ... The boys? I'll tell you later.

He snaps off the phone.

INT. CAR - (MOVING) - LANE - DAY

Baxter turns off the motorway into the narrow lanes approaching Brands Hall. He swings the car round corners, narrowly missing dry stone walls.

Angus crosses himself.

ANGUS

Don't bend the car. We need to arrive!

EXT. BRANDS HALL - DRIVE - DAY

A minibus drives away from Brands Hall.

INT. MINIBUS - (MOVING) - DRIVE - DAY

Stevens cruises along the drive. Blunt is in the passenger seat. Dan and Nigel are in the back with SIX OTHER BOYS, aged 11-13, all in short shorts and T-shirts and looking cheerful.

INT. YACHT - ANCHORED - NIGHT

In the cabin, Roland and Simon are asleep in their day clothes. There is no movement of the vessel.

Wazim carries Roland up the companionway, followed by O'Hagan with Simon.

I/E. YACHT - ABOVE DECK - ANCHORED OFF ALGERIA - NIGHT

Moonlight. They off load the boys into a boat and row for shore. There is no sign of any buildings or people.

O'Hagan rows up a creek. The boat drifts in to land.

EXT. CREEK BANK - NIGHT

O'Hagan and Wazim lift the boys onto dry land. They wake.

O'HAGAN

'Bye kids. Good luck.

Roland's face reflects complete misery.

The boat departs and Wazim stands over them.

WAZIM

Welcome to Arabia, slave boys.

He prods each to make his point.

A 4x4 drives up and Georgette gets out. She nods curtly to Wazim. She checks the boys front and back.

GEORGETTE

Good, Wazim. Not too tanned. --
In prime condition. Should suit the Sheikh. Let's get them aboard.

EXT. 4X4 - PARKED - DESERT - NIGHT

Georgette pushes Roland and Simon into the back of the Land-Rover.

Wazim joins them in the rear, sitting between the two. A dim internal light reveals the rear of the vehicle.

They drive off, bumping over the corrugations in the track, a cloud of dust rising behind them and invading the vehicle.

INT. 4X4 - (MOVING) - DESERT - NIGHT

The boys cough and Wazim places Arab head-dresses on them, masking their faces, so they can breath properly. He does the same himself.

Wazim has his back to Simon, who drifts off to sleep, and faces Roland. Wazim toys with his knife, prodding the boy's chest with it; then his stomach. Roland winces. Wazim grins.

WAZIM

I've grown quite attached to you.

EXT. MINIBUS - (PARKED/MOVING) - DAY

Blunt's minibus stops at the lodge. The lodge keeper lifts the barrier. The bus turns right, away from the motorway.

EXT. CAR - (MOVING) - DAY

Baxter and Angus pass the lodge and follow the minibus down the lane, just out of sight and oblivious of each other.

INT. MINIBUS - (MOVING) - DAY

The minibus drives down narrow lanes, round corner after corner. Stevens is relaxed. He chats with Blunt.

Stevens pours some water into a fruit juice concentrate. He looks back at the boys and checks to see he is unobserved.

The boys are asleep or looking out of the window past Stevens and Blunt.

Dan pretends to be asleep. He lets his head rest on Nigel's shoulder.

Stevens mixes some powder in with the drink and shakes it.

Dan notices through slit eyes and shuts them.

Stevens offers the drink round the boys.

STEVENS

Leave enough for everyone. It's the last you'll be getting for an hour or two.

They pass the drink round, Dan and Nigel to be the last.

Dan nudges Nigel and nods towards the bottle. Turning away from Stevens, he frowns and shakes his head at Nigel.

Nigel is puzzled.

Dan whispers:

DAN

Drugged. Pretend.

Nigel tips his head.

DAN (CONT'D)

Oh look! Is that a police car coming towards us?

Blunt and Stevens snap ahead.

Dan empties the bottle on the floor and passes it back to Stevens, licking his lips.

INT. CAR - (MOVING) - DAY

Baxter drives round bends in the lane identical to those negotiated by the minibus seconds earlier. Only a hundred yards separate the vehicles, yet out of sight.

Angus checks his pistol ammunition.

INT/EXT. CAR - (MOVING) - DAY

Baxter slows to a halt. Angus gets out and opens the gate. Baxter turns into a field and drives parallel to the hedge to hide the car.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Baxter returns to the road, Angus following. They run along it towards the disused lodge. They pass it with caution.

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Twilight advances. Baxter and Angus run along a bramble grown track towards the Hall.

They stop for an impassable barrier and divert into the bracken jungle.

ANGUS

I just hope we're in time to stop
'em.

BAXTER

So do I. Otherwise it's your job to
track them.

INT. 4X4 - (MOVING) - NIGHT

Wazim prods Roland's belly with his knife.

Wazim gags Roland's protests with the head dress stuffed into
his mouth. The ROAR of the engine masks any sounds.

Roland wakes Simon with his foot. Simon sees it all.

ROLAND

Georgette, he's --- OW!

The vehicle judders to a halt and Georgette strides round to
the back.

EXT. 4X4 - PARKED - NIGHT

Georgette opens the back door with a flourish.

GEORGETTE

Leave them alone, Filth. They're
too valuable for you to mess with.

Wazim springs out with his knife thrust towards her.

WAZIM

Walk. They're mine now.

They disappear into the night.

INT/EXT. 4X4 - PARKED - NIGHT

The boys lie huddled together, petrified, shaking. They look
at each other. There is a GUNSHOT. Then silence. BEAT The
boys' faces frozen in anticipation.

The door opens on the boys' terrified faces. Georgette
appears on her own, revealed in the glow of the rear lights,
slipping a tiny revolver into a shoulder holster.

Both boys show relief.

Georgette reaches inside the vehicle.

GEORGETTE

Out, Simon. You can earn your passage.

She gropes in the back for a shovel. Simon gets out, his teeth chattering.

SIMON

What do you want me to do? I'll do anything. Don't...

GEORGETTE

It's okay. Stop wetting your nickers. Stay there, Roland. You go off into the desert and you'll be a Bedu steak if the sun don't get you first.

She indicates that Simon should follow her. There is a DIGGING sound. -- Then a DRAGGING and then more DIGGING.

Roland cowers in the back.

Georgette returns with Simon. She pushes him and the shovel into the back. Simon gives a wan smile. Roland is relieved.

She gets in and starts up.

INT. 4X4 - (MOVING) - NIGHT

Simon and Roland lie close to each other, their arms round each others' shoulders, relaxed.

INT. FADWELL'S FLAT - OFFICE - NIGHT

Fadwell is on the phone. The door is open a crack.

FADWELL

Ambush. Yes. Finish him.

EXT. BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

Baxter hides in bushes by the lake, looking up towards the Hall. His dark clothes hide all but his face. Angus likewise.

They get some mud from the lake edge and smear it over their faces. They wear black gloves.

They creep up the hill in the open. The moon comes out. Baxter falls to the ground and crawls on his stomach till hidden behind a cloud. Angus follows.

At the top of the hill Baxter advances towards a drain pipe, tests it for stability and starts to climb. He reaches the top.

Angus copies. Halfway up, the middle section starts to pull away from the wall.

The pipe sways. Baxter leans out and steadies the pipe.

Angus looks tense. He continues to the top where he climbs over the crenellations. As he does so, a section of pipe falls to the ground with a dull THUMP. They listens for a moment. No one appears to have heard.

EXT. ROOF TOP - BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

Baxter scans the flat roof for an entrance. Angus listens, keeping watch. Baxter finds a door but it is locked. There is a skylight. He heaves. It opens. He looks inside, listens. Not a SOUND.

Baxter hangs from his hands. He drops to the floor with a THUD. He listens. SILENCE BEAT Angus follows.

