

OIL BOOM

When Worlds Collide -The East and the West

by Greg McGee

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NOTE: THROUGHOUT THE FILM, ARAB CHARACTERS ARE SPEAKING ARABIC, AND SUBTITLES ARE DISPLAYED FOR THE AUDIENCE. ENGLISH CHARACTERS BOB AND MO ARE SPEAKING ENGLISH, WITH SUBTITLES DISPLAYED IN ARABIC

The story begins in the desert, with a flat expanse of nothing but sand and sky.

We hear the bleat of a camel, and the camera pans slowly to reveal a small encampment of men in Arab dress, thobe and gutra, sandals, lounging in front of their tent. Surrounding them are a score of camels, and other livestock. They are preparing some tea from an earthen pot on a small fire pit.

They are laughing and joking among themselves in Arabic.

A Land Rover comes over the horizon from afar, kicking up dust as it chews up the desert.

The men look at it with curiosity and watch it approach. They don't seem alarmed or even surprised. As the Rover gets close, we see there are two men aboard, a driver and a passenger. The passenger is Arabic, the driver is American. They bounce to a stop a few yards away from the Arabic men, who are still lounging by the fire.

The American and the Arab get out of the car, dusting themselves off. The American is a tall galoot, tanned and dressed in khaki shirt and pants and leather boots, with a sensible hat. His name is Bob. The Arab with him is Mohammed, (Mo for short)

Bob walks over toward the men with a big smile

BOB

Howdy. How y'all doin' today?

The Arab men at the fire look at each other quizzically.

BOB

Purty hot out here, huh?

Bob makes a motion as if fanning himself.

The Arabs nod and laugh a little.

BOB

(holds out his hand for a shake) I'm Bob
Pritchard, American Standard Oil.

The Arabs look at his hand, thinking he's showing them a ring or or something. They look up at him and nod.

MO
(English) Bob, let me take it from here.

Mo walks up to them and bows politely with his hands together in front.

MO
Salam Alachem.

The Arabs respond with nods and greetings.

MO
This man comes from far away, across the ocean. Excuse his rudeness. He does not know our ways.

The eldest of the Arabs, named HAMID, talks.

HAMID
Ah, that explains it. I thought he was insane.

MO
His name is Bob.

Hamid tries to say the name Bob.

HAMID
Baaaab? What a stupid name. Who's his father?

The other men laugh. Bob is watching all this with a grin pasted on his face. He laughs along with them.

A small boy appears in the doorway of the tent, looking like he's just woken from a nap. Bob sees him, and, being a lover of children, walks over to him with a big smile to say hello.

BOB
Well, hello little fella? What's your name.

The men watch as he approaches, and as he gets within a few feet away, three of them jump up, and draw knives from under their robes and surround the boy, protecting him from bob.

ARAB MEN (AD LIB)

What the hell are you doing? Get away from my family or I'll gut you like a goat, you crazy motherfucker.

Bob backs up, holding out his hands.

BOB

Whoa there, fellas. Settle down. I was just trying to be friendly. I love kids, you know.

MO

Settle down, friends. He's harmless. People are like this where he lives. They just walk up to your children and start talking to them whenever they want.

HAMID

What? That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard!

MO

I know, I know. Just, let it go, OK? Really. He doesn't mean any harm.

HAMID

(thinks a moment, then calls off his family) Its OK, sons. Sit down. Lets just talk to him and maybe he'll go away so we can get back to our tea. (to the boy.) Yusef! You go back in that tent and don't come out here until this crazy man is gone.

The Arab men return to their positions by the fire.

BOB

(to Mo) Are we good here?

MO

(English) Yes, yes, everything is OK.

Bob nods and sighs with relief. Looks around at the tent, the camels, looking for something to say. Then, he sees something on the ground a few yards away, and it draws his attention. He walks out in the desert about 20 yards.

The Arabs just sit and watch him.

HAMID

Now what the hell is he doing?

BOB walks over to low spot in the sand, and presses on it with his boot. Crude oil seeps up out of the sand and sticks to his boot.

BOB
(to himself) Holy shit! Its true!

Bob walks back over to the men, looking very happy.

BOB
Hey Mo, who's the head guy here?

MO
(English) Head guy?

BOB
Yeah, who's in charge?

MO
(English) Charge...

BOB
Jeeezus. Who's the...

One of Hamid's sons, SHADAD, perks his head up at that word. He reaches for his knife again. The other men stir as well.

SHADAD
What the...Is this guy a fucking
Christain? Mo? Why did you bring this
Infidel to me?

BOB
What's going on here, Mo?

MO
Settle down. It sounds like that, but he
was merely using that word as an
exclamation, you know like "Ebn El
Sharmoota!"

BOB
Can you get the hot head there to put the
knife away? See? I'm unarmed?

MO
(English) Its OK. Just don't use that
word any more.

BOB
What word.

MO

(English) J e....you know?

