

**The Post 9/11 Blues or: How the West Learned to Stop Worrying
and Love Situational Morality - Terrorism, Ethics and Creative
Synthesis in the Post-Capitalist Thriller**



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Table of Contents

Summary	iii
Declaration of Originality	iv
Acknowledgements	v
<u>Chapter One:</u> A Watershed Moment: Terror, subversion and Western ideologies in the first decade of the twenty-first century	1
<u>Chapter Two:</u> Post-9/11 entertainment culture, the spectre of terrorism and the problem of ‘tastefulness’	18
A Return to Realism: Bourne, Bond and the reconfigured heroes of 21st century espionage cinema	18
Splinter cells, stealth action and “another one of those days”: Spies in the realm of the virtual	34
Spies, Lies and (digital) Videotape: 21st Century Espionage on the Small Screen	50
<u>Chapter Three:</u> Deconstructing the Grid: Bringing <i>24</i> and <i>Spooks</i> into focus	73
Jack at the Speed of Reality: <i>24</i> , torture and the illusion of real time or: “Diplomacy: sometimes you just have to shoot someone in the kneecap”	73
MI5, not 9 to 5: <i>Spooks</i> , disorder, control and fighting terror on the streets of London or: “Oh, Foreign Office, get out the garlic...”	91
<u>Chapter Four:</u> “We can't say anymore, ‘this we do not do’”: Approaching creative synthesis through narrative and thematic considerations	108
Setting	108
Plot	110
Morality	111
Character	114
Cinematic aesthetics and the ‘culture of surveillance’	116
The role of technology	119
<i>Retrieving SIGINT Data</i> - Documenting the Creative Artefact	122

<u>The Section - Series Bible</u>	125
<u>The Section - Screenplays</u>	175
Episode 1.1 - Pilot	175
Episode 1.2 - Blasphemous Rumours	239
Episode 1.9 - In a Silent Way	294
Bibliography	347
Filmography (including Television and Video Games)	361

Summary

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have come to signify a critical turning point in the geo-political realities of the Western world. The United States of America suddenly found itself directly under attack on that day, and quickly overcommitted to a multitude of interlocking global conflicts of near Orwellian pervasiveness.

Cultural commentators have suggested that subsequent global events, bookended by 9/11 at one end and the Global Financial Crisis at the other, are indicative of a greater shift in traditional power structures. In short, many are arguing that we are witnessing the end of global capitalism.

As the notion of intelligence work began to permeate Western cultural discourse on September 12, screen industries oversaw a massive increase in espionage narratives. The humble spy story, formerly a relic of the Cold War, was suddenly centre stage again. This dissertation examines the shifts that have occurred in the classical spy narrative, post-9/11.

Most of the scholarship examining the genre in the post-9/11 world has focused on humanitarian approaches, as opposed to cultural and textual ones. I will first engage with theorists such as Slavoj Žižek and Jean Baudrillard and find the point where their respective theses on terror and globalism intersect with the work of economist Thomas Piketty to provide a broad overview of cultural shifts in the early part of the 21st century.

The second part of this dissertation will take the form of an in depth examination of the contemporary manifestation of the genre. This examination will be constructed through the establishment of a series of stylistic and industrial precedents, which are then deployed through both textual and cultural analysis focusing upon a survey of various screen-based media. In examining these media, I will argue that television-based drama represents the strongest embodiment of the post-9/11 espionage thriller, especially in regards to the key concepts of the contemporary thriller; situational morality and ideology. I will then propose a series of key tropes and thematic elements which define spy TV as an original genre which stands apart from its more classical 20th century incarnation.

The conclusions of this examination will then be synthesised into an original creative artefact to better demonstrate the aforementioned tropes. This will take the form of a series of screenplays for a contemporary espionage TV series, complemented by a 'show bible' – an industry document which provides an in depth overview of the 'world' of an original show.

By establishing the multi-faceted interplay of all the aforementioned factors, it is possible to analyse the numerous roles that screen-based espionage texts play, not just as artefacts of 'entertainment', but as complex works operating in a broader and more deeply resonant cultural context.

Declaration of Originality

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: ...Patrick Lang.

Date: 01/09/2016

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Chapter One: A Watershed Moment: Terror, subversion and Western ideologies in the first decade of the twenty-first century

The Age of Terror began abruptly at 8:46AM on the 11th of September 2001, when American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Centre in New York City. At 9:03AM, United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower, while at 9:38AM, American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon. Finally, United Airlines Flight 93 was hijacked, but forced down by the actions of passengers and crew on board, eventually landing in a Pennsylvania field at the cost of all lives aboard. These incidents were not catastrophic accidents, but deliberate terrorist actions against the United States, purportedly carried out by religious extremists.

The ramifications of September 11, 2001 have stretched further than the near three-thousand deaths that came as a direct result of the attacks. Instead, as journalist Jonathan Schell observed, “in an instant and without warning on a fine fall morning, the known world had been jerked aside like a mere slide in a projector, and a new world had been rammed into its place...Has the eye of the world ever shifted more abruptly or completely than it did on September 11?”¹

On the geo-political stage, these events have signified a major historical shift in the role of the Western world; in the decade-and-a-half following the attacks the US and its allies have launched a global ‘War on Terror’; an almost unimaginable undertaking in a twentieth-century understanding of warfare. This seemingly unending series of interlocking conflicts, combined with shifts in attitudes towards foreign policy and both civil and human rights, demonstrates a wholesale shift in Western public discourse within the space of a decade. A large proportion of the

¹ Jonathan Schell, “Letter from Ground Zero: The Power of the Powerful” Online website, 2001 <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011015/schell>> (Accessed 5 May 2009)

language utilised when legislating around these issues has involved both the identification of what Naomi Wolf has called an “all-encompassing” terrorist threat, one that must be prevented from acting at all costs, and must in fact be aggressively pursued and shut down.² Absurdly, this ideology recalls Slavoj Žižek’s appropriation of Jean-Pierre Dupuy’s approach to the prevention of catastrophe:

...we should first perceive [the disaster] as our fate, as unavoidable, and then, projecting ourselves into it, adopting its standpoint, we should retroactively insert into its part (the past of the future) counterfactual possibilities (“If we had done this and that, the calamity that we are now experiencing would not have occurred!”) upon which we then act today. We have to accept that, at the level of possibilities, our future is doomed, that the catastrophe will take place, that is our destiny – and then, against the background of this acceptance, mobilize ourselves to perform the act which will change destiny itself and thereby insert a new possibility in the past. Paradoxically, the only way to prevent a disaster is to accept it as inevitable.³

This acceptance of disaster has been ingrained in the fabric of public consciousness since September 12, 2001. This acceptance also refocused the global spotlight onto intelligence services and their various approaches to terrorism and specifically to Islamic extremism after a comparatively quiet end to the 20th century. Fareed Zakaria states that, prior to the events of September 11, 2001, governments “treated them [Al-Qaeda et. al] as minor annoyances, and they roamed freely, built some strength, and hit symbolic, often military targets, killing Americans and other foreigners. Even so, the damage was fairly limited”.⁴ In a post-9/11 world, as a necessary part of the new Western ideological apparatus, resources were reassigned to various intelligence agencies to combat the alleged ‘terrorist threat’; new powers of search and seizure were granted (see Chapter Four for an in-depth discussion of

² Naomi Wolf, *The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007), p.36

³ Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009), p.151

⁴ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (London: Penguin Group, 2008), pp.10-11

the controversial PATRIOT Act), and shifts occurred in most western countries towards a ubiquitous, total surveillance state – a near perfect, unyielding panopticon.

While these changes were most visible in the United States and Britain they also affected Australia, where legislation was passed in the week following the 9/11 attacks granting greater independence to its two core intelligence bodies ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) and ASIS (Australian Secret Intelligence Service). Prior to 9/11, both of these agencies were at risk of what Frank Cain has termed “bureaucratic death through a thousand cuts”.⁵ The agencies were viewed as relics throughout much of the nineties, with some stating that in a post-Cold War world “the associated intelligence skills were...no longer necessary or affordable”.⁶ Even traditional tasks for the agencies, such as the handling of terrorist threats, had been passed onto the Australian Federal Police, and anti-corruption investigation had largely become the remit of various Commonwealth and state bodies.⁷

However, even bigger changes to the Australian intelligence culture followed soon afterwards. After the federal election of November 10, 2001 – where the conservative, Howard-led Liberal party regained government by a vast majority – legislation was put forth to augment ASIO’s already formidable legal powers. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill 2002 granted the agency:

...the authority to seize suspected persons on a twenty-eight day warrant, hold them in a secure location and have them interrogated by ASIO agents. The suspects would have been compelled to surrender documents...to ASIO and

⁵ Frank Cain, “Intelligence Agencies, Terrorism and the Impact of 9/11 on Australia”, *Terrorism & Intelligence in Australia: A History of ASIO & National Surveillance* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), p.223

⁶ Ibid, p. 218

⁷ Ibid, pp. 218-219

be forced to provide all information in spite of it being used against them in subsequent criminal proceedings for terrorism.⁸

While the legislation did not pass in its first round it did become law in June of 2003, with notably few minor changes.⁹ These sweeping adjustments to the powers of the Australian intelligence services granted various agencies powers that brought them in line with their global equivalents such as the American CIA and British MI6. More broadly, this reflects a change in the way intelligence work began to be conducted in early part of the 21st century.

The rhetoric of terror: permanent war as ideological legitimisation

In the years following 2001, the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ engaged in a global War on Terror that arguably was near-Orwellian in its indistinct, unending nature. The meaning and definition of war itself was changed in this period, with Mary Zournazi suggesting that the term itself has now been repurposed to refer to an association with “liberation and freedom – the necessity of war to ensure the rights and freedoms of opposing countries or groups within countries or to liberate others from repressive regimes”.¹⁰ Additionally, Zournazi invokes Baudrillard through the idea of a “virtual war”, where battles are fought through “censored televisual images and other simulated technologies”.¹¹ The War on Terror continued throughout the remainder of the George Bush administration and showed no signs of diminishing.

While the rhetoric of this Coalition attempts to depict the War on Terror as an unprecedented response to an unprecedented threat, many have argued that while the

⁸ Ibid, p. 234

⁹ Ibid, p. 236

¹⁰ Mary Zournazi, “War”, *Keywords to War: Reviving Language in an Age of Terror* (Carlton North: Scribe Publications, 2007), p. 183

¹¹ Ibid, p. 184

methods employed by terrorists may have varied, the response to and depictions of those responsible have not. As Matthew Carr states:

[The War on Terror's] assumptions and many of its methods have been borrowed from previous counter-terrorist crusades. Once again, the anti-terrorist anathema has presented an image of a civilised and benevolent world threatened by a uniquely evil enemy, whose bloodthirsty deeds are beyond comprehension. Once again, the official depiction of 'terrorism' has become a propaganda smokescreen, which denies any responsibility for the violence it depicts in favour of an absurd fantasy of a benign Western world threatened by monsters who hate its essential goodness.¹²

Beyond the role of terrorist as propaganda tool, the War on Terror and its depiction in Western society serves one other important role, that of legitimisation.

Phyllis Bennis argues that:

Like its predecessor, the cold war, the GWOT [Global War on Terror] plays two roles simultaneously. On the one hand it is an ideological framework designed to legitimize the US "right" to military, economic, political and cultural domination. And at the same time, however false the notion of actually waging a "war on terror", the Global War On Terror is also an actual war – not a war on terror but a worldwide war waged for power and control of resources...To push the parallel even further, just as the cold war identified its enemy of choice, communism, the global war on terror has targeted its own enemy "other" – political Islam.¹³

Simultaneously, it can also be argued that the GWOT exists in response to an entirely different kind of terrorism. Terrorist organisations in the twentieth century tended towards tight-knit groups with specific goals; liberation, ideology, the overthrow of governments. Groups such as the Irish Republican Army or the Palestinian Liberation Organization were, in a sense, more intrinsically predictable in their goals, if not their actions. However, the attacks of September 11, 2001 have heralded the beginning of what some have labelled 'hyperterrorism'. As Farhad Khosrokhavar has argued:

¹² Matthew Carr, "Epilogue: In a Time of Terror" in *The Infernal Machine: A History of Terrorism from the Assassination of Tsar Alexander II to Al-Qaeda* (New York: The New Press, 2006), p.323

¹³ Phyllis Bennis, "The Global War On Terror: What It Is, What It's Done to the World", in *War With No End* (London: Verso, 2007), pp.11-12

This type of activism, which some call hyperterrorism, differs from classical terrorism. It has no overriding political purpose. It does not attack political entities and it is not intended to challenge a politically defined order. It is directed against the world as a whole, as symbolized by the United States, although countries such as France, England, Spain or Saudi Arabia may be its actual targets.¹⁴

However, where the rhetoric of the War on Terror succeeds is in signifying mass changes in Western discourse. Slavoj Žižek suggests that events of September 11 and the ensuing global shift are the first of two factors signalling the end of global capitalism; the second being the banking bailout of 2008 that heralded the global financial crisis. He explains that “both times Bush evoked the threat to the American way of life and the need to take fast and decisive action to cope with the danger. Both times he called for the partial suspension of American values (guarantees of individual freedom, market capitalism) in order to save these very same values”.¹⁵

Žižek’s thesis goes on to quote Hegel by way of Marx, suggesting that historical repetition is the signifier of epoch-making events. That is how they occur: first as the tragedy of 9/11, and then the farce of the global financial crisis where America’s free market capitalists turned to the government for a \$700 billion banking bailout. As Žižek observes, “in a supreme irony, ‘socializing’ the banking system is acceptable when it serves to save capitalism. Socialism is bad – except when it serves to stabilize capitalism”.¹⁶

As Žižek goes on to state elsewhere, “the global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point”. He details a number of contributing factors,

¹⁴ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs* (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2005), p.162

¹⁵ Žižek, p. 1

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.13

but for the purposes of this dissertation the key ideas are “imbalances within the system itself” and the “explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions”.¹⁷

If we are to take Žižek’s fall of capitalism in the early part of the 21st century as inevitable then the ‘War on Terror’ has indeed failed, though not in the traditional definition. As Baudrillard explains in *The Spirit of Terrorism*, the world is engaged in a Fourth World War in which “what is at stake is globalization itself”.¹⁸ The established hegemonic order has reached its inevitable close, and it is being deconstructed on several fronts; one could arguably claim the rise of WikiLeaks and ‘hacktivism’ as examples, with a further one being terrorism itself. Baudrillard takes a historical view of terrorist actions and largely divorces them from the stereotypical, Islam-centric view. If Islam dominated the world, he suggests, “terrorism would rise against Islam, *for it is the world, the globe itself, which resists globalization*”.¹⁹ Thus the actions of 9/11 become less about terrorism itself, but about a desire to see an end to the capital state established in the post-Reagan era of the 20th century. Baudrillard suggests a sort of contract between both victims and perpetrators of terrorism. “The moral condemnation and the holy alliance against terrorism,” he explains, “are on the same scale as the prodigious jubilation at seeing this global superpower destroyed”.²⁰

Viewed in this light and divorced from loaded concepts such as ‘religious extremism’, 9/11 can be viewed in a completely different cultural context - one which is, if anything, far more insidious in its nature. 9/11 has come to symbolise the end point of an empire, one based on duplicitous dealings by a seemingly

¹⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times*(London: Verso Books, 2010), p. x

¹⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* (London: Verso Books, 2002), p. 11

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 12

²⁰ Ibid, p. 4

unimpeachable superpower. What Baudrillard argues is that the desire for the end of this empire is inherent both internally and externally. As he explains:

At a pinch, we can say that they *did* it, but we *wished* for it. If this is not taken into account, the event loses any symbolic dimension. It becomes a pure accident, a purely arbitrary act, the murderous phantasmagoria of a few fanatics, and all that would then remain would be to eliminate them. Now, we know very well that this is not how it is. Which explains all the counterphobic ravings about exorcizing evil: it is because it is there, everywhere, like an obscure object of desire. Without this deep-seated complicity, the event would not have had the resonance it has, and in their symbolic strategy the terrorists doubtless know that they can count on this unavowable complicity.²¹

This end point to globalisation is also intertwined with shifts in the ways which wealth accrues in Capitalist systems in the latter part of the twentieth century. Thomas Piketty argues that inequality has been on the rise – to varying degrees – since the seventies and eighties. More specifically, he suggests that capital itself has changed in contemporary society to favour the “relative importance of inherited wealth versus income from labor over the very long run”.²² This can be demonstrated in the transfer of US national assets from the poorest 90 percent of the population to the richest 10 percent; a process that has been steadily occurring since 1980. As Piketty concludes: “...it is hard to imagine an economy and society that can continue functioning indefinitely with such extreme divergence and social groups”.²³

Economic socialism in the post-capitalist world

While Piketty’s approach is economic and empirical as opposed to Žižek’s more subjective propositions, they nonetheless share a common philosophy. Piketty argues for the regulation of wealth in order to eliminate global inequality – a capital

²¹ Ibid, pp.5-6

²² Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), p.237

²³ Ibid, p. 297

tax of up to “5 or 10 percent for fortunes of several hundred million or several billion euros”.²⁴ To be clear, this is a tactic which is not about taxation, it is about identifying and eliminating incomes significantly above the average in order to properly redistribute wealth; a highly controversial and dangerous idea to the free market capitalists who have ruled the West since the second half of the 20th century. Only this, Piketty argues, would “contain the unlimited growth of global inequality of wealth, which is currently increasing at a rate that cannot be sustained in the long run”.²⁵ In short, Piketty is suggesting a form of economic socialism that eliminates the very highest tier of wealth that has been created by free market capitalism.

Žižek’s approach is curiously similar, though rooted in deeper historical ideologies. He highlights the fall of the Berlin Wall as an inverse example – the people of East Berlin did not tear down the Wall out of a desire for capitalism; instead they merely wanted “capitalist-democratic freedom and material abundance but without paying the full price of life in a “risk society”; that is, without losing the security and stability once (more or less) guaranteed by the Communist regimes”.²⁶ While it is overly simplistic to view the fall of the Wall as being motivated purely by a desire by East Berlin citizens for “bananas and pornography” (as some Western commentators smarmily observed), the concept is nonetheless sound: the desire was seemingly for certain capitalist freedoms, with the safety net promised (though often not delivered) by a communist state.²⁷

This is the point where Piketty and Žižek’s theses intersect. Where the East Berlin communists of 1989 desired capitalist values, the ever-increasing masses of the wage-poor in the early 21st century desire values which are, by their very

²⁴ Ibid, p. 572

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Žižek, p. viii

²⁷ Ibid

definition, socialist. The notion of ‘freedom’ within a free-market capitalist society is a problematic one regardless, more closely related to a ‘freedom-of-choice’ for consumers than it is to do with ‘freedom’ in the libertarian sense. In this manner, free-market capitalism ironically already resembles communist thought in a way, with ‘freedom’ an illusion based on one of several pre-determined outcomes. Citizens no longer need their doors kicked in by jack-booted secret police; they are instead placated by the immediacy of choice awarded by consumerism, granting the illusion of ‘freedom’.²⁸

It can be argued that we are moving at high speed towards a fundamental shift in the structure and organisation of wealth and society in the Western world. If the Global Financial Crisis and the banking bailouts (never mind the significant and many natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina that impacted the USA throughout the first decade of the 21st century) highlighted nothing else it is that Western society requires Žižek’s “safety net” of communism, wrapped in the visage of capitalist choice. This is essentially a new form of socialism, one which encourages the regulation and redistribution of wealth while also championing “[the] struggle...not against actual corrupt individuals, but against those in power in general, against their authority, against the global order and the ideological mystification that surrounds it”.²⁹

In a sense, while the methods of 21st century terrorists and socialist reformers are radically different, their goals lie in parallel. Both desire intrinsic changes to the hegemonic order of late-Western free-market capitalism, to be replaced with a system more conducive to their morals and principles. Their motivations,

²⁸ This is demonstrated eloquently in Kathryn Bigelow’s *The Hurt Locker*, when bomb disposal expert William James returns home from the grey and brown battlefields of Iraq, only to be confronted by a wall of overwhelmingly colourful cereal boxes in a supermarket.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. xv

consequently, are largely unimportant. 'Islamic terror' is arguably no more about Islam than socialist reform is about communism – Baudrillard states that “...Islam was merely the moving front along which the antagonism crystallized. The antagonism is everywhere, and in every one of us. So, it is terror against terror. But asymmetric terror. And it is this asymmetry which leaves global omnipotence entirely disarmed”.³⁰

Spy fiction: a genre returned to relevance

Why then, in the so-called Age of Terror, is it valuable to analyse the espionage genre? Popular fiction has always reflected the *zeitgeist*, whether in implicit or explicit fashion. Most importantly, said fiction can be used to express and process real-world fears, confronting them in a manner which is timely, but also presented in a way which is palatable to audiences. The result is twofold – audiences become engaged with the texts as immediate reactions and reflections of reality, and the process also provides catharsis.

Prior to the events of September 11, 2001, the prevailing notion was that the spy thriller was a relic of the Cold War era; a leftover genre comprised of signs and signifiers with little relevance in a post-Glasnost world. With the Gorbachev-led Russia providing little perceivable threat, screenwriters in the nineties turned their attention to other enemies, with mixed degrees of success. The procession of Colombian drug cartels and IRA agents who paraded through the likes of *Clear and Present Danger* and *Patriot Games* did little to advance the genre. Clearly, the spy thriller was irrelevant.

³⁰ Baudrillard, p. 15

After the events of 9/11, this changed significantly. As will be discussed in detail throughout Chapter Two, the early part of the 21st century saw a dramatic increase in the depiction of spies, espionage and surveillance throughout dominant screen-based media. Clearly, the popularity of the relatively humble (and traditional) espionage thriller is intrinsically linked to historical context. This is what Allan Hepburn has termed a “culture of intrigue”; where the symbolic and the figurative collide with the cultural formations of spies and spying, concepts cemented in the national consciousness throughout the Cold War era.³¹ Historical events, Hepburn argues, “contribute to the culture of intrigue. The spy, then, is a symptomatic manifestation of ideologies that play out as historical events and as representations in fiction and film”.³²

In the post-9/11 age the spy thriller exists as a cultural decoder, employed to assist in deconstructing the often complex and fragmented realities of intelligence and security in the 21st century. By drawing on its close 20th century relation, the conspiracy thriller, it attempts to assemble the chaotic and sporadic shadow of violent terrorism into a form more easily engaged with and deconstructed. As Michael Woolf notes:

People just can't stand being without a clear plot. They just don't want to hear (likewise, nobody really trusts them to hear) that the threat is scattered, inchoate, and random (the point about spy fiction is to reveal that the scattered, inchoate, and random are part of a greater devilish design), that there is no script, that men act and conspire inexactly and ineptly and mostly unsuccessfully.³³

The popularity of TV series such as *Spooks* and *24* demonstrate the importance of this structuring of external reality into fictional plots. *24* in particular bases its seasons around a series of never-ending reveals and narrative shifts that

³¹ Allan Hepburn, *Intrigue* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. xv

³² Ibid

³³ Michael Woolf, “Homeland Insecurity”, *New York Magazine* (2002), pp.14-15

constantly change the status quo while steadily revealing the ‘grand plan’ of the villain. Espionage narratives in the 21st century attempt to grant structure to terrorist actions which, by their very nature, are seemingly random, cruel, violent, and without cause beyond the purely symbolic.

Occasionally the genre transcends this need to construct cause, such as in Christopher Nolan’s unsettling *The Dark Knight* (which is, if anything, the spy thriller writ large as dark superhero epic) where the arch antagonist – the Joker – is revealed to have no modus operandi beyond acting as an agent of pure chaos. There is no political motivation, no desire for wealth or material possessions, no personal agenda – purely anarchy. At one point the Joker is confronted about his ‘plan’. He replies: “Do I really look like a guy with a plan? You know what I am? I’m a dog chasing cars. I wouldn’t know what to do with one if I caught it! You know, I just... *do things*”.³⁴ This intrinsic anarchy, this expression of pure id, perfectly captures the difficulties faced in trying to construct meaningful narratives out of chaos. It is fitting then that *The Dark Knight* concludes with the Joker’s defeat only after his binary opposite – Batman – is also symbolically defeated, disgraced and turned into a symbol of everything he stands against. It is here that we are confronted – literally and figuratively – by the spectre of hyperterrorism.

This leads into a discussion of the other core identifying factor of post-9/11 spy fiction – morality. Much has been written regarding the often murky moral realities of intelligence work in the 21st century. With controversial ideas such as the PATRIOT Act, illegal wiretaps and government surveillance and the detainment and torture of civilians, the Western world has seen a significant shift in what is seen as ‘morally acceptable’ in the pursuit of stopping ‘terror’ and terrorists. This shift

³⁴ *The Dark Knight*. Dir. Christopher Nolan. Warner Bros. Pictures. 2008.

(discussed in detail throughout Chapters Two and Three) is reflected, often dramatically and graphically, in the espionage thriller. *24* often came under fire for its depiction of torture, while myriad feature films began depicting the detaining and torture of terror suspects *en masse*, culminating in the harrowing, purportedly based-on-true-events thriller *Zero Dark Thirty*, which documents the actions taken by intelligence services to locate Osama bin Laden in (often literally) excruciating detail.

However, this moral duality is not something new to spy fiction. As Hepburn has noted:

Certain unjust acts, if undertaken rationally to combat other unjust acts, are not judged by universal laws but according to the contexts in which they transpire...Not all laws are just for citizens; not all citizens, certainly, perceive all laws to be just. Spy novels worry about the disequilibrium of justice for individuals over and against justice for a polity...Spies are emblems of doubt insofar as they live at a distance from conviction and keep testing allegiances...Secret agents thrive in that gap, which stands, at least in espionage literature, for the distance between conviction and responsibility.³⁵

Thus spies have always fulfilled a dualistic role in fiction – as both perpetrators of the unjust and as moral guardians of sorts. A common trope in spy fiction is the personal cost of intelligence work; few fictional spies are happy, healthy and in secure relationships. Instead they are outcasts, wounded and brutalised through their pursuit of justice and security. The key difference is that the post-9/11 spy is set up more as the classical hero, with fewer of the flaws and failings of their twentieth century counterparts. In his iconic 1963 thriller *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, author John le Carré decried spies as “a squalid procession of vain fools, traitors too; yes, pansies, sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives”, but their 21st century

³⁵ Hepburn, pp.5-6

equivalents couldn't be further from this depiction.³⁶ Even if we are to examine briefly the three 'JB's' of 21st century espionage – Jason Bourne, James Bond and Jack Bauer – there is a pattern of sympathetic identity inherent in each character. Each man is essentially a patriot in service of his country, with the failings of le Carré's characters buried far deeper beneath the viewable surface.

Jack Bauer is perhaps the most intriguing of these; a family man at heart and possessed of incredible empathy, he is close to the archetype of the American hero. His moral duality, therefore, comes not from any intrinsic character flaw, but from what he is forced to do in pursuit of national security, utility and safety. When he tortures a suspect it is not to satisfy any psychopathic urge, but because it is, as Hepburn states, “[an] unjust act...undertaken rationally to combat other unjust acts”.³⁷ Thus our own fears and uneasiness regarding these unjust acts are ably reflected in these 'heroes', enabling 21st century spy thrillers to transcend the limitations of genre and move into the space of cultural commentary, catharsis and deconstruction.

Further analysis of the spy thriller beyond pure genre theory, therefore, becomes important from a cultural perspective. As a genre, the spy thriller exists in the 21st century as a form of representation of America and (by proxy) the Western world. As Susan Willis has observed:

America lives its history as a cultural production. The post-9/11 era, as one defined by individual uncertainty in the face of an over-certain but often mistaken and repressive state, has seen a tremendous burgeoning of cultural forms meant to explain and manage the crisis. Daily life in America is articulated across an array of competing popular fictions.³⁸

³⁶ John le Carré, “Espionage & Spies”, *The Literary Spy*, ed. by Charles E. Lathrop (Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 2004) p. 137

³⁷ Hepburn, p.5

³⁸ Susan Willis, *Portents of the Real: A Primer for Post-9/11 America* (London: Verso, 2005), pp.4-5

The definition of these “cultural forms” can be easily expanded to include texts that fall into the espionage genre, resplendent as that genre is with historical context, cultural analysis and depictions of the fears which inhabit the 21st century *zeitgeist*. It is for this reason that the spy thriller becomes a valuable artefact for study. It represents and examines, in microcosm, a number of the major changes that the Western world has undergone in the years following the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Analytical approaches and creative synthesis

This dissertation aims to analyse and deconstruct post-9/11 screen-based espionage texts. This begins in Chapter Two with a review of texts across three primary screen-based media – film, video games and television. This review aims to both demonstrate the key changes to the genre in a post-9/11 world, and also to identify common tropes between all three media. Analysis will also be applied at this point in order to discover which media is most definitively representative of espionage fiction in the 21st century, a concept closely related to ‘timeliness’.

Chapter Three will then engage in significant textual analysis of what will be identified as key texts – television shows *24* and *Spooks* – in order to identify common narrative and thematic considerations between the two, both of which represent and demonstrate larger trends within the genre. There will be a particular focus on structure and aesthetics as well as historical/socio-political considerations.

This survey and argument will then be formulated into a series of identifiable tropes in Chapter Four. These tropes will then be broken down into the key thematic and narrative concerns of post-9/11 television espionage drama, with the intention of using said concerns to synthesise an original creative artefact. This artefact forms the

remainder of this dissertation: an original espionage television series reflecting the core concepts identified throughout. This takes the form of a complete ‘show bible’ – a document which describes the universe of the TV series in intricate detail – as well as complete, full length screen plays for three episodes of the show. I believe through this original creative synthesis I will be able to succinctly and accurately demonstrate how the espionage thriller reflects the significant changes to Western thought and the depiction of intelligence work in the first decade of the 21st century.

Since its inception, the spy thriller has always comprised a reflection of historical context, ably assembling and deconstructing events, nations, wars and conflicts. Willis may have declared that “America is in popular genre overdrive, churning out formulaic fictions in a frenzied attempt to determine who we are and what we are doing”, but the truth is rather more complicated.³⁹ Rather, popular genre has always been at the forefront of cultural analysis; it is merely in the wake of the catastrophic intelligence failures that allowed 9/11 to occur that the popularity of the spy thriller has once again been in the ascendant.

The simple truth is that, while the actions of intelligence services are more popularly visible than ever before, spying is a core aspect of Western society. Perhaps it was John le Carré’s iconic operator George Smiley who put it best in the 1991 novel *The Secret Pilgrim*:

For as long as rogues become leaders we shall spy. For as long as there are bullies and liars and madmen in the world, we shall spy. For as long as nations compete, and politicians deceive, and tyrants launch conquests, and consumers need resources, and the homeless look for land, and the hungry for good, and the rich for excess, your chosen profession is perfectly secure, I can assure you.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid, p.7

⁴⁰ John le Carré, “Espionage & Spies”, *The Literary Spy*, ed. by Charles E. Lathrop (Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 2004) p. 137

Chapter Two: Post-9/11 entertainment culture, the spectre of terrorism and the problem of ‘tastefulness’

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, the aftermath of 9/11 resulted in an immediate shift in attitudes towards screen-based media, with some themes and topics suddenly considered taboo or ‘tasteless’ in light of the attacks. This chapter will broadly survey the changes in espionage drama through three key 21st century screen-based medias – film, video games and television – in an attempt to identify the medium through which to most accurately chart shifts and recurrent tropes in the genre.

A Return to Realism: Bourne, Bond and the reconfigured heroes of 21st century espionage cinema

By the late nineties, espionage cinema had long been an outdated relic of the Cold War era. With the fall of the Berlin wall and the eventual deconstruction of the USSR, the genre no longer had its most devious of all villains – the Russians, usually constructed as a Reagan-esque ‘evil empire’ – with which to conjure elaborate spy narratives. The torrent of popular espionage films which had poured forth in the seventies and eighties gradually slowed to a trickle as writers tried to establish credible new threats.

An early attempt at addressing the cognitive dissonance produced by the end of the Cold War was made by director John Frankenheimer (who, having directed the original adaptation of *The Manchurian Candidate*, was well versed in political thrillers) with *The Fourth War*. Addressing the private war being very publicly fought at the Czech-West German border after Gorbachev’s Glasnost policy by two colonels, one Soviet and one American, the 1990 film seemed poised to deliver a

poignant, timely commentary on the futility of conflict. The end result was instead irrelevant, and largely ignored on release. Similarly, John McTiernan's *The Hunt for Red October*, while a fine thriller in its own right, suffers from the feeling of centralising an ailing enemy – while the film began production in the Cold War, by the time of its release the USSR had begun to dissolve. Oliver Boyd-Barrett, David Herrera and Jim Baumann discuss this in greater detail:

Made during the Gorbachev years, the film corresponded with a move of convergence by Russia's leadership toward Western freedom of speech and a market economy. This was not a time of real threat of nuclear conflict. The defection of Captain Raimus, who is represented as a wise, intelligent, and courageous man, symbolizes the "good" Russia who is returning to the fold of Western or "civilized" nations from whose club it was wrenched by the revolution of 1917.⁴¹

Clearly, the threat of the Cold War and a nuclear holocaust had passed. The spy movie, a firm mainstream cinema fixture since the sixties, was faced with its own obsolescence; an archaic relic of a quickly fading war. Espionage films did not disappear, however; instead, screenwriters began searching for new enemies for their government agents to battle.

The Hunt for Red October's protagonist Jack Ryan was adapted to the screen twice more in the nineties, in Phillip Noyce's *Patriot Games* and *Clear and Present Danger*. While taut and technically well-executed thrillers, both films fall back on genre stereotypes, with IRA terrorists and Colombian drug lords standing in for the Soviet Empire. Boyd-Barrett, Herrera and Baumann describe these villains as "...excessively over-the-top evil, with very few, if any, redeeming features. These movies buy in totally to US mainstream stereotyping and dehumanizing of officially approved enemies".⁴²

⁴¹ Oliver Boyd-Barrett, David Herrera, Jim Baumann, *Hollywood and the CIA: Cinema, defense, and subversion* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p. 113

⁴² Ibid

These two films are only significant in their commentaries on American foreign policy and the machinations of the US military-industrial complex, themes which recall the paranoid espionage thrillers of the late seventies. Robert W. Gregg has observed that the film, “[reminds] the viewer of the Watergate and Iran-Contra scandals...in both of which top government officials tried to deny knowledge of and responsibility for what happened, just as they do in *Clear and Present Danger*”.⁴³ Other spy movies relied on either flashbacks to the eighties (*The Assignment*), elaborate webs of paranoia (*Conspiracy Theory*) lacking the subtlety of similarly themed seventies explorations such as the arguably superior *The Parallax View* or *Three Days of the Condor*, or vague warnings regarding government surveillance (*Enemy of the State*). Even the most acclaimed Bond movie of the nineties – Martin Campbell’s *GoldenEye* – had to drag out the threat of Soviet military satellites to achieve a sense of terror.⁴⁴

By far the most effective of the nineties’ attempts to reinvigorate the genre is Brian De Palma’s *Mission: Impossible*. Taking the iconic sixties television series and updating it for a nineties audience, the film just about manages to weave a successful espionage tale through a combination of Eastern European ‘threats’, conspiracy, doubt and a plot so convoluted as to appear near-comical. It succeeds despite having no real commentary to make on the political realities of 1996, and has gone on to spawn five sequels, each wildly different in tone and quality.

The last traditional, pre-9/11 espionage drama to be released was Tony Scott’s *Spy Game*, a star vehicle for Robert Redford and Brad Pitt that had the misfortune of being released in November of 2001. Along with the fourth film to

⁴³ Robert W. Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, (Colorado: Rienner, 1998), p.75

⁴⁴ *GoldenEye* was also the first post-Cold War Bond film, made following a six-year hiatus caused by legal disputes between UA/MGM and Eon Productions.

bring Jack Ryan to the screen (this time played by Ben Affleck), *The Sum of All Fears*, *Spy Game* suffered from having gone into production pre-9/11 and having been released after. Once again, espionage movies seemed out of their time, though now for distinctly different reasons. Where once the spy movies of Hollywood played on the fears harboured by the American populace (particularly during the Cold War), now these works of fiction were being bypassed by the reality of domestic terror on a scale unheard of in the contemporary Western world. Marilyn Young has said:

The only new aspect of this act of terror was its happening in the United States, whose citizens had imagined themselves invulnerable. Many commentators, both here and abroad, expressed a kind of pleasure: now Americans would know how it felt to be unsafe, to be a target, to experience war, and this would have an effect on how they understood other countries with a longer history of devastation.⁴⁵

Or, as film critic Roger Ebert so succinctly states in his review of *The Sum of All Fears*, “My own fear is that in the post-apocalyptic future, [this film] will be seen as touchingly optimistic”.⁴⁶

Censorship and nationalism: early cinematic responses to 9/11

Initial reactions in Hollywood post-9/11 involved censorship, with any film thought of as potentially traumatic – such as the release of Warner’s *Collateral Damage* and the television screening of Edward Zwick’s eerily prescient *The Siege* – being delayed, pulled from distribution or otherwise retconned⁴⁷ in the name of

⁴⁵ Marilyn B. Young, “Ground Zero: Enduring War”, *September 11 in history: a watershed* (Berkeley: Duke University Press, 2004) p. 11

⁴⁶ Roger Ebert, “The Sum of All Fears: Review” Online website, 2002
<<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20020531/REVIEWS/205310302/1023>>
(Accessed 5 July 2012)

⁴⁷ A term often used in intelligence circles meaning to revise something after the fact with new information, placing previously described events in a new light.

“tastefulness”.⁴⁸ However, it rapidly became clear that there was a desire amongst the public – conscious or otherwise – to engage with these sorts of narratives. Lynn Spigel notes that:

Even while industry leaders were eager to censor trauma-inducing images of any kind, video outlets reported that, when left to their own discretion, consumers were eagerly purchasing terrorist flicks like *The Siege* and *The Towering Inferno*. One video retailer noted an “uneasy” feeling about consumer desire for films like *The Towering Inferno*, and one store owner even “moved such videos so they were arranged with only the spines showing, obscuring the covers”⁴⁹

It did not take long before the movie industry stopped its new policy of self-regulation in the name of ‘tastefulness’ and embarked on a new programme directly addressing the need for patriotism in America’s national cinema; a move that recalled the rousing movies of World War II.⁵⁰ In an astonishing column for *Variety*, Jack Valenti, the long-time president of the Motion Picture Association of America, stated that:

We in the movie industry have an obligation to which we must attend. We have to screw our courage to the sticking place, we have to get on with lives and do our job, to tell visual stories which offers [sic] our fellow citizens an interlude so sorely needed at this time. What terrorists do is to terrorize, to try to make us afraid, to bring the nation to its collective knees, to coerce us into a bunker mentality. If we cower, if we hesitate, the terrorist thugs win...Here in Hollywood we must continue making our movies and our TV programs. For a time, during this mourning period, we need to be sensitive to how we tell a story. But in time – and that time will surely come, just as mourning periods end even as we weep when we think about someone close to us who died – life will go on, must go on. We in Hollywood have to get on with doing our creative work.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Lynn Spigel, “Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11”, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 56 (2004), p. 235

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Patriotism is a concept heavily embedded in American cinema. Even *Casablanca*, often considered one of the greatest Hollywood films of all time, is at times thinly veiled propaganda, resplendent as it is with soft-focus mid-shots of a teary-eyed Ingrid Bergman.