INT. BEDROOM - BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

Baxter shines his flashlight round the empty room and finds the door. He opens it and peers into a passage.

Baxter looks at Angus. Puts his finger to his lips. Angus nods.

They pause and listen. Not a SOUND.

INT. PASSAGE - BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

Baxter pads down the passage, to some stairs. He pauses, filling in some details fast on a sketch map.

Angus checks out every door. He opens locked ones in no time with a skeleton key.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOMS - NIGHT

There are basic beds in a row.

The door opens slowly. Baxter enters.

He looks around at the empty beds.

BAXTER

Bugger! They've bloody gone.

He exits.

INT. PASSAGE - BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

Baxter pads down the passage to the office he has visited before, followed by Angus. He tries the door. It opens. They enter, guns at the ready.

INT. OFFICE - BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

Baxter finds the desk and tries to open it without success.

Angus is about to turn on a computer.

VINCE O.S.
Down the corridor.

CHARLIE O.S.
Someone's around. The alarm's
blinking.

Angus hides behind a curtain, his pistol ready.

VINCE O.S.
Search each room.

Someone opens the door and switches on the light but Baxter is not seen.

Baxter hangs by his finger tips from the far side of the desk, his body parallel to the desk, no feet showing below. His face is strained.

Charlie searches under the desk and pauses.

CHARLIE O.S.
No one here.

The light is turned off and the door shut. Blackness reigns as FOOTSTEPS recede down the corridor.

Angus switches on his flashlight and starts the computer. Baxter keeps guard by the door, pistol ready. He waits for it to open Windows. He turns the sound down. A password is demanded.

There are MEN'S VOICES O.S. receding down the passage.

ANGUS
Take it with us.

BAXTER
If you can fight with that under
your arm.

Angus shakes his head.

ANGUS

Need time to find the password.

BAXTER

Come on. We'll be back very soon with the lads. Beat the truth out of them. Someone must know where Dan's gone.

INT. PASSAGE - BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

His flashlight on, Baxter tries various ground floor doors but there is no way out. Baxter finds the kitchen, Angus covering their retreat.

INT. KITCHEN - BRANDS HALL - NIGHT

Baxter enters a larder. There is a fly screen with window behind. He winks at Angus.

He prizes it open with his knife and they exit, shutting both behind them.

EXT. BUSH - NIGHT

Baxter and Angus exit under cover of a large laurel bush. Baxter looks around.

ANGUS

How about I stay around and observe movements? You'll be back by first light?

BAXTER

Makes sense. Keep your head in.

Baxter disappears in the darkness.

EXT. BRANDS HALL - OUTBUILDINGS - NIGHT

Baxter slinks towards a wall and outbuildings. Some distance from the Hall, he starts to jog along the well kept main drive.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jenny sits by her phone, willing it to ring.

She mutters:

JENNY

Come on Baxter. Put me in the picture... Simon, Dan, where the Hell are you?

EXT. ROAD - MINIBUS (MOVING) - NIGHT

A road sign says: Amiens 5km. It is the north of France. The minibus travels south. Blunt drives. Dan and Nigel plus six other boys sleep.

Dan wakes and nudges Nigel, putting his hand over his mouth. Nigel stirs and looks at Dan, wondering. Stevens sleeps, snoring.

DAN
(whispering)
Wait till we reach a town.

Nigel nods.

Blunt looks round at them. They appear asleep. He faces front.

Blunt drives on.

Dan looks at Blunt and whispers again.

DAN (CONT'D)
You escape. I'll tackle Blunt.

Nigel nods.

Blunt looks at them again. Dan snores loudly.

EXT. BRANDS HALL DRIVE - NIGHT

It is a moonlit night. Baxter slows to a walk, on the grass verge, making no noise. He stops and sniffs like a pointer. He drops to all fours and continues slowly, anticipating danger.

There is the silhouette of Vince's head and shoulders looking in Baxter's direction. A splash of moonlight on his face. He lies, waiting.

Baxter creeps to his left. He works round behind Vince and closes in, his path marked by slight movements in the long grass and ferns.

SILENCE BEAT

There is a low GRUNT. Vince lies face down, motionless. Baxter gets onto hands and knees again and oozes through the brambles and long grass.

There is a stifled COUGH ahead. Baxter pauses and flattens. Following a rabbit run, just visible in the moonlight, he continues to crawl ahead.

All is black as he moves into higher undergrowth. There is a SWISH of a knife and a THUD, followed by SOMEONE falling a short distance.

Baxter pauses. There is a glint of moonlight on the knife as he retrieves it and wipes it in the grass. Baxter moves on. He passes a tree.

Charlie jumps on Baxter from the lower branches and knocks him to the ground. He raises a knife, glinting in a shaft of moonlight. He drives it down towards Baxter.

Baxter forces the knife into the ground beside him.

Charlie, on top of Baxter, punches him in the gut. Baxter winces, winded and Charlie frees his knife hand and throttles Baxter. Baxter thrusts his fists between Charlie's arms, breaking his hold.

Baxter thrusts pointed fingers up into his adversary's diaphragm. Charlie GASPS and falls on top of Baxter. Baxter pushes off the corpse. He gets his breath back. BEAT. He's on the move again.

INT. MINIBUS MOVING - AMIENS - NIGHT

The minibus reaches the centre of town. There's hardly any traffic.

Dan nudges Nigel and crouches, ready to spring. Blunt looks at Stevens, still asleep, and then has to swerve to avoid a car.

BLUNT
Bloody Frogs!

He slows at traffic lights.

Dan dives into the front as the minibus halts and grapples with Blunt.

BLUNT (CONT'D)
What the Hell!

Nigel dives across Stevens, who wakes but is momentarily in a nightmare.

Nigel opens the door and jumps out, slamming it behind him.

Blunt seizes Dan. They struggle as Dan tries to jump out too.

Blunt has him under control.

BLUNT (CONT'D)
Get after him! What're you waiting
for? The starter's gun!

He ties Dan's elbow to the steering column with rope from
under his seat.

Dan swings his far arm round to punch Blunt's face. As Blunt
ducks and grabs that arm, Dan knocks Blunt's cell phone onto
the floor between his feet. Blunt does not notice as he ties
Dan's neck to the steering wheel.

A car behind HOOTS.

EXT. VAN - STREET - NIGHT

Stevens runs after Nigel.

The car HOOTS again.

BLUNT
Okay Froggie. Get fried!

He drives onto the pavement. The other car roars past.

DAN
I can't breathe.

Blunt ignores him and runs after Stevens.

Nigel increases his lead on Stevens. The street is deserted.

They run. Nigel sprints across the street, Stevens falls
further behind.

Blunt sees them disappearing down a side alley.

INT. VAN (PARKED) - NIGHT

Dan struggles to pick up the cell phone with his feet.
It drops so he tries again. He drags a hand to touch, then
grab it. He tries to press the buttons but gets a wrong
number. He succeeds.

DAN
Baxter! ...Yeah. We're some place
in France going south... Amiens.
Nigel's escaped... Don't know...
You will? Great.

Dan replaces the cell phone on the gear box.

EXT. SIDE ALLEY - NIGHT

It's a dead end.

Nigel YELLS.

NIGEL
Help. I'm being kidnapped. Help!
Murder.

An angry LOCAL opens a window and shouts:

LOCAL
Taisez-vous. Imbecile! J'essaie
dormir.

He slams the window shut.

NIGEL
Police! Help!

Nigel reaches the dead end and turns to face Stevens, both GASPING for breath. Blunt closes the gap.

Nigel tries to slip between them and they both grab him.

Blunt raises his fist.

STEVENS
No bruises!

BLUNT
He'll keep.

He grips Nigel's wrist and twists his arm behind his back.

NIGEL
Ow!

They march him towards the minibus.