BOB

Oh. OK. Yeah, forgot about that. Shit, I'm sorry.

MO

Its nothing. No worry.

BOB

Can we get down to business now?

MO

(English) Of course. What would you like me to say?

BOB

What's the old guy's name?

MO

Mohammed Al Raisa Azzera Mustafa Enshala

BOB

(sighs) Ok. Does he have, like a nickname?

MO

Nick? Not nick. Mohammed Al Raisa Az..

BOB

No, no. When his wife calls him for dinner, what does she say?

MO

Don't talk about his wife either. That is really bad. Very bad things could happen.

BOB

OK. If his son wanted to call to him from over there, Hey blank blank, bring me some camel food. What part of the name would he use?

MO

Oh, I get it. Hamid.

BOB

Hamid?

MO

Hamid!

Hamid looks up with a smile.

Bob walks over to him, this time, bowing like he saw Mo do, with his hands clasped in front of him.

BOB

Hamid! I am happy to make your acquaintance.

Hamid rises and faces him, and returns the bow and the greeting.

HAMID

Good to meet you too, Bob. (laughs)
Baaab. Man, I have a hard time saying that name. Feels funny on the tongue.

The other Arabs laugh. Bob laughs, everybody looks happy.

BOB

Hamid, let me ask you a question.....

Hamid looks at him quizzically.

BOB

Who owns this land around here?

MO

I don't know what he's talking about.

BOB

Who does this land belong to?

MO

He's asking about the sand I think.

Bob, frustrated, walks over toward his truck and points at it.

BOB

Look. Truck. My truck. I own the truck.

MO

Now he's bragging that he owns 1 measly truck.

HAMID

What an asshole.

BOB

Ok, now, Tent! Tent belongs to you.

MO

He says the tent is yours. You can have the tent.

HAMID

He's giving me a tent?

MO

No no. He is...he is saying what a nice tent you have.

HAMID

He wants my tent? I can't give him my tent. Where would my children sleep? I mean, there has to be an end to hospitality!

MO

He doesn't want your tent, Hamid.

BOB

So here we go. Car is mine. Tent is yours. Car is mine tent is yours..Car is mine, tent is yours.

MO

I think he wants you to sing with him now. Bob has car. Hamid has tent, like that.....

HAMID

What the hell?

SHADAD

Just do it dad, to get rid of this guy.

The Arabs all start singing along with bob, harmonizing, clapping their hands. Its really an uncomfortably nice moment, with the east and western cultures meeting and exchanging their common love of music.

Bob suddenly stops singing and spreads out his hands.

BOB

Stop!

All the men stop, and look over at him with annoyance.

Bob drops down to the ground and pats the dirt.

BOB

Land?

The Arabs continue to watch.

BOB

Car is mine. Tent is yours. Land is....

Hamid looks at him with understanding. He simply points up with a finger.

BOB

(looks up) What?

MO

Allah.

All the men murmur a prayer.

BOB

Allah who?

MO

You call him God. He has many names.

BOB

God owns the land? That's ridiculous.

HAMID

The land is Allah. Allah is everything.

BOB

Look, somebody around here has to have a title to this land, now who is it?

MO

He wants to know the man who owns the land.

All the men laugh quietly.

HAMID

That's ridiculous. How can a man own land. The land has been here forever and men are like chaff in the wind.

MO

(English) You can't own land here, like you say.

BOB

Why not? I'll pay top dollar. Whatever they want! And they don't even have to move!

MO

It is impossible. A man cannot own land. Its ridiculous.

BOB

Whats ridiculous is that these idiots would turn down millions of dollars just for drilling rights. Tell them that.

MO

(shakes his head) It means nothing to them. I can't even think of the words to say it.

Bob just stares at him incredulously. His face has turned red and his eyes are bulging, as though hes about to blow a gasket.

BOB

Well, you listen here, you little wog. Words are what I hired you for, so if can't think of the words, then we're not going to be working together any more. You got me, Mo?

MO

Of course. I understand.

Bob gets in the truck and slams the door thunderously.

BOB

I can't understand these crazy fucking Arabs. Shiiiiiiiiit! What am I going to tell HQ?

Mo, now looking very meek, gets in the truck.

BOB

You have to be the worst translator ever.

MO

Of course, Bob. Sorry.

Bob grinds the truck into gear, and they lurch off into the desert.

Back at the campfire, Hamid and the boys are back to their tea. Yusef, the boy, comes out of the tent and jumps on Hamid and giggles.

HAMID

Was that guy an ass, or what?

SHADAD

A real piece of work.

They're silent for a moment as they run through the encounter in their mind.

HAMID

But, we really had a groove going there for a minute.

SHADAD

Yeah, that was pretty sweet.

One of the guys starts up the song again and they all sing along, happily

ARABS

(singing)

Bob has car, Hamid has tent.

Bob has car, Hamid has tent.

Bob has car, Hamid has tent.

Land.

The land belongs to Allah.

God is great.

FADE OUT