⁵¹ Jack Valenti, “Hollywood, and our nation, will meet this test”, *Variety*, Online website, 2001 <<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117853266>> (Accessed 5 July 2012)

The sentiment and foresight displayed in Valenti's piece is not only prescient of how the American film industry would react to 9/11, but positively astounding in its black and white assessment of the post-9/11 USA. Valenti perhaps best sums up his position (and, by proxy, the position of the US government) in his last few sentences, "Murderers recoil and retreat, they are done for, when the great majority of Americans refuses [sic] to be cabined and confined in a prison of fear, but instead says to terrorists: "Up yours, you bastards.""⁵² These loose policies, implemented across the Hollywood studio system, saw immediate results, with several films of the 'gung-ho' variety being pushed into cinemas. One such film was Irish director John Moore's *Behind Enemy Lines*, an action movie best described as a contemporary fusion of *Top Gun* and a Vietnam War film.⁵³ Gearóid Ó Tuathail commented that:

Rupert Murdoch's Twentieth Century Fox Pictures rush released the movie...to take advantage of a surge of American nationalism in wake of the 11 September attacks and the US-led retaliatory attack against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan...[the film] is a window into the contemporary culture of US militarism, a problematic that requires urgent examination and analysis given the way the administration of George W. Bush has used 9/11 to invade and overthrow governments, and dramatically increase what were already the largest levels of defence spending by any state in the world.⁵⁴

However, initial direct cinematic responses to 9/11 tended towards the humanitarian in nature. *11'09"01 September 11* was a 2002 anthology film released (in some countries) on the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks. Comprised of eleven short films from eleven international directors (including Sean Penn, Ken Loach and Claude Lelouch) running exactly eleven minutes, nine seconds and one frame each, the segments provide differing meditations on 9/11 and its impact. As

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ridley Scott's similarly fist-pumping *Black Hawk Down* could be placed in the same category, though it achieves its ends with markedly more subtlety.

⁵⁴ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "The Frustrations of Geopolitics and the Pleasures of War: *Behind Enemy Lines* and American Geopolitical Culture", in *Cinema and Popular Geo-Politics*, ed. by Marcus Power and Andrew Crampton (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), pp.160-161

Emmanouil Arteoulakis has said, the initial responses to the attacks tended to be “focussed on the ethical and humanitarian, or rather the unethical and inhumane implications”.⁵⁵

Genre approaches to tragedy and terror

Genre cinema was not far behind however, and after having languished in near irrelevancy in the nineties, the espionage film was soon well-poised to begin its ascendancy to the cultural *zeitgeist*. A threat to rival the USSR at the height of the Cold War – albeit a significantly different, more esoteric and endlessly convoluted one – had emerged, and spies had a real enemy again. Intelligence services were also very much in the public eye, particularly considering what Matthew Carr has called the “many astounding failures of the American intelligence community” in failing to predict and prevent the 9/11 attacks.⁵⁶ Additionally, the formation of the Department of Homeland Security, described by Peter Andreas as “the most significant reorganization of the federal government since the early years of the Cold War” and the instigation of the Patriot Act (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four) kept counter-terrorist efforts in the mainstream media.⁵⁷

Doug Liman’s *The Bourne Identity*, despite the majority of its principal photography having been completed prior to September 2001, can arguably be considered the first post-9/11 spy movie. A loose adaptation of ‘airport-novel’⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Emmanouil Arteoulakis, “Aesthetic Appreciation, Ethics, and 9/11”, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol. 6 (2008)

⁵⁶ Matthew Carr, “A Raid on the Path: 9/11 and the War on Terror” in *The Infernal Machine: A History of Terrorism from the Assassination of Tsar Alexander II to Al-Qaeda* (The New Press: New York, 2006), p.299

⁵⁷ Peter Andreas, “Redrawing the Line: Borders and Security in the Twenty-First Century”, *International Security*, Vol. 28 (2003), p.92

⁵⁸ In short, a novel usually sold in airports to entertain travellers during the rigours of long-haul flights. Airport novels are usually long, but easy-to-read thrillers, mysteries or historical romances. The term is believed to originate from the French *romans de gare*, or ‘railway station novels’. Tom

specialist Robert Ludlum's book of the same name, the film follows Jason Bourne, a man who has lost his memory. He gradually pieces together his past to reveal the truth – he is a deniable operative (an assassin, even) for a black operations agency called 'Treadstone' which operates outside the CIA mainstream. Released in June 2002, critical reception to the film largely focussed on its technical and cinematic achievements, though Charles Taylor of *Salon Magazine* provided an insightful analysis of the film by concluding "The old question of how you make spy movies or write spy thrillers after the end of the Cold War has now been replaced by the question of how you make them after Sept. 11. *The Bourne Identity* invokes a different kind of nostalgia: the memory of what it's like to go to a Hollywood movie and be treated with decency".⁵⁹

However, considerable critical discourse regarding the film discussed its depictions of espionage in the post-9/11 world. Taylor went on to state that actor Clive Owen, in a minor yet key role, "effortlessly captures what the movie strains to convey: a spy's moral queasiness with his work",⁶⁰ while Roger Ebert referred to the film as being "about the amoral climate in spy agencies like the CIA".⁶¹ Jason Bourne is presented as a contradiction – a man who wants to escape his murderous past as a CIA assassin, but is forced to employ his skills with violence in order to succeed. In this way, he presents an early archetype of the post-9/11 spy – conflicted, quick to violence, but totally in control. While *The Bourne Identity* and its four

Clancy is another author who typifies this genre; when the *Mail on Sunday* described his novel *Rainbow Six* as "...his biggest thriller yet", they may well have been referring to the physical size of the book, which is a dictionary-sized tome.

⁵⁹ Charles Taylor, "The Bourne Identity", *Salon Magazine*, Online website, 2002
<http://www.salon.com/2002/06/14/bourne_2/> (Accessed 6 July 2012)

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Roger Ebert, "The Bourne Identity" Online website (2002)
<<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20020617/REVIEWS/206170301/1023>>
(Accessed 6 July 2012)

sequels never engage directly with the War on Terror or the events of 9/11, they capture something altogether more mysterious and frightening, the black machinations of the intelligence services.

The two immediate sequels, *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum*, expand on similar themes. Directed by Paul Greengrass and produced by Doug Liman, they also begin to develop the aesthetic template for the majority of post-9/11 action cinema. Shot in a hyper-kinetic, largely handheld style, the films eschew traditional cinematic aesthetics for something more akin to pseudo-documentary realism. The style – a trademark of sorts for Greengrass, who also directed the explicitly 9/11-themed *United 93* and another collaboration with Matt Damon, *Green Zone*, which deals with WMDs – became highly prevalent in Hollywood action cinema, though few other directors have managed to capture Greengrass' highly-evocative, visceral style, instead degrading into chaotic fast-cutting. Delving ever-deeper into the dark heart of Treadstone (or rather its successor, Blackbriar), the two sequels work as a kind of two-part epic chase movie, and while there might be eventual redemption for Jason Bourne, the implication is that despite its exposure programmes like Treadstone/Blackbriar (and, by proxy, their killer elite CIA operatives) will continue. This is a notion only reinforced by the continuation of the series both beyond and through Jason Bourne, with the 2012 sequel *The Bourne Legacy* continuing the Treadstone saga with new protagonist Aaron Cross, while both Greengrass and Damon returned to the franchise in 2016 with the clearly titled *Jason Bourne*. *The Bourne Legacy* also contains perhaps the most succinct definition of the post-9/11 spy – the operator with flexible, situational morality (a key concept regarding the post-9/11 thriller that will be examined in depth throughout Chapters Three and Four). Cross' handler Eric Byer, in a moment

of crisis, asks Cross “Do you know what a sin eater is?” When Cross shakes his head, he replies “Well, that’s what we are. We are the sin eaters. It means that we take the moral excrement that we find in this situation and we bury it deep down inside of us so that the rest of our cause can stay pure. That is the job. We are morally indefensible and absolutely necessary”.⁶²

Most importantly though, the Bourne films brought realism back to espionage cinema, something severely lacking in the Bond movies and other spy movies of the late nineties. While the series is known for its action sequences, they are grounded in a form of reality; the fight scenes in *The Bourne Identity* are fast and brutal, yet distinctly controlled, while the infamous car chase scene (surely a staple of all good thrillers) through the streets of Paris is cleverly inverted and subverted by making Bourne’s escape vehicle not an Aston Martin or an Italian muscle car, but an aging Mini. The most arguably explosive moment of the entire chase sequence involves the car driving down a set of steps, and the chase ends not with massive explosions, but with Bourne parking the car. Arguably, it was this return to realism that connected with post-9/11 audiences who had tired of gadgets and outrageous action scenes.

Text destroyed: the cinematic reboot and the espionage thriller

While the Bourne films predate the curious phenomenon of the ‘Hollywood reboot’ by several years, they can be considered an important predecessor to it in several ways. William Proctor defines the cinematic reboot as “[an attempt] to forge a *series* of films, to begin a franchise anew from the ashes of an old or failed property. In other words, a remake is a reinterpretation of *one* film; a reboot “re-

⁶² *The Bourne Legacy*. Dir. Tony Gilroy. Universal Pictures. 2012.

starts” a *series* of films that seek to disavow and render inert its predecessor’s validity”.⁶³ While the reboot is not a new technique in structuring narrative in entertainment (the process has been widely used in the comic book industry for several decades) its cinematic equivalent became most popular from 2005 onwards, with the release of Christopher Nolan’s *Batman Begins*, an effort to retrieve the iconic franchise from the artistic and commercial dead end of Joel Schumacher’s *Batman & Robin* in 1997. *Batman Begins*, along with other critical franchise reboots such as J.J. Abrams’ *Star Trek* are films that, as Dave Hollands has stated, “seek to recommence, seemingly from scratch, a series of movies that include a supposed original text and all its sequels by simultaneously appearing to readapt, update, pay homage to, and destroy the ‘original text,’ while also denying the existence or importance of said text’s sequels”.⁶⁴ However, for the purpose of this dissertation the most significant reboot of the early 21st century is undoubtedly Martin Campbell’s *Casino Royale*.

While the last ‘traditional’ Bond film, Lee Tamahori’s 2002 *Die Another Day* had considerable commercial returns, it failed to achieve similar critical success. Eschewing the usual schedule of a new Bond film every two years, MGM took a step back to consider the franchise. While the critical response to *Die Another Day* was certainly a contributing factor to James Bond’s extended sabbatical from cinema screens, the worldwide geo-political chaos was certainly another. As Proctor states, “Executive producer Barbara Broccoli claims there was an altogether different reason behind Bond’s 21st-century “upgrade”: “September 11th happened and it felt

⁶³ William Proctor, “Regeneration & Rebirth: Anatomy of the Franchise Reboot” *Scope: An Inline Journal of Film and Television Studies*, Issue 22 (2012), p.4

⁶⁴ Dave Hollands, “Toward a New Category of Remake: A First Analysis of the Reboot” *Film Matters*, Issue 3 (2010), pp. 9-10

inappropriate for the films to continue down that fantastical path. So we decided to move to a more serious Bond””’.⁶⁵

The result was *Casino Royale*, the first Bond film to bear the title of one of creator Ian Fleming’s novels since the 1987 Timothy Dalton vehicle *The Living Daylights*. The movie fits into Proctor’s definition of a ‘reboot’; no series continuity is expected or established (save the presence of actress Judi Dench in a recurring role as Bond’s handler, ‘M’) with a new Bond (Daniel Craig) having just qualified for ‘Double-0’ status. While there are the requisite fast cars, beautiful women and globe-hopping shenanigans expected of the franchise, everything else is brought back down to earth – there are no ridiculous gadgets (no ‘Q’ branch at all, in fact), no snowboard chase sequences, no rockets and no villains with metal teeth. Instead the audience is presented with a harsh, post-9/11 look at the most fantastic of all espionage fantasies. Bond makes mistakes, he is captured, tortured, and people he cares about die. Critically, the plot also deals with bomb-makers and terrorists, though only as the playthings of the primary antagonist, the mysterious Le Chiffre. The influence of the Bourne films is clear throughout *Casino Royale*, from the brutality of the fight sequences to the brooding brow of Bond himself. While it avoids the iconic hyper-kinetic handheld camera approach of Greengrass’ films, *Casino Royale* re-creates Bond as a post-9/11 hero in a similar model as Bourne – realistic, ruthless and ready to do ‘whatever it takes’ to achieve his mission. Sadly, the series slid back into old habits after the disappointing reaction to the intriguing *Quantum of Solace* and, while *Skyfall* and *Spectre* are dramatically sound adventure narratives in their own right, they have, to some degree, embraced the frivolities for which the series has become known.

⁶⁵ Proctor, p. 3

One other film which can be broadly categorised as part of the ‘reboot’ movement is Christopher Nolan’s *Batman Begins* sequel, *The Dark Knight*. While not explicitly an espionage movie, it contains not only many tropes and structures borrowed from espionage cinema, but a distinctly bleak, post-9/11 atmosphere. *Batman Begins* had already established Batman’s identity as a post-9/11 ‘hero’, as Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula and Karen Randall explain:

[*Batman Begins*] is not only a post-9/11 origin story of the dark knight of Gotham City but a complex allegory for the conduct of America’s “War on Terror.” Batman is a freedom fighter who develops his skills at a terrorist training camp, indicating the inextricability of “Western civilization” from its so-called dark others. The film also highlights the collusion of the military-industrial-entertainment complex that develops military gear in tandem with consumer products.⁶⁶

The Dark Knight takes these themes and expands on them considerably, with Batman/Bruce Wayne forced to hunt a criminal known only as ‘The Joker’, whose only goal seems chaos (or, indeed, ‘terror’). The Joker can be easily read as an allegory for terrorism and terrorists, what Carr has called “the indefinable evil”;⁶⁷ he is simultaneously a binary opposition to Batman and a symbol of the dialectic between the modern and the postmodern. Batman is positioned as existing at the limits of the modern hero – critically, he does not kill, unlike other, more postmodern post-9/11 protagonists – he follows logic and morality, whereas the Joker, with his scattershot approach and schizophrenic personality presents the postmodern conundrum of terrorism. The Joker’s only demand is that Batman reveal his identity, and this reveals an inter-dependency of sorts that recalls the relationship between intelligence service and terrorist; without

⁶⁶ Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula, Karen Randall, *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the “War on Terror”* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p.6

⁶⁷ Matthew Carr, “Prologue: The Bomb in the Baby Carriage” in *The Infernal Machine: A History of Terrorism from the Assassination of Tsar Alexander II to Al-Qaeda* (The New Press: New York, 2006), p.4

one the other cannot exist. As Slavoj Žižek has observed, “Batman [is] the Joker’s destructivity put in the service of society”.⁶⁸

The Joker also fits the description for an ‘invisible’ or a ‘cleanskin’ in the intelligence trade. Stella Rimington, the former head of MI5, describes an ‘invisible’ in her novel *At Risk* as “the ultimate intelligence nightmare: the terrorist who, because he or she is an ethnic native of the target country, can cross its borders unchecked, move around the country unquestioned, and infiltrate its institutions with ease”.⁶⁹ Likewise, ‘cleanskins’ are described by Duncan Campbell and Sandra Laville in *The Guardian* as “[persons] with no convictions or known terrorist involvement”.⁷⁰ In *The Dark Knight*, the Joker is described by Lt. James Gordon of the Gotham City Police Department as having: “Nothing. No matches on prints, DNA, dental. Clothing is custom; no labels. Nothing in his pockets but knives and lint. No name, no other alias”.⁷¹

As well as its thematic considerations, *The Dark Knight* shares common espionage cinema tropes – the use of surveillance, the convolution of plot and, critically, the question of morality.⁷² Torture is briefly touched upon, as is ‘situational morality’ and the invasion of privacy when Bruce Wayne builds a surveillance network based on mobile phone technology in order to locate the Joker. His technical advisor, Lucius Fox, describes the system as “Beautiful...unethical...dangerous”.⁷³

⁶⁸ Slavoj Žižek, “Interlude I. Hollywood Today: Report from an Ideological Battlefield” in *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010), p.60

⁶⁹ Stella Rimington, *At Risk* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), p.14

⁷⁰ Duncan Campbell, Sandra Laville, “British suicide bombers carried out London attacks, say police”, *The Guardian*, Online website, 2005
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jul/13/july7.uksecurity6>> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

⁷¹ *The Dark Knight*. Dir. Christopher Nolan. Warner Bros. Pictures. 2008.

⁷² The film even includes a reference to a piece of 1950s CIA technology called ‘Skyhook’ (or the ‘Fulton surface-to-air recovery system’), clearly placing it in the realm of espionage cinema.

⁷³ Ibid

Twilight struggles to enduring freedom: depicting wars cold and hot

This reappearance in popular culture demonstrates a core concept of the espionage genre – that it is, above all else, a topical and highly cyclical construct. As has been demonstrated, the popularity of spy cinema can arguably be linked to global events surrounding espionage and deception. As an inherently audio/visual narrative type, and an often deeply kinetic one at that, the spy film balances weighty deconstructions of realpolitik with the kind of aesthetic hypercinema that megaplex audiences are intrinsically drawn to. Inevitably, as news cycles move away from stories of intrigue and intelligence, the popularity of the genre wanes – there is perhaps no other type of cinema so heavily dependent on verisimilitude.

As a genre, espionage cinema has risen to the heights of popular culture after struggling to stay relevant during the immediate post-Cold War period. Intriguingly, the return of the intelligence thriller in the early 21st century has also seen a resurgence of films set prior to 2001; particularly those set during the Cold War and recreating (or loosely reimagining) actual events. Robert De Niro's *The Good Shepherd* and Billy Ray's *Breach* detail the inner workings of American intelligence services, while Ben Affleck's *Argo* creates an arch comedy/drama hybrid. Steven Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies* is perhaps the most extreme of these cross-genre hybrids, combining a conventional espionage narrative with the mechanics of the courtroom drama. Classics of the genre have also been revisited, with Tomas Alfredson's star-studded 2011 retelling of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* gaining a multitude of accolades. The Cold War has become a focal point for prestige pictures in the last ten years – something to be explored in a retrospective fashion outside of the strict confines of the genre, freed of the political underpinnings present prior to the fall of communism.

However, most post-9/11 thrillers focus on the contemporary world. The sheer number of these films released in the last ten years makes it difficult to give an in-depth analysis of them all, but thematic material has ranged from ‘black’ operation deniable CIA assassins (Jaume Collet-Serra’s *Unknown*); to dirty spies (Roger Donaldson’s *The Recruit*); ‘burned’ spies (Stephen Soderberg’s *Haywire*); and even comedy, in the form of the Coen Brothers’ near-screwball approach to *Burn After Reading* and Grant Heslov’s extremely off-the-wall *The Men Who Stare at Goats*.

However, while most of these films are backgrounded by the ‘War on Terror’ (and, by- proxy, the events of 9/11) the most directly relevant post-9/11 espionage movies deal with these ideas directly. Ridley Scott’s *Body of Lies* involves a CIA operative attempting to capture a jihadist terrorist in Iraq, and deals with the disconnection between his struggles in the field and the machinations of the intelligence agency in the US. Similarly, Stephen Gaghan’s complicated geopolitical thriller *Syriana* takes the form and structure of an espionage movie and deconstructs it, presenting the dialectic between terrorism and government, motivated by petroleum politics. Lastly, *The Bourne Identity* director Doug Liman’s *Fair Game* is based on the memoirs of Valerie Plame and Joseph C. Wilson, regarding the falsification of evidence of WMDs in the lead-up to the Iraq War.

While the number of thematically consistent post-9/11 espionage films is significant, the relatively long turnaround time for features means that they are not the best artefacts with which to examine the genre as a whole. As a case in point, by the time that *Fair Game* was released in 2010, the lack of WMDs in Iraq was fairly widely known public knowledge. As Marc Savlov commented in his review of the film in the *Austin Chronicle*, “[*Fair Game*] comes across as little more than a

footnote in an ever-lengthening list (thanks, Wikileaks!) of the Bush White House's sordid, potentially treasonous actions leading up to and beyond the invasion of Iraq".⁷⁴ The first decade of the 21st century may have restored espionage cinema to its former glory, but the most enthralling, compelling depictions of the post-9/11 intelligence world are arguably to be found elsewhere.

Splinter cells, stealth action and “another one of those days”: Spies in the realm of the virtual

At the turn of the 21st century, the movement towards the legitimisation of video games as art was beginning to make a strong case for itself. It is hard to pinpoint an exact starting date for the advent of the video game medium; Marcus Power points out that, “Many accounts focus on the Hingham Institute, sponsored by the Study Group on Space Warfare, which produced the game *Spacewar!* in 1962”,⁷⁵ but there are earlier, cruder examples, and the medium was not commercially viable until the release of the Magnavox Odyssey home console in 1972. The humble video game spent much of its early years derided as a distraction, an elaborate electronic toy with little inherent value. By the late nineties however, the medium had made leaps and bounds forward, beginning to define its own unique set of aesthetics and control systems, and even beginning to bridge the gap between its own limited technological resources and the aesthetics of cinema, arguably achieved best in Hideo Kojima's 1998 ‘Tactical Espionage Action’ game *Metal Gear Solid*.

Since the events of 9/11, many video games have depicted terrorism and attempts at counter-terrorism, and even more have based their narratives (whether for

⁷⁴ Marc Savlov, “Fair Game”, *The Austin Chronicle* Online website, 2010
<<http://www.austinchronicle.com/calendar/film/2010-11-05/fair-game/>> (Accessed 9 July 2012)

⁷⁵ Marcus Power, “Digitized Virtuosity: Video War Games and Post-9/11 Cyber-Deterrence”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 38 (2007), p.275

single or multiplayer scenarios) around the ‘War on Terror’, though very few have directly engaged with 9/11 itself. However, most of these texts can be placed into the ‘shooter’ genre of games, with few if any traits which can identify them as ‘espionage’ narratives. Therefore, this part of the dissertation will not be discussing terrorist-themed shooters such as *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*. Conversely, a brief discussion of the role of the military-industrial-entertainment complex in the development in the medium is valuable in order to properly place the medium into the larger context of this dissertation.

The US military was and continues to be, as Power puts it, “one of the key players in providing the Pentagon with high-tech games”,⁷⁶ through DARPA (Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency). In 1982 DARPA funded the SIMNET programme, a ‘distributed simulator networking project’ which looked to the fledgling video games industry to construct its complicated simulations. By the late 1990s the relationship was well established, with a 1998 budget for modelling and simulation in excess of \$2.5 billion USD and a “significant amount of movement and exchanges of staff (in both directions) between military organizations and commercial gaming companies like Atari, Avalon and Sega”.⁷⁷

This relationship only intensified in the years following the events of 9/11, leading to the development of several products which not only act as modelling and simulation games for the military, but cross over to the civilian sector. Often these titles are intended as pure entertainment, but there is also a darker side, with some games created explicitly as propaganda, for the ‘training’ of civilians for military life or to aid recruitment. Nick Turse has described this as:

⁷⁶ Power, p.277

⁷⁷ Ibid

...typical of a recently emerging trend that has melded the video game industry (and entertainment industries more broadly) with the U.S. military in a set of symbiotic relationships that literally immerse civilian gamers in a virtual world of war while training soldiers using the hottest gaming technology available. It's the creation of a digital cradle-to-grave concept in which games created by or for the military are used as recruiting tools and also, as it were, to pretrain youngsters. Then, when they're old enough to enlist, these kids find themselves using video game-like controllers to pilot real military vehicles and are taught tactics and trained in strategy using specially designed video games and commercially available, off-the-shelf games that have been *drafted* into service by the military.⁷⁸

The result of this has been a series of games heavily intertwined with the military-industrial-entertainment complex, with the astonishing *America's Army* providing the best example. First released in July of 2002, the game is described by Brian Kennedy as:

...the brainchild of Lt. Col. Casey Wardynski, director of the Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis at West Point. Although Colonel Wardynski is not a gamer himself, his two sons are...The colonel said the idea for the game came to him three years ago while he was researching ways to attract computer-adept recruits for an increasingly high-tech military...the Army is looking to hire 79,500 young adults this year – and, as Colonel Wardynski said, “Gaming tends to be very interesting to young Americans.”⁷⁹

The game, based on Epic's 'Unreal' engine (which has powered most first-person shooters in the 21st century) and which purportedly cost at least \$19 million USD to develop,⁸⁰ teaches “military training, weapons and tactics by allowing players to “experience” army life – from the onscreen “rigors” of boot camp to blasting away at enemy troops”.⁸¹ An informal survey at Fort Benning in 2006 stated that sixty percent of recruits had played *America's Army*, with four out of a hundred

⁷⁸ Nick Turse, *The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives* (Metropolitan Books: New York, 2008), p.116

⁷⁹ Brian Kennedy, “Uncle Sam Wants You (To Play This Game)”, *The New York Times*, Online Website, 2002 < <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/11/technology/uncle-sam-wants-you-to-play-this-game.html>> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

⁸⁰ Turse, p. 118

⁸¹ Ibid

saying that they had “joined the Army specifically because of the game”.⁸² Along with other titles such as *Close Combat: First to Fight* and *Full Spectrum Command, America’s Army* occupies a unique position as 21st century propaganda, more eloquent, but no less subtle, than Frank Capra’s World War II era *Why We Fight* series. Also of note is Kuma Reality Games’ free downloadable title *Kuma\War*. The game prides itself on re-creating actual military missions; several of the downloadable ‘episodes’ available to players include ‘Abu Ghraib MP’, ‘Operation Red Dawn’ (which involves searching for Saddam Hussein), ‘Fall of Sirte: Gaddafi’s Last Stand’ and, perhaps most disturbingly, ‘The Death of Osama bin Laden’, which encourages players to “End the decade long reign of terror”.⁸³ The various downloadable missions are given verisimilitude through what Colin Freeman has described as “authentic on-the-ground information supplied to them from the U.S. military, in the form of satellite maps and testimony from serving soldiers and officers in Iraq, Department of Defense analysts and CIA officers”.⁸⁴

In a rather bizarre connection to the intelligence community, one of *Kuma\War*’s designers, former US Marine Amir Mizra Hekmati was arrested in Iran in early 2012, charged and later convicted of “co-operating with a hostile nation, membership of the CIA and trying to implicate Iran in terrorism”.⁸⁵ In a confession shown on Iranian television, Mr. Hekmati stated that:

⁸² Patrik Jonsson, “Enjoy the video game? Then join the Army.”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, Online website, 2006 < <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0919/p01s04-usmi.html>> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

⁸³ Unknown author, “Kuma\War Mission List”, *Kuma\War*, Online website, 2012 <<http://www.kumawar.com/Mission.php>> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

⁸⁴ Colin Freeman, “Battles re-enacted in video arcades / N.Y. gamemaker lets players portray Iraqi or U.S. troops”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Online website, 2005 <<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Battles-re-enacted-in-video-arcades-N-Y-2738299.php>> (Accessed 12 November 2012)

⁸⁵ BBC News, “Iran overturns death sentence for ‘CIA spy’ Hekmati”, *BBC News*, Online website, 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17261257>> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

After [working for DARPA], I went to Kuma...This computer company was receiving money from the CIA to [produce] and design and distribute for free special movies and games with the aim of manipulating public opinion in the Middle East. The goal of the company in question was to convince the people of Iran and the people of the entire world that whatever the U.S. does in other countries is a good measure.⁸⁶

Mr. Hekmati was sentenced to death, though the decision was later overturned by the Iranian supreme court, citing the verdict as “not complete”.⁸⁷

The intertwining of the military with video games has had real world applications as well, with military technology based on familiar video game control systems emerging. Turse notes that “teenage troops are able to learn to launch and fly the army’s drones [Unmanned Aerial Vehicles] in a mere eight hours because the controls look...very much like a PlayStation controller”.⁸⁸

Defining the post-9/11 ludonarrative

The initial reaction of the video game industry to the events of 9/11 was similar to that of the film industry – redaction. As Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Grieg de Peuter have described, industry reactions were quick and decisive:

UbiSoft [sic] pulled its latest Tom Clancy terrorism game. Electronic Arts was embarrassed about *Command and Conquer: Red Alert 2*, a military strategy game in which one player must obliterate the Pentagon before moving on to take down the World Trade Center...Electronic Arts also delayed the release of *Majesty*, in which players could receive real-life telephone calls alerting them to terrorist attacks. Perhaps more to the point, Microsoft removed from flight simulators the option of flying into tall buildings.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Tehran Times, “CIA spy: U.S. sought to prevent Iran from being a model in Mideast”, *Tehran Times*, Online website, 2012 <<http://www.tehrantimes.com/component/content/article/93702>> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

⁸⁷ BBC News

⁸⁸ Turse, p.139

⁸⁹ Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witheford, Grieg de Peuter, “Sim Capital” in *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture and Marketing* (Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), p.289

However, much like the film industry, video games were soon appropriated as tools of propaganda in the ‘War on Terror’, with modifications for the popular online shooter *Counter-Strike* – a game that already knowingly separated opposing teams into ‘terrorists’ and ‘counter-terrorists’ – appearing soon after 9/11 which allowed players to participate in antiterrorist operations in Afghanistan. As Kline, Dyer-Witthford and de Peuter commented, the modifications appeared “concurrently with actual US special forces landings around Kandahar”.⁹⁰

Despite the prevalence of terrorism themes in military shooters however, the most important depictions of terrorism lie in the few significant, true ‘espionage’ games to have emerged since 9/11. The CIA defines the role of the National Clandestine Service (NCS) as being “to strengthen national security and foreign policy objectives through the clandestine collection of human intelligence (HUMINT) and Covert Action”,⁹¹ which provides a useful definition of ‘espionage’ in the 21st century. However, while many video games depict engagement in what the CIA would term ‘covert actions’ (or, in the case of many shooters, very overt actions) very few deal explicitly with the main concern of espionage – the clandestine collection of human intelligence. Even the plethora of James Bond-branded games released in the 21st century have tended to be overly-bombastic shooters which feature minor amounts of actual intelligence gathering.⁹²

Those games that do engage with HUMINT usually (though not always) belong to the so-called ‘stealth’ genre, a derivative (or rather, a subversion) of the

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Our Mission – Central Intelligence Agency”, *Central Intelligence Agency*, Online website, 2012 <<https://www.cia.gov/offices-of-cia/ clandestine-service/our-mission.html>> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

⁹² In a rather confusing piece of attempted brand continuity, recent video game adaptations of earlier Bond films insert the digital replica of the current 007, Daniel Craig, in place of the original actors. See *GoldenEye Reloaded* and *007 Legends* for examples of this rather odd phenomenon.

action genre, where the avoidance of combat is paramount. Early examples of stealth games include *Metal Gear* and *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake* (from 1987 and 1990, respectively) where players took on the role of military operative Solid Snake, tasked with infiltrating an enemy base unseen and unnoticed. The genre developed gradually throughout the nineties, culminating in the release of three major stealth games in 1998 – *Thief: The Dark Project*, *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins* and *Metal Gear Solid*. The *Hitman* series of games are also a significant franchise; beginning in 2000, *Hitman: Codename 47* follows assassin-for-hire ‘Agent 47’ as he takes on various assassination contracts, attempting to carry them out in as stealthy a manner as possible. By 2000, it was clear that stealth was emerging as an important new video game genre, one whose unique appeal has been summed up by Clive Thompson:

Philosophers from Machiavelli to Hegel have pointed out that the weak must always pay nervous attention to the behavior of the powerful. That psychology is precisely what makes stealth gaming so gripping: You’re always fretfully observing your opponents. To get past a guard, you might spend five minutes just standing there, stock-still, spying on him to figure out his movements, the better to creep by.⁹³

Games tend to develop in franchises, with a greater emphasis placed on sequels, remakes, spin-offs and side-stories than even Hollywood has managed. In the years immediately following 9/11, several gaming franchises emerged not only as proponents of stealth gameplay, but as titles which could be read explicitly as espionage texts; ones to which the meticulous, often punishing nature of stealth gameplay is distinctly complementary.

⁹³ Clive Thompson, “Hide and Go Sneak: In the best new games, stealth – not violence – is key”, *Slate Magazine*, Online website, 2004
<http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/gaming/2004/07/hide_and_go_sneak.html> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

Covert ethos and morality: Sam Fisher and *Splinter Cell*

Probably the single most important post-9/11 video game franchise is *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*, a stealth series following the adventures of Sam Fisher, a former Navy Seal turned deniable operative for 'Third Echelon', a top secret sub-branch of the National Security Agency (NSA). The first game, released in 2002, was notable for bringing a sense of geo-political nous to the stealth genre, as well as a plot that, while often getting lost in techno-babble and narrative convolution, demonstrated a keen understanding of realpolitik. Though, like the first season of *24*, the narrative is largely anchored in nineties tropes, full of crafty Russians and the threat of global war, the plot demonstrates a shift in geo-political thinking post-9/11. Nina Huntemann, in an interview with Michelle Barron of the *Media Education Foundation*, noticed:

...an increase in games of 'covert-ops.' The scenario is some kind of military operation that must be played out, but that military action isn't sanctioned...rather, the government that is supporting it – the U.S. – is doing so secretly...[for example] Tom Clancy's *Splinter Cell*...The ads for *Splinter Cell* read something like this: *I alone have the fifth freedom – the right to spy, steal, destroy, and assassinate to insure that American freedoms are protected. If captured my government will disavow any knowledge of my existence*...The lead character that [you] play is commanded to go out and commit what under the UN Human Rights Charter or even International Rules of Engagement, would be illegal...it's a war crime..you are going to commit these illegal acts for a government; and, in this case, the United States is the auspice.⁹⁴

The game was met with high accolades amongst critics and achieved high sales. Several sequels appeared in the following years, including *Pandora Tomorrow*, which saw Fisher taking on an Indonesian terrorist network, and *Chaos Theory*, perhaps the most celebrated title of the series, which deals with complex and

⁹⁴ Michelle Barron, "Militarism & Video Games: An interview with Nina Huntemann" *Media Education Foundation*, Online website, 2003

<<http://web.archive.org/web/20031220222654/http://www.mediaed.org/news/articles/pdf/militarism>> (Accessed 10 July 2012)

convoluted systems of information dissemination. However, the less commercially successful, but arguably more artistically successful titles *Double Agent* and *Conviction* provide far more intriguing artefacts for analysis.

The 2006 title *Double Agent* positions Fisher as a broken man after the death of his daughter in a hit-and-run accident. He accepts an exceptionally dangerous undercover assignment to infiltrate an American terrorist organisation called ‘John Brown’s Army’ (JBA). Placing Fisher in an undercover operation brings *Double Agent* much closer to the tropes of the traditional espionage narrative, as well as becoming a platform with which to investigate certain post-9/11 ideas and ideologies – the notion of ‘patriotism’, the deaths of the few to serve the many, and so forth. Most critically, the gameplay employed a new feature, a morality system. At certain points during missions, Fisher can – by action or inaction – choose to serve the needs of the JBA or his handlers at the NSA. These choices then affect the outcome of the game, as well as the player’s perception of the Fisher character. Being an early example of the implementation of a morality system in video games, the mechanism lacks the subtlety of later attempts – the choices are strictly binary – but *Double Agent* sets an intriguing precedent for not only the exploration of the often rather obscured morality of espionage video games, but also provides an early depiction of domestic terror and the construction of video game villains with distinct ideologies.⁹⁵

The series then took a hiatus until the 2010 release of *Conviction*. Completely rebuilding the game from scratch, *Conviction* abandons the difficult stealth gameplay of past *Splinter Cell* titles for a more action-heavy, near predatory experience. Max Beland, the creative director on the game, detailed the process in an interview with

⁹⁵ Two different versions of *Double Agent* were created, for sixth and seventh generation consoles. The different versions have significant story derivations, making the reading of a *Splinter Cell* ‘canon’ somewhat problematic.

Tom Ivan of *Edge Magazine*, “...stealth is punitive, stealth is slow. It was funny, because when you watch the movies they’re not that. James Bond and Jason Bourne run fast, they don’t make noise, they kill one, two, three or four guys super quickly and silently with a sound suppressor, so it’s a lot more dynamic. So we needed to do something with that”.⁹⁶

The end result brings *Conviction* far more in line with the respectively cinematic and televisual excursions of Jason Bourne and Jack Bauer. Similarly, the story of *Conviction* is both more bombastic and more explicitly personal than its predecessors – Fisher has left Third Echelon and is on the run. He returns to his old life when he discovers that what is left of his agency is attempting to stage a *coup d’état* against the American government, and that the people who killed his daughter may be involved. The plot would not seem out of place in a season of *24* (much like the body count) with its collection of EMP bombs, personal stakes, a ticking clock and a broken ‘hero’. Like other espionage archetypes of the 21st century, Fisher loses everything in the service of his country, and in fact ends up having to work against those whom he trusted. This continues the dialogue begun in *Double Agent* regarding the fine line between terrorist and counter-terrorist, which in *Conviction* becomes far more complex than a simple binary opposition.

Conviction sees Fisher having ‘gone off the reservation’, to appropriate the common spy vernacular – he is a fugitive from the US government and, in order to save the US, he often has to work explicitly against them.⁹⁷ While his actions are justified to the player through their knowledge of the larger conspiracy at work,

⁹⁶ Tom Ivan, “Ubisoft Thought Splinter Cell Was Too Hardcore”, *Edge Magazine*, Online website, 2010 < <http://www.edge-online.com/news/ubisoft-felt-splinter-cell-was-too-hardcore> > (Accessed July 24 2012)

⁹⁷ The following game – *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* – opts for a ‘soft reboot’ approach, with a visibly younger Fisher once again back in the NSA fold. It is an approach that is perhaps mechanically successful, but a narrative cul de sac.

Conviction serves an important function in reminding players that the role that they so deify is not entirely dissimilar to that of the so-called antagonists. After all, a close reading of the name *Splinter Cell* provides an intriguing linguistic analysis. ‘Cell’ is the term often used to describe the organisation of clandestine terrorist groups, insofar as individual units or ‘cells’ operate independently of a main ideological group. Nicholas Fotion, Boris Kashnikov and Joanne K. Lekea argue that “Once their enemies get themselves organized to respond to a terrorist threat, they can destroy a well-organized movement in domino-effect fashion...To avoid that effect, the links between the cells of a terrorist cell need to be kept loose”.⁹⁸ This form of terrorist organisation is the most common in the 21st century, but has its roots in organisations such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

‘Splinter’ can be used to refer to an ideological break with the mainstream, as in a splinter religious group, or to a sharp fragment, what the Cambridge Dictionary defines as “a small sharp broken piece of wood, glass, plastic or similar material”.⁹⁹ In this context, Sam Fisher’s role as part of a ‘Splinter Cell’ could be interpreted to mean that he is part of a small, specific organisation that exists outside of the ideological mainstream, or that as a ‘splinter’ he is a covert (read: small), sharp weapon to be deployed by such an organisation. Intriguingly, either definition brings Fisher and Third Echelon into the realm of terrorist ideologies, perhaps best demonstrating that, for spies in the 21st century, the line between good and evil is merely a matter of perspective.