A police car races towards the alley. Nigel is hopeful. It races past just before they reach the alley end.

BLUNT
Ha ha ha.

EXT. STREET - MINIBUS STATIONARY - NIGHT

Blunt ropes Nigel's wrists and ankles. Then wrists to ankles.

BLUNT
You'll keep like that till the
boat.

Stevens opens the door and Blunt rolls Nigel inside. Stevens locks the door.

The drugged boys sleep on, oblivious of events around them.

Blunt unties Dan and ties him in the back to a side spar by his wrists behind him.

DAN
Ow! It hurts.

BLUNT
Nothing to what your master'll do
to you.

EXT. LODGE - NIGHT

The lodge looms up. Baxter pads past, turning towards the motorway, away from his car. He jogs along the road.

EXT. LANE - NIGHT

Baxter jogs for a few yards. There is the SOUND of a vehicle behind him. Baxter speeds up.

The road ahead lights up slightly as distant headlights overtake him. He vaults a gate into a field.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Baxter runs back parallel to the hedge. He climbs up the bank, poised on the top.

EXT. BANK - HEDGE AREA - NIGHT

Baxter crouches in the hedge at the top of the bank, looking down on the lane. He pants hard, his face tense and watchful. The hunter hunted.

EXT. LANE - NIGHT

A car PUTTERS past Baxter. It stops just beyond the gate, out of his sight. Doors OPEN.

EXT. BANK - HEDGE AREA - NIGHT

Baxter freezes, waiting. Low voices.

BILL O.S.
Go left.

EXT. LANE - NIGHT

Baxter jumps into the lane and sprints for the car.

He snatches open the passenger door, leaps in and pricks his knife into the DRIVER'S neck.

BAXTER

Drive!

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The driver lets in the clutch and drives away. A burst of rapid FIRE from behind hits the driver. He slumps forward.

Baxter seizes the wheel, opens the door and pushes him out. Baxter shuts the door, just as BILL tries to force it open.

He continues driving, scraping Bill off the side of the car against the bank. There's a YELL.

The rear windscreen is SHOT out. Baxter stops the car suddenly and puts it into reverse, flat out.

EXT. LANE - NIGHT

Another MAN FIRES as Baxter reverses over him. SILENCE reigns. ---

Baxter drives off fast, leaving bodies on the road.

EXT. EXETER - MINIBUS/STATIONARY - DAWN

Baxter has rented a minibus. He has clean clothes. He waits some distance from the vehicle near the station.

He is on his cell phone.

BAXTER

Yeah, Jenny. The boys've gone.

JENNY (O.S.)

Gone! My God! How can you trace them now?

Baxter hesitates. Tell her?

BAXTER

Don't lose hope. We're going in to try and find times and places. Be in touch.

EXT. STATION - DAWN

Jock, Johnnie, Stevie and BOMBER HAYES appear, all carrying golf bags. Baxter waves and they follow him along to the bus.

The mercenaries climb into the bus. There is the occasional PASSER-BY.

BAXTER

Great to see you guys. I know where Dan is. Just Simon now. Move it!

JOCK

How? Where?

BAXTER

Later.

EXT. BARN - DAY

The minibus enters a barn. Baxter closes the door behind them.

INT. BARN - DAY

The mercenaries exit the bus with their golf bags and start assembling their weapons concealed in them.

BAXTER

Have to hide out here till dark. Johnnie, I want you to stay with the bus.

JOHNNIE

Yes, Boss. Miss all the action.

BAXTER

Maybe. You know what to do.

JOHNNIE

Willco.

INT. 4X4 - (MOVING) - DAY

Dawn breaks. Georgette pulls up at an oasis with a few palm trees and gets out. Water shimmers through the trees.

EXT. OASIS - 4X4 (PARKED) - DAY

Georgette wakens Roland and Simon and beckons them out of the vehicle.

GEORGETTE

You'd better take a swim and wash off the dust. Don't even think of running away. The Sheikh would hunt you down in minutes.

Shielded by palm trees, the boys strip off. They dive into the water, while Georgette shakes the dust out of their clothes.

SHOUTS and SPLASHES as they enter the water.

EXT. OASIS BEYOND TREES - DAY

The boys swim, taking full advantage of their last moment of freedom. Roland ducks Simon. Simon races after him and pulls him under. He surfaces, spluttering.

Georgette arrives through the trees.

GEORGETTE

In you come. Move it. Dry yourselves with this.

She leaves a cloth. They dry themselves and get dressed partly visible behind a clump of palm trees.

GEORGETTE (CONT'D)

In now.

They obey. She gets into the 4x4 and drives off.

EXT. FORT - DAY

The fort has high white walls and two immense gates. The 4x4 draws up outside.

TWO SOLDIERS with sub machine-guns open the gates.

Georgette gets out and the soldiers yank the boys out of the vehicle and prod them forward like cattle.

GEORGETTE

Hey. You leave them alone. They're not your master's yet. Tell Sheikh Hassan Georgette is here.

A soldier looks as if he might hit her with his gun butt. He thinks better of it.

Georgette looks as tough as any man. She stands her ground, arms folded, one hand inside her tunic.

Simon and Roland stand close to her, frightened.

One soldier gestures to them to come inside, and then closes the gates behind them with a THUD.

INT. FORT - ALGERIA - DAY

Georgette, Simon and Roland are in a wide courtyard, just inside the fortified area. One soldier guards the boys while the other disappears inside the building.

Georgette melts.

GEORGETTE

Remember, say nothing unless he asks you something. Always do exactly as you're told immediately, and you should survive.

The boys, downhearted nod.

A door opens and SHEIKH HASSAN comes out. He is tall and charismatic. He is dressed in a dazzling white robe, trimmed with gold, and wears a similar headdress.

He smiles briefly at Georgette, and then turns to inspect the boys. He checks them front and rear. He opens their mouths and inspects their teeth, like horses. Then he nods approvingly.

HASSAN

Good. These will suit me well if the price is right.

He gestures to Georgette and they talk away from the boys.

He indicates to the boys that they should come to him. They do so with alacrity, which pleases him.

He turns to Georgette and nods. They shake hands and without a further glance at the boys she goes to the gate.

Georgette looks relieved when the gate is opened by a soldier.

She exits and it THUDS shut behind her. A car door SLAMS. Her vehicle roars away fast.

The boys look tearful.

Hassan speaks in clipped English.

HASSAN (CONT'D)

You belong to me now. Understand?

They nod.

HASSAN (CONT'D)

You have no opinions. You do as
you're told. Then you'll be happy.

The boys nod. Hassan CLICKS his fingers.

MAXINE, 16, a pretty dark girl, dressed in a white flowing robe, comes out from the inner sanctum. She gestures for the boys to follow her in. They snap to obey.

INT. BARN - DAY

Johnnie closes the barn door. He spends some seconds inside the minibus before jumping down and carefully closing its door.

Johnnie takes out a grenade, pulls out the pin and carefully wedges it under a haversack, which he partially covers with straw.

EXT. BRANDS HALL DRIVE - DAY

Baxter and men are close to the laurel bush. He signals for them to follow him. Angus slinks along the wall and joins them.

ANGUS

No change, Boss. Just one smart
car, garaged.

BAXTER

Good. Stevie, cover our rear from
the bush. We'll return the same
way.

Stevie, nods and takes up position facing outwards, his back to the wall.

Baxter makes a sign to get down and then prizes open the window and enters, followed by Bomber and Angus. Jock brings up the rear.

INT. PASSAGE - BRANDS HALL - DAY

The mercenaries pad along the long passage to the stairs and halt. A light is on. A RADIO sounds in a room above.

INT. STAIRS - BRANDS HALL - DAY

Jock whispers:

JOCK

I don't like this, Boss. Too easy.

BAXTER

Yup. Snaky bastards. Watch out for tricks.

Baxter signals Jock to cover him up the stairs. Angus covers their rear. As Baxter creeps towards the stairs, a knife spins through the air and stabs him in the arm. He GASPS and holds his arm.

Jock FIRES one shot and a body slumps over the rail above.

Angus and Bomber rush up the stairs. Angus sprays the gallery above with rapid FIRE.

Jock bandages Baxter's arm with a field dressing. Jock gestures with thumbs up. Baxter replies with the same gesture. They follow the others up the stairs.

INT. PASSAGE - FIRST FLOOR - BRANDS HALL - DAY

No sign of any other opposition. They converge on the room from which MUSIC comes. Jock is about to open the door.

BAXTER

No, don't. Could be Booby trapped.

Baxter takes out a stick of plastic explosive and presses a small piece against the door lock with a detonator in it. He lights the fuse.

They all back off along the passage. There is a BANG and the door is blown in.

INT. OFFICE - BRANDS HALL - DAY

The mercenaries rush in, guns at the ready. Angus and Jock remain in the passage.

Seated by the desk, round the corner from the door, in front of an ornate fireplace is Fadwell. On his knee sits OLIVER, 10. Fadwell holds a hand gun under the boy's chin.

Oliver looks scared to death. Fadwell, relaxed, smoothly dressed in a dinner jacket, smiles. He speaks in greasily superior tones:

FADWELL

Good evening, Mr Baxter and his merry men. So glad you could make it.

BAXTER

Put him down, Creep!

FADWELL

Steady on, old chap. He's mine to do what I like with. I call the tune here.

He strokes the boy's hair.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

Cute little chap, isn't he? What will you pay for him?

BAXTER

Let him go or I'll --

FADWELL

Don't do anything hasty. The slightest jerk and this toy will blow his dear little brains all over the ceiling. I've just had it re-decorated.

BAXTER

I'll re-decorate you.

FADWELL

Just put down your weapons. Unless you want your leader dead, let's have all six of you in here, lying on the floor, now.

Angus throws a smoke grenade.

It chokes everyone in the room. They lurch about, SPLUTTERING. When it clears, both boy and Fadwell have vanished.

BAXTER

Where the hell have they gone?

Angus and Jock enter, waving the remains of the smoke away from their faces.

ANGUS

Don't know. Just vanished. No one passed us.

JOCK

Not very bright. He might have shot the kid.

ANGUS

How the Hell does he know there are six of us?

BAXTER
He's got cameras all over.

Baxter strides to the window. It's nailed shut.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Where the Hell?

INT. BARN - DAY

The outline of the bus can be seen in the trace of sunlight shining through the open barn doors.

EXT. BARN - DAY

A car PURRS by. It stops in the lane further up the road. Doors OPEN softly but do not close. Soft FOOTSTEPS approach.

A single FIGURE checks out the interior of the barn. It disappears into the black interior. There's SILENCE.

FIGURE
Oh my G ---

A huge FLASH illuminates the barn and outside. A figure flies across.

FIGURE 2 runs away, across the yard. Johnnie's gun FIRES once. It falls motionless.

Johnnie rolls to his right. An automatic OPENS UP on the exact position he has just left.

Johnnie rolls down the bank and hurls two grenades to left and right of where the gunfire came from. They EXPLODE.

Johnnie listens. There is silence except for the CRACKLING from the burning barn.

Johnnie raises his head, listening.-- SILENCE.

As Johnnie sprints towards the road bank, an automatic OPENS UP, missing him. He shelters behind a tree stump. Another OPENS UP from the road bank. He is trapped from both sides.

Warmed by the flaming barn, Johnnie pants yet smiles, enjoying the fray. Johnnie removes his last two grenades, clipped to his belt, pulls the pin of one and throws a stone to HIT the side of the barn.

An instinctive return of FIRE shows the position of one enemy. Johnnie throws a GRENADE and is rewarded by a bright explosion. FIGURE 3 topples down a bank. Johnnie throws the OTHER GRENADE in the direction of the other adversary.

He waits till it has formed a screen of smoke and runs to the bank.

INT. CAR - LANE - DAY

Johnnie clammers over the bank and dives into the car. He SPRAYS behind him with his weapon, and races away.

INT. FORT - ALGERIA - DAY

Simon and Roland clean a huge pile of brass and silver. Maxine is in charge.

MAXINE

You two better work faster or you be here all night.

SIMON

It's okay for you, just sitting there watching us.

MAXINE

That's what slaves for. Well, one of the things.

She laughs.

ROLAND

My arms are falling off.

MAXINE

Hurry up. You still learn how to wait at dinner, and entertain the guests. That's the high point.

ROLAND

What happens if we don't finish?

MAXINE

You be beaten, not by me, but by eunuch.

ROLAND

What's that?

MAXINE

What you become if you don't do as you're told.

She laughs again, as if at some secret joke.

INT. OFFICE - BRANDS HALL - DAY

Baxter strides to the desk and levers it open with his knife, wincing as his arm hurts. He riffles through the papers. A PC catches his eye.

Jock watches the corridor, his weapon at the ready.

BAXTER
Angus, reckon you can tap into
this?

ANGUS
Try me.

Angus switches on the PC and faces the usual request for Password. He plugs in a USB and figures race over the screen.

The screen halts activity.

ANGUS (CONT'D)
We're in.

BAXTER
Check recent e-mails first.

ANGUS
Got something here, Boss.

He points to an e-mail. Baxter looks over his shoulder

BAXTER
Great. Simon is going with another
to a Sheikh near Tripoli.

JOCK
Let's get out of here.

He looks around, weapon ready for Fadwell's return.

BAXTER
Wait on. What's this? Dan. Skikda,
Algeria for sale.

ANGUS
Who do we go for first, Boss?

BAXTER
God! What a decision. -- I must
make some arrangements. No time to
lose.

Baxter picks up his cell phone.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The mercenaries emerge from the window. Angus trips over Stevie Webster. He is lying there, groaning.

BAXTER
Asleep again. How do you feel?

STEVIE
Bloody awful! How would you feel
with one over the head?

He gets to his feet, staggers but appears in control.

EXT. HORIZON - DAY

A glare of fire brightens the sky.

STEVIE
Flippin eck! Look at that.

BAXTER
Johnnie's barbecue!

Baxter rings Johnnie with his cell phone.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Hi Johnnie. All okay? -- Yeah. Get
to a garage and find another bus
quickly. We'll meet you at the
lodge.

EXT. MINIBUS - DAY

Baxter stows the last of long, canvas bags into the bus, Angus helping. Jock, Stevie, Hayes and Johnnie are already inside.

Baxter slides the door shut and gets into the driver's seat.

INT. MINIBUS - DAY

Baxter drives off. Angus passes a map into the rear.

BAXTER
Familiarize yourselves with the
map. We fly from Exeter to Annaba
in Algeria. A couple of stops en
route and twenty four hours, total.

ANGUS
Some trip. What then?

BAXTER

A truck I've laid on for across the desert to the Sheik's fort. About six hours. It'll be dusty and rough, so get some sleep on the plane.

JOHNNIE

And you're sure Simon'll be there?

BAXTER

Unless he's been sold on. I don't reckon there'll be much chance of that. They'll have to arrange a meeting of buyers. If the Sheikh doesn't want them for himself.

EXT. TRUCK - (MOVING) - DESERT - DAY

A battered and dirty truck bounces across the desert, leaving the outskirts of an Arab town.

INT. TRUCK - (MOVING) - DAY

Baxter and his men are sweaty and dust covered. They all wear goggles and Arab head-dresses

JOCK

Hope this safari isn't for much longer. It's keeling me lungs.

BAXTER

Be yomping soon.