Like many other espionage texts in the cinematic or televisual media, *Splinter Cell* (and, indeed, other espionage video games) constantly draws into focus the

⁹⁸ Nicholas Fotion, Boris Kashnikov and Joanne K. Lekea, *Terrorism: The new world disorder* (London: Continuum Books, 2007), p.109

⁹⁹ Cambridge Dictionary, Online website, 2011

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/splinter_1?q=splinter> (Accessed 24 July 2012)

similarities between terrorist and counter-terrorist, highlighting perhaps not a common ideology, but a notion of parallel methodologies. Put simply, the line between Fisher (and, by proxy, all other post-9/11 spies or ‘operators’) and his nemesis is effectively either a (dark) mirror – one which reflects the heart of both the protagonist and the society that has spawned him/her – or a matter of perspective, with the methods employed to prevent terrorism eerily similar to those used to perpetrate it. Arguably, many of these methods are simply identical, their only difference coming purely from ideological perspective. After all, as David Ray Griffin famously stated in his iconic 9/11 conspiracy deconstruction, *The New Pearl Harbor*, “The choice, accordingly, is simply between (some version of) the received conspiracy theory and (some version of) the revisionist conspiracy theory”.¹⁰⁰

The *Splinter Cell* series exists as part of the Tom Clancy franchise of games, a series begun in the late-eighties with a video game adaptation of *The Hunt for Red October*. While a series of development studios worked on various titles throughout the nineties, Clancy himself set up Red Storm Entertainment in 1996 with former British Navy captain Doug Littlejohns to handle Clancy branded titles. The company was purchased by Ubisoft in 2000, who later purchased perpetual rights to the Clancy name in 2008 for an undisclosed sum believed to be somewhere around “20 million Euro[s]”.¹⁰¹ Several major ongoing titles are collected under the franchise umbrella, including the aforementioned *Splinter Cell* as well as *Rainbow Six* and *Ghost Recon* – both titles which deal explicitly with stealth mechanics and counter-terrorist operations. Far from being mere representations of militarised masculinity

¹⁰⁰ David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11* (Moreton-in-Marsh: Arris Books, 2007), p.xxv

¹⁰¹ Ryan Geddes, “Ubisoft Buys Perpetual Clancy Rights: Rainbow Six, EndWar, Splinter Cell and Ghost Recon will live on” *IGN*, Online website, 2008
<<http://au.xbox360.ign.com/articles/861/861093p1.html>> (Accessed 24 July 2012)

however, these titles all provide commentary on 21st century geopolitical realities.

As Josh Smicker has stated:

The games in these series are also primarily organised around small groups of specialized operatives working to prevent WMD attacks...debilitating information assaults...on the United States or its allies; or to prevent hostile regimes from coming into power. The special operatives also use a range of military technologies, from fiber-optic cables to look under doors to unpiloted aerial vehicles to find and eliminate nearby enemies...thereby exemplifying the logics of pre-emption at a micro level...These games are part of a broader military discourse in which...the “special” becomes the “general”...Effectively, permanent small wars become structurally necessary to avert the advent of larger conflicts.¹⁰²

The technological elements which Smicker has identified bring these texts in line with the espionage genre, where the obsession with gadgetry is paramount. Indeed, technology is central to the gameplay of all Tom Clancy branded titles – whether it is in its application, its destruction or the dangers of becoming reliant on it. The obsession/reliance dialectic is also a major theme at the heart of Hideo Kojima’s *Metal Gear Solid* series of video games. While the series does not directly engage with the ‘War on Terror’ and operates from a particularly Japanese-centric viewpoint (as opposed to the more specifically ‘Western’ texts discussed throughout this dissertation) it is nonetheless worthy of brief discussion.

Virtualised war: *Metal Gear Solid* and the post-modern

Setting aside the labyrinthine and nearly-incomprehensible plot of the *MGS* series, the games share two of the themes that Smicker identifies in his analysis of the Tom Clancy branded games – the role of technology and the broader military discourse regarding “permanent small wars”.¹⁰³ *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*

¹⁰² Josh Smicker, “Future Combat, Combating Futures: Temporalities of War Video Games and the Performance of Proleptic Histories” in *Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games*, ed. by Nina B. Huntemann and Matthew Thomas Payne (New York: Routledge, 2010), p.116

¹⁰³ Ibid

addresses the technological aspect most directly, with the protagonist Raiden a product of extensive US military ‘VR (Virtual Reality) Training’, which he refers to as “indistinguishable from the real thing”.¹⁰⁴ Arguably, Kojima’s continual obsession with virtualised spaces, imagined scenarios¹⁰⁵ and the role of technology in military conflict can be read as a commentary – if not an outright indictment – of how ‘video games’ function as tools of war. As Tanner Higgin has rightfully observed:

...*America’s Army*...extends the reach of the training taking place within the armed forces to the home. Individuals with high technical aptitude, problem-solving skills, and familiarity with military conflicts and computerized interfaces are likely to make a much easier transition into military service. However, such a subject formation is in no way limited to games created specifically for military recruitment. Instead, many different video games can be seen as not only creating certain kinds of memories but significantly shaping opinions and perceptions of warfare.¹⁰⁶

The *MGS* series is littered with examples of the breaking of the fourth wall, with a boss fight in *Metal Gear Solid* requiring the player to switch controller ports in order to complete it, or the final hours of *MGS2*, where the player is urged to “Turn the game console off right now!” and generally admonished by the AI for playing the game in the first instance. Rather than functioning as aging tropes of a postmodern approach to narrative however, these self-reflective moments force the player to constantly question the motivations of not just *MGS2* itself, but rather the entire video game medium and its role in not only contemporary armed conflict, but in what might be called the military-industrial-entertainment complex. The *MGS* series forms a unique and unparalleled dialogue between creator and audience –

¹⁰⁴ *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*. Dir. Hideo Kojima. Kojima Productions. 2002.

¹⁰⁵ The ending of *Metal Gear Solid 2* reveals that a large portion of the narrative has occurred directly in Raiden’s mind; perhaps the largest, most complicated virtual space of all.

¹⁰⁶ Tanner Higgin, ““Turn the Game Console off Right Now!”: War, Subjectivity, and Control in *Metal Gear Solid 2*” in *Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games*, ed. by Nina B. Huntemann and Matthew Thomas Payne (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 263-264

Kojima and gamer – one which is continued throughout *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* (a Cold War prequel) and *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*, which posits an all-too believable near-future scenario of permanent small wars fought by Private Military Companies, with series protagonist Solid Snake an aging relic of another time, before confusingly returning to the depths of the Cold War in *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*.

Alternate approaches to the digital intelligence operator

Aside from the *Splinter Cell* and *Metal Gear Solid* series, few games have attempted to capture the morally complex universe of 21st century espionage. Those that do tend to either attempt to copy the game mechanics of the aforementioned franchises – such as the blandly titled *Spy Fiction*,¹⁰⁷ which looked to *MGS* for its core mechanics and blatantly cavalier approach to narrative – or framed their ‘spy’ narratives within action game mechanics, such as the *Syphon Filter* series did. Similarly, several popular television espionage dramas were adapted as video games, to varying degrees of success. The game of J.J. Abrams’ *Alias* series functions on familiar *MGS* and *Splinter Cell* mechanics, though Hilary Goldstein, reviewing the game for *IGN*, stated: “Sounds stealthily-good, I know, but unfortunately this is not the second-coming of Solid Snake” and “Imagine Sam Fisher in fishnet stockings. Yeah, it’s like that”.¹⁰⁸

24: The Game, based on the iconic action series, fared rather better. Utilising the core ‘real-time’ mechanic of the show (pushed to almost comical levels of

¹⁰⁷ The creator of *Spy Fiction*, Hidetaka ‘SWERY’ Suehiro later developed his obsession with iconic Western genre narratives by writing and directing *Deadly Premonition*, a thriller/survival horror/open world game heavily indebted to David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks*.

¹⁰⁸ Hilary Goldstein, “Alias – Xbox Review”, *IGN*, Online website, 2004
<<http://au.xbox.ign.com/articles/504/504657p1.html>> (Accessed 13 August 2012)

credibility) and its unique aesthetic approach, the game served as a kind of ‘Season 2.5’ to the series. Complete with likenesses and voices of the main cast, it comes the closest of all the television adaptations to capturing the feel of its parent show, and manages to evoke moments of extreme unease in the player during its interactive interrogation sequences. However, the nature of the strict plotting of *24: The Game* sits ill-at-ease with any sense of player agency, and the end product, while tremendously entertaining, is better viewed as an example of a nominally interactive ‘passive’ text. Jo Bryce and Jason Rutter argue that video games must function in a different manner:

...game players or audiences are more actively engaged than film viewers in both the narrative and the other events within the game environment. The ability to modify both of these aspects of a computer-based game shows a level of interaction with the text that is not provided by traditional cinema or Hollywood blockbuster movies.¹⁰⁹

The only notable attempt to break out of this mould was Obsidian Software’s ambitious 2010 role-playing game (RPG) *Alpha Protocol*. Taking the typical number-crunching statistics based gameplay of the RPG, but adapting it to a contemporary espionage setting, *Alpha Protocol* sets out to tell a convoluted spy tale of deniable agencies, dangerous Middle Eastern terrorists and double dealing. Its key gameplay mechanic is ‘choice’; as well as offering moments of moral choice leading to narrative consequences, Obsidian structured potential conversation pathways around what they called the ‘three JB’s’ of espionage – the aforementioned Jason Bourne, Jack Bauer and James Bond. These approaches can be reduced to a series of binary relationships: Bourne is professional/utilitarian, Bauer is aggressive/violent and Bond is professional/suave. Thematically however, Obsidian were influenced by

¹⁰⁹ Jo Bryce and Jason Rutter, “Spectacle of the Deathmatch: Character and Narrative in First-Person Shooters” in *Screenplay: Cinema/Videogame/Interfaces*, ed. G. King and T. Krzywinska (London: Wallflower, 2002) pp. 76-77

far more morally ambiguous espionage texts than the typical Bourne/Bauer/Bond touchstones. Senior Obsidian producer Ryan Rucinski, in an interview with *GamesRadar*, explained that “There have been a lot of movies that have influenced us during the conceptual creation – *Mission: Impossible*, the *Bourne* films, *Ronin*...However, one of the main contributors in look and tone was *Syriana*. If James Bond is where the action comes from, *Syriana* has a big influence on the theme.”¹¹⁰

While the narrative of *Alpha Protocol* is certainly a post-9/11 one in its themes and tropes – complete with shadowy government agencies, mysterious corporations and power-plays – the game’s more preposterous moments, like a boss fight with a Russian Mafia leader high on cocaine in a disco, drag it down to the level of pastiche, if not outright parody. Similarly, the game fails on a purely mechanical level, with its attempt to cater to several gameplay styles resulting in a difficult, near-unplayable synthesis of ill-executed ideas.

Undoubtedly, the few true espionage games of the post-9/11 era have attempted to engage with ideas involving the War on Terror and global geo-political shifts. However, their attempts are largely eclipsed by the efforts of post-9/11 espionage cinema. Combined with the exceptionally long production cycle for video games – often several years, longer than even than the most indulgent of filming schedules – the medium is unfortunately not yet able to produce the most relevant post-9/11 deconstruction of the spy genre.

Spies, Lies and (digital) Videotape: 21st Century Espionage on the Small Screen

¹¹⁰ Will Porter, “Alpha Protocol – First look”, *GamesRadar*, Online website, 2008
<<http://www.gamesradar.com/alpha-protocol-first-look/>> (Accessed 13 August 2012)

Like its cinematic equivalent, espionage television was in a state of decline after the fall of the USSR. The end of the Cold War and the removal of a single, identifiable enemy left the genre stagnant, and by the late nineties there were very few spy shows being produced, with *La Femme Nikita*, an adaptation of Luc Besson's 1990 French action/thriller, the only notable example of the genre.

Adapted for television by Joel Surnow, *La Femme Nikita* reworked Besson's tale of a juvenile delinquent recruited by a secret government agency to become a deadly assassin. The series established a number of thematic concepts that would soon become central to post-9/11 espionage fiction, including the moral complexities of counter-terrorism operations and situational ethics. It is also one of the few late-90s espionage series to survive into the 21st century, with the final season airing in 2001. As well as providing a female protagonist who could be seen to create a blueprint for *Alias*' Sydney Bristow (albeit a far darker, more convoluted one), *La Femme Nikita* is notable for establishing the core production team that would bring the iconic (and controversial) spy series *24* to the screen in 2001, including series creator Joel Surnow and composer Sean Callery.¹¹¹

Intriguingly, by the time the series premiered in early 1997 the source narrative was nothing if not well travelled. Besson's original *Nikita* was first remade as the Hong Kong action film *Black Cat* by director Stephen Shin, which was soon followed by the same director's *Black Cat II*, and then in Hollywood, in the form of John Badham's 1993 effort *Point of No Return*. Clearly, there is something universal at the core of the *Nikita* tale, something Linda Grindstaff has referred to as "the

¹¹¹ Callery has also, in more recent years, worked with fellow *24* compatriot Howard Gordon on yet another espionage drama, *Homeland*.

Pygmalion legend on which *Nikita* is based”,¹¹² a point only reinforced by the fact that *Nikita* was remade *yet again* in 2010 for The CW Television Network, simply as *Nikita*.

La Femme Nikita was arguably a strong, action-oriented spy series, that set up a number of binary oppositions and ideological/moral quandaries that would form the foundation of post-9/11 espionage television landscape. However, it was one of very few such shows that existed in the late nineties, when spy television had largely devolved into parody/comedy (the short lived *Spy Game*) or odd derivations of the spy-fi sub-genre (the effortlessly bizarre MTV short series *Aeon Flux*). Compared to what was arguably the high point of the genre, the early-to-mid sixties – when iconic spy shows such as *Danger Man*, *The Avengers*, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Mission: Impossible* and the hallucinogenic *The Prisoner* garnered both critical and audience acclaim – the humble spy series was clearly in need of some fresh ideas.

By 2001, several new series were in production featuring new spies – or ‘operatives’, to employ the ethically murky 21st century vernacular – which were due to premiere in the final weeks of September and the beginning of October, a particular circumstance that has, as Ina Rae Hark has commented, “an eerie sort of precognition”.¹¹³ Three shows in particular debuted during this difficult time – Joel Surnow’s ‘real-time’ action drama *24* on the Fox Network, J.J. Abrams pulpy paean to James Bond, obscure mythology and the female form, *Alias*, on ABC, and Michael Frost Beckner’s complex drama *The Agency*, which followed the inner-workings of the CIA, on CBS.

¹¹² Linda Grindstaff, “A Pygmalion Tale Retold: Remaking *La Femme Nikita*”, *Camera Obscura*, Issue 47 (2001), p.137

¹¹³ Ina Rae Hark, “Today Is the Longest Day of My Life: *24* as Mirror Narrative of 9/11” in *Film and Television After 9/11*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Southern Illinois: SIU Press, 2004), p.121

While *24* did not start screening until November of 2001 and *Alias* began at the end of September, *The Agency* began on the 27th of September, a mere sixteen days after the events of 9/11. The series had been due to begin on the 20th of September, but was pulled due to the content of the pilot episode. David Grove, in a review for *PopMatters*, explains that:

The aborted pilot centered on a plot by Middle Eastern terrorists, led by Osama bin Laden (mentioned four times by name), to blow up Harrod's Department Store in London. Even more disturbingly, the pilot opened with an agent in Cairo bound to a chair with a red, white, and blue gag, with a booby trap designed to explode when it's pulled out of his mouth. Since the pilot introduced *The Agency's* main characters, clips from it were inserted into the replacement episode.¹¹⁴

Clearly, dealing directly with the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attacks – fictional or otherwise – was not considered appropriate at the time. Instead, *The Agency* and *24* succeed in their early seasons thanks to their clever sublimation of the national *zeitgeist*. Neither show deals directly with the aftermath of 9/11, as both were in production long before the events occurred, but both capture something fundamental about the West in late 2001. Hark goes on to comment that:

Where *24* does significantly intersect with 9/11 is in the way it mirrors the television news coverage in the aftermath of the tragedy. U.S. television is rarely comfortable with abstractions or ideologies. From the outset, network news broadcasts and news magazines sought to personalize the tragedy, giving voices to the victims and their survivors, even to the perpetrators...A political act metamorphosed into a family drama...The series *24* fictionally takes this approach back to the level of the attack itself, so that everything that initially seems political is actually personal.¹¹⁵

The initial critical reaction to these shows was overwhelmingly positive, though many were quick to note both the timing of their respective releases and the seeming rise in TV spies. Caryn James, writing for *The New York Times*, commented that “[in addition to *24*] with *Alias* and *The Agency* also set in the C.I.A....suddenly

¹¹⁴ David Grove, “The Agency”, *PopMatters*, Online website, 2001

<<http://www.popmatters.com/tv/reviews/a/agency.html>> (Accessed 17 September 2012)

¹¹⁵ Hark, p.123

cops, lawyers and doctors have competition for the most overexposed career on television”.¹¹⁶ Others raised concerns regarding the subject matter of such shows in the wake of 9/11, with James Poniewozik and Jeanne McDowell reporting in *Time Magazine* that “The terrorist attacks and the war have juiced ratings for established hits like *Friends* and *CSI*, either because the news has drowned out hype for new shows or because viewers crave yesterday’s pleasures as tomorrow looms ever scarier. That could mean rough going for a show that has bet so much on its novelty”.¹¹⁷ This “novelty” in terms of *24* was its explicit real time element; a device that came to define the show in a very particular way rather than restrict its appeal. However, despite the risks of both overexposure and verging too close to an admittedly painful reality, both *24* and *Alias* survived for, respectively, eight and five season runs, gaining audience and critical attention as they developed. While *Alias* is not particularly noteworthy in terms of this dissertation, steeped as it is in a sub-genre of espionage fiction that could be loosely termed ‘spy-fi’, divorcing it from any sort of identifiable reality,¹¹⁸ *24* is an early and important example (if not archetype) of the post-9/11 spy series.

Featuring murky morals and ethics, a complicated ‘hero’ (who is often depicted as everything but) and plot twists that test even the loftiest interpretations of narrative convolution, the series develops and evolves the thematic territory explored in Surnow’s *La Femme Nikita*. Eventually, the series would become a dark mirror to

¹¹⁶ Caryn James, “Critic’s Pick: A Very Long Day in the Life”, *The New York Times*, Online website, 2001 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/09/arts/09JAME.html>> (Accessed 17 September 2012)

¹¹⁷ James Poniewozik, Jeanne McDowell, “Television: The Time Of Their Lives”, *Time Magazine*, Online website, 2001 <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1001184-2,00.html>> (Accessed 17 September 2012)

¹¹⁸ In short, an offshoot genre of spy fiction/espionage which is blended with tropes or ideas from science fiction. The unique late 60s TV series *The Prisoner* is a notable example, as are the *Metal Gear Solid* series of video games, which blend Cold War paranoia with giant walking robots, psychics and superhuman characters.

the first ten years of the 21st century, with plot lines often reflecting current world events, from political machinations to Islamic terrorists and the role of Weapons of Mass Destruction. However, it was not until the second season of *24* that the show began to engage with these ideas more directly.

The 9/11 morality play: *The West Wing*, Sorkin and televisual disruption

Instead, the first television series to engage directly with the complicated questions raised by 9/11 was Aaron Sorkin's acclaimed political drama *The West Wing*. While the show could never be considered a spy series, over its seven seasons it often dealt with geopolitical realities involving intelligence agencies and terrorists, though it depicted them from the perspective of a government administration.¹¹⁹ The episode in question, "Isaac and Ishmael", opens the show's third season and explicitly occurs outside of regular continuity. The episode begins with cast members of the show appearing on screen, directly addressing the audience:

Good evening...for those of you who tuned in tonight to see our season premiere, I'm afraid you won't, that'll be next week. We're eager to get back to our continuing storylines, but tonight we wanted to stop for a moment and do something different. You'll notice a few things different about this show tonight. For instance, in place of our usual main title sequence, we'll be putting phone numbers up on the screen where you can pledge donations to groups that are able to help with victims assistance...the profits from tonight's episode will be donated to the New York Fire-fighters 9/11 Disaster Relief Fund, and the New York Police and Fire Widows and Children's Benefit Fund. A helping hand, from our family to theirs. Now, don't panic – we're in show business, and we'll get back to tending our egos in short order, but tonight we offer a play, it's called "Isaac and Ishmael". We suggest you don't spend a lot of time trying to figure out where this episode comes in...the timeline of the series – it doesn't. It's a storytelling aberration, if you'll allow. Next week, we'll start our third season...That's all for us, thank you for listening.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Occasionally *The West Wing* engaged more directly with espionage-type narratives. TV critic Heather Havrilesky, writing for *Salon Magazine*, described the final episode of season four as, "[a] mind-bending hybrid of *Six Feet Under*, *24*, and *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*".

¹²⁰ *The West Wing 3.0*, "Isaac and Ishmael". Dir. Christopher Misiano. Warner Brothers Television. 2001.

This opening sequence clearly establishes the episode as occurring outside of the regular *West Wing* universe – its narrative has no consequences for the show’s larger world. Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles point out that, “Just as the attacks of 9/11 disrupted and altered the nation’s collective life for a brief moment, “I&I”’s opening implies, so, too, the episode will disrupt television viewing only ever so slightly. The future will bring a return to normal lives, and the rhythms of the U.S. national community will be disrupted only temporarily”.¹²¹ The episode then continues, telling two parallel, interlocking narratives focussed around a ‘lockdown’ of the White House. In the first, Deputy Chief of Staff Josh Lyman addresses a group of high school students visiting the White House as part of a ‘Presidential Classroom’ initiative. When the lockdown occurs, a broader discussion of terrorism begins, eventually involving other senior West Wing staff, including Press Secretary C.J. Cregg, Communications Director Toby Ziegler and Deputy Communications Director Sam Seaborn. The second narrative has the FBI detaining a member of the White House staff who has the same name as a Saudi Arabian terrorist. He is questioned by the FBI and Chief of Staff Leo McGarry before the case of mistaken identity is realised and the lockdown is lifted.

The most arguably relevant material in the episode however, occurs in the White House Mess where senior White House staff deconstruct the very notion of terrorism with the high school students. Buried amongst creator/head writer Aaron Sorkin’s clever dialogue and razor-sharp barbs lie coherent, strikingly direct statements about terrorism and geo-political realities. One student asks “What do you call a society that has to just live every day with the idea that the pizza place you’re

¹²¹ Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, “*The West Wing’s* Prime-Time Nationalism” in *The Prime Time Presidency: The West Wing and U.S. Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p.161.

eating in can just blow up without any warning?” “Israel,” Sam Seaborn replies.¹²² The context of open discussion surrounding the White Hall Mess allows Sorkin to both push his distinctly left-leaning politics while also encouraging critical discourse and dialogue. Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles comment that the episode “[invites] the audience to participate in its vision of U.S. nationalism in the wake of 9/11. The choice of the White House Mess as a locale launches the conversational, Socratic dynamics of the episode...As if beckoning the audience to join in, the setting personalises the discussion of terrorism”.¹²³

Indeed, the choice by Warner Brothers Television and broadcaster NBC to allow Sorkin to proceed with such a show was a brave one. As television commentator Naomi Pfefferman observed, “After the attack, CBS’ *The Agency* shelved a show about a terrorist bombing, and HBO’s *The Sopranos* deleted a title-sequence shot of the World Trade Center. Sorkin, on the other hand, asked NBC executives if he could write a morality tale about tolerance in the aftermath of the terror”.¹²⁴

Tolerance is the key word in the context of “Isaac and Ishmael”. Later in the episode, the First Lady relates the Biblical story of Isaac and Ishmael to promote the notion of tolerance. However, it is put into context much earlier in a discussion between Josh Lyman and the high school students, in a free and open dialogue of ideas which Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles have characterised as a *methexis* – “an invitation to participation and dialogue as a means of cultural understanding and

¹²² *The West Wing 3.0*, “Isaac and Ishmael”. Dir. Christopher Misiano. Warner Brothers Television. 2001.

¹²³ Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, pp.161-162

¹²⁴ Naomi Pfefferman, “The Left ‘Wing’”, *Jewish Journal*, Online website, 2001

<http://www.jewishjournal.com/up_front/article/the_left_wing_20011012> (Accessed 8 October 2012)

healing”.¹²⁵ The following dialogue shows Sorkin, as writer and cultural commentator, quite literally attempting to heal the United States, while also making an impassioned case for understanding.

High school student 1: So why *is* everybody trying to kill us?

Josh Lyman: It’s not everybody.

High school student 1: It *seems* like everybody.

High school student 2: It’s just the Arabs.

High school student 3: Saying “the Arabs” is too general.

High school student 2: It’s Islamics.

Josh Lyman: It’s not Arabs. It’s not Islamics. [To Donna] They’re juniors and seniors?

Donna Moss: Yes [nods].

Josh Lyman: You’re juniors and seniors. In honour of the SAT’s you’re about to take, answer the following question.

Josh walks to a white board, erasing its contents. Donna hands him a marker.

Josh Lyman: “Islamic extremist is to Islamic as “blank” is to Christianity.

Josh writes the phrase on the whiteboard.

High school student 2: Christian fundamentalists!

Josh Lyman: No.

High school student 4: Jehovah’s Witnesses?

Josh Lyman: No. Guys, the Christian Right may not be your cup of tea, but they’re not blowing stuff up. Islamic extremist is to Islamic as “blank” is to Christianity.

Josh pauses and looks at the students before leaning down and writing “KKK” in the blank space.

Josh Lyman: *That’s* what we’re talking about! It’s the clan gone medieval and global. It couldn’t have *less* to do with Islamic men and women of faith, of whom there are millions upon millions. Muslims defend this country in the army, navy, air force, marine corps, national guard, police and fire departments, so let’s ask the question again.

High school student 5: Why are Islamic extremists trying to kill us?

Josh Lyman: That’s a reasonable question if ever I heard one. Why are we targets of war?

High school student 2: Because we’re Americans.

Josh Lyman: That’s it?

High school Student 6: It’s our freedom.

Josh Lyman: [laughs] No other reasons?

High school student 7: Freedom and democracy.

Josh Lyman: I’ll tell you, right or wrong – and I think they’re wrong – it’s probably a good idea to acknowledge that they *do* have specific complaints. I hear ‘em every day. The people we support, troops in Saudi Arabia, sanctions against Iraq, support for Egypt. It’s not just that they don’t like Irving Berlin.

Donna Moss: [shakes head] Yes, it is.

Josh Lyman: No, it’s not.

¹²⁵ Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, p.160

Donna Moss: I don't know about Irving Berlin, but your ridiculous search for rational reasons why somebody straps a bomb to their chest is ridiculous.

Josh Lyman: You just called me ridiculous twice in one sentence.

Donna Moss: Hardly a record for me.

Josh Lyman: And *you* just made my list.

Donna Moss: [to students] Nothing happens on the list.

Josh Lyman: It's a serious list, but she *does* have a point, albeit... college girl-ish.

Donna Moss: Watch now as he's going to put me down and make my point at the exact same time.

Josh Lyman: Hardly a record for me. What's Islamic extremism? It's seventh century Islamic law, as practiced by the prophet Mohammed, and when I say "strict adherence", I'm not kidding around. Men are forced to pray, grow their beards a certain length. Among my favourites is there's only *one* acceptable cheer at a soccer match "*Allahu Akbar*" – God is great. If your guys are getting creamed, then you're on your own. Things are a lot *less* comic for women, who aren't allowed to attend school or have jobs, they're not allowed to be unaccompanied, and oftentimes get publicly stoned to death for crimes like not wearing a veil. I don't have to tell ya, they don't need to shout at a soccer match – they're never gonna go to one. So what bothers them about us? Well, the variety of cheers alone coming from the cheap seats in Giants stadium when they're playing the Cowboys is enough for a *jihad*, to say nothing of street corners lined church next to synagogue next to mosque. Newspapers that can print anything they want, and women who can *do* anything they want, including taking a rocket ship to outer space, vote and *play* soccer. This is a plural society. That means we accept more than one idea. It offends them. So *yes*, she does have a point, but it totally doesn't mean you should listen to her.

High school student 6: So what do we do now?

Josh Lyman: What?

High school student 6: What do we do now?

Josh Lyman: Well, I think for help with that question we're gonna need some people smarter than I am.

Donna Moss: Definitely.¹²⁶

While most critics praised Sorkin's writing and the episode's timeliness, reviews were not universally positive. Some labelled the episode "preachy", and some went as far as television critic Jane Bowron, who lambasted the episode as a "clumsily executed piece of insanely boring nationalism".¹²⁷ However, the lasting value of "Isaac and Ishmael" lies in its exceptionally timely ability to create a dialogue involving the complex moral ideologies of terrorism, both on screen and,

¹²⁶ *The West Wing 3.0*, "Isaac and Ishmael". Dir. Christopher Misiano. Warner Brothers Television. 2001.

¹²⁷ Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, p.160

by proxy, in the discussions it created in reality. As Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles further observed, the episode “presented a dialogic rhetoric that symbolically invited participation and disputation about the terrorism confronting the United States”.¹²⁸

Isabelle Freda identifies key questions inherent within this rhetoric, stating that:

[The] episode allows us to ask, within its modest but dense textual frame, some of the larger questions that comprise the 9/11 problematic: for example, what dangers lie in this style of identification with power, and how is entrapment translated into “access” within it? How is ignorance translated into a kind of knowledge? How is isolation produced as “safety?”¹²⁹

While *The West Wing* was the first television drama to directly engage with the after-effects of 9/11, it is nonetheless not an espionage series (despite the fact that “Isaac and Ishmael” has at least one sub-plot – Leo McGarry and the FBI hunt for a terrorist on the White House staff – which is practically an archetypal spy narrative). However, it was not long before a plethora of espionage narratives started to return to television screens.

Regnum Defende: the British TV thriller

While the majority of spy dramas in the first decade of the 21st century were American productions, British television was not far behind in its appropriation of the genre. David Wolstencroft’s now-iconic series *Spooks*, a BBC/Kudos production, premiered in May of 2002, directly referencing the events of 9/11 within mere minutes of its first episode. With its grainy, 16mm film aesthetic that owed much to *24*, and a more restrained approach to story dynamics, *Spooks* premiered at precisely the right time to seize on the terror-obsessed *zeitgeist*. Focussing on ‘Section D’, the counter-terrorist department of MI5, the series continued to run for ten seasons,

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ Isabelle Freda, “Survivors in *The West Wing: 9/11 and the United States of Emergency*” in *Film and Television After 9/11*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Southern Illinois: SIU Press, 2004), p.230

eventually finishing production in 2011. During its run the series was nominated for nearly forty British Academy Television Awards¹³⁰ and maintained consistently high ratings, as well as syndication to many other countries. The show itself is notable for its willingness to kill off main cast members, with few major characters surviving more than three of four seasons. By the end of the tenth season, an astonishing thirteen ‘Grid operatives’ had met their fates though having their faces plunged into deep fat fryers, being shot, stabbed, blown up, poisoned, tortured to death or otherwise removed.

Several other British shows aired in the following years, with varying degrees of espionage-related material. This included *The Fixer*, another Kudos production featuring several production staff from the *Spooks* team, most notably producer/head writer Ben Richards. A grimier, more morally ambiguous undertaking than *Spooks*, *The Fixer* sees protagonist John Mercer, a former Special Forces operative, removed from prison by a shadowy, vaguely state-sponsored (but, officially, entirely non-existent) agency to act as an assassin for the government. As Gareth McLean comments in a review for *The Guardian*, “On paper, it resembles *Nikita* and there are shades of *Spooks* – John Mercer’s shadowy status recalls the twilight world in which BBC1’s spies operate – but *The Fixer* exists in a murkier world, an uncertain world in which old maps don’t chart, where old codes of conduct and morality don’t apply”.¹³¹ While its links to true espionage drama are as murky as the morality of those involved, *The Fixer* can be read as a variant on the *Nikita* story, without any of that show’s more redeeming features. Indeed, *The Fixer* lasted a mere

¹³⁰ British Academy of Film and Television Arts, “Awards Database – The BAFTA Site, *Spooks*”, BAFTA, Online website, 2012 < <http://www.bafta.org/awards-database.html?pageNo=1&sq=spooks> > (Accessed 25 October 2012)

¹³¹ Gareth McLean, “The Fixer’s formula will have you glued to your set”, *The Guardian*, Online website, 2008 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/garethmcleanblog/2008/feb/07/transfixedfixer> > (Accessed 25 October 2012)

two seasons, with a review of the second season by Tim Dowling lambasting the show:

The Fixer itself seems to want to traffic in moral ambiguities, but instead it seeks refuge in criminals evil enough to justify employing a state-sponsored hit squad. I call that peddling moral certainties. In the end, *The Fixer* is merely squalid, the baddies are preposterous and all the action takes place in some completely unpopulated part of London where you can get away with spraying bullets everywhere. Other than that, it's ace.¹³²

The mid-to-late 2000s also saw several more traditional action dramas appearing on the BBC and ITV, albeit with terrorism and counter-terrorism themes deeply rooted in their narratives. Both *Ultimate Force* and *Strike Back*¹³³ deal with British counter-terrorist teams, the SAS and the (fictional) ominously titled 'Section 20', respectively. Both are properties created by British author and former SAS soldier Chris Ryan, who was a member of the ill-fated Bravo Two Zero patrol during the first Gulf War.¹³⁴ While both programmes deal with the prevention of terrorist actions – and are both terrifically exciting – neither is a particularly eloquent evocation of the espionage drama. Indeed, Mark A. Perigard, writing for the *Boston Herald*, dismissed *Strike Back* as a “dumb, not-so-much fun shoot'em-[up]”.¹³⁵ Other British television espionage properties tend to deal with historical, rather than contemporary spy stories, such as the BBC mini-series *Cambridge Spies*.¹³⁶

¹³² Tim Dowling, “The Choir: Unsung Town and The Fixer”, *The Guardian*, Online website, 2009 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2009/sep/02/the-choir-unsung-town-review>> (Accessed 25 October 2012)

¹³³ While the first series of *Strike Back* is a strictly British production, subsequent series have been produced as US/UK productions by Sky 1 and US cable channel Cinemax, an offshoot of cable giant HBO. Cinemax is mostly known for its late-night softcore pornography programming, leading some to dub the channel 'Skinemax'.

¹³⁴ For a detailed breakdown of the events, see Chris Ryan, *The One That Got Away* (London: Century, 1995), Andy McNab, *Bravo Two Zero* (Britain: Bantam Press, 1993) and Michael Asher, *The Real Bravo Two Zero* (England: Cassell, 2003).

¹³⁵ Mark A. Perigard, “Cinemax drama ‘Strikes’ out”, *Boston Herald*, Online website, 2011 <http://www.bostonherald.com/entertainment/television/reviews/view/2011_0812cinemax_drama_strikes_out/> (Accessed 25 October 2012)

¹³⁶ The mini-series in question is a dramatisation of the events surrounding the ‘Cambridge Four/Five’, a group of Cambridge graduates in the 1930s who were recruited as spies for the Russian

Infiltrating the mainstream: TV spies across networks

The majority of espionage series that have appeared since 9/11 have been largely British or American in origin. One notable exception is the Canadian broadcaster CBC's series *The Border*, which aired between 2008 and 2010. Following the fictional Immigration and Customs Security Agency (ICS), the show primarily dealt with cross-border matters concerning Canadian national security, many of which included themes of terrorism. Additionally, the show focussed on the difference between Canadian and American procedures in such situations. While moderately successful, the series was cancelled after only three seasons. However, despite its minor ratings and cultural impact, the show was nonetheless discussed by unnamed U.S. state officials in 2008 who criticised it for promoting negative American stereotypes. A cable, released by WikiLeaks, stated that "the level of anti-American melodrama has been given a huge boost in the current television season as a number of programs offer Canadian viewers their fill of nefarious American officials carrying out equally nefarious deeds in Canada while Canadian officials either oppose them or fail trying", suggesting that the series had some level of impact on American/Canadian relations.¹³⁷

The Border is, however, the exception rather than the rule. Outside of the US and the UK, terrorism-themed dramas are infrequently produced, while other sub-

intelligence services. For a more detailed breakdown of the events, see Christopher Thompson, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), S.J. Hamrick, *Deceiving the Deceivers: Kim Philby, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess* (Connecticut, Yale University Press, 2004), Chapman Pincher, *Treachery: Betrayals, Blunders and Cover-Ups: Six Decades of Espionage* (New York: Random House, 2012) and Kim Philby, *My Silent War: The Autobiography of a Spy* (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

¹³⁷ CBS News, "WikiLeaks: Do Canadians have an inferiority complex? – Point of View", *CBC News*, Online website, 2010 <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/pointofview/2010/12/wikileaks-do-canadians-have-an-inferiority-complex.html>> (Accessed 1 November 2012)

genres of the broad ‘crime’ type continue to flourish, such as the wildly popular Danish procedural series *The Killing*, Sweden’s *Wallander* and the Danish/Swedish co-production *The Bridge*.¹³⁸ In Australia, there has not been a true spy TV series produced since *Spyforce*, which ran from 1971 to 1973, while police procedurals have continued to thrive. In recent years, several Australian series have utilised some of the tropes of espionage drama, without fully engaging with the genre. Series such as *The Code* and *Secret City*, while taut, well-written texts in their own right, belong more firmly in the realm of political and conspiracy thrillers.

The remaining American series to be discussed tend to fall into one of several categories, largely dictated by their intended networks and audiences. Series intended for broadcast on free-to-air networks or on so-called ‘basic-cable’¹³⁹ channels tend towards longer season arcs with self-contained plots and a focus on building character traits over long periods of time, with larger, over-arching narratives a present, but secondary focus. One example of this approach is *Burn Notice*, a spy comedy/drama which airs on the USA Network, a basic-cable channel that has boasted the rather appropriate slogan “Characters welcome” since 2005.¹⁴⁰ The show follows the exploits of Michael Weston, a former CIA operative now ‘burned’ by his former employer and forced to eke out a minor existence in his home-city of Miami while trying to discover who is responsible.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ The popularity of *The Bridge* has led to two remakes – a US/Mexican version under the same title, and the British/French co-production *The Tunnel*.

¹³⁹ Technically, a cable-channel that does not encrypt its broadcast signal, meaning anyone connected to the system can receive it. These channels often contain significant original programming, but without the potentially objectionable content found on the scrambled ‘premium cable’ channels such as HBO and Starz.

¹⁴⁰ USA Network, “Television Shows, Series, Movies Sports and Characters – TV Channel – USA Network – Homepage – USA Network”, *USA Network*, Online website, 2012 <<http://www.usanetwork.com/>> (Accessed 1 November 2012)

¹⁴¹ In the context of espionage, to ‘burn’ an operative refers to the dissemination of a ‘burn notice’, a document sent from an intelligence agency to other agencies stating that an operative is considered unreliable for a variety of reasons. See *The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and*

The focus of the narrative is firmly on a week-to-week basis, with Weston and his cohorts usually enlisted to help out ordinary people in trouble, a structure it shares with the likes of its most notable predecessor *MacGyver* (with which it also shares an obsession with improvised gadgetry), as well as contemporary series *Person of Interest*. While there is a larger, over-arching narrative in place, it takes a back-seat to the week-to-week drama, and while the finale of each of *Burn Notice*'s seasons usually hints towards considerable change, the nature of network and basic cable television programming means that, in order for the show to continue, the circumstances of a series must remain constant. *Burn Notice* saw many twists and turns in its stories through its seven seasons – including the addition of a new major character and Weston's eventual reinstatement to the CIA – but the core of the program (Weston assisting the helpless, the downtrodden and the otherwise stepped upon) always remained unchanged.