Baxter grins.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

No lions. People are more predictable.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The truck stops under cover of a small cluster of palm trees.

The mercenaries exit the vehicle.

ANGUS

Keep under cover boys. Have a drink.

Angus carries a crate of soft drinks from the truck. Mild celebrations.

Baxter lifts out some bundles from the truck, and hands out the weapons.

BAXTER

Stun grenades. The others are only for emergency. Don't want to create too big an international incident or kill the kids.

STEVIE

What's the long one? Launcher?

Baxter grins and nods.

BAXTER

You can carry that one, Stevie, just in case of company on the way back.

STEVIE

Sure there are enough of us, Boss?

BAXTER

Surprise and S.A.S. skills. No problem.

JOHNNIE

It was a smooth flight. Could have done without the truck.

BAXTER

The best money could buy. Now get your heads down under cover. Tonight's going to need your wits about you. Angus, first watch.

EXT. FORT - NIGHT

Searchlights constantly pass along the inside of the walls, revealing their height and strength.

Large Mercedes pull up outside. Their OCCUPANTS are ushered inside the doors by soldiers.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT

Maxine wears a transparent, flowing dress of blue and gold. Roland and Simon are in golden loincloths. They pass round drinks on silver trays to the guests, businessmen on a flesh-pot safari. GIRLS C. 16-18 dance seductively for the guests.

The only lighting comes from candles on gold candelabra.

A fat ENGLISHMAN in a white suit is talking to Sheikh Hassan, who fails to hide his dislike of his guest.

ENGLISHMAN

So I think you'll find the next delivery have a better kill factor. Uranium tipped warheads.

HASSAN

Good. I have buyers for the lot. Part of the bargain includes tonight's entertainment.

ENGLISHMAN

Understood. We are allowed complete freedom of choice?

HASSAN

Of course. That's what I said. They are both top quality. Very expensive if you want to buy one.

Hassan turns away to speak to other guests. The Englishman stops Roland and takes a glass from his tray, gazing at him.

He follows Roland as he delivers his last glass and they exit together.

EXT. PALM TREE AREA - NIGHT

There is the SOUND of bolts being checked on weapons. The mercenaries strap on heavy packs. A line of men leads off from the palms hardly visible on a moonless night.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The line of men disappears into dead ground among the dunes.

INT. FEASTING CHAMBER - NIGHT

About a dozen MEN, most in light suits, including Sheikh Hassan in his robes, sit on cushions. Huge bowls of rice and meat are being cleared away.

Maxine, girls and Simon look tired after a long evening, as they tread among the cushions where A DOZEN REVELLERS, some Arab, some European sit or lie in varying states of inebriation. Some snatch at the girls as they pass.

Simon looks around for Roland and is dismayed by his absence.

TWO ITALIANS talk to Simon, who wants to get on with his job, although the area is now tidy.

Some of the candles have been extinguished. There is only a dim light. Simon breaks away to join the girls.

Arab MUSIC starts, wailing and swirling to suit the dancers. The girls and Simon start to dance and the MUSIC gets faster and faster till they sway with exhaustion.

Every so often a guest grabs a girl and they disappear to some other room.

Only Simon is left and the Italians. They close on him in a corner.

The MUSIC still continues.

EXT. INSIDE THE FORTS WALLS - NIGHT

Black shapes of mercenaries slide down ropes from the wall top. Fierce fire opens up from the top of a tower. A mercenary throws a GRENADE, silencing the fire.

CRASH! The main doors EXPLODE inward. The EXPLOSIONS of grenades, and a long BURST of machine gun fire, shatter the night. Just a gentle MOANING follows.

More FIRE rages from the main house. Mercenaries spread out, firing. More GRENADES BEAT SILENCE.

INT. FEASTING CHAMBER - NIGHT

The room's doors burst open and stun grenades roll across the floor.

The grenades EXPLODE and for a moment there is a stunned silence. The Italians are unconscious.

Baxter and Jock spring into the room, FIRING bursts into the ceiling. They switch on the lights and search the room...

Baxter is dismayed as he searches around.

BAXTER

No!

Simon pokes his head out from under a cushion.

Baxter sees Simon and swallows with emotion.

JOCK

There's the laddie!

BAXTER

Score one! Take you home, kid.

Baxter makes for Simon, who can't believe his eyes.

SIMON
What the? Are you real?

He touches Baxter, and smiles. His face comes alive. Then overcome with tears.

BAXTER
Where's the other boy? Any others?

Simon points to the door.

SIMON
Roland. A fat man was with him.
Please save him.

BAXTER
Too bloody right! We're out of
here.

Baxter signals Jock to cover their rear with his machine pistol and leads Simon out.

INT. PASSAGE - NIGHT

Baxter opens each room door in turn and searches for Roland. He flings open the last door and storms in, Simon close behind.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Englishman chases sobbing Roland around the room.

ROLAND
No! No!

Baxter strides towards the man, volcanic.

ENGLISHMAN
Get out. He's mine. Ask the Sheik.

Baxter smashes his jaw with the butt of his gun. He kicks him in the crotch so he bounces off the far wall screaming.

Simon is over-awed.

SIMON
What a drop kick!

GUNFIRE sounds in another part of the building. A fire fight breaks out.

Baxter grabs the cowering, punch-drunk Roland and makes for the door, followed by Simon. Roland takes in Simon, tearfully relieved.

INT. PASSAGE - NIGHT

BULLETS keep Baxter, Simon and Roland penned in the passage. The boys look at each other. Will they get out?

Baxter chucks a grenade round the corner. There is an EXPLOSION, followed by silence, apart from distant sporadic GUNFIRE.

They turn the corner and meet Johnnie. Baxter points Roland and Simon to Johnnie.

BAXTER

Get them out of here quick. I'll check the rest. Wait. Any more boys?

SIMON

No. Just a nice girl, not a slave, an Arab.

BAXTER

She belongs here. She stays.

Johnnie nods and vanishes down the passage with the boys trailing close, pistol at the ready.

INT. FORT - NIGHT

Baxter advances down a passage, spraying ahead of him with GUNFIRE.

INT. FORT - NIGHT

Johnnie is about to leave the main building.

He pulls the boys down to the ground, behind him, and looks through a doorway.

He steps back, pulls out a grenade and throws it round the corner. It EXPLODES. There is a CRY.

Johnnie pulls Roland close to him. Simon follows.

JOHNNIE

Run with me, now!

They sprint towards the gates.

EXT. FORT - NIGHT

Heavier GUNFIRE is followed by silence. There are three long whistle BLASTS. A mercenary riddles the Mercedes' tires with GUNFIRE.

Black shapes, the mercenaries, leave the fort fast. Stevie sets up a trip wire by the gate.

Their truck suddenly whirls up. Baxter does a quick head count, as they bundle into the vehicle before they drive into the night.

A loud EXPLOSION echoes from within the fort.

INT. TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Johnnie drives flat out.

Baxter scans front and rear, his weapon at the ready.

Jock wraps blankets round the boys, who cling together, still too shocked to speak.

BAXTER

Well done lads. We're not out of here yet, but that was great stuff.

JOCK

What the hell was that crunch?

BAXTER

That was Stevie's parting gift. It'll have brought down enough wall to keep them in there for a while. Good work.

STEVIE

Okay Boss.

SIMON

It sure made a bang.

JOCK

Ah. It talks.

BAXTER

Did we get you out in one piece?

SIMON

Me? Just in time.

Roland hides his face in his hands.

STEVIE
You're safe with us.

BAXTER
Keep awake, Jock. We might have
company before long. Ready for
them, Stevie?

Stevie nods as he clasps his rocket launcher. Baxter cuts a
hole in the tarpaulin roof with his ankle knife.

Dawn starts to creep over the horizon.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Fire it out of that, if the time
comes. Cook 'em.

INT. FORT - DAY

Sheik Hassan RANTS on the phone, furiously, in Arabic.

INT. 4X4 (MOVING) - DAY

Both boys look more alert and in wonder at the mercenaries.

SIMON
How did you appear like that?
It's like a dream... A wonderful,
fabulous dream!

JOHNNIE
Pinch him.

Roland shrinks back into himself, as if trying not to be
seen.

Baxter ruffles Simon's hair.

BAXTER
Just be lucky.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Their truck has stopped with a steaming radiator. Jock looks
inside the bonnet with Angus.

The boys are sitting in its shade, while Stevie keeps guard
from the vehicle's roof.

BAXTER
What's the story?

Jock looks up, cleaning his hands on a rag.

JOCK

The water hose has gone. We'll have to wait for it to cool down. I've taped it but she'll seize if we go on right now.

BAXTER

Ten minutes. We're only a short way from the coast.

STEVIE

Boss, I can see dust. Something's coming this way fast. Two vehicles, I reckon.

BAXTER

Shit! All we need. They may not be hostile. Away from the vehicle everyone. Take cover in the wadi.

Baxter grabs the boys and hauls them behind a large rock.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Eyes shut, hands over your ears.

He lies in a hollow behind the rock, carbine at the ready. The dust clouds zoom in. Two 4X4's close. They each carry mounted heavy machine guns.

A spray of gun FIRE on their stationary vehicle, sets it alight.

Baxter FIRES, then rolls away.

Stevie aims and FIRES the rocket launcher. The leading vehicle EXPLODES in flaming pieces.

A CRESCENDO of fire arises from various weapons along the edge of the wadi and the second 4x4 catches fire and ZOOMS off, blazing.

It disappears over a ridge. There is an EXPLOSION and a plume of smoke.

Baxter, delighted, rises from the sand. So do the boys, shaken.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

All here... Okay? Well, that's decided that. We'd better get yomping.

STEVIE

Is it far, Boss?

BAXTER

Only a few miles. Good for your legs. Let's go.

INT. FADWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

The phone RINGS. Fadwell answers it.

FADWELL

Yes Stevens?

STEVENS O.S.

The cruiser firm let us down.

FADWELL

Did they? I'll sort them later. Tell Blunt to move and find an alternative vessel, even if it's slower. Hurry up. Baxter could be after you.

He replaces the receiver.

EXT/INT. - MINIBUS - DOCKS - DAY

The minibus arrives at a port in the South of France. It parks beside a number of other vehicles.

Stevens opens his bleary eyes and yawns.

Blunt gets out and checks for Baxter. He looks back inside the bus. The drugged boys are waking.

Nigel and Dan, still tied up, look wretched.

BLUNT

I'll see what I can find. You stay and look after your babies. Keep them in the bus. Tell them a story or something.

Blunt runs down to the water front.

EXT. DESERT - ALGERIA - DAY

Baxter and company look very dusty and tired. Simon looks done in. Roland is piggy-backing on Angus. Baxter leads. They stagger up a rising dune.

Ahead lies the sea and a motor cruiser, anchored close in. Nothing else is in sight.

Baxter grins with delight. He waits for the others' reactions.

JOCK

Jeez Boss. Do you walk on water too?

BAXTER

Only in winter.

There is a hearty CHEER. Baxter just points to his compass.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Come on, lads.

Baxter leads them to the water's edge where they slump to the ground and wait for two rubber dinghies to ROAR in and collect them.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Baxter, Angus and Jock scan a map. The other mercenaries clean their weapons. The vessel's engines ROAR.

BAXTER

It's getting on for six hundred miles but this thing does thirty knots plus, so we should be off Skikda by this time tomorrow.

ANGUS

I hope we're in time.

BAXTER

Better be.

Simon and Roland appear wearing shorts, far too big for them, and men's shirts with the sleeves cut short.

STEVIE

Hey. Latest fashion.

SIMON

Where did you magic this boat, Baxter? She's a cracker.

BAXTER

A friend - owes me one. Time for a rest. Tomorrow's another busy day. Take care of Roland, Simon... Poor kid.

Simon nods.

EXT. BOAT/SEA - DAY

An elderly motor boat CHUGS its way out of a French port, with Blunt and company aboard. Blunt paces up and down the deck looking at his watch.

STEVENS O.S.
Keep out of his way.

INT. BOAT (MOVING) - DECK-HOUSE - DAY

Stevens is with Dan and Nigel. Nigel lies back on his bunk, scowling while Dan and Stevens sit on the one below. Both boys are still wearing their P.E. outfits.

STEVENS
As you may be realizing, this is not a fun trip. And no more tricks, or you'll be bound tighter than a Christmas turkey.

DAN
I wouldn't be in your shoes when Baxter traces you.

STEVENS
But he won't, will he.

He looks at Dan suspiciously.

STEVENS (CONT'D)
What've you to be cheerful about?

Dan grins. Stevens looks uneasy.

EXT. CRUISER/MOVING COAST - DAY

Baxter's cruiser slows down. The coast is just visible in the distant heat haze. Stevie plays deck quoits with Simon. Roland crouches in the shade, trembling. Simon joins him, and puts his arm round his shoulders.

Roland pushes him away. Simon looks hurt.

EXT. CRUISER/MOVING DECK - EVENING

Everyone comes on deck as the engine sounds CHANGE to Slow.

BAXTER
Guys, get below till dark. We don't want to arouse attention if there're any fishermen around. Angus, check weapons and grenades.

ANGUS

Right Boss.

BAXTER

Boys, this isn't your scene.
Stay below until we return.

SIMON

Will Dan be there?

Baxter hugs him.

BAXTER

Oh, I hope so, Simon. God, I do.

Simon puts his arm round Roland's shoulders, which he accepts this time, and gently leads him below.

EXT. CRUISER - NIGHT

Dark shapes move silently across deck on padded feet. They disappear over the side, in single file.

EXT. DINGHY - DAWN

A rubber dinghy detaches itself from the cruiser. As they approach shore, the engine is cut. They drift in-shore

The beach is deserted. White walls of a town can be seen about a mile away.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A closed van, driven by Georgette, arrives at a little jetty where Blunt and Stevens disembark.

EXT. VAN (STATIONARY) - DAY

Blunt and Stevens hurry to and fro between boat and van, carrying long parcels, that contain the boys.

Dan's face, defeated, is just visible, sticking out of a roll of material. His eyes search back and forth, still hoping for rescue. He sees no Baxter and his face falls.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

It is early morning and a few ARABS AND AFRICANS are about, with goats and camels.

The van stops in a little market square with white walls and several narrow alleys opening off it.

Georgette and Stevens get out. Blunt gets out and searches around. No Baxter. He relaxes.

She walks over to a tall AFRICAN. They speak for a moment, watched by Stevens, who remains by the van. She gesticulates.

Stevens opens the rear of the van. Boys are revealed.

Stevens lines them up about a yard apart in the market-place. The African comes over, holding a photograph and claims Nigel. Georgette and Stevens walk down the line, combing their hair and straightening their T-shirts.

BUYERS walk amongst the boys, inspecting their muscles and teeth like livestock.

An ARAB shows much interest in Dan and haggles with Georgette. The Arab pays her some money and then takes Dan to the side of the square, where he binds his wrist to the boy's so there is no prospect of escape.

Dan and Nigel look at each other and nod farewell, devastated. A tear trickles down Dan's cheek.

DAN

Couldn't you buy him too?

The Arab strikes him across the face.

Nigel turns away, held by the African.

SIX NEW OWNERS lead away their purchases. Georgette and Stevens approach their van.

Stun grenades EXPLODE in the square from three sides. A larger van drives into the square, scattering everyone as it blocks the exit road. The rest are just alleys.