As a spy narrative, *Burn Notice* eludes to the aftermath of the global war on terror without ever engaging with it directly. The tropical climate of Miami is far removed from the Middle Eastern (or, indeed, Middle American) settings of most contemporary spy dramas, and the villains tend to be Colombian drug dealers, con artists and small-time arms runners rather than ideological terrorists. The show often feels like a throwback to eighties action tropes, eschewing the noughties obsession with global terror – though Weston regularly and vocally decries the use of torture as a viable means of interrogation throughout the series. Once again, the focus lies firmly on the characters rather than the larger concepts. Robert Abele, in a review of the first season for *L.A. Weekly*, commented that “It's got a low-hum basic-cable

Associated Terms, available at < http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf>, for more information.

charm, fuelled by personality, breezy cloak-and-dagger ingenuity and smart-ass dialogue rather than a flashy, budget-driven broadcast network complex”.¹⁴²

A similar approach can be found in USA Network’s other spy series *Covert Affairs*, a lightweight action drama from *Bourne* director producer Doug Liman that follows Annie Walker, a young CIA recruit sent to work for the Domestic Protection Division (DPD). While the series weaves in issues of terrorism and global relations (particularly the complicated relationships between the intelligence agencies of different countries, specifically the CIA and Mossad) the focus sits more firmly on Walker as she tries to negotiate a double life, often having to lie to those close to her for the sake of national security. Like *Burn Notice*, *Covert Affairs* is a minor show, albeit one that demonstrates that spy dramas, no matter how lightweight, have an obvious pull with television audiences in the 21st century.¹⁴³

Quality TV and the slow-burn thriller

The other category of espionage drama is that found on premium cable. These shows tend to have higher budgets, shorter production runs and more focus on larger narratives. They are also more inclined to deal with potentially objectionable material, as regulation by the Federal Communications Commission is considerably more relaxed with regard to premium cable channels. Due to the encrypted nature of signals broadcast by these channels, they are far less likely to be accidentally viewed by age-inappropriate audiences. This led, in the early part of the 21st century, to a

¹⁴² Robert Abele, “Burn Notice: Tune in, Zone out”, *L.A. Weekly*, Online website, 2007 <<http://www.laweekly.com/film+tv/surf-report/burn-notice-tune-in-zone-out/16740/>> (Accessed 1 November 2012)

¹⁴³ Another comedic spy series worthy of note is the FX Network’s animated property *Archer*, a parody/pastiche of spy narratives both contemporary and particular to the Cold War. “Shoot, bitch! Democracy’s at stake!” is a typical example of the show’s dialogue.

renaissance of sorts in premium cable television, what Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris and Anthony Freitas have called “quality TV”:

In recent years, cable programs have achieved the reputation of “quality TV” – expensively produced, intelligently written, they utilize edgy and graphic themes and are often humorous in a dark, ironic sort of way. The flexibility of the cable industry is largely responsible for these quality programs: the relatively light FCC regulation in terms of language, action, and sexuality, the ability to air episodes multiple times during the week, and the freedom from the traditional broadcast confines of “least objectionable programming” have all helped create an environment that allows for interesting, edgy shows to air.¹⁴⁴

Two such shows have aired on the premium cable network Showtime: *Sleeper Cell* and *Homeland*. Like most premium cable series, both have shorter seasons than their network and basic-cable counterparts, with *Sleeper Cell* running for ten- and eight-episode seasons before its cancellation, while *Homeland* has had six twelve-episode seasons. Like the iconic dramas of another premium cable network, HBO, both shows could be considered examples of “quality TV”¹⁴⁵ – prioritising novel-like narrative arcs over accessibility and character studies over action. The very nature of these narratives requires greater investment on the part of the viewer in order to engage properly, as opposed to the strict genre structures imposed by network-driven procedural shows. Stuart Hall has identified these as systems of “encoding” and “decoding” narrative structure. As Hall has stated:

One of the most significant political moments (they also coincide with crisis points within broadcasting organisations themselves, for obvious reasons) is the point when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading. Here the ‘politics of signification’ – the struggle in discourse – is joined.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris, Anthony Freitas, *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting* (New York: New York University Press, 2007) p. 255

¹⁴⁵ While the phenomenon of quality TV itself begins in roughly the late 1990s, the concepts behind it stretch back much further. For a full understanding of the methodology, see Geoff Mulger, “Television’s Holy Grail: Seven Types of Quality” in *The Question of Quality* (London: BFI, 1990) and Robert J. Thompson, “Television’s Second Golden Age: The Quality Shows” *Television Quarterly*, Issue 28 (1996).

¹⁴⁶ Stuart Hall, *Encoding, Decoding* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 517

This “oppositional reading” is most readily apparent in *Sleeper Cell*, a series which can be read as much as a reaction to the proliferation of terrorism-themed dramas as it can as an example of such a drama. The show combines the counter-terrorism themes of *24* and its ilk with the structure of an undercover cop drama, following African-American Muslim FBI agent Darwyn al-Sayeed as he goes undercover in a clandestine terrorist sleeper cell operating within the United States.¹⁴⁷ The cell is led by Faris al-Farik, a charismatic Saudi Arabian extremist, who provides a nemesis of sorts for al-Sayeed. The cell also contains (over the course of two seasons) several characters with ethnicities, sexualities and ideologies not consistent with the stereotypical view of Muslim extremists. These include a Bosnian with a fondness for rap, a Paris-born skinhead, a Dutch former prostitute, a Latino gang member, a gay Iraqi-born, British raised Muslim and (perhaps most disturbingly for Western audiences) a blonde-haired, blue-eyed all-American young man who is the son of two left-leaning liberal college professors.

These characters, as well as the distinctly familiar, deeply suburban setting, work to make *Sleeper Cell* resonate with audiences. Far from the global spanning, improbable plots of *24*, the actions of the terrorist cell feel distinctly local, and therefore far more threatening. This sense of threat to the everyday America was utilised heavily in the show’s marketing, with seasons one and two having the taglines of “Friends. Neighbours. Husbands. Terrorists.” and “Cities. Suburbs. Airports. Targets.” respectively. The terrorist actions are always aimed clearly at

¹⁴⁷ A ‘sleeper cell’ is a component of a clandestine organisation. The system isolates the cell from the larger organisation, making it difficult to infiltrate. A variant on this system appropriated by extremist groups is described in detail in a purported al-Qaeda training manual, which was seized in a raid on a cell in Manchester. It can be found online at the website of the US Department of Justice. <http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/manualpart1_1.pdf>

civilian targets – a biological attack at a baseball game, or anthrax at a shopping mall – which strike right at the heartland of ideological American identity.

It is the characters, however, which create a version of Hall's oppositional reading. While al-Farik is quite clearly the antagonist, the audience is encouraged to identify with not only him, but the other members of the cell as well. The show does this by selectively, yet cleverly delving into the characters' back stories, often presenting them in a sympathetic, if not wholly positive light. The question of religion is constantly brought to the fore, with al-Sayeed's own take on Muslim faith differing radically from that of al-Farik. The inherent hypocrisy of religious fundamentalism is highlighted early on by demonstrating the cavalier attitude several members of the cell have towards sex, which contradicts their faith, while they hold American society to task for its 'excesses'. Kamram Pasha, a practicing Muslim and a writer on the show, commented that "This is the first show that even acknowledges the divergent view of these extremists versus the mainstream religion of a billion people... The entire intention of *Sleeper Cell* is to show how Darwyn is motivated by both patriotism and faith. That intrigued me."¹⁴⁸

Thus Hall's opposition becomes the dialectic tension experienced by the audience – they are encouraged to sympathise with these characters, while also being constantly appalled at their actions. What makes *Sleeper Cell* ultimately so successful, and an example of 'quality TV', is this attempt to understand the particular terrorist psychopathology, which lies dormant and unexplored in more action or plot-oriented espionage television. As Robert Abele commented in a review for the *LA Weekly*, "These aren't soft-centered entreaties to "understand" terrorists

¹⁴⁸ Associated Press, "Is America ready for 'Sleeper Cell'?", *NBC News*, Online website, 2005 <<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/10285301/ns/today-entertainment/t/america-ready-sleeper-cell/#.UJoMptCbXTo>> (Accessed 7 November 2012)

— as the show was already accused of doing when little was known about it — but stories that attempt to get at the circumstances that turn ordinary people into holy warriors.”¹⁴⁹

Showtime’s 2011 series *Homeland* takes this empathy/fear dialectic and focuses it much more intensely. A remake of the Israeli series *Hatufim* (or *Prisoners of War*, in its English variant) *Homeland* begins with the liberation of a US Marine in Iraq, Sergeant Nicholas Brody, who has been held by Al-Qaeda for eight years. Hailed as a hero at home, Brody is suspected by CIA operations officer Carrie Mathison of having been turned to the Al-Qaeda cause. What follows is a tense psychological examination of both protagonists, neither of whom is easy to decode, or even to sympathise with. Brody is an enigma, either turned by terrorists or suffering from extreme Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, while Mathison constantly struggles with mental illness, an illness that makes her obsessive, single-minded and more than a little dangerous. Like executive producer Howard Gordon’s other work (most notably, he served as the showrunner on *24* from 2006 onwards) *Homeland* highlights the inherent similarities between the methods of terrorists and counter-terrorists.

Stripped of more conventional action and plot-driven structural concerns, *Homeland* is a strict psychological thriller, relying not on explosions, but intense character moments to create its almost unbearable levels of suspense and tension. In this way, it is the iconic representation of the premium cable approach to content; focussing on characters and novel-like structural story arcs, while still fulfilling the requirements to exist as genre television. As Maureen Ryan commented, in a review

¹⁴⁹ Robert Abele, “Must-Scare TV: *Sleeper Cell* raises the unthinkable; *Homecoming* raises the dead”, *LA Weekly*, Online website, 2005 <<http://www.laweekly.com/2005-12-01/film-tv/must-scare-tv/>> (Accessed 7 November 2012)

for *The Huffington Post*, “[*Homeland*] also manages to be both an addictive espionage thriller and a compelling character study, as well as a well-constructed exploration of the difficulties and ambiguities of fighting terrorism a decade after Sept. 11.”¹⁵⁰ The show has continued to develop and evolve, removing Brody as a protagonist after the conclusion of the third season and shifting towards a much bleaker, harder espionage drama. While the focus has largely moved away from family dynamics and Mathison’s mental health, the show nonetheless remains one of the most vital, intelligent and considered depictions of contemporary espionage on television.

There are several shows that exist outside of the typical network-TV/basic-cable and premium-cable approaches, most specifically the two at issue here, Fox’s iconic *24* and the BBC’s *Spooks*. While these texts exist in a format that is closer to the network television model, they prove exceptions to the typical structure of self-contained episodes and lightweight content. Both series ran for extended periods of time while still remaining critically, socially and culturally relevant.¹⁵¹ Both are shows with network level season runs – *24* containing twenty-four episodes a season, while *Spooks* averaged ten episodes a series (a long run for a British show, which tend to average six a series) – which nonetheless focus on larger, over-arching stories and character development. While *24* contains considerable levels of action, for example, it can also be read as an eight season exploration of the human toll taken on counter-terrorist agents in a post-9/11 moral universe. Similarly, *Spooks* retained a sharp narrative edge over ten seasons by – as mentioned earlier – maintaining an

¹⁵⁰ Maureen Ryan, “Review: ‘Homeland’ Puts Stellar Performances at the Heart of a Compelling Espionage Tale”, *The Huffington Post*, Online website, 2011 <<http://www.aoltv.com/2011/09/29/review-homeland-has-stellar-performances-claire-danes-damian-lewis/>> (Accessed 8 November 2012)

¹⁵¹ *24* returned as a limited run ‘event’ series in 2014 for the London-set *24: Live Another Day*, while *Spooks* returned to screens in the feature film *Spooks: The Greater Good* in 2015.

infamously unsympathetic attitude towards its main characters, killing them off with abandon at regular intervals.

Most importantly, however, both shows maintained high ratings throughout their respective runs, while also garnering critical acclaim, awards and dedicated communities of fans. Additionally, with long seasons and the fast turnaround required of network-style television production, both were able to engage directly with issues of terrorism and counter-terrorism as they occurred, keeping the shows relevant with stories quite literally ripped from the headlines and tied firmly into the global *zeitgeist*. This approach, combined with the wealth of other espionage content apparent within post-9/11 television drama, makes it identifiable as the most vibrant, reflective and appropriate medium with which to examine shifts within the genre as a whole.

Chapter Three: Deconstructing the Grid: Bringing *24* and *Spooks* into focus

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, television drama (and more specifically, network television drama) with its fast production turnaround, popular appeal and constant demand for content, represents the most timely, culturally viable medium with which to scrutinize the post-9/11 espionage genre, as well as the multitude of socio-cultural shifts which have contributed to changes in said genre. Given television's unique position in this regard, it is valuable to examine the most culturally significant televisual texts in detail, in order to gain further understanding of how they function not only structurally, but how they integrate into the post-9/11 *zeitgeist*.

Jack at the Speed of Reality: *24*, torture and the illusion of real time or: “Diplomacy: sometimes you just have to shoot someone in the kneecap”

On the 6th of November 2001 the Fox Network premiered its new action-drama series *24*. A high-concept show, *24*, in each of its seasons, covers a twenty-four hour time period in the life of Federal agent Jack Bauer, working (mostly) for the fictional Counter Terrorist Unit (or CTU). The focus of the series was originally CTU in Los Angeles, though later seasons saw the setting shift to Washington, New York and London, and even briefly to the fictional African country of ‘Sangala’.¹⁵² The show's key concept is that it is supposedly broadcast in ‘real time’; with a

¹⁵² Using fictional countries, or avoiding naming specific countries, is a common *24* technique to avoid depicting the real world. As well as ‘Sangala’, there has been the ‘Islamic Republic of Kamistan’ (or IRK) as well as the never-explicitly-defined ‘Middle Eastern State’ that acted as the antagonist in season two. *The West Wing* has also utilised this technique, with plots revolving around ‘Equatorial Kundu’, the ‘Sahelise Republic’ and ‘Qumar’.

twenty-four episode season, each episode covering a single hour. This is in reality a fallacy, as network programming guidelines require each episode to be closer to forty to forty-five minutes in length to allow for twenty minutes of advertising. What this achieves in practice is a kind of hyper-real style of delivering plot information, where every second – quite literally – counts. Time jumps do occur between breaks for advertising, leaving the audience with the assumption that either nothing happens during these brief pauses, or at the very least dull, uninteresting narrative occurs (which would explain why, after ten years of appearing on screen, Jack Bauer has never been seen using the bathroom or sitting down for a meal).

This intense hyper-reality and the temporal format it utilises create what Jacqueline Furby has called a “contract of intense involvement”¹⁵³ between the show and its audience. As Furby states, “the audience cannot view casually, but instead enters into a contract of intense involvement that endures over twenty-four weeks if viewed as originally broadcast, or for eighteen hours of viewing episodes on DVD or VHS ... it is the programme’s temporal structures that force the audience to view it as a *compulsive text*”.¹⁵⁴ This contract creates a unique relationship between the audience and the show – to miss even moments is often catastrophic to understanding of the narrative, leading to a compulsive viewing ritual. It is a show, in fact, uniquely unsuited to the demands and idiosyncrasies of network television, with its frequent commercial breaks and week-long gaps between episodes all working to hinder narrative understanding for all but the most dedicated of viewers. As such it is a show that has thrived on the more compressed viewing format of the DVD market, itself a curious quirk of early 21st century television production.

¹⁵³ Jacqueline Furby, “Interesting Times: The Demands 24’s Real-Time Format Makes on its Audience” *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), p. 59

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*

Greater narrative significance may be gleaned through repeated, compressed and critical viewings of the show, as Steven Peacock has noted:

In returning to *24* on repeat broadcast, disc, download, or instant rewind, the viewer can appreciate more fully the attention to detail in the series' visual compositions. Pausing and rewinding points of the series, shuttling to and from different moments, we can discern how (and savour the sense of knowing that) a detail or gesture caught on the periphery of the frame (a glance, a glimpse of information) becomes crucial to the unfolding scenarios of the series.¹⁵⁵

Part of the way in which *24* creates the illusion of real-time is through its use of split-screens, a distinctive videographic technique in evidence from the very first episode. The splitting of the screen into as many as four separate images conveys the feeling of time passing simultaneously across a number of narrative threads, so the various plot threads appear to be happening in parallel. The screen is also often split during sequences of action or suspense, providing multiple viewpoints for a singular plot thread, thereby creating the illusion of a documentary-like realism. As the show builds towards an advertising break or the end of an episode it is quite common for the director to utilise a four-way split screen to summarise all of the action occurring simultaneously, increasing tension and audience anticipation.

Despite these 'narrative logistics' however, there is also a cultural significance to the use of split screen aesthetics, perhaps best argued by Deborah Jermyn:

24's use of the multiple screen image and its relationship in particular with realism and interactivity in a multimedia age – with its visual echoes of live news broadcasts and CCTV surveillance cameras – adds to the programme's sense both of real-time immediacy and 'authenticity', borrowing an aesthetic which in these media has come to connote a privileged relationship with 'the real'. So too, then, does it engage with questions about how we look at these media...it foregrounds itself as a reflexive televisual text which invites the audience, on the one hand, to align themselves with the hero and join in the

¹⁵⁵ Steven Peacock, "24: Status and Style" *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), p 33

frenetic, labyrinthine plot, but also, on the other, to question and probe the nature and truth claims of the technologies it utilises.¹⁵⁶

In latter seasons of *24*, when the use of split screens had become an established trope of the series, producers would occasionally avoid the use of split screens in order to build narrative tension. A notable example of this technique is in series three, during an episode where Jack Bauer is forced by terrorists to execute CTU Department Head Ryan Chappelle; the tense, uncomfortable nature of the scene is accentuated further by the lack of a split screen.¹⁵⁷ While this technique of restricting the splitting of the screen was seen sporadically in the first few seasons, it became more common as the show continued, with seasons seven and eight containing four to five instances each.

This televisual and aesthetic innovation, as well as the notion of *24* as a “compulsive text” has led to it becoming one of the most popular and iconic television shows of the first decade of the century. Roland Weed has stated:

It’s no surprise that *24* has been hugely popular not just in North America, but also in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Australia. The success of the show has been overwhelming and strikingly international in scope, despite the sensitive and controversial nature of its material: terrorism, covert action, intelligence gathering, torture, racial conflict, and profiling. In North America, the fan base extends across the political spectrum with celebrity fans ranging from Rush Limbaugh, Antonin Scalia, and John McCain to Bill Clinton, Rosie O’Donnell, and Barbra Streisand.¹⁵⁸

This popularity has led to the blossoming of a huge cross-media *24* industry that includes DVDs, soundtrack albums, a magazine, a video game, novels, websites, graphic novels, figurines, a board game and, rather oddly, a men’s cologne (described by Mark King as, “...a vibrant and dynamic blend of coriander, mandarin

¹⁵⁶ Deborah Jermyn, “Reasons to Split Up: Interactivity, realism and the multiple-image screen in *24*” *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), p 50-51

¹⁵⁷ *24* 3.18, “6:00am-7:00am”. Dir. Ian Toynton. 20th Century Fox Television. 2004.

¹⁵⁸ Ronald Weed, “CTU Orientation” *24 and Philosophy: The World According to Jack* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. xv

orange and bergamot”).¹⁵⁹ However, despite this popularity (or even perhaps because of it) the show has had its share of critics and detractors, particularly as it headed towards its later seasons. Often these critics have targeted the occasional crudeness of *24*'s storytelling – Alan Sepinwall of the Newark Star-Ledger stated that the eighth season had, “gone off the rails...with Jack getting caught up in a plot-delaying detour that’s even dumber than the survivalist who held Kim hostage for a few episodes in season two”¹⁶⁰ – but most often the criticisms have targeted the perceived ethics and political slant of the show, or more specifically, its implied lack of either.

Suspense and situational morality in *24*

24 often utilises ‘ticking time bomb scenarios’ in order to maintain a high level of tension in its narrative. These scenarios usually involve a high-threat object (which can be anything from a viral pathogen to a suitcase thermonuclear weapon) in the hands of terrorists, with a specific time for detonation/explosion/diffusion etc. This method of creating narrative tension is a well-established part of the thriller genre, as Alfred Hitchcock explained to François Truffaut:

We are having a very innocent little chat. Let us suppose that there is a bomb underneath this table between us. Nothing happens, and then all of a sudden, ‘Boom!’ There is an explosion. The public is surprised, but prior to this surprise, it has to be an absolutely ordinary scene, of no special consequence. Now, let us take a suspense situation. The bomb is underneath the table and the public knows it, probably because they have seen the anarchist place it there...In the first case we have given the public fifteen

¹⁵⁹ Mark King, “Smell like Jack Bauer with *24*: The Fragrance”, *The Guardian*, Online website, 2011 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/jan/28/24-the-fragrance-jack-bauer>> (Accessed 1 March 2012)

¹⁶⁰ Alan Sepinwall, “‘Human Target’ and ‘*24*’ review – Sepinwall on TV”, *New Jersey*, Online website, 2010 <http://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/index.ssf/2010/01/human_target_24_review_-_sepin.html> (Accessed 1 March 2012)

seconds of surprise at the moment of the explosion. In the second case we have given them fifteen minutes of suspense.¹⁶¹

While the nature of the suspense is typical, Bauer's reactions to its circumstances are anything but. In these situations, CTU and most specifically Jack Bauer often employ methods of torture – everything from reasonably sophisticated sensory deprivation to crude electrocutions and knives to kneecaps – in order to elicit information from suspects, many of whom turn out to be reasonably innocent of wrongdoing, but only after torture has been utilised.

This has led to criticism from, among others, Slavoj Žižek, who condemned the show for its depictions of torturers as 'heroes'. Žižek writes:

24 should not be seen as a simple popular depiction of the sort of problematic methods the US resorts to in its "war on terror". Much more is at stake. Recall the lesson of *Apocalypse Now*. The figure of Kurtz is not a remnant of some barbaric past. He was the perfect soldier but, through his over-identification with the military, he turned into the embodiment of the system's excess and threatened the system itself ... The way out of this predicament was that, instead of saying "What horrible things I did to people!" they would say "What horrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders!" In this way, they were able to turn around the logic of resisting temptation: the temptation to be resisted was pity and sympathy in the presence of human suffering, the temptation not to murder, torture and humiliate ... This is 24's real problem: not the content itself but the fact that we are being told openly about it. And that is a sad indication of a deep change in our ethical and political standards.¹⁶²

By the same token, a compelling argument has been made for Bauer's actions by Randall M. Jensen, who distils said actions to a form of utilitarianism, which maintains that: "morality can be summed up by a single principle: you should always do what maximises utility, where utility is understood to be happiness or well

¹⁶¹ François Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p.73

¹⁶² Slavoj Žižek, "The depraved heroes of 24 are the Himmlers of Hollywood", *The Guardian*, Online website, 2006 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/jan/10/usnews.comment>> (Accessed 1 March 2012)

being”.¹⁶³ This is essentially a philosophical construct of a much older idea: acting purely in the service of a ‘greater good’, where traditionally moral decisions are overridden by the aforementioned notion of utility. Thus, if Bauer is forced by the ‘ticking time bomb’ phenomenon to torture a witness in order to save the lives of others, it becomes not a choice, but an imperative – the needs of the many outweighing the needs of the few. Several commentators have labelled this “situational morality”, including Sharon Sutherland and Sarah Swan, who stated that, “...Bauer, who under intense and unrelenting pressure increasingly choose[s] illegal courses of action to meet [his] goals ... asks us to accept the choices made as necessary ones”.¹⁶⁴

One of Bauer’s most common lines of dialogue is, “You have no idea how far I’m willing to go”. As Erickson has so eloquently stated, “Bauer...has a degree of autonomy that frequently verges on criminality”.¹⁶⁵

However, what makes the *24* torture scenario so disturbing throughout the run of the series is the fact that CTU has several people on their payroll who are, in all but name, torturers. Interestingly, none of these characters remain for more than a season or two, but there have been at least three (Richards, Johnson and Burke) who are regularly brought in to torture suspects and on several occasions, members of CTU suspected (rightly or wrongly) of being moles. The short lived nature of these characters exists to provide contrast to Bauer, a comparative super-human in his ability to torture others, yet still endure. However, Bauer pays a high cost for his

¹⁶³ Randall M. Jensen, “What Would Jack Bauer Do? Moral Dilemmas and Moral Theory in *24*” *24 and Philosophy: The World According to Jack* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 7

¹⁶⁴ Sharon Sutherland, Sarah Swan, “‘Tell me where the bomb is, or I will kill your son’: Situational morality on *24*”, *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007) p.120

¹⁶⁵ Christian W. Erickson, “Counter-Terror Culture: Ambiguity, Subversion, or Legitimization?”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 38 (2007), p.204

endurance, suffering extreme physical and emotional damage. This notion has been discussed by Stephen de Wijze, who argues:

While it's clear that Jack's terrible actions trouble him, he nevertheless retains his humanity and emotional wholeness. Žižek and others point out that this is not what happens in reality. Torturers themselves very often develop into monsters and become the personification of the system's excess, ultimately destroying themselves and the very system that gave them legitimacy.¹⁶⁶

An article in *The New Yorker* in 2007 singled out and critiqued this aspect of the show, which ironically had the net effect of the writers of *24* devising a plot for the seventh season which saw CTU disbanded and Jack Bauer answering to a senate inquiry for his 'illegal' use of torture.

As actor Carlos Bernard (who played Tony Almeida) has stated:

It reflects the change in attitude in the US. It's important we addressed that – it's become such a large issue in our country and you can't be casual about it. But just because in one episode Jack killed his boss, it doesn't mean we condone killing your boss. It's the same with torture. Just because Jack often tortures people, it doesn't mean we condone torture. There has probably always been this battle about how you extricate information from people. It will see-saw back and forth throughout history. It was purely because of 9/11 that it started to be OK. I don't want to say it is OK, but we began to soften our view of it because of the shock of that event. I'm sure we'll hit a time in the future when torture is seen as OK again.¹⁶⁷

However, *24* creator Joel Surnow has no questions regarding the role of torture in contemporary counter-terrorism, stating, "Isn't it obvious that if there was a nuke in New York City that was about to blow—or any other city in this country—that, even if you were going to go to jail, it would be the right thing to do?"¹⁶⁸ The show to him is, "ripped out of the Zeitgeist of what people's fears are – their

¹⁶⁶ Stephen de Wijze, "Between Hero and Villain: Jack Bauer and the Problem of "Dirty Hands"", *24 and Philosophy: The World According to Jack* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 20

¹⁶⁷ James Rampton, "How Jack Bauer's sidekick turned nemesis", *The Independent*, Online website, 2009. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/how-jack-bauers-sidekick-turned-nemesis-1807225.html>> (Accessed July 16 2010)

¹⁶⁸ Jane Mayer, "Whatever it Takes: The politics of the man behind *24*", *The New Yorker*, Online website, 2007. <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/02/19/070219fa_fact_mayer> (Accessed July 13 2010)

paranoia that we're going to be attacked. There are not a lot of measures short of extreme measures that will get it done... America wants the war on terror fought by Jack Bauer. He's a patriot".¹⁶⁹

The issue of torture in *24* even gained the attention of relevant government departments, which culminated in a visit to the producers of the show by Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan, who told them that "promoting illegal behaviour in the series was having a damaging effect on young troops".¹⁷⁰ Finnegan was later quoted as saying, "I'd like them to stop. They should do a show where torture backfires...The kids see it and say, 'If torture is wrong, what about *24*'? The disturbing thing is that although torture may cause Jack Bauer some angst, it is always the "patriotic" thing to do".¹⁷¹

Yet torture is undeniably a part of the post-9/11 television landscape; the non-profit organisation Human Rights First has stated that the incidences of torture in television shows has increased exponentially, with 228 scenes of torture on prime-time US television in 2003 compared to 42 in 2000.¹⁷² Despite criticism from the left, occasional uneasiness and the fact that creator Joel Surnow is a self-confessed "right-wing nut"¹⁷³ *24* remains surprisingly free of a political agenda; in fact it usually dismisses politics altogether, replacing them with the in-the-moment importance of 'situational morality'. While this a concept more traditionally identified with the political right, *24* makes an attempt to realign situational morality

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Buncombe, "US military tells Jack Bauer: Cut out the torture scenes... or else!", *The Independent*, Online website, 2007. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-military-tells-jack-bauer-cut-out-the-torture-scenes--or-else-436143.html>> (Accessed July 16 2010)

¹⁷¹ Ibid

¹⁷² Ibid

¹⁷³ Jane Mayer, "Whatever it Takes: The politics of the man behind *24*", *The New Yorker*, Online website, 2007. <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/02/19/070219fa_fact_mayer> (Accessed July 13 2010)

with the aforementioned utilitarianism, to varying degrees of success. The show itself then becomes divorced of an explicitly political agenda, not advocating 'progressivism' or 'conservatism', but much more simply, 'Jack Bauer-ism'.

Corrupted ideologies, violence and timeliness

Ideologies usually denote weakness in the world of *24* and are often depicted through the character of the president. Left-wing, Democratic presidents such as David Palmer and Allison Taylor prove either too weak and naive, or end up undertaking an explicitly wrong action with good intentions. On the other hand, right-wing, Republican presidents such as Noah Daniels and series' arch-villain Charles Logan are misguided, greedy and easily manipulated. Only Jack Bauer, with his ability to make decisions based on the moment, not a mode of thinking, is able to save the day.

The show often positions political systems as products of 'corrupted ideologies', in that the antagonists often believe that they are genuinely doing the right thing for their country because they are patriots. This manifests itself several times throughout the series, from President Charles Logan conspiring to fake evidence of WMDs to a presidential advisor complicit in an assassination attempt because he believes that the president is not acting in the best interests of the country. In a strange reversal of these scenarios, season four sees series regular Tony Almeida having spent time in federal prison after putting the safety of his wife ahead of national security. The fact that both Almeida and his wife Michelle Dessler are Federal agents does not enter into the argument – in the eyes of the government, Almeida had committed treason. Those who act on the basis of a corrupted ideology

end up dead or arrested, while those who try to stop them it seems, ultimately end up irreparably damaged.

The show's depiction of torture steadily rose as the Bush administration's 'War on Terror' increased in intensity (*24* featured 67 instances of torture in its first five seasons).¹⁷⁴ Likewise, Bauer's level of violence increases at a steady rate – in the first season, he was responsible for roughly ten deaths; by the time season six concludes, he has caused the deaths of fifty people in that season alone. Based on the criteria that a 'kill' for Bauer is one which is shown onscreen, he has been responsible for a total of 267 deaths over eight seasons and the made-for-TV movie *24: Redemption* (which packs an incredible fifteen kills into its two hours of pseudo-real-time), which averages out to 1.37 kills per 'hour' (or 0.022 kills per 'minute', presumably divisible into minor and major wounds). This issue of violence and torture makes even dedicated fans of the show distinctly uncomfortable, including author Stephen King, who stated:

There's also a queasily gleeful subtext to *24* that suggests, "If things are this bad, why, I guess we can torture *anybody we want!* In fact, we have an obligation to torture in order to protect the country! *Hooray!*" Yet Jack Bauer's face — increasingly lined, increasingly haggard — suggests that extreme measures eventually catch up with the human soul.¹⁷⁵

Indeed, *24* has always prided itself as utilising stories and tropes that are, as Kiefer Sutherland himself has put it "ripped from the headlines" of the present day, a fact that of course relates back to the particulars of the show's production and broadcast. However, this began as nothing more than unfortunate co-incidence; while season one premiered in the wake of 9/11, it had been in production for quite

¹⁷⁴ James Rampton, "How Jack Bauer's sidekick turned nemesis", *The Independent*, Online website, 2009. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/how-jack-bauers-sidekick-turned-nemesis-1807225.html>> (Accessed July 16 2010)

¹⁷⁵ Stephen King, "'24': So Good It's Scary", *Entertainment Weekly*, Online website, 2007. <<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20006667,00.html>> (Accessed July 12 2010)

some time beforehand. Actor Carlos Bernard stated that he did not think the show would continue after the events of 9/11:

9/11 happened when we'd only shot six episodes of the first series, we were sure the show would be cancelled. We thought, 'Jeez, they can't put this show on air now'. But people were really engaged with the issues, and it went out. It's ironic that the terrible climate of the world actually helped the show.¹⁷⁶

This notion of being in the right place at the right time, no matter how unfortunate, is arguably the key to *24*'s considerable success. Looking back at the first season of the show, however, it comes across not as a 'ripped from the headlines' embodiment of the *zeitgeist*, but as stuck in the political, technological and narrative tropes of the nineties. The 'terrorists' of season one are Balkan extremists, their cutting edge technology represented by mobile phones, PDAs and GPS units. In narrative terms, the whole season feels like a hangover from Cold War espionage fiction, without much to connect it to the present day. However, it may have been simply enough to have a narrative focussed on terrorism in general in order for the public to engage with it.

The second season is entirely different. As Caldwell and Chambers have stated:

The second season of *24* marks the first post-9/11 representation of counter-terrorism on the show (and also, in a sense, to American audiences). More important than the timing, this season of *24* communicates to its viewers the very sense that American politicians, and particularly the Bush administration, have been insisting upon and repeating ceaselessly since 9/12: '9/11 changed everything'. Season Two of *24* thus offers viewers a representation of the 'new world' that is, putatively, post-9/11 America and its 'war on terror'.¹⁷⁷

The moment that season two begins it is obvious that things have changed.

The antagonists have changed from season one's Serbian military renegades to a cell

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷ Anne Caldwell and Samuel A. Chambers, "24 After 9/11: The American State of Exception", *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007) p.97-98

of ‘Middle Eastern’ terrorists attempting to set off a nuclear device in Los Angeles. The terrorists are never explicitly revealed as belonging to a singular country or cause, with the term ‘Middle Eastern’ used as an interchangeable signifier for Islam. Similarly, season two sees Bauer as a much thornier protagonist, quicker to do ‘whatever it takes’ to protect his country, even if that means torture, murder or worse. Bauer returns to CTU reluctantly, forced to re-establish an old cover identity. He does this by shooting a convicted paedophile-turned-informant while in custody, removing the man’s head with a hacksaw and delivering it to the criminal the informant would have sent to jail.¹⁷⁸ Quite clearly, Bauer (and, by proxy, the intelligence services he represents, both in the show and in reality) have few scruples in a post-9/11 world.

Parallel worlds and the post-9/11 reality: political commentary as entertainment television

Ironically, though Bauer is arguably the product of a post-9/11 world, *24* exists in, at the very least, a parallel, if not entirely different world. The first season could feasibly be argued to purport to occur in ‘reality’, as it deals with series regular David Palmer as a presidential candidate, with no explicit references to higher levels of government. However, from season two onwards *24* clearly moves to a parallel universe of sorts, with its own assortment of presidents, politicians and fictional terrorist splinter organisations. Unlike *Spooks*, which explicitly references 9/11 and contemporary politics, *24* has its own political figures. This is somewhat of a necessity, as in the show these figures are often seen interacting with Bauer and CTU

¹⁷⁸ The key factor here is the heinous crimes committed by the man whose head is removed. By positioning him as a child molester the audience is still able to stay ‘on side’ with Bauer and the notion that he is doing the ‘right thing’. This would not have worked if the man in question had been arrested for a much ‘softer’ crime such as, say, shoplifting.

– obviously not possible if the show positioned George Bush or Barack Obama as its President, without devolving into something akin to pastiche.¹⁷⁹ It also allows the writers more freedom in their depiction of the government, particularly in the case of season five, which saw President Charles Logan faking evidence of WMDs to control the flow of oil – excellent drama no doubt, but far more politically contentious in the context of the real world.

24 thus presents a post-9/11 reality which never explicitly refers to itself as such. The show never relies on real-world political manoeuvring in the manner which *Spooks* and its ilk does, rather making its sources of conflict physical items. Rogue nuclear weapons are a common plot device to such a high extent that the show occasionally comes across as a techno-thriller soap opera with suitcase nukes. Other problems have revolved around stolen Sentox nerve gas and the threat of release of a deadly pathogen, centred around a specific carrier. The constantly shifting nature of *24*'s convoluted narratives also means that these physical objectives are often no more than elaborate McGuffins which lead to much larger, more insidious plots.¹⁸⁰

By not setting *24* in the 'real' world, the writers of the show also avoid the problem of credibility, a factor that the series has never been particularly strong on. By inhabiting an obviously fictional or secondary universe, the writers can do things like set off nuclear explosions in Los Angeles and stage attacks on the White House by Sangalan rebel forces without the audience disengaging because of the sheer

¹⁷⁹ There are, however, notable exceptions. Forensic crime drama *NCIS* began its season in 2003 with explicit references to the Bush administration.

¹⁸⁰ While at first glance it appears narratively revolutionary, *24* in fact adheres to an elongated form of the traditional screenwriting 'Three-Act Structure', the only difference being that instead of occurring over a ninety-minute feature film running time it happens over twenty-four forty-five-minute television episodes. Major turning points in the plot usually occur at around episodes eight and sixteen of any given season, where original threats are resolved and replaced by new ones.

improbability involved. Cleverly though, the show maintained the sense of capturing the *zeitgeist*, the feeling of stories and situations deeply rooted in the reality of post-9/11 America. *24* came to play off the fears of the American populace, but managed to disguise itself as prime-time entertainment by maintaining the façade of being played out in a fantasy universe.

Interestingly, when *24* explicitly references the ‘real world’ it tends to get itself into trouble. The ‘Middle Eastern’ terrorists of season two were never given a distinct cause or country of origin, whereas season four saw terrorists who were specifically Muslim, and Turkish. The fact that their organisation, Crimson Jihad, was fictional did not seem to enter into the equation, and the show drew fire from the Council on American-Islamic Relations. To defuse the situation, Fox met with the Council and a public service announcement, featuring Sutherland, was screened prior to another episode, stating, “While terrorism is obviously one of the most critical challenges facing our nation and the world, the American Muslim community stands firmly beside their fellow Americans in denouncing and resisting all forms of terrorism. So in watching *24*, please bear that in mind”.¹⁸¹

This disconnection from reality has allowed *24* to provide a running commentary on post-9/11 America over the course of its eight seasons, in much the same way as *The West Wing* provided a Democratic alternative to the Republican Bush government of the early 21st century. The show went through something of an ideological overhaul in the two year gap between seasons six and seven, leading to Bauer appearing in Washington before a senate committee, having to answer to charges of illegal torture conducted during his time at the recently-disbanded CTU.

¹⁸¹ Stefan Kanfer, “Four Stars for ‘24’”, *Black and White: Birmingham’s City Paper*, Online website, 2007. <<http://www.bwcitypaper.com/1editorialbody.lasso?-token.folder=2007-02-08&-token.story=185833.112112&-token.subpub=>> (Accessed July 13 2010)

This can arguably be interpreted to represent the shift of the US towards a more democratic outlook with the election of Democrat Barack Obama to the White House. However, even once the show's political rules have changed, Bauer remains unrepentant regarding his actions, refusing legal counsel and then stating:

The people that I deal with, they don't care about your rules, all they care about is a result. My job is to stop them from accomplishing their objectives; I simply adapted. In answer to your question am I above the law... no sir. I am more than willing to be judged by the people you claim to represent, I will let them decide what price I should pay. But please do not sit there with that smug look on your face and expect me to regret the decisions that I have made, because sir, the truth is... I don't.¹⁸²

Heroism, cost and the moral high ground: the post-9/11 archetype

It is Bauer as a character which allows the audience to remain engaged with *24*'s convoluted narratives. Here is a man who, over the course of eight seasons, a TV movie, and a limited-run event series, has been shot, tortured, electrocuted, betrayed, addicted to heroin, kidnapped, infected with biological weapons, set up and abandoned by the government that he swore an allegiance to – yet he keeps serving his country; he remains a contemporary superhero of sorts.