Black figures in black Balaclavas jump among the lurching bodies. Stevie knocks the African unconscious.

Georgette pulls out a machine pistol from the van.

Johnnie karate chops her so hard, her neck snaps and she tumbles into the gutter.

Blunt fades into the crowd of Arabs.

A black figure opens the door to the van and throws Stevens and the unconscious African into it. Another shepherds the astonished boys into the van.

All except Dan, who disappears in the melee with his purchaser, down an alley. Baxter and Johnnie sprint after them. LOCALS jump out of their way.

INT. VAN - DAY

The large van is crammed with men and boys.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

The square is empty, apart from the odd unconscious body.

Angus steps down from the van, his automatic at the ready.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

The alley is full of Arabs parting before a maddened Baxter, his weapon weaving in all directions.

Johnnie is at his back covering their rear.

There is no sign of Dan and his new master.

Baxter yells:

BAXTER
Dan, tell me where you are!

There is a faint CRY stifled.

Baxter mad with frustration, can't place it.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Dan, Dan!

There is a cut-off CRY from the back of a shop. Baxter runs over TWO CUSTOMERS as if they aren't there, charging into the shop.

INT. SHOP - DAY

Johnnie covers the shop entrance.

A wild MOB of Arabs surges towards him. He fires a burst at their feet and they back off, still yelling. Stones start to fly. One hits Johnnie on the cheek. He shoots the thrower in his leg. The stones cease.

Dan's owner flies through the air, from the rear of the shop CRASHING into a basket of leather goods.

EXT. SHOP IN ALLEY - DAY

Baxter runs past Johnnie, Dan under an encircling arm, his automatic SPRAYING bullets into the air above the crowd.

Johnnie covers their retreat, SPRAYING bullets close to their feet. The crowd follow at a discreet distance, YELLING dire threats and throwing rocks.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Baxter SPRAYS bullets near the crowd as they edge closer to the van. They back off, then advance again.

Angus fires even closer so the crowd back off. He jumps into the van and GUNS the engine.

Baxter and Johnnie follow Dan into the van, SLAMMING the doors behind them.

They ROAR away.

EXT. VAN/MOVING - BEACH - DAY

The van ROARS across the beach, stopping at the water's edge. Its occupants tumble out. Two dinghies swirl in to meet them.

EXT. DINGHY - DAY

The African, now conscious, and Stevens get some helpful persuasion into a dinghy from Stevie and Angus.

The boys leap in joyfully.

Dan smiles at Stevens, who lowers his eyes.

EXT. DINGHIES - DAY

The dinghies ROAR out to the motor-cruiser anchored half a mile out.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A couple of police jeeps drive onto the beach flat out. The police jump out and FIRE at the retreating dinghies.

EXT. CRUISER - DAY

There is a flash and CRUMPING noise.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A rocket scatters sand over the police. They get into their jeeps and drive away fast.

EXT. DINGHY - DAY

Its occupants cheer.

Stevens' face is green with fear.

EXT. CRUISER - DAY

The mercenaries help their passengers aboard up folding steps. Jock persuades the reluctant African with his dirk.

BAXTER

Thanks, Jock. Take them below, and tie them up securely. We'll hand them over to our police when we get back.

JOCK

A pleasure. Come, scum.

The African is ready to jump overboard. Jock re-directs him with his dirk.

BAXTER

Johnnie, look after the boys with Stevie. A meal, a shower and bed in that order.

JOHNNIE

Ay, ay Sir.

BAXTER

Well done lads. A great effort.

He strides over and hugs Dan. Dan is tearful under the strain.

ANGUS

One hundred per cent.

There is the SOUND of the cruiser getting under way.

INT. CRUISER - CABIN - DAY

Dan and another boy, FREDDIE 11, in shorts, put on their T-shirts after their shower. Dan looks star-struck.

FREDDIE

Magic. How did that happen?

DAN

He's my uncle ... the guy in charge. Came to the rescue. Just in time!

Baxter enters with Simon, wearing a borrowed camouflaged tunic down to his knees, Baxter's arm round him. Roland follows close behind.

BAXTER

You don't know how glad I am we've got you back, laddie.

Simon runs to Dan and hugs him.

Dan is lost for words. He just buries his head in his substitute Dad's chest, hugging Simon. Baxter manages a smile and holds him close, safe.

Roland swallows and turns away to hide his tears. Baxter gathers him up too. Simon giggles. He can't stop giggling, hysterical.

Dan slaps him lightly. He stops.

SIMON

Baxter, daddy bear.

EXT. CRUISER - DAY

The vessel creams through the water fast, no land in sight.

INT. CRUISER - DAY

Dan, Roland, Nigel, Simon and Freddie eat sandwiches. Johnnie relaxes in a chair, cleaning a weapon. Five other boys eat at a second table. All seem stunned by their experiences.

Roland is recovering.

ROLAND

Can't wait to see my mum and dad and tell them all about it... Well, some of it.

Nigel is close to tears.

NIGEL

Mine won't want to see me.

Baxter enters.

BAXTER

Why on earth not?

NIGEL

Never did get on with them. Too big a family. Another baby's on the way. May be born by now.

Baxter puts his hand on Nigel's head.

BAXTER
Don't you worry, old lad. I'll fix
you up if you're in trouble.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Baxter drives with Simon, Dan and Nigel asleep in the back.
He draws up at Jenny's house.

Simon wakes and looks around.

SIMON
Where's Roland?

BAXTER
I dropped him off at his home while
you slept. He'll be okay, poor kid.
Got caring parents.

Baxter bites his lip.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Jenny dusts her lounge, in a motiveless manner. She puts down
a family photo after a loving gaze.

Jenny shakes her head and shrugs as if: What's the point?

The door bell RINGS and she dashes across to it.

Baxter stands there, all smiles, his arms round Simon and
Dan.

Jenny hyperventilates, supporting herself against the door
frame.

BAXTER
Sorry, I should have rung. Mission
accomplished. I thought you might
need support.

Jenny bursts out of the house, crying.

JENNY
I can't believe it.

She hugs and kisses Simon and Dan. Then sweeps her arms round
Baxter. She wipes her tears away and hugs her boys again.
Then takes in Nigel, standing worried by the car.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Who's this?

BAXTER
Just a word, Jenny.

He gestures away from the boys and Jenny follows.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
Nigel's been rejected by his
parents. He was the one who led us
to Fadwell and the eventual
discovery of Simon and Dan.

JENNY
I see where you're going. Will I
take him in?

Baxter nods.

She is watched by Simon and Dan, trying to hear what is being
said.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Wow! That's asking a lot.

Dan and Simon run over to them.

DAN
Please, Mum, let him stay. He's
nowhere else to go and he's a mate.

SIMON
I like him too. Another bro'.

Jenny wavers.

JENNY
What's he experienced?

BAXTER
No more than Dan.

JENNY
Does that say much? Oh my God,
Baxter, what have they been
through?

BAXTER
From what I've seen of him, he's a
nice kid. Un-spoilt by Fadwell and
his cronies and I would pay for his
keep. He seems to have bonded with
Dan, too.

JENNY
 Forget his keep. He's more than
 welcome.

BAXTER
 I just knew you'd say that.

He hugs her. Jenny beckons Nigel over and hugs him.

NIGEL
 Can I stay, really?

JENNY
 Of course.

Nigel is ecstatic.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Dan, Nigel and Simon pile up in a friendly free for all on
 the lawn. Simon sits on Nigel's chest and Dan tickles Simon
 to get him off.

Jenny and Baxter watch, amused.

JENNY
 I guess we're family again.

BAXTER
 Thanks to Angus and the lads.

Jenny laughs.

JENNY
 And you had nothing to do with it.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dan, Simon and Nigel lie asleep in three single beds lit by
 the moon through the curtains. Each twitches as they re-live
 their past nightmares.

INT. JENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jenny lies asleep, smiling. She mumbles:

JENNY
 Baxter, my guardian angel.

INT. JENNY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Baxter lies asleep on the settee, looking wasted.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Two black clad figures climb the gate. Fadwell leads, followed by Blunt. Fadwell makes for the French windows. He inserts a skeleton key and eases the window open. Blunt follows, easing the door closed behind him.

INT. JENNY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Fadwell sees Baxter, SNORING, pauses with a look of hatred, then continues past him, and opens the far door, followed by Blunt.

INT. BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fadwell opens the door and looks at the sleeping boys, with a dim flashlight. He pauses it on Simon and licks his lips.

He points to Simon and Blunt tiptoes to his bedside. He places a pad over Simon's face. Fadwell feeds liquid into the pad from a small hip flask. Simon struggles briefly and lies unconscious.

Fadwell looks briefly at Dan and shakes his head. He extracts Simon from his bed and places him over his shoulder. They leave, closing the door behind them.

INT. JENNY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Blunt opens the window for Fadwell. Simon's trailing arm brushes across Baxter's face. He wakes in a flash. He feels for his pistol beneath his pillow, too late

Fadwell passes Simon to Blunt and pulls out a pistol, covering Baxter.

FADWELL

I could kill you here, but it'd be a bit messy. I'll take care of you elsewhere. Be very quiet and step outside.

Baxter grits his teeth and does so.

Fadwell closes the door behind him.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

Tie him up, tight.

Blunt places Simon on the lawn and ropes Baxter's wrists behind him.

Fadwell inspects the knots, pistol in hand and leads with Baxter ahead of him out to the car, Simon over Blunt's shoulder.

Blunt lays Simon to the rear of the car.

FADWELL (CONT'D)
Now his ankles.

Blunt ties Baxter's ankles.

BAXTER
They'll know where to come looking.

FADWELL
And won't find a thing. Brands Hall is sold. We have a destination for you, and Simon can watch. It'll make him obedient for good, in addition to a little operation.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Fadwell opens the car boot. They push Baxter into the boot. Fadwell closes the boot softly.

Fadwell ties Simon's wrists and gags him. They place him carefully in the back of the car.

Fadwell gestures to Blunt to get in the back with Simon.

FADWELL
Just in case he wakes.

Fadwell gets in and drives away.

INT. ROLLS (MOVING) - NIGHT

Fadwell is on top of the world. Blunt looks tired in the passenger seat.

FADWELL
We'll dispose of his lordship and then I'll pay you and you can vanish. I've got an island retreat, where I can enjoy the boy's company.

Blunt nods.

From the boot:

BAXTER O.S.
Perverted bastard.

Fadwell smiles.

FADWELL

By the way, my vanishing trick --
a secret room. The door works as
fast as it did hundreds of years
ago. A priest hole. Press... Poof!

Fadwell uses his cell phone.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

Yes, Charlie, I should be delighted
to feed them tonight. You'll find
the motel on the Taunton side of
Honiton. Have a good night.

Fadwell looks at Blunt and smiles.

FADWELL (CONT'D)

Right, Mr Baxter. You'll appreciate
my last little treat for you.
A swine feast.

EXT. FARM DRIVE - NIGHT

The Rolls cruises up the track to stop by the farm house.

Fadwell backs it towards the shed door.

EXT. MILL SHED - NIGHT

The Rolls has its boot almost against the barn door.

Fadwell opens the shed door and the rear door of the car and
lifts Simon out, helped by Blunt.

They carry Simon into the barn. He wakens and struggles
violently, squirming about like a fish being landed.

FADWELL

Wasting your energy, my dear.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Fadwell switches on the light to reveal the mill with pulleys
and lifting gear beside it, a long table, a sky light and a
number of sisal sacks, empty.

There are bars over the windows. There is a substantial door
with a locking bar.

Fadwell hooks Simon's wrists over a larger hook attached to a
pulley. He pulls the pulley so Simon is on tiptoe, facing the
mill.

Fadwell leers into Simon's face:

FADWELL
 Watch well, my Dear. Thus depart
 all I get tired of. You wouldn't
 want that to happen to you.

Fadwell and Blunt exit.

EXT. FARM DRIVE - NIGHT

As Blunt bends to lift Baxter out, Fadwell smacks him across the back of his neck with an iron bar. Fadwell closes the boot on Baxter. He staggers with Blunt inside the barn. He binds his wrists and ankles. He hooks up Blunt on a similar hook, close to the mill.

As Blunt regains consciousness, Fadwell gags him with an old rag.

FADWELL
 This saves all I was going to pay
 you and removes you as a witness.
 So neat.

Blunt struggles in vain and his eyes bulge.

FADWELL (CONT'D)
 Now for the star of the show.

Simon gazes at Blunt in horror.

FADWELL (CONT'D)
 Lovely blood and bone meal, dear
 Simon. Produces the finest bacon.
 You'll be so obedient after this
 little demo.

Fadwell makes for the door.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

The boot is open as Fadwell returns. Baxter has escaped.

FADWELL
 Very clever. Well, you'll have to
 keep. No weapon, no trouble.

Fadwell looks into the darkness.

An area of light shines from the mill but beyond - blackness. Fadwell hurries to the mill, and slams the door behind him. He places the heavy bar across it, making entrance impossible.

INT. MILL - NIGHT

The door brackets are heavy iron.

FADWELL

Before you die, my dear Blunt,
think of the pleasure you'll give
my little piglets as they eat up
every last morsel. No trace for
anyone.

Fadwell places a sack beneath the mill exit chute.

INT. PIGLETS' STYE - NIGHT

The piglets are at their trough, at least thirty of them,
most well grown, in a hunger frenzy, SQUEALING for food, lit
by a dim bulb.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Simon gives a furious but useless squirm. His face is
agonized.

FADWELL

Friend Baxter will enjoy your last
screams.

Fadwell switches on the mill, which HUMS. He heaves on the
pulley, raising Blunt to the level of the chute to the mill.
He starts to lower him in. His feet are already out of sight.

Blunt SCREAMS through the gag.

There is a CRASH. The skylight splinters in a shower of
glass. Baxter hurtles through onto the table.

Baxter swings Blunt out of the chute and kicks Fadwell in the
same movement. Fadwell's pistol drops to the floor.

Fadwell runs to the door and unbars it, pursued by Baxter
with furious intent.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Fadwell jumps over a pig pen fence and trips. The famished
pigs surround him, biting and SCREAMING in their desire for
food. Fadwell YELLS as he is torn apart.

Baxter makes no effort to save him.

BAXTER

'Bye Fadwell. Puts me off bacon for
life.

He leaves and enters the barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Baxter lowers Simon to the floor and cuts his bonds. Simon's relief at seeing Baxter is tangible. A quick hug. Baxter switches off the machine.

SIMON
Fadwell?

BAXTER
Won't be coming back.

Simon is so relieved.

Baxter lowers Blunt to the floor and unties his gag.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
I guess we'd better keep you like
that till we hand you over to the
police. Aiding and abetting such
filth - fifteen years at least.

Blunt looks happy with that, compared with what he has just missed.

Simon sits against a wall, rocking to and fro in shock. He gradually returns part way to normal.

Baxter massages feeling back into Simon's stretched arms. He fondles Simon's head.

EXT. ROLLS - NIGHT

Baxter removes a tools satchet from the boot.

Baxter helped by Simon drops Blunt into the boot. Simon places a dirty old sack over his head. Simon laughs.

SIMON
We might feed him to the rats.

INT. ROLLS - NIGHT

Baxter drives, glancing at Simon way out beside him, a happy smile on his face, once more angelic.

BAXTER
That's our boy.

FADE OUT