Yet this heroism comes at distinct personal cost – Bauer loses his wife, his friends, even (for a while) his identity and his freedom to do a job which is essentially that of a civil servant. Paradoxically, in taking on a vocation which is supposed to prevent violence, Bauer – by necessity – becomes a product of that violence, unable to function in any capacity outside of it. The fourth season of the show sees Bauer in Washington, employed in what is essentially a desk job for the Secretary of Defense – he does not even get past the first episode before the old running, shooting, torturing Bauer rises back to the surface. “You're cursed, Jack,”

¹⁸² *24* 7.1, “8:00am-9:00am”. Dir. Jon Cassar. 20th Century Fox Television. 2009.

says the same Secretary of Defense in season six. “Everything you touch, one way or another, ends up dead”.¹⁸³

In this manner, Bauer is more than just a modern-day Superman, he is the iconic post-9/11 hero archetype; beaten down, stepped on, but willing to do what must be done, no matter the cost. He embodies the underlying violence which has arguably existed in contemporary society since September 12, 2001. Slavoj Žižek has stated that:

At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible ‘subjective’ violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. We need to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts. A step back enables us to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance.¹⁸⁴

In short, Bauer exists in a permanent state of paradox; he embodies the creation of a post-9/11 world, trained to prevent violence through its very use. In this manner, the actions of those who are employed to prevent violence increasingly begin to resemble those whose want it is to cause it. As Žižek has further said, “Terrorists cannot but appear as something akin to Milton’s Satan with his ‘Evil, be thou my Good’: while they pursue what appear to us to be evil goals with evil means, the very *form* of their activity meets the highest standard of the good ...”¹⁸⁵

In this way, *24* creator Joel Surnow and long-time show runner Howard Gordon have created a new post-9/11 archetype, one who, along with the 21st century incarnations of Jason Bourne and James Bond, has more in common with the morally ambiguous anti-heroes of hardboiled detective fiction than Roger Moore’s charming, martini-sipping 007. While hardboiled protagonists often had their fair

¹⁸³ *24* 6.20, “1:00am-2:00am”. Dir. Brad Turner. 20th Century Fox Television. 2007.

¹⁸⁴ Slavoj Žižek, “The Tyrant’s Bloody Robe”, *Violence* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2008), p. 1

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*

share of unpleasant character flaws, the ‘three JB’s’ of contemporary espionage are imbued with characteristics which make them identifiable and empathetic to audiences – Jack Bauer, for example, is a dedicated family man, James Bond a lover of the finer things, Jason Bourne a man who simply wants his life back. However, these characteristics also serve to contrast against the character’s deeply anti-social behaviours; behaviours that are often required of them when called to “get their hands dirty” for the sake of the democracies they represent.¹⁸⁶ There is perhaps no better example of this extreme sociopathy for the benefit of democracy than in *Casino Royale*, where a naked James Bond is tied to a chair and hit repeatedly in the testicles with a rock by the villainous Le Chiffre. “I’ve got a little itch, down there,” Bond says, delicately. “Would you mind?” As Le Chiffre hits him continually and viciously, Bond laughs maniacally, wailing “now the whole world is going to know you died scratching my balls!”¹⁸⁷ This curious and constant shifting between the social and the deeply anti-social strikes a careful balance, for our heroes must still hold the moral (or at least more moral) position; as Fotion, Kashnikov and Lekea have observed:

For the enemies of terrorism, holding the moral high-ground is important... If these enemies are democratic states, they risk losing their own institutions if they act undemocratically. In time, the lapses make it less clear to their people what the difference is between the terrorists and their democratic enemies. When that happens, the democratic states will, sooner or later, lose the support of the people in their fight against terrorism.¹⁸⁸

Thus, by positioning Bauer as an essentially ‘moral’ man, albeit one who utilises extreme measures when necessary, *24* manages to keep its chief protagonist both identifiable and sympathetic. It is then an unfortunate footnote to the show that

¹⁸⁶ Even when Bauer was addicted to heroin in *24*’s third season, it was for purely unselfish reasons – he did it to cement a cover identity.

¹⁸⁷ *Casino Royale*. Dir. Martin Campbell. Eon Productions/MGM. 2006.

¹⁸⁸ Nicholas Fotion, Boris Kashnikov, Joanne K. Lekea, *Terrorism: the new world disorder* (London: Continuum Books, 2007), p. 156

the final season sees Bauer go on a homicidal rampage after the death of one of his colleagues, finally crossing the line between an enforcer of the law and out-and-out murderer.

Yet despite this single lapse in character consistency (likely more attributable to poor writing rather than a genuine character shift) Jack Bauer has become a new archetype. An uncompromising, infallible, incorruptible moral absolute who is forced to bend (and occasionally break) the rules of a democracy in order to defend it, he is possibly the most effective and iconic of the post-9/11 spies.

MI5, not 9 to 5: *Spooks*, disorder, control and fighting terror on the streets of London or: “Oh, Foreign Office, get out the garlic...”

Debuting in May of 2002 (just as *24* was concluding its first season), David Wolstencroft’s *Spooks* occupies a somewhat unique position in this dissertation. While *24* was already well into production when the events of 9/11 occurred, *Spooks*, as mentioned earlier, can be read explicitly as a reaction to those events. In this way, it precedes *24*’s second season in being the first to critically examine the ‘new world’ that the post-9/11 dialectic created. The show continued to run for a staggering ten seasons, eventually completing its run in 2011, before returning in 2015 for the brutal, unrelenting feature film *Spooks: The Greater Good*. As well as domestic success, the show was notably well received in the USA, where it was re-titled *MI-5*,¹⁸⁹ and has been screened on PBS, cable channel A&E and BBC America.

The show’s success in America goes some way to demonstrating its appeal, considering it was an explicitly British show competing directly against the bigger-

¹⁸⁹ This is to prevent possible offence. While the term ‘spook’ is generally understood to mean ‘spy’ it can also be misconstrued as a racial slur.

budgeted *24*. Once again, an explicitly genre-based espionage thriller managed to tap into the global *zeitgeist*. Production company Kudos' joint managing director, Stephen Garrett, explains that:

When the BBC greenlit a second series...the process started of trying to get American interest in it. They saw *Spooks* as...a classy show. Very few British shows sell...the BBC told us that they hadn't sold a drama series into any channel for twenty years. I think the reason that *Spooks* did it is that we tell big stories... A lot of British drama is too parochial. For the first time, Britain had created a show that looked and felt *big*, and was dealing with international stories. I'm very confident and comfortable with taking on shows like *24*...I think *24* is a great show and we complement it rather well.¹⁹⁰

However, courting the American market also meant that the show had to be cut in order to fit in with American network advertising models, meaning that *MI-5* is often, narratively speaking, a mere shadow of its labyrinthine British equivalent. Garrett goes on to say that:

There are three different versions really: there's the BBC 59-minute version...the 'international' version which is 50-minutes and the 'US' version, which is 44-minutes. We have to cut twenty-five percent of the material out to make the US version. It's kind of astonishing to us that it still makes any sense at all, but rather scarily it does seem to make sense, and the pace is extraordinary.¹⁹¹

Certainly, *Spooks* has few contemporaries in British television. While several mini-series and made-for-television movies have tackled the notions of terrorism (mostly notably the intriguing but flawed international co-production *The Grid*) no other series has attempted anything even remotely similar. Probably the only equivalent series are the two Chris Ryan-produced shows mentioned earlier, *Ultimate Force* and *Strike Back*. However, while these two shows often deal with terrorists and terrorism, they do so from a military perspective that occupies altogether more 'boys'-own' adventure territory. While both terrifically exciting (and

¹⁹⁰ *Spooks*, "MI5 USA, DVD Special Feature". Dir. Unknown. Kudos/BBC One. 2004.

¹⁹¹ Ibid

strengthened by the presence of *Spooks* regular Richard Armitage in the first season of *Strike Back*) both lack the intelligence, moral discourse, foresight and quality of writing which *Spooks* is rightly praised for.

Even the official post-watershed ‘spin-off’ show *Spooks: Code 9* failed to function on the most basic of narrative levels. The show, which was created and overseen by *Spooks* creator David Wolstencraft (himself an accomplished espionage novelist), was made to appeal to a younger demographic than its parent programme, and posited a near-future scenario in which London had been bombed with a nuclear device during the 2012 Olympic Games. The attack forces the majority of government to re-locate to Manchester, and MI5 is required to recruit younger officers to deal with both the huge loss of staff in the attack and a new, younger enemy. The awkward need to write for a different demographic, an obviously low budget and characters that seemed to have more in common with those of pouting teen high school dramas rather than hardened spies created a very odd genre fusion within the show. Ratings were poor and it was cancelled after only one six-episode season. Critical reaction to *Spooks: Code 9* was similarly disgruntled, with Gareth McLean of the *Guardian* calling it, “an utterly cynical venture and a damning indictment of the lack of imagination at work in commissioning new drama”.¹⁹² Clearly, even Wolstencraft was unable to recreate the success of *Spooks* in another context.

¹⁹² Gareth McLean, “Spooks: Code 9 is a spin off too far”, *The Guardian*, Online website, 2008 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/garethmcleanblog/2008/aug/08/asspinoffsgospookscode>> (Accessed 2 May 2012)

Violence, topical drama and ‘The Stranger’

While *Spooks* has not attained the level of notoriety that *24* has for its depiction of violence, the show has still been at the centre of several notable controversies. The second episode of the first series, “Taking Care of Our Own” featured a scene where an undercover MI5 operative was killed by having her head forced into a deep-fat fryer; approximately 154 complaints were then registered to the Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC).¹⁹³ However, the BSC eventually defended Kudos and the BBC, stating that *Spooks* was, “...a serious piece of television...[showing] the kind of threat which might be faced by agents engaged in the fight against terrorism” and that the death was, “...shocking but...in the context was acceptable and important for the later narrative”.¹⁹⁴ Screenwriter and social commentator Charlie Brooker applauded the BBC for their risk-taking in the episode, comparing *Spooks* favourably to *24* and stating:

[*Spooks*] demonstrated astonishing nerve by signing Lisa Faulkner as a regular character, then killing her off in spectacularly grisly fashion in episode two. The moment her head was forced into the deep-fat-fryer, viewers reared on the formulaic, it’ll-be-alright-in-the-end blandness of cookie-cutter populist dramas like *Casualty* and *Merseybeat* sat up and blinked in disbelief: here was a major BBC drama series that actually had the nerve to confound expectation.¹⁹⁵

The show also drew complaints from the Muslim Council of Britain over the season two episode “Nest of Angels”, which depicted an Islamic terrorist group operating and recruiting out of a mosque in Birmingham. The complaint was made after Birmingham Central Mosque was defaced not long after the episode was

¹⁹³ BBC News, “Spy show draws record complaints”, *BBC News*, Online website, 2003
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/3073921.stm>> (Accessed 24 April 2012)

¹⁹⁴ John Plunkett, “BBC spy drama spooks TV watchdog”, *The Guardian*, Online website, 2002
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2002/jul/31/broadcasting.bbc1?INTCMP=SRCH>> (Accessed 24 April 2012)

¹⁹⁵ Charlie Brooker, “The grim reality of TV”, *The Guardian*, Online website, 2002
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2002/dec/21/broadcasting.arts?INTCMP=SRCH>> (Accessed 24 April 2012)

screened, with the message “Suicide bombers inside – kill the bombers”. Inayat Bunglawala, the media secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain, stated that, “We can’t deny that the BBC have a right to screen a drama about this – it is topical. It is the treatment of the subject that will lead to attacks”.¹⁹⁶ The BBC was quick to smooth over the issue however, with a statement that said:

We do not believe that [the episode] incites hatred or disrespect for Muslims or Islam. The story is about a Muslim who works to prevent such an attack from happening. The character is inspired by the true story of an Algerian agent, who greatly assisted the British Security Services undercover. The drama does not say that mosques breed terrorists.¹⁹⁷

To dismiss “Nest of Angels” as a cynical piece of racist profiling is to entirely miss the subtleties which writer Howard Brenton and director Bharat Nalluri bring to the episode.¹⁹⁸ The key to these subtleties lies in the character of Muhammed Ibn Khaldun, played by Sudanese-born English actor Alexander Siddig.¹⁹⁹ Ibn Khaldun (a name that Peter Morey notes also belonged to a renowned Muslim polymath and traveller)²⁰⁰ is an Algerian university lecturer who has escaped to the UK via France. In Algeria he was arrested by the Algerian secret service and forced to work for them by infiltrating a *jihadi* terrorist group; he was exposed and a bomb meant for him instead killed his wife and family. He comes to the UK offering to assist in infiltrating the Birmingham mosque, and while Section

¹⁹⁶ BBC News, “TV ‘Muslim plot’ sparks complaints”, *BBC News*, Online website, 2003
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2975478.stm>> (Accessed 24 April 2012)

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

¹⁹⁸ Bharat Nalluri has regularly worked with Kudos Film & Television, the production company responsible for *Spooks*, *Life on Mars* and *Hustle*, amongst others. He directed six episodes of *Spooks*, including both the pilot and the final episode. He was born in Andhra Pradesh, India and raised in Newcastle upon Tyne in England; his unique cultural background making him an obvious and excellent choice to direct the potentially controversial “Nest of Angels”.

¹⁹⁹ Siddig appears frequently in this dissertation. As well as appearing in the iconic role of Khaldun in *Spooks*, Siddig played the key role of Hamri Al-Assad in season six of *24*. Additionally, he has played important Middle Eastern characters in several post-9/11 thrillers, from the 2004 TV movie *The Hamburg Cell* and action series *Chris Ryan’s Strike Back* to Stephen Gaghan’s complex 2005 drama *Syriana*.

²⁰⁰ Peter Morey, “Strangers and stereotypes: The Spooks controversy and the framing of Muslims”, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 46 (2010), p. 536

D are hopeful, they do not trust him completely, unable as they are to see his true motives. After a series of potentially damning incidents – missing meetings with his handler, the disposal of surveillance equipment – the team begin to suspect that he may actually be a double agent.

Morey has argued that Khaldun’s motivations may be far more complex than mere binary oppositions however, stating that:

In his transience and apparently shifting affiliations, Khaldun could be seen as an embodiment of Zygmunt Bauman’s “stranger”, that paradigmatic yet disturbing figure of the margins created by the modern nation in its desperate but always unfulfillable craving for order. The stranger flourishes beyond the ordering categories of insider/outsider, friend/enemy, with their totalizing drives ...Had the [Muslim Council of Britain] taken the time to consider the narrative arc of “Nest of Angels”, it might have seen that, beyond the initial caricatures, it operates as a kind of allegory for the position of Muslims: doubted by the majority communities around them and having always to prove their fidelity.²⁰¹

This narrative complexity ably demonstrates the political and social realities that *Spooks* often attempts to address. This is in direct contrast to *24* writers, whose efforts to portray Muslims are often well-intentioned but disappointingly black-and-white. This also applies to the broader portrayal of villains in both shows – *Spooks* tends towards antagonists who are at the very least empathetic, if not sympathetic, while *24* (with a few distinct exceptions) is practically full of moustache-twirling evil-doers.

Khaldun eventually only proves his loyalties by sacrificing his life – trying to talk down a martyr-to-be with a bomb strapped to his chest before taking the brunt force of the explosion himself. In this, *Spooks* is closely aligned with many other post-9/11 thrillers, demonstrating that, as Morey further states:

[it] dramatizes the impossibility, in the aftermath of 9/11, for Muslims to satisfactorily demonstrate their allegiance to the nation – at least in this life. In thrillers such as *Spooks*, *24*, *The Grid* and countless other variations,

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 536-537

vindication can only come through a rite of blood. In truth, both sides try to “get the stranger to do the filthy thing.”²⁰²

The show’s largest controversy however involved an unfortunate case of life imitating art. The two-part opener of the show’s fourth season, “The Special” had been shot and readied for screening when the 7th July 2005 London bombings occurred.²⁰³ The two-part episode deals with a terrorist group called ‘Shining Dawn’, who plant bombs around London and threaten to set one off every ten hours unless their leader is released from prison. As the group are a collection of extremists who believe that the Earth should be culled of its excess population, they specifically target high-density population centres, aiming for as many civilian casualties as possible.

After the events of July 2005, there was some discussion as to whether the two-part episode should be screened. Gibson states that:

The subject matter caused consternation after life imitated art on July 7. Although the fictional terrorists in question are not religious extremists, the similarities were sufficient to cause head of drama Jane Tranter and new BBC1 controller Peter Fincham to agonise over whether to drop the episodes.²⁰⁴

The two episodes eventually aired (somewhat ironically) on the 12th and 13th of September in 2005. This ability to engage with ‘real-world’ issues is a key component to the narrative success of the show, as Paul Copley has commented:

If anything is remarkable about *Spooks* and its verisimilitude, it is the way in which its quick production and its canny writers provide stories that seem to be almost fully in consonance with the news headlines. These range from a dangerous international financier who threatens to bankrupt the United Kingdom (Series 7, Episode 5, broadcast in Autumn 2008) to an undercover operation in an extremist mosque in which a peace-seeking Algerian Muslim

²⁰² Ibid, p. 537

²⁰³The attacks were colloquially referred to as ‘7/7’, bringing them in line – culturally at least – with 9/11.

²⁰⁴ Owen Gibson, “Spooky coincidences”, *The Guardian*, Online website, 2005.

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2005/sep/12/mondaymediasection.bbc>> (Accessed 24 April 2012)

averts large-scale bloodshed (Series 2, Episode 2, broadcast June 2003), the latter being one of a number of *Spooks* storylines that sparked controversy.²⁰⁵

Pacing, verisimilitude and bombast: *Spooks* as MI5 fantasy

If *24* represents an action-packed take on the contemporary espionage thriller, *Spooks* shares more in common with the meditative pacing of the novels of John le Carré (though Cobley has commented that *Spooks*' "young, attractive, clean-cut, middle-class MI5 agents" provide considerable contrast to le Carré's characters, who are invariably "middle-aged, weary and operating on the seamier side of social life").²⁰⁶ Indeed, *Spooks* avoids the kind of feverish bombast that *24* rushes headfirst into, preferring instead an approach more focussed on political manoeuvring and the exploration of character. It also occurs quite explicitly in 'reality', in stark contrast to *24*'s beleaguered fictional Los Angeles, and consistently tackles more politically risky situations and scenarios.

However, the show is still clearly modelled on spy fiction as opposed to spy reality. In a damning article for the Guardian, former MI5 officer and one-time potential adviser to *Spooks* David Shayler, admonished the series for "lame[ly] rehash[ing] every cliché in the book, while introducing dangerous misconceptions about MI5".²⁰⁷ Shayler further reprimands Kudos and the producers of *Spooks* for their choice of storylines, stating that, "plotlines of violent anti-abortionists and international rightwing extremist conspiracies [are] the stuff of liberal-left fantasy rather than any reflection of the real and vital work MI5 does in protection of our

²⁰⁵ Paul Cobley, "'It's a fine line between safety and terror': crime and anxiety re-drawn in *Spooks*", *Film International*, Vol. 7 (2009), p.39

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 36

²⁰⁷ David Shayler, "Must spy harder", *The Guardian*, Online website, 2002

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2002/may/15/bbc.davidshayler>> (Accessed 14 May 2012)

security and our democracy”,²⁰⁸ demonstrating that the personal political views and opinions of the writers is as much a contributing factor to *Spooks*’ themes as the political *zeitgeist*.²⁰⁹ It is important to note at this point that despite its slick appearance of ‘realism’ that *Spooks* is as much an elaborate fantasy as *24*, or indeed any other piece of spy fiction. As Philip Johns famously stated:

I had rid myself long ago of any ideas that the Secret Service was the glamorous and exciting career of the novelists. I had yet to see any false beards or encounter alluring adventuresses who would seduce me from my loyalties. My car was a Citroën, several years old, instead of a shining Bristol or Aston Martin. Although I had done some pistol practice on the range in London, I did not habitually carry a Beretta strapped to my armpit.²¹⁰

Which is not to condemn *Spooks* for its perceived lack of realism; the show is simply catering to the requirements of its genre, as well as the mandate of its parent production company Kudos, who have a reputation that Cobley has defined as:

...slick productions that promise accomplished television scripts and high production values. The paradoxical mix of glamour and realism can be attributed, to some extent, to the company’s practices. So, the contribution of Kudos to the reading formation should not be underestimated even at this nascent stage in the ascendancy of its brand equity.²¹¹

However, the impact of *Spooks* on the popular image of the British security services cannot be underestimated. Nick Wilkinson commented that the famously secretive MI5 had been given a ‘TV makeover’ of sorts in *Spooks*, stating that, “the Armani suits, luxurious offices, flashy cars and, above all, the high levels of violence, bear no resemblance to a Service which prides itself on not being

²⁰⁸ Ibid

²⁰⁹ It is worth noting that while Shayler was a potential advisor to *Spooks* and had a long running career working for MI5, specifically in counterterrorism, in recent years his behaviour has tended toward the bizarre. As of 2007 he began claiming to be the son of god, complete with divine powers, as well as making several statements indicating anti-Semitic sentiment. Thus, while his experience is clearly not in question, any statements he makes must be measured against this behaviour, which unfortunately brings Shayler closer to David Icke’s end of the ideological scale.

²¹⁰ Philip Johns, “Fact Versus Fiction”, *The Literary Spy*, ed. by Charles E. Lathrop (Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 2004) p. 148

²¹¹ Paul Cobley, “‘It’s a fine line between safety and terror’: crime and anxiety re-drawn in *Spooks*”, *Film International*, Vol. 7 (2009), p.40

noticeable as it goes about its business, usually in the less photogenic parts of Britain. The programmes initially caused a surge in recruiting interest, but the violent image attracted fewer females and some undesirable men”.²¹²

Importantly though, as mentioned before, *Spooks* occurs explicitly in the post-9/11 world. The first episode was shot in November and December of 2001 and aired in May of 2002, with the script having been written prior to 9/11, but being amended to mention it. This is addressed explicitly within the first ten minutes of the first episode; a tour guide leads a group around the public areas of Thames House (where MI5 are based) giving a history of the service when one of the group asks, “how much has your remit changed since September last year?” The guide replies, “Our workload’s exploded, our intake’s tripled and we’re talking to our sister agencies all over the world, more than ever. We try to be as open as we can...”²¹³ This statement serves two functions, firstly (and primarily) placing the show into the confines of reality and secondly providing an ironic purpose, as a recurring theme on *Spooks* is the lack of co-operation between the so-called ‘sister agencies’, particularly (but not exclusively) the CIA.

Relationships, death and protagonists

Earlier seasons of *Spooks* also focussed on the impacts on the personal lives of MI5 agents, similar to *Alias*, but in a much more evolved way.²¹⁴ This is typified by the story-arc in the first season involving Section D head Tom Quinn and his potential love interest, a woman named Ellie. Quinn is troubled by having to lie

²¹² Nick Wilkinson, “Spookmania and the media”, *British Journalism Review*, Vol. 20 (2007), p. 50

²¹³ *Spooks, I.I.*, “Thou Shalt Not Kill”. Dir. Bharat Nalluri. Kudos/BBC One. 2002.

²¹⁴ One slogan used on *Spooks* DVD box sets is the rather bland phrase, “Defending their country, deceiving their friends”.

about his true vocation, but is forced to do so for the sake of national security.

Actress Esther Hall, who played Ellie, described it as:

Imagine moving in with the man you love and then discover you don't even know his real name? It's the ultimate betrayal. Suddenly you're in a relationship with a complete stranger. You discover your partner has always been acting in some way, that he's always been at an emotional distance. If someone's lied that much, how can there ever be any trust in your relationship again?²¹⁵

This focus on relationships eventually became less and less important as the series continued, the only real caveat being that, for the men and women of Section D, any relationships outside of the intelligence world, healthy or otherwise, were simply not possible. As the series continued and took on a darker, bleaker (and arguably more realistic) tone, the majority of the workers on 'The Grid' were unable to function in any healthy relationships, romantic or otherwise. Any romantic melodrama present in later series is, as Felix Thompson has said, moved "in-house" and is then exploited for the sake of dramatic tension:

...heightening the intrateam world as a kind of surrogate family melodrama, often based around father-figure Harry Pearce...Unlike episodes in the first two series, later storylines use threats to family members as an index of the heroic sacrifice of the agents rather than emphasizing the ruthlessness and brutality of their world... The interlocking of threats to home life with the work of the agents is also likely to give a greater sense of ideological unity about what the agents are supposed to be defending in a period, particularly after 2005 in which Britain became a direct target for a new wave of international terrorism.²¹⁶

These failed relationships are also related to *Spooks*' extraordinarily high number of central-character deaths. While *24* (and most American network television) is usually reticent to remove primary characters from their narratives, fearing public outcry and a resultant drop in ratings, *Spooks* has an attitude to its

²¹⁵ BBC Press Office, "Spooks: MI5 not 9 to 5", *BBC*, Online website, 2002
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/05_may/07/spooks_presspack.pdf>
(Accessed 24 April 2012)

²¹⁶ Felix Thompson, "Coast and Spooks: On the permeable national boundaries of British television", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Vol. 24 (2010), p.436

characters which borders on the cavalier. Nicola Walker, who played the long-running character Ruth Evershed in the show, said that, "...[there was] a running joke in *Spooks* – especially in my first year – when a new script came through the first thing you did was check that your name was still in it at the end and that you hadn't been blown up, or put into a deep fat fryer".²¹⁷

The turnover rate remains consistently high, which fulfils two important functions. Firstly, it positions the characters as real, vulnerable human beings, not Jack Bauer-esque superheroes who can survive anything. As such, the level of audience identification and empathy is much higher, leading to greater emotional investment. Secondly, it has kept the show fresh and vibrant through its ten seasons, constantly bringing in characters who may fulfil identical roles, but are completely different people to their predecessors.

For example, the show has, over the course of ten seasons, utilised three primary protagonists – Tom Quinn, Adam Carter and Lucas North (also known as John Bateman), portrayed by Matthew Macfayden, Rupert Penry-Jones and Richard Armitage, respectively. While each has, at some point, been the Head of Section D, they are also distinctly different characters – Quinn a single man struggling with personal relationships, Carter a committed husband and father and North an edgy loner, having spent years in a Russian gulag. In fact, it is probably North's story arc which is the most fascinating, the ninth series of the show weaving a complex tale of his true identity as a bomber and impersonator of the real 'Lucas North'. To the credit of the show's writers, the character remained at all times sympathetic and accessible, which made his eventual death by suicide – having committed treason and betrayed his colleagues – poetic in a way that almost recalls Greek tragedy.

²¹⁷ *Spooks*, "An Elusive Peace – Series 4 Documentary". Dir. Unknown. Kudos/BBC One. 2006.

However, Adam Carter can probably be seen as not only the most iconic of the *Spooks* protagonists, but also as a template for how character relationships function within the show. Entering the show in the third season as a confident, happily married MI6 officer with a young son, Carter goes through a series of traumatic episodes after joining MI5. During the season three episode “Frequently Asked Questions” he struggles with the moral implications of his own interrogation methods. At the end of the season, his wife is taken hostage by extremists and forced to sit through the execution of one of her colleagues (Danny Hunter, one of the lead characters from series one to three) and is released, but is then shot to death later in the fourth season. Carter becomes increasingly unstable throughout the fifth and sixth series of the show, to the point that when his death finally does occur (driving a car-bomb to a safe location away from the public, no less) in the first episode of the seventh series of the show, it is almost a relief.

By positioning him as an essentially doomed figure, Carter has become the iconic *Spooks* protagonist – an evidently good man destroyed by working to save his country. Despite Penry-Jones’ traditional good looks and propensity for rushing around London in a suit with a gun, his Adam Carter is far from the eyebrow-raising wisecracking James Bond – he is instead merely a man pushed to the breaking point and beyond, one for whom death is a kind of release.

Richard Armitage’s Lucas North, on the other hand, provides a completely different sort of protagonist – one much more in keeping with the darker tone the show turned to in later seasons. First appearing in the first episode of the seventh season (concurrent to the death of Adam Carter), North was the former head of Section D (prior to *Spooks*’ first protagonist Tom Quinn) who had been captured while on a mission in Russia. He was imprisoned by the Russians for eight years

until Harry Pearce negotiated for his release. North rejoins MI5 as Senior Case Officer, taking over Adam Carter's case load and assets. At the beginning of the ninth season he is reassigned as the head of Section D, after the death of Ros Myers.

It is during the ninth season that the truth about his character slowly becomes apparent. North is in fact a man called 'John Bateman', a former drug trafficker who, while working in Dakar in his youth became involved with the shadowy Vaughn Edwards. Bateman delivered a package of Edwards' to the British Embassy, which contained a bomb that killed seventeen people. Attempting to get out of Senegal, Bateman kills an acquaintance of his – the real Lucas North, who had just passed the first round of MI5 entrance exams – leaves the country and joins MI5 as North. Bateman psychologically suppresses the memories of his true identity, completely 'becoming' Lucas North until series nine, when Edwards re-appears and begins to blackmail him.

The complex series of events that unfold lead to North giving Edwards classified government information on a deadly genetic weapon called 'Albany' which Edwards intends to sell to the Chinese. The truth is revealed to Section D, which leads to a confrontation between North and Harry Pearce on a rooftop – North planning to kill Pearce in retribution for the accidental death of Maya Lahan, a woman with whom North/Bateman was involved. Instead, upon hearing from Pearce that Albany is a fake, North throws himself from the rooftop to his death. In taking this action, Lucas North/John Bateman essentially becomes the tragic hero/antihero; destroyed not simply by the demands of a difficult, thankless career, but also by his own personal demons, which are amplified to the level of national security threat due to his position. It is an approach which, while significantly different in its character

arc to other, more typical espionage protagonists, places North firmly in the *Spooks* tradition of flawed and ultimately doomed characters.

Death and danger: the true cost of defending the realm

This constant examination of the psychological and personal impacts of a career in espionage is one of the key factors in *Spooks*' success, particularly when compared to its US contemporaries. Morey observes that:

...if in shows such as *24* and *The Grid* the security services are the nation in miniature, then *Spooks* shows a nation at once inclusive and multicultural, but also torn by anxieties and doubts, expediency and intrigue, and a mistrustful relationship with its allies. An ostensive set-up involving agents safeguarding British national security against a range of threats is, in fact, only one aspect of a programme that is also keen to explore the psychological cost to agents of a life of danger, double-dealing and subterfuge.²¹⁸

This constant danger and high body count is not simply limited to *Spooks*' protagonists either – characters usually depicted as being in technical support roles are constantly threatened and killed off. For example, the character of Colin Wells was a well-established technical assistant in the first four series. In the fifth series premiere his character is sent into the field, and he is caught by a number of conspirators working inside and against the British government. Chased through woods, bloody and battered, he finally surrenders to his opponents, saying to them:

I'm not strong enough to fight you, I was never any good at this running and jumping thing. To be honest, I'm not really meant to be out in the field, it's just that we're very overstretched. So just get on with whatever it is you're going to do to me because I might be smaller and weaker than you, but...you can hurt me, but you won't humiliate me.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Peter Morey, "Strangers and stereotypes: The *Spooks* controversy and the framing of Muslims", *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol. 46 (2010), p. 535-536

²¹⁹ *Spooks*, 5.1, "Gas and Oil (Part 1)". Dir. Omar Madha. Kudos/BBC One. 2006.

One of his pursuers considers this, and then responds by saying, “The problem is Colin, the world is not made for small and weak people any more”.²²⁰ The two pursuers then lead Colin away and hang him as he pleads for his life. This rather visceral sequence of events serves to demonstrate that everyone in the intelligence services is vulnerable – not just the James Bonds of the world, but those with ‘desk jobs’. This is further reinforced in series 10,²²¹ when MI5 technician and data analyst Tariq Masood is assassinated in a manner highly reminiscent of the real-life killing of Georgi Markov by the Bulgarian Secret Police.²²²

These deaths also make some comment about the nature of the world in which MI5 operates – simply, that it has changed. Far from Section D’s workload merely ‘exploding’, as was stated in *Spooks*’ very first episode, the world has become a darker, considerably more violent place, at least for those who work in intelligence. This begins to become apparent several seasons into the show; in the series three episode “Who Guards the Guards?” Joint Intelligence Committee chairman Oliver Mace says to Harry Pearce, “If you’re asking me, “is there, at present, anything we shouldn’t do to achieve our ends?” then frankly, I don’t know. Post-9/11 we made a decision, that nothing, nobody was to be off limits any more. Look around at what’s been happening since Iraq, we’re up against it, we can’t say anymore “this we do not do””.²²³

By making its protagonists (and, in fact, all characters, both major and minor) inherently vulnerable, the show achieves something similar to *24*’s Jack Bauer, but

²²⁰ Ibid

²²¹ *Spooks*, 10.2, “Episode 2”. Dir. Jonathan Brackley & Sam Vincent. Kudos/BBC One. 2011.

²²² Markov was a Bulgarian dissident murdered in 1978 when an agent of the Bulgarian Secret Police, working with the KGB, stabbed him in the heel with an umbrella which released a vial of the deadly poison ricin into his system. Markov died three days later. The incident appears regularly in popular culture, and has become an iconic symbol of Cold War-era espionage.

²²³ *Spooks*, 3.3, “Who Guards the Guards?”. Dir. Cilla Ware. Kudos/BBC One. 2004.

in a completely different way. While Bauer is a veritable superman, living through all sorts of blood, violence and death, his *Spooks* equivalents are distinctly human and can be killed, often quite easily.

While Bauer is inevitably the more iconic archetype of the post-9/11 fictional spy, the characters of *Spooks* become more well-rounded, realistic people due to their vulnerability, which allows for a far higher level of audience engagement, sympathy and empathy. The empathy that audiences feel for Jack Bauer – the sorrow of a man pushed beyond emotional limits on a regular basis – is shifted over to the character of Harry Pearce, the head of MI5 Counter-terrorism. While he rarely ventures into the field and his job is more explicitly political in nature, Pearce has to make the consistently hard decisions that often lead to the deaths of his officers. As the only character to appear in every season of *Spooks*, he holds an unenviable position within Section D. While every protagonist of the show has been tragic in some respect, it is perhaps Harry Pearce who is the most tragic of them all, creating a very different master spy to the kneecap-shooting, running and shouting Jack Bauer. Rather, Pearce belongs more firmly to the le Carré spy tradition, while still existing (along with *Spooks* protagonists both living and dead) as a uniquely post-9/11 espionage protagonist.

Having now analysed the key texts of post-9/11 television espionage drama in depth, the next chapter of this dissertation will attempt to identify the key narrative and thematic considerations unique to these texts. This will then be used to construct the creative artefact which will aim to represent the archetypal post-9/11 thriller.

Chapter Four: “We can’t say anymore, ‘this we do not do’”: Approaching creative synthesis through narrative and thematic considerations

In attempting to create an original, fictional artefact with which to demonstrate the changes that have re-shaped television espionage drama post-9/11, it is important to establish a series of narrative and thematic characteristics common to key texts with which to inform said artefact. The purpose of the artefact is not to create a facsimile of these texts, but rather to create an original synthesis of common elements in order to identify an archetypal television espionage narrative. These elements will then help to form the basis from which an original narrative can be constructed.

Setting: While popular espionage fiction prior to 9/11 was heavily focussed on James Bond-inspired globe-hopping, the post-9/11 equivalent, as we have seen, is more interested in the prevention (or lack of prevention) of domestic terror. Therefore, post-9/11 television espionage drama tends to be tied to a relatively fixed sense of place. *Spooks* has always been distinctly London-based, while *24* is largely based in Los Angeles. The shows are not strictly tied to their primary locations, however – *Spooks* has a number of episodes set around the world, though mostly in Europe, and as mentioned earlier *24* was set in Washington, New York and London for a season each, as well as a brief two-hour jaunt to ‘Sangala’ – both shows, rather, are *informed* by a sense of location. This is often demonstrated through each show using distinctive landmarks, such as *Spooks*’ constant use of both Thames House and the Thames itself. While keeping the narrative set largely in one city is no doubt a practical financial consideration, creating a sense of setting and identity creates a

relationship with the audience – i.e. when the city comes under threat, by association, the audience does as well.

This also allows for filmic explorations of cities as characters in themselves, informing the aesthetic and thematic undertones of the text. *Spooks* spends most of its ten seasons casting London as a cold, blue-tinged city of glass, steel and high-rise buildings spread amongst grungy industrial estates. Though, as Cobley has noted, *Spooks* creates the illusion of a very *specific* London,

...while it is not directly involved with overseas operations...the narratives of *Spooks* almost entirely bracket out the squalor of much of contemporary London, ordinary people (except in the abstract as a group to be protected) and social class. Yet it does not bracket out homeland protection from crime or the notion of the populace in the way that the chase narrative of the contemporary espionage genres such as the Bourne trilogy does.²²⁴

24 does something similar, though it uses a larger variety of locations in and around Los Angeles to construct its plotlines, often framing them in terms of LA's cultural identity. Christopher Gair notes that "...the LA of *24* represents a fragmented, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic space of social and cognitive conflict where class, political, national and transnational boundaries are constantly destabilised".²²⁵ By framing cities as characters, espionage drama can create unique aesthetic identities, setting particular shows apart from other shows in the same genre. London and Los Angeles are highly distinctive cities, something capably demonstrated in *Spooks* and *24* respectively through the application of specific cinematic/visual approaches. Therefore, any attempt to create an espionage show linked to a single location should attempt to establish a similarly *unique* location as well as a cinematic language with which to depict it.

²²⁴ Paul Cobley, "'It's a fine line between safety and terror': crime and anxiety re-drawn in *Spooks*", *Film International*, Vol. 7 (2009), p.38

²²⁵ Christopher Gair, "*24* and post-national American identities", in *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), p.204

Plot: As a genre, espionage fiction has always utilised large numbers of plot points to keep the narrative moving. As Furby notes regarding *24*, “Each season, and every episode within that season, presents a set of clues, patterns, and gaps in information that shape the viewer’s experience of suspense and anticipation that is a key functional device of the thriller genre”.²²⁶ Double, triple and quadruple-crosses are common in these sorts of narratives, and the genre’s post-9/11 equivalent is no different, if anything intensifying the speed and dramatic weight of plot points. This is probably best demonstrated in *24*, which despite adhering roughly to a traditional three-act structure, creates sub-acts within itself through constantly moving the focus of the plot.²²⁷ Typically, a season of *24* can be split into three acts of eight episodes each; each act of eight will involve roughly three to four separate problems which are in turn resolved by the end of the act and replaced with new problems. This creates what Furby has called a “contract of intense involvement”²²⁸ with the audience that leads to a state of compulsive viewing, which in the case of *24* is further heightened through its use of pseudo-real-time. While the storylines in *Spooks* are largely stand-alone in nature, they create the same ‘contract’ not only by utilising the same high-velocity narratives, but by creating viewer investment through ongoing plot and character threads that continue (often in the background of the narrative) beyond single episodes and into entire seasons.

The key to creating this kind of drama lies in a combination of the two aforementioned elements: narratives must, by the definition of ‘espionage fiction’, be full of twists, turns and surprises, creating the aforementioned “contract of intense

²²⁶ Jacqueline Furby, “Interesting Times: The Demands *24*’s Real-Time Format Makes on its Audience” *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), p. 59

²²⁷ For a more detailed breakdown of the three-act structure, see Syd Field, *The definitive guide to screenwriting* (London: Ebury Press, 2003) and Syd Field, *Screenplay: The foundations of screenwriting* (New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2005).

²²⁸ Ibid

involvement”, yet they must also be laced with larger, overarching narratives for both plot and character, which develop over several episodes or even an entire season. This gives the audience a sense of continuity with the characters and the world of the series, thereby avoiding the trap of having individual episodes feeling isolated and with no bearing on the larger narrative.

Yet this kind of fiction operates with a particularly calculated mechanism for the release of plot information – withholding important facts from the audience (or, at the very least, from major characters) until near the conclusion of the narrative is an important storytelling trope of the thriller genre. Furby has stated that thrillers are “...particularly likely to delay the presentation of key images and information up until the final scene, or may include false or misleading information, which will cause the viewer to construct an inaccurate story until the moment when the complete information set is revealed”²²⁹ and this is a technique which can also be utilised to increase audience involvement.

Morality: Both *24* and *Spooks* regularly engage with the notion of morality, though in distinctly different ways. Indeed, the concept of what Sutherland and Swan have called “situational morality”²³⁰ has become common to most post-9/11 espionage fiction, regardless of the ideological position of its authors.²³¹ There are several possible ways in which this “situational morality” can manifest itself within these narratives, a combination of which will be used to demonstrate a post-9/11

²²⁹ Ibid

²³⁰ Sharon Sutherland, Sarah Swan, “‘Tell me where the bomb is, or I will kill your son’: Situational morality on *24*”, *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007) p.120

²³¹ This concept is an explicit part of the Bourne films’ overarching narrative thrust, for example.

moral landscape which seemingly requires the use of violence in order to do good, what Žižek has called, “a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence”.²³²

Firstly, a character working to prevent an act of terror can use torture (physical, psychological or otherwise) in order to gain information from a suspect. Often, this involves the character acting outside of their official remit – *24* is full of scenes involving Jack Bauer locking his superiors out of interrogation rooms so he can pull his pistol/knife/severed sparking electrical cable on a suspect – though occasionally the use of torture is sanctioned by a higher authority. Most critically though, the potential for violence is always present in the character, even if it is initially lurking beneath the surface.

Whether the suspect in fact knows anything is beside the point – the situation, combined with a ‘ticking time bomb’ narrative setup, creates a moral dilemma for the character. In attempting to prevent terrorism from occurring, they will have to engage in actions more commonly associated with terrorists. Torin Monahan has noted that *24* in particular is rife with these tropes, not just torture, but many other “extra-legal” actions, stating that, “routine interrogation and torture of suspects also figure prominently...as tacitly condoned methods, especially when immediate extraction is necessary to ensure public safety...Other sanctioned actions include things like jailbreaks of criminals in order to prevent biological attacks”.²³³

This leads into the second key moral concept of post-9/11 espionage fiction, that of characters working against terrorist actions having to take on characteristics more common to terrorists in order to prevent said actions. This comes from confronting enemies who, as Jack Bauer stated, “don’t care about your rules, all they

²³² Slavoj Žižek, “The Tyrant’s Bloody Robe”, *Violence* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2008), p. 1

²³³ Torin Monahan, “Just-in-time security: Permanent exceptions and Neoliberal orders”, *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007) p.109

care about is a result”.²³⁴ This becomes a complex and constant pull between the desire to defend democracy and freedom and the embrace of methods which are seemingly directed against everything that democracy and freedom stand for – torture, rendition and the invasion of privacy. The tools with which security agencies have to defend democracy are inherently contradictory to democracy’s purposes, creating a constant dialectic tension within the espionage narrative, while also engaging with the audience’s own moral ideology. This allows the narrative to raise questions involving these ‘moral imperatives’ without appearing overly didactic, and allows the audience to see multiple perspectives on the argument not only through their objective assessment of the posed scenarios, but their emotional identification and sympathy with the characters.

Lastly, the question of if and when to take action creates moral ambiguities. A common scenario in espionage fiction involves agents or agencies acquiring intelligence which, if acted upon, may save lives, usually at the cost of others. This moral dilemma regularly occurs in both *24* and *Spooks* whenever there is a large national threat – nuclear bomb, explosion, nerve gas etc. – where the potential loss of human life could be lessened by a public announcement. However, this can also cause panic and the possibility of further casualties, an undesirable scenario particularly if the threat can be eliminated without revealing it to the public. Due once again to the ‘ticking time bomb’ element, decisions regarding whether or not to release information to the public are often made at an agency, rather than governmental level, forcing characters to make difficult choices involving the potential deaths of thousands of innocent civilians.

²³⁴ *24 7.1*, “8:00am-9:00am”. Dir. Jon Cassar. 20th Century Fox Television. 2009.

Character: While espionage fiction most often utilises intense narrative convolvement in order to create compelling structure, its post-9/11 incarnation also focuses on character development, or more specifically on the destruction of character. As noted above, the protagonists of post-9/11 espionage drama are caught in a constant battle between their function of, essentially, preventing bad things from happening and the methods which they have to employ to achieve a positive outcome. *24* and *Spooks* both show the psychological strain that this moral dilemma causes the average human being, as well as the more immediate physical problems of being a 21st century counter-terrorist agent – constant threats, the death of colleagues and so forth. This is arguably the biggest change from pre-9/11 espionage drama, one that can even be seen in the Daniel Craig-starring Bond movies, perhaps the most ‘classical’ and iconic of spy narratives still functioning.

Yet the paradox of moral ambiguity is not a new one, as Stephen de Wijze has pointed out, the notion of ‘the lesser of two evils’ goes back to Machiavelli:

...persons engaged in practical politics (realpolitik) are often forced to choose between the lesser of two evils, using violence and other unpleasant means to achieve their goals. Consequently, morally upright persons cannot help but get their hands dirty in politics, and they are right to do so...we want our politicians to be good enough for politics, but not too good. If they are too good and keep their hands clean, they will fail to protect us; but if they have no qualms about committing such acts as murder and torture, they are persons that shouldn't be given power over us.²³⁵

This tenuous balancing point is where the protagonists of the contemporary thriller are required to operate; the very fine line between ‘doing what it takes’ and ‘madness’. It is also a delicate balance to thrust onto an audience – if a character is too weak, an audience will not empathise with them, and if a character is too aggressive they quickly lose their humanity, regressing into nothing more than

²³⁵ Stephen de Wijze, “Between Hero and Villain: Jack Bauer and the Problem of “Dirty Hands””, *24 and Philosophy: The World According to Jack* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 22

trained killers. In short, when characters lose their sense of balance in dealing with realpolitik, they become unstable, which provides a rich source of character-driven drama. *Spooks* has addressed this balance in its protagonists by pushing them as far away from their humanity as possible before killing them off, and in several instances (most notably the Lucas North/John Bateman scenario) sending them far past losing their humanity.

24 constantly addresses and re-addresses this precarious balance in intriguing ways. Firstly it grounds Bauer in his humanity by giving him a family; though his wife is killed at the end of season one, his daughter appears regularly throughout the show to remind him that he is more than merely an agent of government, he is also a father. This moral reinforcement is usually then tied into the plot by putting the daughter in significant danger which Bauer then has to alleviate. The most interesting example of the balance in *24* however, occurs at the beginning of the critically maligned sixth season of the show. Bauer has been returned to the US after two years in Chinese custody, where he was tortured daily. Immediately sent back into action but then, due to a typically complex sequence of events, forced to work against CTU with reformed terrorist Hamri Al-Assad, Bauer finds himself having to torture a suspect for information. He plunges a ball-point pen into an open wound on the man's back, but recoils at his screams and backs down, claiming that he can see in the man's eyes that he has no further information. Bauer seems physically disturbed at his actions, particularly seeing as though he has spent the last two years receiving similar treatment from the Chinese. Al-Assad approaches the prisoner and calmly slides a knife into the man's kneecap before asking again; the man is much more responsive, giving Al-Assad the information he wants. Afterwards Jack looks

on, shaken. “I don’t know how to do this anymore,” he says. Al-Assad considers him for a moment before replying, “you’ll remember”.²³⁶

By constantly reminding viewers of his ongoing internal struggle, Bauer always remains a sympathetic character. Though the approach to his particular character is unique, the endurance of all post-9/11 espionage protagonists must be stretched to the breaking point, and often beyond. Bauer’s damage as a result of life as a CTU agent is physical as well as psychological (numerous times throughout the sixth and seventh seasons other characters recoil at Bauer’s scar-ridden torso and prison tattoos; he also acquired a heroin habit in the line of duty between the second and third seasons) and remains a constant factor. Similarly in *Spooks*, agents lose friends, family, work colleagues and often their lives in the line of duty. The key to creating good characterisation in this instance is keeping these agents in states of almost constant crisis – physical, emotional and psychological.

Cinematic aesthetics and the ‘culture of surveillance’: While there is no single, identifiable set of aesthetics common to all post-9/11 television espionage drama, most shows share certain universal visual traits. These are best described by Daniel Chamberlain and Scott Rustin, who appropriate Caldwell’s notions of ‘cinematic’ and ‘videographic’ television. The cinematic can be quite literally defined as an appropriation of cinematic aesthetics – in the case of *24*, the decision to shoot in the 16:9 anamorphic widescreen ratio (at a time when 4:3 was still the standard) and at cinema quality 35mm film. *Spooks* has also always been shot and presented in 16:9, while the gauge is 16mm film, granting the series a gritty visual style that brings it in line with docu-drama, replete with buzzing film grain. The

²³⁶ *24* 6.2, “7:00am-8:00am”. Dir. Jon Cassar. 20th Century Fox Television. 2007.

videographic however, is described by Chamberlain and Rustin as exhibiting “hyperactivity and an obsession with effects; this style can readily be found in the layering of talking heads, graphics and backdrops on cable news providers such as CNN or MSNBC”.²³⁷

In *24* the videographic is integrated into the *mise-en-scène* and is foregrounded regularly in each episode – onscreen ticking clocks, the splitting of the screen and on-screen text identifying locations, characters and so on. While *24* is an extreme example of this, most other espionage television utilises at least one (if not more) of these traits – *Spooks* takes both the on-screen text and the occasional splitting of the screen, for example. This creates what Chamberlain and Rustin call a sense of ideological “liveness” that reminds viewers that they are – in the case of *24*, quite literally – running “live” and against the clock.²³⁸ This notion, combined with the aforementioned ‘ticking time bomb scenario’ creates feelings of excitement, anxiety and extreme tension, all desirable traits for a thriller, and all traits that are thus accomplished visually as well as narratively.

It can thus be argued that the archetypal aesthetic of post-9/11 espionage drama is a fusion of these ‘cinematic’ and ‘videographic’ approaches. These are approaches which should, aesthetically, be completely incompatible, but instead are made to work collectively to create a unique thriller experience that can be treated as ‘real’ and therefore a product intrinsically linked to the *zeitgeist*. This can also be seen in the appropriation of non-cinematic visual motifs throughout these shows, such as the use of surveillance video, handheld cameras, footage from mobile phones, so-called ‘amateur’ video, scratchy voice recordings and so on. As well as

²³⁷ Daniel Chamberlain, Scott Rustin, “*24* and twenty-first century quality television”, *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007) p.16

²³⁸ *Ibid*

providing a sense of documentary realism, these non-cinematic artefacts evoke the culture of surveillance prevalent in Western society in the wake of 9/11.

This culture of surveillance is perhaps best demonstrated by the US Patriot Act, an astonishing piece of legislation signed into law through the US Congress on October 26, 2001. The bill, as Elaine Tyler May has described, “granted federal agents access to e-mails and voice mails of suspected terrorists ... The law expands the authority of the federal government to conduct electronic surveillance and wiretaps, screen computers, and access private records”.²³⁹ The US Patriot Act (or the “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act”) was a highly controversial piece of legislation when it was first introduced, and remains so to this day. In a similar vein, the United Kingdom (and specifically London) has arguably now become the world leader in electronic surveillance, with a report in 2008 placing the conservative estimate of surveillance cameras in the country at 4,285,000, or approximately one camera per fourteen people.²⁴⁰ The report goes on to estimate that London alone contains roughly half a million CCTV (Closed-circuit Television) cameras.²⁴¹

Spooks demonstrates this surveillance quite explicitly, with Grid data analysts often tracking suspects via an interconnected network of on-the-ground CCTV cameras linked to advanced facial recognition software. The suggestion being that, between CCTV and the prevalence of Web 2.0 content such as YouTube and social networking, Western society is being constantly recorded, analysed, archived

²³⁹ Elaine Tyler May, “Echoes of the Cold War: The Aftermath of September 11 at Home”, *September 11 in History: A watershed moment?*, ed. by Mary L. Dudziak (London: Duke University Press, 2003), p.47-48

²⁴⁰ Channel 4 News, “FactCheck: how many CCTV cameras?”, *Channel 4*, Online website, 2008 <<http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/society/factcheck+how+many+cctv+cameras/2291167.htm>> (Accessed 29 May 2012)

²⁴¹ Ibid

and deconstructed. The appropriation of these non-cinematic artefacts not only acknowledges the culture of surveillance (and the underlying moral complications of its application), but utilises their application to create a sense of the 'real' in the audience, as well as a visual reference to documentary or docu-drama.

This can also be read as a response to the what Jean Baudrillard has called "the relation of the image to reality" and the appropriation of the 21st century's obsession with the instantaneous, global image by terrorists who have "exploited the 'real-time' of images, their instantaneous global worldwide transmission, just as they exploited stock market speculation, electronic information and air traffic".²⁴²

Baudrillard goes on to ask:

How long do things stand with the real event...if reality is everywhere infiltrated by images, virtuality and fiction?...But does reality actually outstrip fiction? If it seems to do so, this is because it has absorbed fiction's energy, and has itself become fiction. We might almost say that reality is jealous of fiction, that the real is jealous of the image...It is a kind of duel between them, a contest to see which can be the most unimaginable.²⁴³

In this constant dialectic between fiction and reality, the unique fusion of cinematic, non-cinematic and videographic imagery in post-9/11 espionage television drama creates an object which occupies a unique space – fiction with the appearance and aesthetic characteristics of the 'real' world. In attempting to write a creative synthesis of these models, the use of these aesthetic traits is centrally important.

The role of technology: As previously mentioned the culture of surveillance is a key concept of both the post-9/11 *zeitgeist* and the espionage television it has spawned. Surveillance at the level and sophistication demonstrated in *Spooks* and *24*

²⁴² Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism* (London: Verso, 2002), p.27

²⁴³ Ibid, p. 27-28

requires a high reliance on technology. The notion of technology and spy ‘gadgets’ (perhaps realised most in most iconic fashion by the ever-more ridiculous pieces of technology given to James Bond by Q branch in every nearly every Bond film until *Casino Royale* brought the series back to the realm of reality in 2006)²⁴⁴ has been a long standing part of espionage fiction. Indeed, it has long been a part of the spy game in reality, with the CIA’s Office of Technical Service (OTS) having been formed in 1951 to, as Robert Wallace describes, create “devices and capabilities to improve the CIA’s ability to identify, recruit and securely handle clandestine agents”.²⁴⁵ It is from the OTS that most of the ‘James Bond’ style gadgets have drawn inspiration, with real world devices including invisible ink, hidden radio transmitters, cigarettes that fire bullets and, perhaps most memorably, a hollowed out dead rat used for ‘dead drops’.

‘Technology’ in both reality and espionage fiction has translated, in the post-9/11 world, into exceptionally high tech surveillance and communications equipment. The sophistication of equipment is, in reality, somewhat exaggerated, as former CIA officer Milt Bearden has pointed out:

The myth is that the United States has unlimited satellite resources providing real-time, minutely detailed coverage of any spot on Earth. That’s Hollywood. The reality is that U.S. imagery assets are strained to their limits, with more demand being placed on them today than any time in the last decade...the intelligence community often has to settle for one pass over an important target every few days.²⁴⁶

Or, as another former CIA officer, R. James Woolsey, so succinctly put it after having seen Phillip Noyce’s 1992 thriller *Patriot Games*, “The satellites are

²⁴⁴ Though, rather intriguingly, the Q character and his branch returned to the James Bond universe in the 2012 instalment, *Skyfall* after having been absent from both *Casino Royale* and *Quantum of Solace*.

²⁴⁵ Robert Wallace, H. Keith Melton, *Spycraft: Inside the CIA’s top secret spy lab* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2008), p. xx

²⁴⁶ Milt Bearden, “Fact Versus Fiction”, *The Literary Spy*, ed. by Charles E. Lathrop (Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 2004) p. 152-153

good, but they're not that good".²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this technology (whether it is merely a surveillance camera, a satellite, some form of patently ridiculous spy gadget or the 21st century phenomenon of social media) is at the heart of the post-9/11 world and its associated fiction. Susan Willis has observed that:

Where the nineteenth century gave birth to the forensic sciences, popularized by the ploy of the fingerprint in detective novels, we now boast a host of technologies guaranteed to inscribe us in the real: voice prints, retinal scans, and DNA. And where Marshall McLuhan once shocked the world by proclaiming the "medium is the message," thus indicating that meaning was no longer rooted in what was said but in how it was communicated, we have now entered a world where the code is reality...With the imaginary steeped in the tedium of information, and the real reduced to the barren skeleton of the code, we risk becoming a nation of sleepwalkers, yearning to recover the remnant of the symbolic order in our dreams.²⁴⁸

Information and its transmission has become the currency of contemporary espionage fiction. Therefore, the technology and gadgets in said fiction have come to reflect this, moving away from James Bond and OTS-inspired guns-in-cigarette packets, and instead focussing on technology for the collection and retrieval of information. This can be as complex as the utilisation of satellite technology and facial recognition software, or as simple as the placement of a variety of microphones and surveillance devices. It can even be as simple as the use of a mobile phone to transmit information; Read Mercer Schuchardt has called *24* "a documentary of the cell phone's complete takeover of contemporary life. All else is commentary".²⁴⁹ While the first season of *24* now appears dated in terms of spy technology, its cornerstones of mobile phones, internet-connected computers and satellite systems remain key technologies in contemporary espionage drama. The

²⁴⁷ R. James Woolsey, "Fact Versus Fiction", *The Literary Spy*, ed. by Charles E. Lathrop (Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 2004) p. 152

²⁴⁸ Susan Willis, "Only the shadow knows", *Portents of the Real: A primer for post-9/11 America* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 75

²⁴⁹ Read Mercer Schuchardt, "How the Cell Phone Changed the World and Made *24*", *24 and Philosophy: The World According to Jack* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 169

dangers of dependence upon technology are frequently highlighted in these texts as well, particularly in *24*'s eighth season, which sees CTU New York attacked by an EMP device which incapacitates their technical abilities. Any rejection of technology is also viewed as disruptive, which is why when Muhammed Ibn Khaldun throws his MI5-supplied surveillance equipment away in the *Spooks* episode "Nest of Angels", he is immediately treated with suspicion by his handlers.²⁵⁰

In attempting to create a contemporary spy thriller, there must be a delicate balance between the use of technology and the use of more traditional means of intelligence gathering by its protagonists. There must also be an acknowledgement of the gadget-obsessed nature of espionage fiction in general, although this does not have to be taken to extreme levels.²⁵¹

Retrieving SIGINT Data – Documenting the Creative Artefact

The writing of a television series with which to explore these narrative and thematic characteristics has several constraints. As it is outside the scope of this dissertation to write the requisite number of screenplays to constitute an entire series or season of an original television show I have instead elected to construct the *narrative arc* for a series, then select several, individual episodes and write their screenplays in full.

The question of the length of a series or season is also potentially difficult. In British drama, shows can run from three episodes of ninety minutes (*Chris Ryan's Strike Back*) to six, eight or ten episodes of roughly an hour (*Spooks*) while American shows average twenty-two to twenty-four episodes of forty-five minutes

²⁵⁰ *Spooks* 2.2, "Nest of Angels". Dir. Bharat Nalluri. Kudos/BBC One. 2003.

²⁵¹ For example, geosynchronous satellite surveillance would be considered within the realm of reality, whereas just about anything given to James Bond by Q in the seventies – including guns in ski poles, grappling suspenders, a mini submarine and a fake nipple – would not.

for network television (*24*) or ten (*Sleeper Cell*) and twelve to thirteen episodes for cable television (*The Wire*). To further complicate matters, some American networks and cable providers will schedule a shorter first season as a ‘test run’ for a show before committing to a full-length series. For *The Section* I have chosen to work with a twelve episode story-arc, as I believe this gives enough time to create a three-tiered episode structure, a structure which will allow the creation of standalone stories, multi-episode stories and season-long narrative arcs. I am also working on the basis of a forty-five minute running time per episode, as this is most common for ten to twelve episode series which are designed to run for one hour on network television, including time for commercial breaks.

Simply writing three screenplays in narrative sequence is not practical, as the nature of season long story arcs means that the larger themes which have been discussed at length in the analytical portion of this dissertation would not be able to be properly demonstrated. Similarly, writing three out-of-sequence screenplays would not create any sense of context or continuity. While flashbacks could be inserted into the individual episodes narratives, such a device would not make sense in the larger context of the series and would take away screen time and narrative drive from the events of each episode. Therefore I have chosen to create an additional document – the show bible. A common document written in the inception and pre-production stages of a new series, the show bible exists for two purposes – firstly to provide an in-depth guide to the world of the show, and secondly to work as a ‘pitch’ document when a series is being presented to a network.

In America, the writing of a show bible is worth (ironically) twenty-four units with the Writers Guild of America (WGA), the requisite amount for membership. The WGA defines this as, “Long-term story projection, which is

defined for this purpose as a bible, for a specified term, on an existing, five times per week non-prime time serial” or “Bible for any television serial or primetime miniseries of at least four hours”.²⁵² For the purposes of *The Section*, the show bible will demonstrate, in a tone suitable for a pitch document, how the aforementioned narrative and thematic considerations will function within the show, as well as outlining a twelve-episode story arc.

The three screenplays which will be written for this dissertation are taken from key points in the series. Firstly, the pilot episode will establish the world of the series and the characters, as well as key components of the season-long story arc. This will be followed by the second episode, which is an intentional ‘stand-alone’ episode. The last screenplay is for episode nine, which appears to be a self-contained episode, but sets up the narrative for the final third (or last act) of the first season, tying together threads of the season-long story arc. It is my belief that by choosing these key episodes, as well as the creation of a show bible, I will be able to demonstrate not only the overall ‘world’ of *The Section*, but also its role as a synthesis of the key texts of this dissertation.

²⁵² Writers Guild of America, “Join the Guild: How to become a member”, *Writers Guild of America*, Online website, 2006 <<http://www.wga.org/content/default.aspx?id=84>> (Accessed 31 May 2012)

THE SECTION

Series Bible

By
Patrick J. Lang

16/08/15

The Fundamentals of The Section

The Section is about fear.

It is about the fear that consumes our everyday lives. The fear that someone, somewhere wants to hurt us, to maim us, to grind us down until we are but shadows of our former selves. *The Section* is about the things that we do to quell those fears; the people who we place in charge of our protection, our wellbeing. *The Section* is about spies.

Our show is built on the idea that a series can be an entertaining, white-knuckle, action-packed espionage thriller, yet still engage with political, cultural and social issues in a compelling way without descending into didacticism. The end result will be a visceral, exciting and furiously contemporary thriller that deals with terrorism in the 21st century. It is the task of the show to not only provide a picture of intelligence work in contemporary Australia, but also to maintain a near-constant level of tension which will keep viewers coming back to the show week after week to experience stories that achieve a strange resonance – these are events that could be happening in your own backyard.

To that end the series utilises a three-tiered structure with which to frame its narratives; the structure itself has long been utilised in drama television, from *Hill Street Blues* to the 2004 reboot of *Battlestar Galactica* and beyond. This structure allows for long-form narrative exploration through an ongoing continuing storyline, while stand-alone episodes make the series more accessible to casual viewers or those tuning in for the first time. Additionally there will also be multi-episode stories, usually in the form of a two-part narrative, which will provide the appropriate peaks and crescendos throughout each series. The structure is:

1. Series Arcs
2. Multi-Episode Arcs
3. Episodic Arcs

The Series Arcs will run throughout the show, and remain in a constant state of evolution. Thus, when questions are answered at the end of one series, they will give way to another set of questions. Our goal is *not* to keep the audience in a constant state of confusion, ala *Lost*, but rather to keep the level of intrigue high by peeling back further layers of conspiracy and deception to get at that ever nebulous quality in espionage drama: the truth. Multi-Episode Arcs (usually two episodes, though there is room to expand further if necessary) allow us to fully explore a subject in an in-depth manner. The ‘Paul Baker’ arc that takes place in the middle of the first season is an example of this – it not only allows for a much more complex plot, but provides a mid-season narrative climax which will hook viewers in as we head into the

explosive final episodes. Episodic Arcs are ‘one-shots’ – single, standalone episodes perfect for hooking casual or first time viewers which also allow us to explore different material than the Series Arcs, therefore avoiding the pitfalls of the later, conspiracy-obsessed days of *The X-Files* which made it impossible for new viewers to become involved.

The key to the success of this model is keeping the stakes high at all times – throughout the course of the pilot episode alone the team will deal with explosions, snipers, bomb threats, terrorists and a dirty bomb. The trick is to not let these concepts descend into cartoon caricatures, and to keep them based firmly in reality – the threat must always seem real. The men and women of *The Section* live in a state of perpetual crisis, but they prevail thanks to their collective wits and brains.

The threat is real.

The war is on.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement	130
Glossary of Terms	134
Dagda Security (aka The Section)	139
ONAFD (Office of National Assessments Field Division)	140
Main Character Biographies	
John Bishop	140
Malcolm Richards	142
Alex Walker	144
Jade Zhu	146
Samir (Sam) Mahmoud	148
Eric Johnson	150
Secondary Character Biographies	151
Season One	
Story Arcs	154
The Structure of the Conspiracy	156
Character Arcs	157
Episode Synopses	
Pilot	158
Blasphemous Rumours	156
From Safety to Where...?	159
#12 & \$35	160
Atrocity Exhibition	161
A Short Term Effect	162
Close to the Edge	163
Broken English	165
In a Silent Way	166
Violator	167
The Killing Moon	167
Closedown	168
Equipment, Personnel and Procedures	
The Grid	172

Staff and Organisation	172
Weapons	173
Communications	174

MISSION STATEMENT

The Section:
Australian Espionage Drama

Australian intelligence services have greater powers to impede civil liberties than their overseas counterparts.

It sounds ludicrous, even fictional, like something Orwell might have dreamt up in a totalitarian rage, but the above statement is absolutely true. A 2002 amendment to the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Bill, pushed through by the Howard government in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, gave unheard of powers to ASIO, our internal security body (the equivalent of MI5 or the FBI). The bill gave ASIO the right to seize people on twenty-eight day warrants, hold them in ‘secure’ locations and force them to give up documents and other evidence that could be used against them. They can strip-search you, throw you in a holding cell and leave you to rot.

Our intelligence officers have more power to detain citizens than the CIA or MI6.

The above facts are only known by a relatively small percentage of the community, despite there being no restriction on this information’s dissemination. “Our intelligence community has the most power” is a statement that belies a lot of drama, and therefore makes it perfect for a fully formed, action packed drama series.

Australia has a long and rich history of producing popular genre television – a quick glance at the ratings figures (and syndication rights) for shows like *Water Rats* and *Stingers* reinforces this. ***Australian audiences like crime on their television sets.*** Some years ago *Underbelly* set staggeringly high viewing numbers for a locally produced crime series.

Imagine the potential for a locally produced espionage drama.

The popularity of the espionage television drama has risen dramatically in the post-9/11 world, with international shows like the BBC’s irrepressible *Spooks* and Fox’s infamous *24* (both of which returned in 2014 after a considerable hiatus) wowing and enthralling audiences around the world, while still managing to engage in political discussion. Australian television, despite its plethora of procedural cop dramas and true crime miniseries, has yet to actively engage in espionage drama production.

Our show will change all that. If Australian audiences can accept Australian cops on Australian streets solving Australian crimes, they will be blown away by the

machinations of a secret government espionage agency playing out on their screens every week. Our show will be relevant, gripping and will doubtless evoke that most difficult to achieve goal in television – the office discussion around the water cooler the following day.

What will make it even more gripping is how immediately real it is.

Our show is set in Adelaide. Not Los Angeles. Not London. Adelaide. A small city, but where big things happen. Espionage dramas always separate Australian audiences by global dislocation – while many may have visited, not everyone is familiar with the layout of these mega-cities. Adelaide is an Australian city that will be recognised by Australians, making the threat, the danger, and thus the tension, much more immediate. A possible terrorist attack on the Hollywood Bowl in L.A., for example, may be devastating, but carries little dramatic weight with local audiences. In our show, Adelaide is under threat – in the pilot episode alone we see a deadly nerve agent being released in Adelaide’s central railway terminal.

A sense of place is of prime importance.

Throughout the show we will visit the Adelaide Hills, Aldinga Beach, the suburbs both north and south, Adelaide skyscrapers, Rymill Park, the South Australian countryside and many others. Our action will play out not against the smog of L.A. or the crisp industry of London, but in Adelaide – city of churches, city of parklands, city of espionage.

Creating a strong sense of time and place will be of utmost importance, and will filter through every aspect of our show.

Visual. Our show is set in the real world. As such, an overly ‘cinematic’ style should be avoided; if there’s to be an epic crane shot, for example, there had better be a strong narrative reason to support one. A verite-documentary visual style will be utilised to this end, without evoking the ‘hand-held cliché that has become popular in every American police procedural. Our hand-held cameras are inspired not by *Law & Order*, but by the edgy, paranoid observations of the *Bourne* films and *Children of Men*. Keeping cameras at eye-level where possible is equally important, as it will grant opportunities for the audience to more firmly connect with the characters. Audiences should be able to switch on their screens and feel as if they have come across a documentary on the Australian intelligence services.

This is not to say that we can’t make a crisp, attractive looking series – *The Section* can still be shot on full HD video under full cinematic conditions and lighting. The key is to make the style effortless and immediate, not purposefully ugly. Similarly, any actions scenes that occur should shy away from the ‘awesome’ shot; our show won’t show the same explosion from fifteen different angles just because it looks

good. Our show is more interested in the questions surrounding the explosion: “What is the shot? Where’s the camera? Who’s holding it?” Our camera doesn’t stare blankly at an enemy with a gun when they start firing – our camera *gets the hell down*. The key word here should be ‘visceral’ – we want the audience riveted firmly to their seats as if the experience is happening to them.

There’s plenty of room for visual contrasts too; while the action will be gritty and visceral, this will be offset with the relative visual calm of other locations: The Section, the halls of power, the streets of Adelaide... The organisation of government industry and architecture will be violently aesthetically opposed to the tension that we’re drawing on. This will give us multiple textures and levels to play with, even within the constraints of genre. Our show will have multiple, differing and layered levels of tension – we’re not ‘on’ or ‘off’, we’re anywhere between one and one thousand.

Editing. Like the cinematography, our show will be cut in a dynamic fashion, while avoiding the eye-aching fast-editing so popular in contemporary action cinema. While some fast cutting will be necessary to keep the intensity high, the model here is much more the textural, rhythmic cutting style of a Paul Greengrass movie, not the attention-deficit shenanigans of a Michael Bay flick.

However, equally important are extended takes and long masters for the framing of plot. After all, ultimately our show is about *characters*, and our actors should have a plethora of opportunities to showcase this. Dialogue and exposition should be framed and cut to evoke a sense of building suspense and dramatic tension. While the action scenes should be about near-information overload, our quieter moments should be about utilising extended takes to pull our audience firmly into the world of the show.

Story. Our stories will be an equal balance of action, suspense, intrigue and character. While the *scale* of the threat – everything from psychotic Christian fundamentalists to terrorist bombings, rogue agents to global conspiracies – will change on an episode-to-episode basis, the *stakes* will always remain high. Our show is a drama; it’s not simply about the nuts and bolts of constructing a cracking spy narrative (although we do that too), it’s about how these narrative events impact on our characters. We will not shy away from contentious topics from throughout the political spectrum. We will not be didactic, but we will highlight political realities. At the end of the day ‘entertainment’ is still our watchword; we simply aim to create entertainment that functions on multiple levels. The notion of ‘conspiracy theories’ will be explored throughout the show as well (Mahmoud is slightly obsessive about these theories, as befits his compulsive personality) but we will keep this within the realms of the genre and believability. In short, stories regarding shadowy organisations, secret plots and suppressed information are fine; anything involving aliens or time travel is not.

Most importantly, **Character**. Our characters, for all their specialist experience and training, are *real* people. They are not action heroes. They are not James Bond. They are fallible. They make mistakes. They crack under pressure. They can bleed. *They can be killed*.

We are working within a genre, that is not in question. As such, we are required to have certain archetypes in order for our show to function. However, Mahmoud is not merely ‘the tech geek’, Walker is not only ‘the action hero’, Bishop is not just ‘the tortured agent’ and Johnson is not ‘the uptight bureaucrat’. For our characters, these labels are merely descriptive; the truth of their characters is much more convoluted, presented in endless shades of grey. They can be contradictory. This will keep the characters fresh and unpredictable, it will keep them intriguing.

It will form the nucleus of our show.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abu Sayyaf – Military Islamist separatist group based in and around the southern Philippines. Responsible for various terrorist actions since the early 1990s, including bombings, kidnappings, assassinations and extortion. Also known as **al-Harakat al-Islamiyya** or the **Islamic Movement**.

AFP – Australian Federal Police. Enforces criminal law and protects Australia's interests.

AIC – Australian Intelligence Community. Collective acronym for Australian intelligence agencies.

Al-Qaeda – Global militant Sunni Islamist group formed by Osama bin Laden which calls for worldwide Jihad. Characteristic techniques include suicide bombers and simultaneous attacks. Also known as the **International Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Crusaders and Jews**.

ASIO – Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. Responsible for internal Australian intelligence and security (equivalent to **MI5**).

ASIS – Australian Secret Intelligence Service. Responsible for collecting foreign intelligence (equivalent to **MI6**).

Bilderberg group – An annual conference of 'persons of influence' from Western Europe and North America. Conspiracy theorists believe them to be a 'global elite', secretly influencing and controlling world governments

Black operation – A covert operation typically involving activities that are highly clandestine and often outside of standard military protocol. In most 'black ops' no official records are kept.

Burn notice – An official statement issued by an intelligence agency to other agencies, stating that an individual or group is unreliable. The notice implies that all information regarding the individual/group should be disregarded or 'burned'.

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency. Civilian intelligence agency of the United State government. Provides national security intelligence assessment and can engage in covert activities.

CQC – Close quarters combat. Short-duration, high-intensity conflict, characterised by sudden violence at close range. Sometimes also referred to as **Close quarters battle (CQB)**.

DCRI – *Direction Centrale du Renseignement Intérieur* (Central Directorate of Interior Intelligence). French internal security agency, operates under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior. Mostly concerned with counter-espionage and counter-terrorism within French borders.

DGSE – *Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure* (Directorate-General for External Security). French external security agency, operates under the direction of the French Ministry of Defence. Mostly concerned with paramilitary operations and counterintelligence abroad.

DSD – Defence Signals Directorate. Australian government intelligence agency responsible for signals intelligence (**SIGINT**) and information security (**INFOSEC**). Equivalent of the American **NSA** and British **GCHQ**. Operates listening stations that are thought to be a part of **ECHELON**.

Duress code – A covert signal used by an individual that is under duress to indicate their state. Usually embedded in normal communication as a word or phrase to alert other people that the subject is under duress.

ECHELON – The signals intelligence collection and analysis network operated by the five signatory states to the UK-USA Security Agreement (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA – abbreviated to **AUSCANNZUKUS** or **Five Eyes**). It is a software system which controls the download and dissemination of the intercept of commercial satellite trunk communications.

EMP – Electromagnetic Pulse. A burst of electromagnetic radiation, usually the result of certain high energy explosions (particularly nuclear) or fluctuating magnetic fields. Causes severe disruption/destruction to nearby electrical/electronic systems.

False flag terror – Covert operations designed to deceive the public in such a way that the operations appear as though they are being carried out by other entities.

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation. An agency of the United States Department of Justice. Serves as a federal criminal investigative body and an internal intelligence agency.

FSB – *Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii* (Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation). Domestic security agency of the Russian Federation. Successor of the **KGB**.

GCHQ – Government Communication Headquarters. British intelligence agency responsible for providing signals intelligence (**SIGINT**) and information assurance to the UK government and armed forces.

GICM – *Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain* (Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group). Sunni Islamist terrorist organisation affiliated with **Al-Qaeda**.

Go bag – Term for a bag or backpack that most espionage agents will have prepared and stashed in a location they know to be secure. Literally contains all the appropriate documents and equipment they need to ‘go’ at a moment’s notice, i.e. passport, cash etc.

HAARP – High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program. An ionospheric research program to analyse the ionosphere and to investigate the potential for developing ionospheric enhancement technology for radio communications and surveillance purposes. Believed by many conspiracy theorists to be capable of generating earthquakes and mind control.

HERF Weapon – High Energy Radio Frequency Weapon. A directed energy weapon that uses high intensity radio waves to disrupt electronics. Essentially a portable **EMP** device.

INFOSEC – Information Security. The practice of protecting information and information systems from unauthorised access.

ISIS – The **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria**. A Salafi jihadist militant group who have risen in power considerably as of 2014. Responsible for multiple human rights abuses, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

Jihad – An Islamic term literally translated as ‘struggle’, seen as a religious duty of Muslims. Generally thought of in the West to mean ‘holy war’, but in fact holds multiple (and many non-military) meanings.

Kevlar – Para-aramid synthetic fibre, often used for bullet proof armour.

KGB – *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti* (Committee for State Security). The national security agency of the Soviet Union from 1954-1991. Dealt with internal security and intelligence as well as maintaining a secret police force.

Krav Maga – Israeli developed hand-to-hand combat system taught to Special Forces. Known for its philosophy emphasising threat neutralisation, simultaneous defensive and offensive manoeuvres and aggression.

MI5 – Military Intelligence, Section 5. UK counter-intelligence and security agency.

MI6 – Military Intelligence, Section 6. UK Secret Intelligence Service for foreign intelligence.

MKULTRA – A covert, illegal intelligence program run by the CIA's Office of Scientific Intelligence from the early 1950s to the late 1960s. Employed multiple methodologies to manipulate mental states and alter brain functions.

Mossad – *HaMossad leModi'in uleTafkidim Meyuchadim* (Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations). Israeli secret service.

MSS – Ministry of State Security of the People's Republic of China. Chinese foreign and domestic security and intelligence service. Also sometimes referred to as **CSS**.

NSA – National Security Agency. American cryptologic intelligence agency of the Department of Defence. Limited to the gathering of foreign intelligence.

NSC – National Security Committee. Australian cabinet committee and ministerial decision-making body on national security matters.

ONA – Office of National Assessments. Provides assessments on international political, strategic and economic developments to the Prime Minister and the National Security Committee.

Pine Gap – Satellite tracking station located eighteen kilometres south-west of Alice Springs. Involved in military satellite operations and the **ECHELON** network. Staff includes members of the **NSA** and **CIA**. The only prohibited airspace in Australia.

PGU – *Pervoye Glavnoye Upravleniye* (First Chief Directorate of the Committee for State Security). An organisation within the **KGB** that was responsible for foreign operations and intelligence collection.

SAS – Special Air Service. Special forces regiment of the British Army. The Australian equivalent is known as the **SASR**.

SIGINT – Signals Intelligence. Intelligence gathering by the interception of signals. Often employs the use of cryptanalysis. In Australia this function is performed by the **DSD**.

Skyhook – Nickname for the **Fulton surface-to-air recovery system** – a method for recovering personnel from the ground. It involves a harness and a self-inflating balloon with a lift line that is engaged by a MC-130E Combat Talon I aircraft, lifting the individual into the air and reeling them onboard. Developed in the early 50s, primarily for use by the **CIA**. Also known as **STARS**.

Spook – A term used to describe espionage agents or spies.

SuperDARN – Super Dual Auroral Radar Network. An international radar network for studying the upper atmosphere and ionosphere, comprising eleven radar sites around the globe.

SVR – *Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki* (Russian Foreign Intelligence Service). External security agency of the Russian Federation. Successor of the **PGU**.

UAV – Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (aka ‘drone’). Remotely controlled aircraft used in both military and civilian sectors. In military sectors they are primarily used for reconnaissance and attack.

DAGDA SECURITY (AKA THE SECTION)

Formed in 2011 by former ASIS operative Malcolm Richards, Dagda Security quickly grew to become the largest, most profitable private security firm in South Australia. While employing a large team, Richards has gone out of his way to very carefully select his staff, headhunting and recruiting his key operations team very carefully. As of 2013 his team had come to include former members of ASIS, MI6 and the British SAS. Late that year the team moved into large offices on Gilbert Street in the Adelaide CBD, specially outfitted with state-of-the-art surveillance and reconnaissance facilities that rivalled those of their government counterparts.

As a private security company, Dagda's contracts involved everything from corporate security to counter-surveillance, private investigations and computer security/consultation. While the company was never listed publicly, its estimated worth was a multi-million dollar figure. The name is a curious nod to Richards' past work for ASIS during the Irish 'troubles' – the Dagda being an important god in Irish mythology. Also known as 'Eochaid Ollathair' he was seen as a father and 'protector of the tribe'. Obviously Richards views himself in a similar kind of role.

In late 2016 discussion began at the highest levels of government about the increased level of perceived terrorist activity occurring in and around Adelaide. Discovered by ASIO agents, it became apparent that terrorist cells were utilising Adelaide as a staging and planning ground, as it had all of the access of larger cities such as Sydney or Melbourne, but without the added security pressure. Without the resources to dedicate agents to the problem, ASIO delegated to the NSC, who classified everything to do with the matter – all relevant documentation is so secret it is classed as 'no eyes'. The NSC, with the clandestine approval of the PM, arranged to buy out Dagda Security and bring it into the Australian Intelligence Community as a deniable black-ops unit, primarily charged with secret government missions and the investigation of terrorist activity in South Australia. This has created tension between various sections of government, as the creation of a deniable black-ops unit was a programme put into place by the previous government.

Dagda (now known to those few in power as 'The Section') remains relatively autonomous, and keeps up the pretence of being a private security and investigations company for appearances' sake. However, they are ultimately answerable to the NSC and the PM, and for this reason a permanent legal liaison has been assigned; in this case, former ASIS lawyer Eric Johnson.

While some of the staff at Dagda have been apprehensive about the changeover, Malcolm Richards has seemed cautiously enthusiastic. Sources suggest that he was growing tired of catching adulterous husbands and protecting corporations, and wanted to start making a difference again.

ONAFD (OFFICE OF NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS FIELD DIVISION)

Only revealed in the final episode of the first season, the ONAFD is a highly secret division of the Office of National Assessments, formed to investigate embarrassing and potentially dangerous internal leakages of information from within the AIC. With an investigative division headed up by former private security consultant Grace Strauss, the existence of the division is known only by the PM and a few select insiders.

Within six months of being established, Strauss and the ONAFD had begun to uncover a conspiracy which reached deep into the depths of government and the AIC. Someone had been leaking out information from within the ONA and using it to blackmail politicians and civil servants all the way up the chain. The purposes of this blackmail were unknown, but some of the information was traced back to high-up agents within ASIO. Strauss prepared a deep cover operation, and went inside ASIO as an agent to try to get to the truth.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

MAIN CHARACTERS

John Bishop

Position: Head of Investigations, The Section

D.O.B: 12/10/1978

Birthplace: St. Kilda, Melbourne

Hair: Dark Brown

Eyes: Brown

Height: 6' 1

Education: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Language – Latrobe University (Melbourne Campus)

Government Experience: ASIS Intelligence Officer

Marital Status: Separated

Dependents: None

Blood Type: B-

John Bishop was recommended to ASIS by one of his university supervisors. Bishop had graduated from Latrobe University in 1998 with a dual degree in Arts and Language. He showed promise academically while at University, but lacked a certain amount of commitment which his supervisor thought ASIS could assist with. Additionally, he scored highly in the study of Arabic languages (particularly Arabic, Urdu and Pashto), something that was in demand after the rise of Islamic terrorist groups in the mid-1990s .

Bishop's training was largely uneventful, though his scores typified him as an excellent field agent. He had a certain cocky charm that landed him in hot water on several occasions, but the rigours of his instructors slowly but surely knocked off the rough edges. By the end of his training he was a competent, if inexperienced agent.

The decision was made to connect Bishop with long-term agent Malcolm Richards, who was at the time struggling with his role in the agency. The arrangement was designed to benefit both parties – Bishop was to gain Richards' stability, and Richards was to get a greater sense of importance, and stabilise his role within the company.

It worked as planned, with the two agents both greatly benefitting from the arrangement. Richards took the opportunity to move into the role of Bishop's handler, finally taking a step away from field work. Together, the two completed a series of missions from 1999-2002, in locales including Bolivia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan. Throughout, Bishop displayed the qualities of a model Intelligence Officer; one of the best ASIS had had since Richards himself. He also demonstrated high proficiency with para-military exercises.

Bishop was married in early 2000, and during most of his time with ASIS he managed to keep his relationship with his wife healthy despite the inherent secrecy in his lifestyle. At the time this ability to compartmentalise was considered one of Bishop's best assets, as well as his linguistic and analytical skills.

Bishop started to lose faith in ASIS after Richards left in early-2002, but he was kept busy with the high demand for agents with Arabic language skills after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Throughout 2003 and 2004 Bishop received additional training at Arlington, Virginia from the CIA as part of a global 'exchange programme' of sorts, designed to bring assets from a variety of worldwide agencies up to the same standard of field operating procedures. Bishop's training at Arlington included advanced interrogation techniques, psychological warfare and information extraction. Bishop, as usual, demonstrated extreme proficiency in these fields, though the ASIS psychologist assigned to his yearly review upon his return to Canberra in late 2004 was concerned at the impact this training had made on him.

2005-2009 saw Bishop undertaking a series of operations, mostly in the Middle East, from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia. However, his judgement became somewhat compromised at the time, and his reliance on extreme methods of information extraction raised eyebrows at high levels. His relationship with his wife remained steady, but Bishop exhibited serious levels of job stress.

In late-2009 Bishop took an enforced holiday from the company (voluntary, but suggested by his handlers) to try and separate himself from the violent tendencies he had acquired. At some point during his sabbatical, the surveillance teams assigned to

Bishop lost him for several days, during which an unknown catalysing event occurred. It was at this point that his marriage began to break down, and in mid-2010 he and his wife separated, though they have not entered into divorce proceedings.

Bishop returned to work in late 2010 and took on one final assignment to the Middle East before resigning from the company permanently. In early 2011 moved to Adelaide, and took up the position of Head of Investigations at Dagda Security under his former colleague Malcolm Richards.

Bishop is an exceptionally competent, though somewhat unpredictable field agent – highly trained, and with a wealth of experience.

Malcolm Richards

Position: Director, The Section

D.O.B: 22/04/1956

Birthplace: Twickenham, Greater London (UK)

Hair: Light grey, receding

Eyes: Blue

Height: 5' 10

Education:

Government Experience: ASIS Intelligence Officer, ASIS Intelligence Support Officer, Freelance Intelligence Asset

Marital Status: Divorced

Dependents: Jacinta (16/06/1985)

Blood Type: O+

Malcolm Richards joined ASIS straight out of university in 1977 (note: despite his UK birthplace, Richards is an Australian citizen – his parents came to Australia in 1966 as part of the '10 pound pom' migrant programme), where he quickly made a name for himself as a competent Intelligence Officer. He undertook a series of operations both domestically and internationally.

In 1981 he was loaned to MI5 for an extended period as an undercover asset in an IRA operation. 5 at the time believed they had a mole and needed an outsider they could trust. The operation stretched out for a number of years during which Richards was constantly undercover. Eventually the operation was concluded with a series of arrests in mid-1983 and Richards returned to Canberra. The long stretch of time away however had seriously damaged his marriage, and despite the birth of his daughter in 1985, Richards was divorced in mid-1986.

The company wanted to keep him on low profile jobs after such a large undercover operation, but Richards appeared to flounder with a lack of work. He was peripherally involved in the Sheraton Hotel incident of 30th November 1983, though

a disciplinary hearing exonerated him of any blame. At this stage he started to exhibit the first signs of dissatisfaction with his career. A psychological assessment was called for, but showed no signs of disturbance. Throughout Richards managed a friendly, almost jovial manner with his colleagues, and an iron determination in the field.

Richards spent most of the late 1980s doing field work in South America and the Middle East, where his talent for languages made him a valuable asset. He was not assigned to any other long term undercover work, instead working through a series of short missions with a high success rate. This continued until late-1990, when the invasion of Kuwait saw Richards recalled to Canberra.

The next 2-3 years were an unfortunate time for ASIS, with allegations that it was out of control. Richards shied away from attention and in 1994 when *Four Corners* aired a story outlining the problems ASIS faced, Richards withdrew from field work for a time. In an attempt to get him back in the game, the Director General assigned Richards to assist in the training of a new ASIS recruit, John Bishop, in mid-1999. Despite scepticism on Richards part, he and Bishop struck up a strong rapport, the younger man helping Richards to reconnect to the company, and Richards providing Bishop with a sense of stability. It was at this stage that Richards' focus shifted from field work to that of a handler – while he still worked in the field when required, this stage in his life saw him take on a more tactical role. Bishop would later become Richards' Head of Investigations at Dagda.

Throughout 1999 to 2002 Richards and Bishop completed a series of missions together in various locales, including Bolivia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan. While the two worked well together Richards' dissatisfaction for the company had only increased, and he eventually resigned in February 2002. The company hired him as a freelance agent several times over the next few years in response to the sudden need for Middle Eastern intelligence in the wake of the September 11 attacks. However, by mid-2004, Richards had left the agency for good.

Richards spent the next few years drifting in and out of security consultation jobs around the country before settling in Adelaide in 2008 to be closer to his daughter Jacinta, with whom he had mostly lost contact. Re-invigorated, he set up Dagda Security in late-2011, eventually recruiting Bishop when he also left ASIS in 2010. The small company quickly grew to be a moderate-sized but successful venture, specialising in corporate security and personal investigations. Richards took on a senior administrative role in Dagda, rarely venturing into the field, though he is still heavily involved in mission planning and tactical support.

While he is exceptionally reliable, his attitude towards the AIC is somewhat cynical.

Alex Walker

Position: Head of Tactical Operations, The Section

D.O.B: 12/08/1973

Birthplace: Rowlands Gill, Gateshead (UK)

Hair: Black

Eyes: Deep Brown

Height: 6'2

Education: GCSEs

Government Experience: British Royal Army – 2nd Infantry Division, 24th Infantry Brigade, Parachute Regiment (1st Battalion), Special Air Services (SAS) – 22 SAS A Squadron, Special Projects Team

Marital Status: Divorced

Dependents: William (23/12/2002)

Blood Type: O-

Alex Walker started his military career as a typical recruit. Coming straight out of high school with his GCSEs in 1990, he enrolled in the British Royal Army and was assigned to the 2nd Infantry Division, who had been placed in York after returning from Germany in 1983. The 2nd Infantry's primary role was to cross the channel and set up defences in the instance of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe.

When the Division was disbanded following the end of the Cold War, Walker was transferred into the 24th Infantry Brigade (who had served as part of the 2nd) and was then loaned to UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) for engagements in Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout 1995. During this time he further distinguished himself as an excellent soldier with exceptionally fast decision-making abilities.

When UNPROFOR concluded operations in the Balkans Walker applied to the Parachute Regiment, seeking new challenges. He underwent training at P Company located at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick, North Yorkshire, where he set exceptional records in the 8 tests involved, particularly the '20 Mile Endurance March' and the 'Stretcher Race'. He successfully completed training at P Company as a 'Baby Para' and went on to complete the Basic Parachute Course (again, highly distinguishing himself) at RAF Brize Norton, Oxfordshire. It was at this time that he met his wife and was married.

Walker was then placed in the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment (1 PARA). His notable engagements during his time with the Regiment included serving in Operation Joint Guardian (a NATO-led peacekeeping operation during the 1999 Kosovo War) and landing in Sierra Leone during the country's civil war in May 2000, where he was part of a force who evacuated foreign nationals and held control of the capital as part of Operation Palliser.

Not long after the conclusion of Palliser, Walker began searching for new challenges again, and applied to the Special Air Services (SAS). Walker's training was in two phases – the first, undergone at Sennybridge, Powys in the Brecon Beacons, involved a five week selection process of over 200 candidates. Walker excelled in both the Personal Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test (CFT), easily passing the first set of selection criteria.

The second phase was the SAS's well known 'jungle phase', which Walker underwent in Brunei. Once again, his escape-and-evasion scores were excellent, and his performance in the gruelling resistance-to-interrogation tests was admirable, if not outstanding. Eventually, Walker passed selection and was assigned to the 22 SAS A Squadron. Utilising his training from the Parachute Regiment, Walker then became part of the A Squadron Air Troop, specialising in free-fall parachuting, High Altitude-Low Opening (HALO) and High Altitude-High Opening (HAHO) techniques. Walker briefly returned to the UK to the birth of his son, William in 2002. However, his constant absence and inability to discuss his work saw a significant breakdown in his marriage.

Operational details are scarce of Walker's movements over the next few years, but it is known that he distinguished himself enough as a member of the A Squadron to be transferred into the Special Project Team, an elite anti-hijacking counter-terrorism team, where he was further trained in Close Quarters Battle (CQB) and sniper techniques. As part of the team he undertook a series of undisclosed black ops in the Middle East from 2003-2008, possibly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Walker left the SAS in 2010 after his divorce – somewhat ironic, as his role in the Regiment was certainly a contributing factor to the breakdown of his marriage. Seeking a new beginning, Walker moved to Australia, where he had spent some time while he was on loan to the Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) for training purposes. Seemingly moving across the world because he "liked the weather", Walker quickly established himself as a sought after private security contractor before he was recruited by Malcolm Richards to serve as Head of Tactical Operations at Dagda Security.

Personality-wise, Walker is driven, analytical and exceptionally clever. The speed at which he can react to situations is almost unbelievable (though fitting the lightning-fast response times the SAS encourage). However, he is also jovial and easy-going with those he likes, and has a bone-dry sense of humour.

Jade Zhu

Position: Senior Field Agent, The Section

D.O.B: 29/11/1985

Birthplace: Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Hair: Black

Eyes: Dark Brown

Height: 5'7

Education: Bachelor of Arts (English),

Flinders University

Government Experience: MI6 – Asset, Ministry of State Security of the People's Republic of China – Second Bureau, Ninth Bureau

Marital Status: Single

Dependents: None

Blood Type: O-

Jade Zhu was born to poor parents in the Hong Kong suburb of Wan Chai in 1985. Both her parents had no family in Hong Kong, the majority of their relatives being inaccessible on the mainland. Zhu was their second child, she has an elder sister.

When Jade was 12 years old her parents were killed accidentally, caught in the crossfire of a gunfight which had broken out between members of the 14K and Sun Yee On Triad groups. Her elder sister, unable to care for herself and Jade, disappeared to lead her own life. Jade has not seen her since, and her whereabouts are unknown – she is assumed dead.

By the age of 14, with no money or education to speak of Zhu was forced into prostitution in order to survive. In 2001, at the age of 16 she came to the attention of a local Triad boss, Zhang Chenhu, who had risen to the position of '426' or 'Red Pole' in the 14K Triad – an enforcer. Zhang became obsessed with Zhu, and hired her on a number of separate occasions. Zhu began to feel uneasy about Zhang, but with little money or resources of her own, she had little choice but to continue seeing him. However, she had become quite proactive by this point, and was more than capable of defending physically if need be.

Around this time Zhu met Oliver Green, a former British liaison to the Special Branch of the Hong Kong Police Force. After the disbanding of Special Branch in 1995 and its reassignment to the Security Wing Green left the service but chose to remain in Hong Kong. He then carved a small niche for himself as an import/export merchant, though he still held close ties to the British intelligence services. He met Zhu when he interjected in an incident involving Zhu and two clients on the streets of Wan Chai. Zhu was grateful, yet dismissive, for his assistance, and somewhat suspicious of his intentions. However, through occasional yet regular contact the two eventually formed a friendship, entirely platonic in nature.

Green had known about Zhang Chenhu for some time and Zhu's relationship with him. Realising that his destructive nature would eventually harm Zhu, he contacted members of the British intelligence community and eventually came up with a deal. Zhu was to be offered a small but regular sum of money to inform on Zhang, with the eventual goal of his arrest. Green was unsure why, but MI6 had expressed interest in the man beyond that suiting a mid-level Triad.

Zhu reluctantly agreed, and had barely begun her work when she was approached independently by a member of the Ministry of State Security of the People's Republic of China (MSS). They had no knowledge of her involvement with MI6 and offered her a deal of their own, with additional information. Zhang Chenhu was a former agent for MSS who had been sent to infiltrate the 14K Triad. After several years he became too integrated with his role, cut all ties to the agency and went dark. The MSS wanted him back, and offered Zhu not merely cash, but a job with the agency on the mainland if she was successful in informing on him.

Zhu was torn between her loyalty to Green, the prospect of a fresh start and her distrust of the Chinese. Eventually she approached Green, who set up yet another deal with MI6 – while they had known that Zhang was MSS, a double agent placed *within* the Chinese security services would be far more valuable. Thus, Zhu became a double agent for MI6.

Surprisingly, in taking down Zhang Zhu proved to be an extraordinarily effective agent. Her rather difficult early life left her very physically capable, and her intelligence and quick thinking got her out of trouble more than once. Languages were also not a problem for her, as well as her native Cantonese, Zhu could speak fluent Mandarin and quite passable English, thanks to exposure to all three languages in Wan Chai. She excelled, and when Zhang was transported back to the Chinese mainland, Zhu got her new job.

Because of her experience in Hong Kong, Zhu was first placed in the Second Bureau of the MSS, which deals with Foreign Affairs. During her time there she undertook many field missions, distinguishing herself while still passing information to MI6. She eventually pushed for a transfer to the Ninth Bureau, which deals exclusively with Anti-Defection and Countersurveillance. There she was perfectly placed to secretly assist MSS agents in defection to other countries.

In 2008 Zhu was on a mission in Australia, tracking down (or rather attempting *not* to track down) a defecting Chinese spy. Just as the mission was wrapping up and she was getting ready to leave she had a call from Green – MI6 had burned her, anonymously leaking her double agent status to the MSS. Green was unsure how or why this had been done, but he urged her not to go back to China. If she did, it was likely she would never be seen again. Angry and frightened, but practical as ever

Zhu went straight to the Australian government and requested political asylum. Her defection was considered a triumph for the Australian intelligence community – after all, a sympathetic double agent with knowledge of the Chinese secret services was quite a prize.

Note: it is at this time that she started referring to herself as ‘Jade Zhu’. This is most certainly not her birth name, especially considering its western construction. No records of her birth name exist. The name also reveals Zhu’s attitude towards her own personality – ‘Jade’ being green in colour and ‘Zhu’ meaning “the tree with the red core”. In short, her name means that she is young (green) but strong and fiery at heart. Zhu has a love of language and words, which permeates her lifestyle.

After being placed under her new identity, Zhu pursued her love of language and undertook a Bachelor of Arts in English at Flinders University. However, post graduation she found work difficult to come by, as she had little in the way of skills that did not involve espionage and field work. In 2011 she was approached by Malcolm Richards, who had acquired her file thanks to a source in ASIS (much to the annoyance of ASIS) and asked her to join Dagda as a field agent. Zhu, always looking for new challenges, jumped at the chance.

In her role as a senior field agent Zhu is methodical and practical. Despite their somewhat different personalities she engages well with both Alex Walker and John Bishop.

Samir (Sam) Mahmoud

Position: Head of Electronic Surveillance and Digital Warfare, The Section

D.O.B: 15/08/1990

Birthplace: Al-Za’franiya, Baghdad (Iraq)

Hair: Dark Brown

Eyes: Light Brown

Height: 5’7

Education: Bachelor of Computer Science – Adelaide University

Government Experience: N/A (see Criminal Record)

Marital Status: Single

Dependents: None

Blood Type: A+

Samir Mahmoud’s parents came to Australia shortly after his birth in 1990, to escape the turmoil in Iraq. They were granted refugee status and eventually naturalised as Australian citizens, settling in Goodwood. Despite some initial difficulties in assimilating into local culture, Mahmoud’s parents eventually integrated, his father Tariq (an academic in his own country) eventually taking a position at Adelaide University.

Mahmoud was raised as an Australian citizen, and despite encountering significant xenophobia in his youth he managed to integrate well into society. In middle high school Mahmoud developed an interest in computers and databases that quickly grew into an obsession. At 13 he was already a very good programmer, and in the early 00s when the internet was still in its popular infancy he was well ahead of the cultural curve.

Mahmoud's parents are both members of the Muslim faith, but neither they nor he (nor any members of the extended family) could be considered "radical" in the political sense of the word. Mahmoud seems to be largely uninterested in matters of faith, preferring the precision of technical equipment to the indefinable.

In 2007, at the age of 17 Mahmoud came to the attention of the AFP and ASIO when he was caught accessing government servers in an attempt to discover information on "UFO activity and free energy suppression". Mahmoud's hacking had been extraordinarily successful, but he failed to discover any useful information. Due to Australia having more relaxed laws regarding computer crime than other first world nations, Mahmoud was let off with a warning and 200 hours of community service. However, the court also ordered a psychological evaluation on Mahmoud, which suggested that he has a personality prone to conspiracy theories. Additionally, he is very focussed to the point of tunnel-vision, which accounts for his near synergy with computers.

After completing his community service Mahmoud applied and was accepted to Adelaide University to study Computer Science, where he maintained a GPA of 6.93 throughout his academic career. He graduated (with Honours) in 2011, and worked a number of freelance IT jobs (there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Mahmoud was involved in illegal computer activity at this time, but nothing to substantiate) before Malcolm Richards recruited him to Dagda Security in 2013.

Richards could see Mahmoud's obvious potential, and he soon rose through the ranks at Dagda to become their Chief Data Analyst, which also involves running their IT department. Throughout his time at the firm, Richards has taken an almost fatherly interest in Mahmoud, encouraging his talents and defending his occasionally odd personality.

Mahmoud's past makes him an unknown element – he maintains a genial, often humorous personality with his colleagues (he obviously takes the literal meaning of his given name 'entertaining companion' quite seriously) but is known for his occasional irrational behaviour.

Eric Johnson

Position: NSC Liaison, The Section

D.O.B: 04/10/1983

Birthplace: Bruce, Canberra

Hair: Dark Brown

Eyes: Hazel

Height: 5'7

Education: Bachelor of Economics, Bachelor of Laws – University of Canberra

Government Experience: ASIS Legal Representative, NSC Key Liaison

Marital Status: Single

Dependents: None

Blood Type: A+

Born to parents who were heavily involved in the government, Eric Johnson was groomed from birth to play an important role as a civil servant. From a young age he demonstrated a dedication to his academic studies bordering on the fanatical, and his attention to detail and meticulous nature led to him graduating a double degree at the University of Canberra with almost perfect marks.

He served as a practicing lawyer for several years, specialising in corporate law, where he made quite an impression as a ruthless, exceptionally efficient litigator. Johnson was brought into ASIS when an asset at the law firm he worked at contacted the company in 2008, bringing Johnson to their attention. Johnson was subsequently headhunted by ASIS and brought on board as an official Legal Representative.

Johnson successfully defended ASIS in several important suits where members of the public had attempted to charge them with misconduct, and deflected attention from government departments. In all regards he proved himself to be an excellent addition to the ASIS legal defence team.

In 2009 Johnson was sent on a field operation to Syria. An important intelligence asset in the area required a legal strategy mapped out, and Johnson was considered perfect for the job. As the mission required discretion and a certain possibility of danger, ASIS Intelligence Officer John Bishop was assigned to Johnson as a bodyguard/fixer. The two men had an obvious personality clash, compounded when the asset in question was killed thanks to a leak in his organisation, and Bishop (with Johnson reluctantly in tow) had to escape the killers, leading them on a roughshod chase through Damascus which despite its rather unorthodox execution is now used as a textbook evade and escape example in ASIS basic training. The result of this botched operation is that Bishop and Johnson now hold an inescapable dislike for each other, which mostly stems from having opposite personalities.

After the National Security Committee passed down the resolution on the absorption and restructuring of Dagda Security into the AIC in early 2016, it was decided to provide a key liaison officer to mediate between the needs of the NSC and Dagda's more independent operational style. Former ASIS Executive Officer Griffin Williams (by then serving with the NSC) recommended Johnson as a prime candidate, despite his somewhat complicated history with Bishop. The excerpt from Williams' recommendation letter reads, "[working relationships] need a little conflict every once in a while. Friendliness in the work place breeds complacency and distraction, which leads to cock ups, which, in our line of work, winds up with people being dead and, more importantly, paperwork".

When approached, Johnson relished the opportunity, though there are some concerns at ASIS that Johnson's background in corporate law and economics will lead to him approaching the Dagda assignment as if he's the tax department and they need auditing. While his personality – cutting, professional and ruthless – is perfect for the assignment, it was ASIS's recommendation that his performance be put under a review period of no less than 3 months. He has been seconded from ASIS to serve the NSC.

SECONDARY CHARACTERS

Marwan al-Hamzi

Saudi Arabian national, now living in Adelaide. A junior member of an Al-Qaeda cell being observed by the Section and ASIO, but thought to be of a low threat risk. Described by Mahmoud as being as useful as "a tea cosy on an RPG". Mid-20s, slightly dense, fundamentalist and easily manipulated.

Paul Baker

Police detective who is seconded to the section after assisting them in the CPS Alkaloids affair. A former STAR Group Explosive Coordination Section member, Baker is skilled in resolving high conflict situations and explosives disposal. His time as a police detective has sharpened his investigative skills. Late 30s, smart and quick thinking.

Simon Barrow

The Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel and originally an officer of the ONA after a period of military service. A mysterious, right-wing figure who is responsible in the chaos surrounding The Section and moves to eradicate Australian civil liberties. 'Simon Barrow' is an alias; his original identity is a closely kept secret. 40, brusque, intelligent and dangerous.

Felicity Bishop

John Bishop's ex-wife, though they are separated rather than formally divorced. An attractive, intelligent woman in her mid-30s, Felicity was dedicated to her husband,

but their relationship began to break down with the usual strains of living a secret double life.

Andrew Ealing

Founder of the Australia for Australians political party and a senior pastor in the Australian Christian Church of Continuationism. Also responsible for right-wing Christian terrorist group the Empowered Order of the Taxiarch. Mid-40s, charismatic, charming, whip-smart and not to be crossed.

Hao Fengzhi

Jade Zhu's former partner at the MSS, where they worked in the Ninth Bureau, which deals with Anti-Defection and Countersurveillance. Mid-30s, driven and experienced in the field, he is considered a key agent by the MSS. Unfortunately for them, he has plans to defect.

Petya Gorchakov

Former Soviet biochemist who defected to Australia towards the end of the Cold War. Malcolm Richards supervised his defection while he was an agent at ASIS. He now produces the best fake blood in Adelaide for wound simulation and low-budget horror movies. Late 60s, world weary, funny and sharp as a tack.

Oliver Green

A former member of Special Branch in Hong Kong, Green has since retired from the service and runs an import/export business. Responsible for introducing Zhu to MI6, and subsequently warning her when she was burned by the same agency. Late 50s, intelligent and extremely well connected in China, the UK and Australia.

Megan Jones (aka Elizabeth Drazen)

Australian investigative journalist and secret Mossad asset, responsible for the assassination of Andrew Ealing. Late 20s, attractive, driven, intelligent and a cold-hearted killer, but not without a conscience.

Andrej Kovač

Bosnian arms dealer with few scruples and even fewer loyalties. Walker encountered Kovač in post-war Bosnia as part of SAS Operation Tango, where he assisted the SAS because it aligned with his goals. Mid 50s, smart, ruthless, smarmy.

Roger Lexington

Right-hand man of Andrew Ealing and enforcer for the EOT/AFA. Late 30s, heavy set, loyal and totally deadly in a fight.

Adam Murrow

A news/talk radio show host focussed on conspiracies and 'New World Order' doctrines, based in Adelaide. Mahmoud is a big fan, and The Section have been

known to pick up tips from him and occasionally leak intel to him. Late 30s, brusque, forceful, angry and passionate.

Sergey Mikhailovich Novikov

A former high-level member of the KGB, Novikov was assigned with anti-defection duties towards the end of the USSR. One of his greatest failings was the defection of Petya Gorchakov; something that he still takes rather personally. Late 60s, thorny and quick to anger, but with a devious mind.

Dr. Karl Oberheim

German scientist and contact of Malcolm Richards in West Germany during the Cold War. Mid 50s, nervous, intelligent.

Grace Strauss (aka 'Sarah')

Agent with the above-top-secret Field Division of the Office of National Assessments (ONAFD), formed to investigate potentially dangerous internal affairs in the Australian Intelligence Community. She is sent undercover into ASIO to investigate a series of confidential leaks that reach all the way to the top. She is responsible for torturing Bishop when he is brought in, though the two later team up to find those responsible. Mid-30s, highly motivated and ruthlessly efficient.

Jane Symonds

Radio producer for Adam Murrow's controversial show 'The Fourth World War' and Murrow's occasional lover. Her belief in Murrow's cause is only matched by her resolve to see justice done for the victims of the conspiracy that Murrow espouses. Late 20s, driven and steely, yet a little naive.

SEASON ONE

Story Arcs

Four major story arcs will form the basis of the first season:

- 1. The constant threat of an active terrorist presence in Adelaide and the ongoing task of fighting it.*
- 2. The fear that The Section is being manipulated by a person or persons unknown for their own purposes.*
- 3. The constant struggle between running a viable black operations unit and protecting civil liberties.*
- 4. The eventual discovery of a nationwide conspiracy perpetrated by rogue elements in the government to seize control of the country.*

1. The constant threat of terrorism is the basic foundation of our show. Like other espionage series of the past decade, the processes of investigating and intervening in potential terrorist plots (whether foreign or domestic) remain our focus. This keeps the tension (and the stakes) consistently high, but grants audiences greater levels of identification by keeping events in recognisable settings. Additionally, this goes directly into the heart of the *zeitgeist*, making our show not only great entertainment, but highly relevant.

Many episodes of the show that deal with these threats will be stand alone (or ‘one-shot’) episodes that are designed with accessible storylines to encourage new viewers on a week-to-week basis. However, larger narrative threads will appear throughout, making the show more satisfying to repeat audiences. As the first season continues (and particularly as it moves into its final third) it will become increasingly apparent that many of these seemingly ‘isolated’ events are in fact connected and a larger conspiracy is at work. This will begin to take its toll on our characters, as Mahmoud becomes more paranoid, Bishop turns further inward... so on and so forth.

2. The idea that The Section is being manipulated by outside sources is introduced in the final moments of the pilot episode and is slowly expanded on from there. This is not to say that every episode will be about this concept, just that clues and hints (even red herrings) will be scattered throughout the narrative, until it takes centre stage in the last third of the season. The images in the final moments of the pilot suggest the involvement of the government (or rogue elements *within* the government) and eventually the team at The Section begin to come to the same conclusion, as only those within the government would have the access, knowledge and ability to manipulate them in such a way.

3. The inherent problem of civil liberties is one that particularly plagues Bishop and strongly links back to his discomfort over his ‘extreme rendition’ training from the

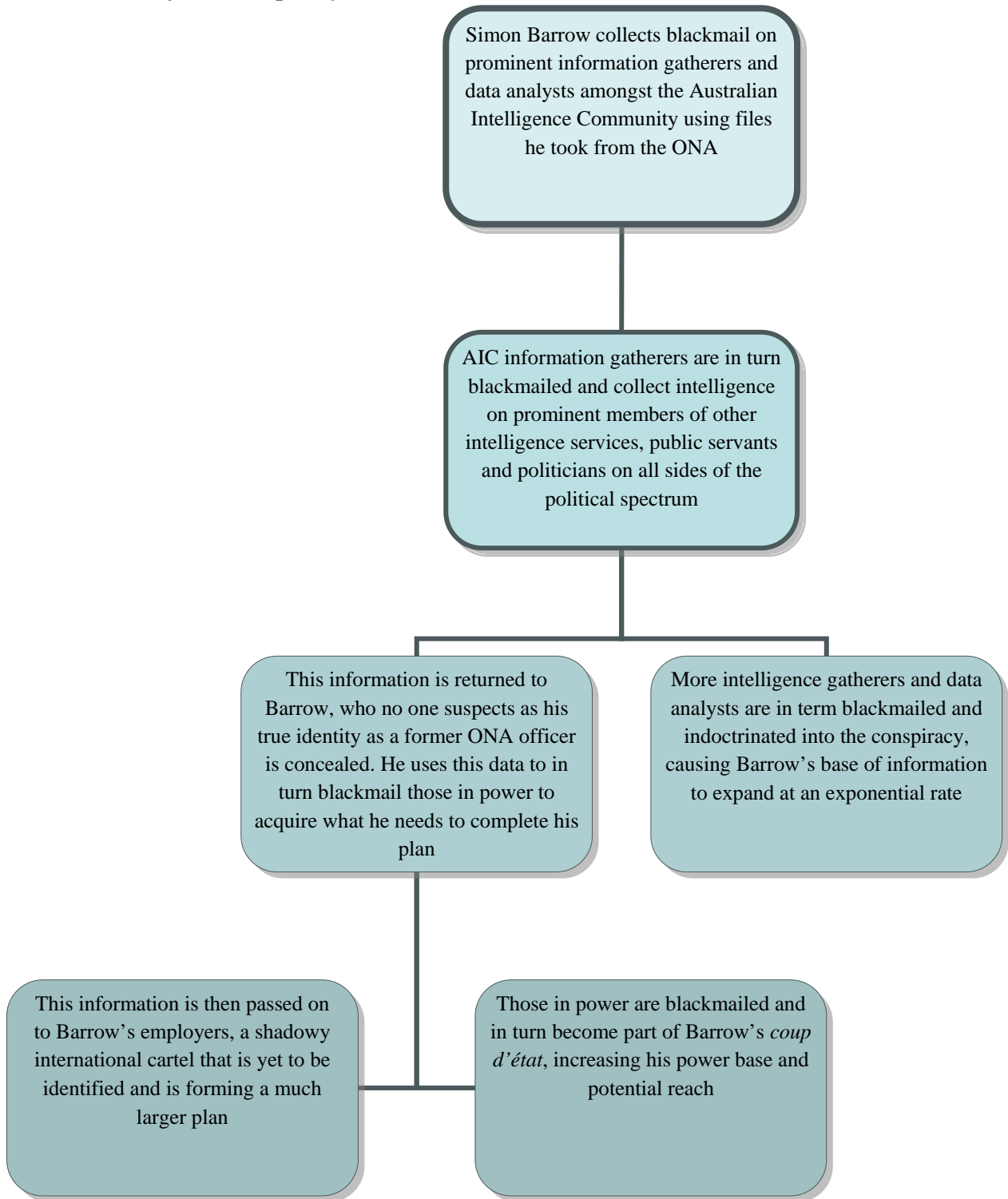
CIA under ASIS. However, it is also something which regularly affects the entire team – most of them joined what was then Dagda Security to escape from such morally grey areas. Constantly, scenarios occur where conventional morality and liberties must be put aside to prevent disaster – Bishop will be forced to torture a suspect for information, an innocent civilian will be detained by Zhu, so on and so forth – and the team struggles with the notion of having to break the highest ideals of democracy in order to save it. Curiously, the other character who takes this exceptionally seriously is Johnson, who believes first and foremost in the power of democracy and due process. This leads to him being viewed as naive by many of the team, but it also allows for a lone point of connection with Bishop.

Our characters are not idealists, they are realists – they know that to do the job they are charged with rules must be bent, if not broken, and notions of conventional morality and ethics must be flexible. However, as people who could be considered patriots their own actions often disturb them and the question of ‘how far is too far’ is never far from anyone’s mind. We will play with this idea somewhat as well – a sequence in *Blasphemous Rumours* makes Richards appear as a cold-blooded killer, willing to do anything to achieve his goal, only to flip around and reveal the whole truth at the end of the episode. While *The Section* is not didactic, there is plenty of room for the discussion of ethical, political and moral issues to be interwoven into the narrative.

4. The hints throughout the first two thirds of the show will eventually lead to the discovery of a nationwide government conspiracy. This will not be fully revealed until the final episode – it is nearly revealed by the team at the end of *Violator*, only to be interrupted by a bomb blast – and even then the revelation will come only at around the halfway point of the story.

However the truth will finally be revealed – Simon Barrow, the Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel, is the mastermind of a government-wide conspiracy. Utilising information gathered from his time spent at the ONA and a network of associates, he has collected enough damning information on major government officials to bribe those in power (see diagram below). The old rhetoric of ‘knowledge is power’ is his watchword, and with this power he pulls strings from behind the scenes to reshape Australia into a right-wing country with a near fascist government. While he has built up allies along the way, many in the government do not support him, leaving two factions vying for control beneath the surface of everyday life. However, as of *In a Silent Way* it is a battle that Barrow is steadily winning.

The Structure of the Conspiracy



Character Arcs

John Bishop

Bishop's continuing struggle with ethical and moral issues, as well as his natural dislike of authority, will consistently cause problems. His strong personal connection with Richards will be strained by what he sees as an unproductive new direction for the company. However, throughout he remains dedicated to his work and his colleagues, never allowing his dissatisfaction to interfere with the role of The Section.

Malcolm Richards

Richards will have difficulty adjusting to the command structure of the new organisation, and constantly come into conflict with Johnson (though not to the same extent as Bishop). The demands of active counterterrorism will take him into the field on several occasions for the first time in several years. He will also face personal issues as he tries to reconnect with his estranged daughter.

Alex Walker

Walker will shine in his role as head of Head of Tactical Operations, showing a good eye for detail and a knack for tactics. He and Bishop form a strong bond throughout, and Walker ends up taking great risks for him. Walker also develops a romantic relationship with Zhu, though this is not common knowledge amongst his colleagues.

Jade Zhu

Zhu establishes herself early on as Bishop's right hand in field situations. She will prove to be an excellent, hard-headed agent, though she is somewhat haunted by her past; a fact that will be brought into sharp focus when she is forced to deal with Hao Fengzhi, her former partner from the MSS. She builds a strong rapport, and eventually a romantic entanglement, with Walker.

Samir Mahmoud

Mahmoud will struggle to keep his attitude in check around Johnson, but the two will eventually develop a rather unique dialogue. Mahmoud's obsession with conspiracy theories will continue to abound and he will prove highly useful in explaining complex theories to the team. He will also get excited regularly about new technological toys.

Eric Johnson

Johnson faces an uphill battle throughout the first season – trying to appease the NSC while dealing with regular conflict with The Section. However, despite his adherence to the rulebook he slowly begins to form working relationships with his colleagues by the season's end. He and Mahmoud will be forced to work together at one stage and eventually he will even win Bishop's grudging respect.

EPISODE SYNOPSES

Season One

Episode One – Pilot

Logline: The Section enters the fight; an ambush; a government plot is exposed; nothing is as it seems.

The team at private security company turned deniable government intelligence agency Dagda Security (aka The Section) struggle with their new responsibilities. They have barely wrapped up their private investigation activities when a Bosnian arms dealer on their watch list – Andrej Kovač – slips through customs. Bishop tails him to a meeting with a member of a Moroccan terrorist cell (the GICM) attempting to make a purchase. The Section is forced to quickly shut down their data servers to prevent AFP involvement. Zhu and a small team take Kovač in, and Bishop talks him into co-operating with them. The meet for the handover with the GICM is set.

The team set up surveillance for the meet, which occurs in Adelaide's central railway station. Kovač meets his contact, who hands him a briefcase that quickly begins leaking a deadly nerve agent. Kovač and the contact are killed, and several Section members are injured. The team re-convene at The Section, where they decide that such an attack is either a deliberate assassination attempt or a way to distract them. Johnson reveals what he believes to be the real target – a secret government truck carrying radioactive waste, travelling with little protection. The team put together a plan and intercept both the truck and the would-be attackers, and that afternoon execute it flawlessly, securing the waste and taking four middle eastern men into custody.

However, a directive from above sees the men handed over to the AFP, and days later it's revealed that they were killed in a mysterious car accident. Meanwhile, at Government House in Canberra, a mysterious man discusses his plans for the country, and The Section's role as a scapegoat.

Episode Two – *Blasphemous Rumours*

Logline: Right-wing Christian terrorists attack Adelaide; Bishop and Walker infiltrate; Richards gets mad; Mossad get the last word.

In suburban Adelaide one morning three supermarkets explode – the victims of bomb attacks by right-wing Christian terrorists with a bone to pick about 'Islamisation'. The Section investigates the group and its links to both a political party and a church; specifically to a man involved in both – Andrew Ealing. Walker attends a press conference and quickly becomes a trusted aide to Ealing, while

Bishop infiltrates the church and bugs their computer systems. While there he comes across a woman eventually revealed to be Megan Jones, an undercover reporter.

Mahmoud goes through their computers and the terrorists' full, horrifying plan becomes clearer. Using international connections, they have secured a quantity of Anthrax and are bringing it in to the country via a refugee boat. Once arrived, they will pass it on to a local Al-Qaeda cell that will use it in an attack, giving Ealing and company all the political clout they need to pass 'white Australia' laws. The team goes after two of the terrorists' targets, a former Soviet biochemist who is to be taken and will verify the Anthrax, and an Al-Qaeda cell member. They fool Ealing into thinking that everything has gone to plan and arrange a handover of the Anthrax at the Port Adelaide docks. Once there Richards surrounds the area with snipers and attempts to force Ealing to shut down his operation. When he refuses, Richards brings up a video feed showing Bishop and Ealing's wife, then orders Bishop to kill her.

Ealing breaks down and agrees to stand down, but is taken out by a lone sniper bullet – not fired by any member of The Section. Meanwhile, it's revealed that Ealing's wife is alive and well – it has all been a hoax. The threat is eliminated, but careful perusal of the scene reveals the true identity of Ealing's killer – Megan Jones, now known as a Mossad assassin.

Episode Three – *From Safety To Where...?*

Logline: Mahmoud learns unwanted information; an unlikely alliance; misdirection abounds; a new enemy.

Mahmoud is held captive in The Section, being interrogated by Bishop. He is accused of keeping secret files on high-ranking staff and passing them on to parties unknown. Disturbed but defensive, Mahmoud begins to tell his side of the story.

We flashback to Mahmoud secretly meeting a source – codenamed 'Melton' – in Rymill Park. The source has a startling piece of information – there is a mole inside The Section at the highest level. Smiley does not know the identity of the mole, just that there is no one Mahmoud can truly trust... except Eric Johnson. Perturbed by this turn of events and reticent to ally with Johnson, Mahmoud nonetheless approaches him at his home and the two agree to find the mole – Mahmoud by trawling through the personal data of the upper-level members of The Section, and Johnson by retrieving their personnel files from the NSC.

Their investigations lead them to a recent operation conducted by The Section which involved the surveillance and infiltration of an Abu Sayyaf cell. The operation went badly, leaving Walker wounded and a young field agent dead. The intelligence for the operation came from a source codenamed 'Hanssen'; a source known only to

Bishop. Mahmoud and Johnson begin to suspect that ‘Hanssen’ does not exist, and is in fact an invention of Bishop – the mole. However, they don’t have enough evidence to prove it, so they archive their information on a standalone, non-networked laptop of Mahmoud’s, and keep digging. Meanwhile, an old friend of Richards’ from ASIS tells him that Johnson has requested a copy of Richards’ file. Richards calls in Bishop, and together they start putting together a picture of what Johnson and Mahmoud are up to.

With all evidence pointing to Mahmoud and Johnson trying to set them up, Richards has Bishop bring them in for interrogation. Hurt by Mahmoud’s perceived betrayal Bishop pushes him hard. Bishop goes into details about Hanssen, revealing that he could not possibly have been the mole. Bringing Johnson into the fold, The Section realise that *none* of them could conceivably be the mole, and decide to go after the person responsible for the debacle – Melton. Mahmoud sets up a meet so they can capture him, but no one turns up. Disheartened by their failure, the team heads home, determined to start fresh the next day. When Johnson returns to his home he discovers that Mahmoud’s laptop full of The Section’s confidential files is missing. They have been played by Melton, and their personnel documents are now in the hands of parties unknown.

Episode Four – #12 & 35

Logline: A dangerous robbery; on the trail of thieves; new friends; fast responses; a near-fatal encounter; the horrible truth.

Bishop and Zhu travel to Launceston to investigate a robbery from CPS Alkaloids, one of the largest producers of legal opiates in the world. The thieves are thought to be members of an Al-Qaeda sleeper cell, possibly one connected to the AFA incident. In Adelaide, Mahmoud uses satellites to track a vehicle leaving the scene, but loses track of it in Legana, north of Launceston. Bishop and Zhu interview Dr. Karl Oberheim, the scientist in charge. Zhu is suspicious of him and, with Mahmoud’s help, they bug his phone. As soon as they leave he places a call to the thieves – he is being blackmailed by them, forced to assist in the theft or they will kill his son, a student in Adelaide.

Richards reveals that Oberheim is an old contact from his days in East Germany, and encourages Bishop to try to bring him onside. However, even after speaking with Richards, Oberheim refuses to give up any information until his son is safe. Richards puts Walker in charge of locating the son. Mahmoud locates the thieves, who have shifted to a boat and are heading up the Tamar river towards Bass Strait. Bishop and Zhu take Oberheim with them and attempt to catch up by driving overland.

Walker manages to locate both the son and the multiple teams watching him. Walker wants to move in with a tactical team, but he spots a police detective hanging

around. They discover that he's been sent to check out the area after there were reports of armed men in the area. Walker approaches him, explaining that he's leading a Specialist Response and Security team from the Australian Federal Police to deal with a kidnapping situation. Baker calls in and verifies Walker's AFP identity, which is sneakily placed into the system by Mahmoud. Baker offers his assistance in taking down the bad guys.

Bishop, Zhu and Oberheim arrive in George Town, but miss the thieves – they've made it out onto Bass Strait. The trio commandeer a boat and head after them. They catch up to the boat and follow it at a distance, until it meets a larger cargo freighter. Packages are exchanged between the two. Bishop sneaks on board to place a GPS tracker on the drugs to trace to whoever is in charge. He also finds plans for a bomb, one which Zhu spots being loaded onto the smaller boat, and plans to use it to blow up a passenger ferry across the Strait. Forced to choose between the drugs and innocent lives, he slaps the tracker down, gets back to his boat and they go after the bomb.

Walker, Baker and the tactical team move in on the three two-man teams watching Oberheim's son. They incapacitate them, only to discover they're a private security company hired to guard the building – with no idea of who is inside. Walker and Baker move inside and secure the son.

Bishop, back on the boat, goes tearing after the bomb. The thieves spot them, and gunfire is exchanged as they race towards a passenger ferry. Zhu takes over driving and gets their boat alongside. Bishop jumps across and incapacitates the thieves, grabs the wheel and narrowly misses the ferry. Mahmoud patches through Walker, who has Oberheim's son with him. Faced with a still ticking bomb, Baker – a former member of the STAR Group Explosive Coordination Section – gets on the line and helps him defuse it. Baker realises that he is not dealing with the Federal Police.

With his son safe, Oberheim reveals the horrifying truth – the robbery was part of a larger plan to steal research materials from the company, materials regarding a dangerous new chemical CPS is developing. The Section vows to discover the truth. Back in Adelaide, Walker requests that Baker be cleared to join The Section. Despite resistance from Johnson, Richards approves the request.

Episode Five – *Atrocity Exhibition*

Logline: Zhu encounters an old friend; extremists take hostages; Walker gets brutal; an agent defects.

At the Adelaide Convention Centre an International Arms Exhibition takes place. Zhu is sent in undercover to identify potential intelligence threats. Immediately there is a problem – Zhu spots Hao Fengzhi, her former partner from the MSS. Before she

has a chance to extract the Convention Centre is invaded by masked gunmen, who take the entire exhibition hostage. The Section are asked to resolve the situation quietly, so Mahmoud shuts down North Terrace under the pretence of construction work.

Meanwhile, the hostage takers reveal themselves as anti-globalist activists – the extremist end of a social movement that criticises the global reach of corporate capitalism, of which weapon sales is an extreme example – and threaten to start killing hostages if their demands are not met. Zhu manages to re-initiate contact with the Grid and starts giving them information. Walker starts working with Bishop to formulate a plan to take the centre by force. Zhu is also thrown together with Fengzhi, and the two are forced to acknowledge their existence. Mahmoud attempts to trace the history of the terrorists, only to discover that their website's IP address can be traced back to Beijing and the MSS. Bishop contacts a local double agent in the MSS and discovers that Fengzhi had plans to defect, and the MSS wanted him taken out – the so-called 'anti-globalist' activists are in fact a white MSS kill team, and the whole event has been stage managed as a convenient excuse for his death.

Walker and Baker, in his first mission for The Section, lead a tactical team into position and prepare to assault the Convention Centre. They go in, brutally and efficiently taking out the terrorists. The leader manages to fire a round at Fengzhi, but Zhu throws herself in front of him, taking a bullet in the shoulder. The team clear up the scene and Zhu is given medical attention. Richards and Bishop decide to keep Fengzhi from the attention of ASIO and spirit him away to a safehouse, much to the annoyance of Johnson.

Episode Six – *A Short Term Effect*

Logline: A meeting of minds; a deadly weapon; enemies big and small; a ray of hope; man down.

The NSC decide to hold a conference at a hotel in Adelaide to assess The Section's progress; they are put in charge of handling security. The morning of the conference, Richards, Walker and Baker are heading to the hotel for last minute arrangements when Richards is called away to a meeting. Walker and Baker go ahead to secure the hotel. Members of the NSC begin to arrive. As they go through their security checklist, Walker notices a guest not on the official manifest. He and Baker split up and tail the man. Walker loses the man, but Baker manages to follow the man to a maintenance area containing the controls for the ventilation system. The man is putting some kind of device with a timer and a canister in place.

Spotting Baker, the man pulls a gun, but Baker is faster and shoots him in the leg, incapacitating him. With less than two minutes on the timer, Baker attempts to disarm the device with Mahmoud's help via radio. However, he is unable to stop it

and it goes off, releasing a white powder. Mahmoud manages to shut down the ventilation system, stopping the powder from spreading, but Baker and his prisoner have been exposed. The man claims that they are both dead.

The hotel is put in lockdown and a response team from the Department of Health and Aging (the Australian equivalent of the CDC) is sent in. Walker is quarantined with members of the NSC and the public in the foyer, while Baker and his prisoner are isolated. On the outside, Bishop, Richards and the rest of The Section work to locate the culprit. In isolation, Baker interrogates his prisoner and discovers that he is a member of an Australian extremist, right-wing anti-government militia calling itself The Tri-Coloured Shirts. Mahmoud and Johnson look into the group, but find that they are a small collection of outsiders without the infrastructure to obtain chemical weapons. Meanwhile, the response team identifies the powder – it's a nerve agent, a variant of a Soviet-era *Novichok* weapon which has been altered somehow to make it much more potent. It is almost impossible to treat, and most certainly deadly.

Acting on a hunch, Bishop and Zhu visit Dr. Karl Oberheim, who is being kept in federal custody while an enquiry is launched into the CPS Alkaloids affair. He confirms that the chemical stolen from CPS – created as part of a government contract to synthesise a 'clean' herbicide – could be used to strengthen a nerve agent. Bishop, with Mahmoud's help, attempts to track down the freighter which took the drugs after the CPS robbery. Bishop and Mahmoud identify the freighter as belonging to a company owned by a Russian oligarch – Valentin Kazembek – who happens to be in Adelaide. They bring him in for questioning, but he claims the boat was stolen by pirates off the coast of Somalia, and a check into his background yields no information.

Zhu leads a tactical team to raid the headquarters of The Tri-Coloured Shirts, north of the city, in search of an antidote. The raid goes down without a hitch and the team locate what could be a antidote. Richards brings in Petya Gorchakov to verify it, and Gorchakov believes it could work. Meanwhile, the response team at the hotel has cleared Walker and the guests of any infection and moves Baker and his prisoner to a medical facility for treatment. Walker, feeling responsible for Baker, goes with them. The prisoner, with a weaker immune system, dies on the way there, and Baker is in a bad way. Richards and Gorchakov personally transport the antidote to the facility, where it is administered to Baker. It does not work. Baker dies, and The Section have no leads.

Episode Seven – *Close To The Edge*

Logline: Bishop on a mission; how far a man will go; a ticking time bomb; 'situational morality'; unstoppable forces and immovable objects.

After Baker's funeral, Richards leaves Bishop in charge of The Section and takes the day to collect his thoughts and reflect on his decisions. He is pained by Baker's death. As he is driving home, Richards receives a phone call – his daughter Jacinta has been kidnapped and is being held hostage. The kidnappers threaten to kill him unless he does exactly what they instruct him to. Richards agrees, but manages to get in touch with Bishop and pass on an 'under duress' code to him. Bishop puts all of his energy into finding out who's responsible.

Richards' instructions take him to a research facility located on the city's outskirts, where the kidnappers task him with retrieving a briefcase. Richards bluffs, blackmails and sneaks his way inside. Meanwhile, Bishop leans hard on contacts to get to the truth, so much so that his colleagues at The Section start to question his involvement in the case. Slowly, after intense interrogations ending in several busted kneecaps Bishop finds out the identity of the kidnappers, and gets a preliminary fix on their location.

Richards manages to retrieve the briefcase, but is quickly sent to another location by his kidnappers – a section of the freeway near a tight bend. The briefcase contains a HERF weapon, capable of disrupting electronics at a distance. He is instructed to set the weapon up, wait for a convoy of cars, and fire it, making sure that a certain car runs off the road and crashes. Richards has no choice but to comply, so he waits. Back at The Section, Mahmoud identifies the target car – it contains several senior government ministers.

Bishop and Mahmoud locate a warehouse in an industrial area of the northern suburbs where it's believed Jacinta is being held. Bishop asks Walker to prepare a tactical team to go in, but Walker, paralysed by guilt over Baker's death, is unable to act. Bishop decides to take matters into his own hands and goes to the warehouse alone. There, he mows through the warehouse, killing the minions in his way with cold, lethal precision. He takes a bullet in the shoulder and is nearly killed, but is saved when Walker bursts in and takes down Bishop's attacker. Walker has managed to recover – briefly at least – from his guilt and indecision. The two of them manage to get to the leader of the kidnappers just in time, stopping Richards from having to take the shot. The kidnapper is revealed to be Sergey Mikhailovich Novikov, a former KGB operative with a grudge against Richards from his time in ASIS. He is taken into custody.

During his interrogation, Novikov cuts a deal with Johnson – everything he knows in exchange for immunity. No one is impressed, but after a discussion with the NSC an agreement is made. Novikov admits to working for Valentin Kazembek, the Russian oligarch and the head of a Russian ultra-nationalist group who style themselves after the Union of Mladorossi – an early 20th century group advocating a hybrid of Russian monarchy and the Soviet system. The nerve agent attack was a test run for a plan Kazembek is putting into place to kill off the Russian parliament, the target

suggested by Novikov to kill of Richards. When that failed, Novikov still wanted Richards dead and Kazembek suggested the kidnapping – the death of senior government ministers would have been a useful side effect, throwing everyone into disarray. Novikov reveals that Kazembek is due to leave the country imminently. Bishop and Walker race to Adelaide Airport, where Kazembek’s private plane is about to depart. Forced to go after it as it races down the runway, they eventually stop it from taking off. Kazembek is arrested and handed over to the Russian consulate. The team has stopped a major terrorist action and the cause of their recent troubles, but at a considerable price.

Finally, back at The Section, father and daughter are reunited. However, Jacinta tells Richards that she wants nothing to do with him as whenever she sees him, something horrible always happens. She walks away. Richards is heartbroken. Bishop struggles with what he has had to do to save her. Walker tries to deal with his guilt.

Episode Eight – *Broken English*

Logline: A public figure; a sinister plot; Bishop undercover; suspects everywhere; friends close, enemies closer; a new ally.

Richards receives a tip from a contact working at the DSD – controversial conspiracy theorist radio talk show host Adam Murrow has been targeted for assassination by parties unknown. As Murrow is considered a useful asset that The Section can pick up and leak intel to and from for their benefit, Richards makes preventing the killing top priority. Bishop goes undercover, posing as a potential investor interested in taking Murrow’s radio show ‘The Fourth World War’ into international syndication. He’s quickly taken into Murrow’s inner circle, and starts learning about the conspiracy-obsessed mindset with which these men and women live their lives.

Meanwhile, Mahmoud and Zhu install electronic surveillance on Murrow’s property and start digging through records; looking for any sign of people he may have annoyed enough to want him dead. Unfortunately, the list is rather long and they find themselves overwhelmed with potential candidates. Bishop is instructed to stay close to Murrow and act as his bodyguard if need be.

Murrow notices Bishop’s attention and becomes suspicious. He calls on sources to discover more about Bishop, eventually learning that Bishop was once an ASIS operative. Instantly distrustful of “another spook” Murrow goes on the run, trying to put as much distance between himself and The Section as possible. This happens just as Mahmoud and Zhu locate the assassin – Murrow’s radio producer (and occasional lover) Jane Symonds, who believes in Murrow’s cause and believes that his death will turn him into a martyr. The team track Murrow on a satellite to his large

property in the Adelaide Hills, and Bishop goes after him to warn him. Symonds is not far behind.

There is a showdown at Murrow's property, where Bishop and Symonds both confront Murrow. He doesn't believe Bishop's insistence that his life is in danger. Symonds acts completely innocent until Murrow turns to walk away, when she draws a handgun and fires. Bishop pushes Murrow out of the way, taking a bullet to the shoulder, and returns fire. Symonds is wounded, but alive. Murrow, disgusted at the betrayal, thanks Bishop and promises to help "his organisation" in whatever way he can.

Episode Nine – *In a Silent Way*

Logline: Bishop is kidnapped; Johnson gets threatening; Walker goes stealthy; a rooftop shootout; a hero goes rogue.

While undercover in a distinctly non-threatening left-wing green group, Bishop is abducted in the middle of the night by forces unseen and taken to a 'black site' in the CBD, where he is questioned and tortured by a mysterious woman who only identifies herself as 'Sarah'. He reveals nothing. The team eventually identify Bishop's abductors as ASIO agents, who are also investigating the same left-wing group. Johnson stops Richards from getting Bishop out, as it would reveal the existence of The Section. Walker agrees to go into the building and extract Bishop by any means necessary. In the black of night, Walker sneaks into the building and, with the support of the team via radio, slowly makes his way towards the top. Along the way he silently takes out guards, defeats retinal scans and crawls through ventilation shafts. Meanwhile, Bishop attempts to resist torture as Sarah reminds him of ASIO's legal rights to hold him.

Walker reaches the top and, sneaking past the guards, manages to locate Bishop, who has been drugged on highly addictive opiates. He manages to get Bishop mobile and the two head for an extraction on the roof. However, they are spotted and all hell breaks loose – ASIO agents fire wildly at them as Walker attempts to subdue them and Bishop struggles with very fast and violent withdrawal symptoms. Their extraction finally arrives – a helicopter piloted by an ex-SAS colleague of Walker's – and Bishop gets on board. Walker ropes up and the chopper takes off.

Walker and Bishop return to The Section several hours later, where news is breaking – the government has used the extraction as an excuse to crack down on left-wing groups, as well as a nationwide manhunt for Bishop. Panicked, Bishop resists attempts to keep him at the office, punches Johnson in the nose and makes a run for it. John Bishop has gone rogue.

Episode Ten – *Violator*

Logline: Bishop goes dark; the team edge closer to the truth; a war begins; an explosion.

Hunted by the police, the intelligence services and even his own colleagues, John Bishop is a man on the run; he disappears from view while he attempts to put together a plan. Meanwhile, at The Section the team try to deal with multiple problems – Johnson is receiving serious pressure from the NSC to bring Bishop in, while the country is quietly being turned into a police state thanks to the new legislation. Richards discreetly asks Mahmoud to look into who's behind the laws, which pose serious threats to civil liberties. To keep the NSC happy the team formulate a plan to grab Bishop – by a process of elimination, they'll work out where he keeps his 'go bag', and pick him up when he attempts to retrieve it.

In parliament, new legislation is rushed through in the wake of so-called 'terrorist activity' and passes without opposition. The laws grant the police unheard of powers, similar to those given to ASIO, to use against citizens. Left-wing groups and voices of dissent are shut down. Ordinary citizens do not notice what is happening around them. The state begins taking control of the media. The Section find themselves increasingly isolated. The PM can't be reached.

The team believe they have identified the location of Bishop's go bag. Walker and a team wait at the location to lift Bishop. Bishop approaches and moves inside, successfully retrieves his bag and leaves – unfortunately The Section are at the wrong building. He steals a car and heads north, for the countryside. Meanwhile, Mahmoud has been working hard (with assistance from Johnson) at uncovering the origin of the disturbing new laws. Everyone is called back to the office for a briefing. Just as they are about to begin an unscheduled van comes screaming into their underground car park. Before the team can do anything it explodes. Everything goes black.

Episode Eleven – *The Killing Moon*

Logline: The team lay dying in rubble; a young girl's deception; a teenager's dangerous thirst for knowledge; a man's loss of innocence; a fool's errand; a moment of hope.

The Section lies in ruins, the target of a bomb attack. The team lie in the rubble, unconscious; maybe dead or dying. We slowly move in on each of the survivors as they flashback to how they came to be where they are.

In Hong Kong a young girl sees her parents gunned down by Triads – in the wrong place at the wrong time. Alone and poor, she is forced to turn to prostitution for

years before she meets a former member of British Special Branch, who recruits her as an asset against the Triads. Before she knows it she's working for MI6 as a double agent in the Chinese Security Services. That's until one day she's on mission to Australia and is burned by MI6. Forced to seek political asylum, she assumes a new name: Jade Zhu.

In Goodwood a young Iraqi man lives with his parents. Obsessed with conspiracy theories and suppressed information he almost effortlessly hacks into government files, earning him the attention of ASIO, the AFP and the courts. Put on trial but let off with a warning, his immense talent with computers is soon recognised by the head of Dagda Security, who hires him – Samir Mahmoud – as a data analyst.

In the UK a bright-eyed young soldier works hard to join the prestigious SAS regiment. Taking on the hardest of physical and mental endurance tests, he gets through and begins a distinguished career. However, after witnessing the horrors of the Balkan conflict in the mid-to-late 90s and the eventual breakdown of his marriage, he leaves the Regiment and the UK for sunnier shores. He settles in Adelaide, where he – Alex Walker – is recruited by Dagda.

A lawyer for ASIS is assigned a mission in Syria to meet with an asset and negotiate a deal for him. The lawyer is assigned a field agent as bodyguard and fixer – John Bishop. The two men clash at every turn, and when the deal goes bad they find themselves on the run from cold-blooded killers through the streets of Damascus. John Bishop is forced to work with a man he can't stand – Eric Johnson.

We return to The Section, where a section of rubble slowly stirs before a lone figure emerges, coughing its lungs up. Covered in dust and blood, he wipes the grime from his face. It is Malcolm Richards, and he's angry.

Episodes Twelve and Thirteen – *Closedown: Parts One & Two*

Note: This synopsis covers the final two episodes of the first season

Logline: Unlikely friends; the time for subtlety has passed; building a team; a desperate mission; the truth revealed; exchanges and double crosses; one final race against time.

Three months have passed. The team is missing or presumed dead. The country is slowly yet steadily becoming a police state, though it's being kept quiet. 'Sarah', the ASIO agent who tortured Bishop in custody, tracks him down, hiding out in a small country town in the north of SA. She reveals to him her true identity – she is Grace Strauss, head of the Office of National Assessments Field Division (ONAFD), a beyond top secret government department formed to deal with internal affairs within the Australian Intelligence Community. She had discovered a conspiracy of blackmail and subversion which stretched to the highest echelons, and had been

undercover in ASIO to root it out. The Section had come close to discovering the identity of the scheme's mastermind, but the bomb at their HQ stopped them before it could be revealed. Strauss has no one left to trust – she asks for Bishop's help in reclaiming their country.

Bishop is suspicious, yet sees no alternative. The two head back to Adelaide where they begin to investigate the whereabouts of the team. They find Zhu in hiding, with a cover waitressing in a Chinese restaurant at the Central Markets. She reveals the whereabouts of both Mahmoud and Walker, alive but in federal custody. Nothing is known of Richards, and Johnson is thought to be working for the splinter faction of the government behind the plot. Zhu, Strauss and Bishop put together a plot to simultaneously free both Mahmoud and Walker, both being held in separate sections of the Adelaide Remand Centre on Currie Street. A daring, high risk prison break ensues.

Once at a safe location, Mahmoud reveals what he learnt before the bomb flattened The Section – the culprit behind the intelligence leaks is Simon Barrow, the Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel. A former ONA agent under an alias, Barrow has blackmailed his way into an almost impregnable position. However, Mahmoud has a plan to stop his major source of intelligence – Barrow has a hard link installed at Pine Gap, one connected directly to the ECHELON intelligence network. It has to be removed physically, leaving Bishop and company to ponder how to break into the most heavily guarded intelligence facility in the country. *(End of Part One)*

Bishop travels around, soliciting help from anyone they've helped or encountered during their time at The Section. Together with what remains of their organisation they put together a plan pooling all of their resources to take out the ECHELON leak. For the final part of their plan they need a government patsy; naturally, Bishop decides to go after Johnson. Bishop tracks him down to a government office building in the CBD. However, when he confronts Johnson, Johnson convinces him that he's playing along with Barrow, trying to chip away at him from the inside. Bishop enlists Johnson to help on the assault on Pine Gap.

Using all of the resources at their disposal, the team put their plan into action – travelling to Pine Gap, they manage to fool the guards into getting Bishop inside with a combination of Petya Gorchakov's fake blood and Karl Oberheim posing as a doctor. The rest of the team back off to provide ops support from a distance. Bishop manages to knock out his guards and gain free access to the facility. With Mahmoud's guidance he locates the hard-link which is leeching from the ECHELON system. Removing it and a connected hard drive packed with data, he moves towards extraction. However, on his way out he comes to surveillance room which contains a map of the Pine Gap facility – it is bigger and more vast than anyone would have thought possible. Before he has a chance to examine any further, he is spotted by a

guard and the base is put on alert. Bishop fights his way to the rooftop, where he activates a self-inflating balloon – part of a Skyhook system. He is whisked away by a low flying airplane.

Re-convening at a safehouse back in Adelaide, the team go over the data they've retrieved. Mahmoud discovers a piece of SIGINT that Barrow had been keeping from the intelligence services – three cargo freighters on their way to Adelaide from different locations, each believed to be carrying an explosive EMP device. Their explosion in Adelaide will be the final act of false flag terrorism that Barrow needs to commit to have the political clout to reshape the government and the country into a near fascist state. Worst still, the intelligence is several weeks old – the bombs could already be in place, but the team have no way of knowing where they are. Mahmoud has one final piece of bad news for Bishop – he has discovered that Barrow has started seeing a woman, and it's Bishop's ex-wife, Felicity. Bishop is less than impressed and aware that Barrow must have some kind of endgame.

Johnson comes up with a possible plan – he will use his standing within the government to set up a meeting with Barrow and help Bishop and Strauss sneak in to interrogate Barrow for answers. It's primitive, but effective. Johnson, Bishop and Strauss head for a large black building on Grenfell Street where Barrow has an office. The meeting is set; Johnson walks into Barrow's massive office, Bishop and Strauss run in behind him. Barrow is not phased, he merely smiles, brings out Bishop's ex-wife and holds a gun to her head. Unable to resist gloating, he tells Bishop and company how every action they had taken since becoming The Section was part of his larger plan, which they unknowingly followed to the letter. Bishop's escape from ASIO, the bombing of their office and now the three EMP bombs will all be blamed on 'left wing terror groups', giving Barrow all the clout he will need to push the country and the government even further to the extreme right.

Barrow suggests that they all wait quietly while the EMP bombs explode around the city. At a stalemate, the team don't know what to do. Suddenly, the outer door opens and Richards appears, a gun in hand and trained on Barrow. Belittling the team's shock at his being alive, Richards goes on to explain that he knew Barrow would try to use Felicity as leverage, so he approached her earlier that day and explained Barrow's true motives. Shocked and appalled by the evidence Richards presented her, Felicity agreed to wear a wire. As he revealed the truth it was beamed out to every media outlet in the country. Police storm the room and arrest Barrow, who is taken away ranting about the people that he answered to.

Mahmoud storms in and goes for Barrow's computer, getting inside and revealing the locations of the EMP bombs. They're in different corners of the city, so the team split up to go after them – Zhu and Mahmoud, Walker and Richards, Strauss and Bishop. It's a close call, but the teams manage to disarm the devices. However, just as Strauss and Bishop are finishing up at their location they are attacked. Strauss is

knocked unconscious and left behind while Bishop is subdued and bundled into a van. Everything goes black.

EQUIPMENT, PERSONNEL AND PROCEDURES

The Grid

A term used to refer to the nerve centre of The Section, 'The Grid' is a large situation room from where operations are conducted and run. An open space in the most protected part of the building, the Grid is full of computer workstations, a large primary screen and a significant number of personnel. Several offices (including, most prominently, the office of Malcolm Richards) overlook the area. The Grid serves multiple purposes – it is the heart of The Section, a practical operations centre and the place where the most important decisions are made. While The Section is situated in a large, almost labyrinthine building, it could all be operated from the Grid if need be.

Staff and Organisation

The Section divides its staff amongst its primary departments, most of which have been carried directly over from the company's days as Dagda Security. Broadly, decisions are made and discussed by a group of department heads and senior agents known as the *Executive Branch*. This includes, at a minimum, the director and the heads of each department. However, this is often expanded to include senior agents from each department on a case-by-case basis.

Departments are then run independently by their respective heads. These include:

- *Department of Investigations*
- *Department of Tactical Operations*
- *Department of Electronic Surveillance and Digital Warfare*

Department staffs are supplemented by various administrative staff that work independently or move between departments for the completion of day to day responsibilities. There is also a separate security division, which handles building and personnel security, but is run completely in-house and subject to intensive vetting

The *Department of Investigations* is responsible for all field agents. These are operatives who conduct practical, in the field investigations on behalf of The Section, whether explicitly or in a clandestine fashion. These are the traditional 'spies' – responsible for information gathering, infiltration and general operations. They will usually be armed and will usually operate under an alias while dealing with members of the public. The *Department of Investigations* is run by John Bishop, with Jade Zhu serving as senior field agent.

The role of the *Department of Tactical Operations* is twofold – firstly, they advise field agents on operations (often serving as their handlers via radio link) and secondly, provide the planning and execution of tactical actions when required. Alex Walker is the head of the department and constantly fills the former role, taking charge of the Grid when agents are in the field. He will also occasionally enter the field himself when the situation demands it. The Section also maintains a series of *Tactical Teams*, all of whom fall under Walker’s charge – their role is similar to that of the American SWAT teams or the South Australian STAR Force; to apply significant force when required, though their training and operational role is most closely modelled on the British SAS. Since Dagda Security has been merged into a government entity, the number and equipment of these teams has increased exponentially in order to deal with greater perceived threats.

While the title of the *Department of Electronic Surveillance and Digital Warfare* sounds exotic and exciting (and it occasionally can be) its true role usually boils down to something far less intriguing – IT. Chief data analyst Samir Mahmoud is the head of the department and takes the job very seriously, despite his relatively young age of 25. The department is responsible for all computer and technology-related information and operations, from running communications to installing software and signals intelligence. It is a large department in scope, containing several sub-sections including *Technical Services*, which deals with practical electronics (building bugs, servicing drones, other gadgets) and *Information Analysis*, which is dedicated to sifting through and interpreting SIGINT (primarily taken directly from the ECHELON system). Mahmoud himself tends to float around the department doing “a bit of everything” (his words) as well as his role as primary communications controller on the Grid.

Weapons

Field agents are required to carry a handgun when on operations, though they are encouraged to use them only as a last resort and to keep the weapon concealed if at all possible. Standard issue is a Sig Sauer P228, a semi-automatic 9mm pistol often used for law enforcement purposes which is also equipped with a built-in laser sight. When Dagda Security was merged into a government organisation it became standard practice for all senior staff and department heads to be trained in basic weapon functions and the P228 was used for this purpose.

There are also ‘field packages’ put together for when agents need to operate autonomously for extended periods. Packed into the back of armoured vehicles (most commonly large, black four-wheel-drives) these packages consist of a number of weapons and ammunition to account for all possible tactical situations. Usually included are stun guns, MP5K machine guns, pocket blades, silencers, rubber bullets and even an M4 carbine assault rifle, as well as other practical equipment (i.e. mobile recording devices, handcuffs, access control technology, MOE kits etc.)

The M4 is also the standard weapon for the tactical teams, who are also equipped with body armour and riot gear. Their primary role is in close quarters combat (CQC) in an urban environment (primarily for the purpose of counter-terrorism) and this is reflected in their armoury. As specialist equipment may be required in different circumstances, Walker has devised a series of 'kits' that the tactical teams can be outfitted with. These include custom-designed kits for sniping, CQC, hostage rescue and stealth operations.

Communications

Most agents of The Section keep in as near-constant contact with the Grid as possible while in the field. This is maintained through a series of secure radio links, usually a comm unit worn in the ear, or with a mobile phone if the situation warrants it. Due to the staff of The Section holding varying backgrounds and experiences with different agencies, there is no strictly 'accurate' radio protocol in place. This is also due to the fact that The Section has only recently become a government body; as the show continues the procedures will tighten up considerably.

The radio codes employed by various characters depend largely on their background. For example, Walker's SAS history means that he refers to enemies as 'X-Rays' and friendlies as 'Yankees'. As most of the staff have a broad knowledge of radio codes and have worked with various security agencies over the years, so there are few problems with miscommunications. It has, however, become fairly standard for field agents to refer to the controlling agent at the Grid as 'Alpha' during operations, designating them as the 'first in charge' or 'first in chain of command'.

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THE SECTION
EPISODE 1.1 - PILOT

By
PATRICK J. LANG

FIFTH DRAFT
AUGUST 2016
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1. EXT. RUNDLE MALL, ADELAIDE CBD. EARLY MORNING 1

TITLE: Rundle Mall, Adelaide. 0730.

It is a cold and bright June morning along Rundle Mall, Adelaide's central shopping district. The Mall is slowly but steadily becoming populated as the city begins to wake up. Business people walk quickly to their places of work, and at every available space there is a shop serving coffee.

JOHN BISHOP, a lean, serious looking man in his late 30s stands at the window of a small coffee shop, leaning on the counter. He is dressed in a suit and a long, dark overcoat.

He stirs his coffee and pulls out his mobile, punching in a number.

BISHOP

(ON PHONE)

I'm in position. Switching to
comms.

BISHOP hangs up the phone and places a small, flesh-coloured comm-unit in his ear. He taps it quickly to confirm that it's working, and goes back to stirring his coffee.

In the distance a slightly stout MAN in his mid-50s walks along the street, similarly attired in business wear. BISHOP does not look directly at him.

BISHOP

I have eyes on the target. We
have a go.

2. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. EARLY MORNING 2

The operational area of a private security company, the Grid of The Section is a large, open room surrounded by screens displaying data. Being so early, there is a small but efficient skeleton staff operating the equipment. The man in charge is clearly ALEX WALKER, a well-built and

officious looking British man in his early 40s. He stands watching while SAMIR MAHMOUD, a gangly Iraqi-Australian in his mid-20s operates a computer, watching Bishop's progress.

WALKER

Roger that. Stay on him, he's proving rather slippery.

3. EXT. RUNDLE MALL. EARLY MORNING

3

The MAN has passed BISHOP and is steadily progressing down the Mall. BISHOP ignores him and puts the lid on his coffee.

BISHOP

He's a politician, isn't that in his job description?

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Make sure you mention that during your next security check.

BISHOP leaves his coffee and begins to follow the MAN at a distance, being careful not to attract his attention.

BISHOP

Target is on the move. Will advise when I have the site.

4. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. EARLY MORNING

4

WALKER

Roger that. Standing by.

WALKER turns to MAHMOUD.

WALKER

Where are we on the target sites, Sam?

MAHMOUD taps something out on the computer, bringing up data on a series of hotels around the city.

MAHMOUD

We've identified five different hotels that he likes to frequent. Based on his pattern of use, it's likely that today he'll use one of these three. The two on North Terrace seem more likely, but we're keeping the Weymouth Street option open as well.

WALKER

Right then Mr. Minister, let's see how far that expense account stretches.

5. EXT. KING WILLIAM ROAD. EARLY MORNING

5

BISHOP continues to follow the man along King William Street, a series of interlocking roads. The traffic is becoming quite thick. The MAN stands at the lights, ready to cross to Weymouth Street.

BISHOP

He's going for target site gamma. Repeat, *gamma*.

SAMIR

(ON COMM)

Got it, opening their system now.

BISHOP moves quickly across the road to close the gap between himself and the MAN.

BISHOP

Can we still make the connection?

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM, DISTRACTED)

Yep. In fact, gamma is great, they have surveillance in all their rooms, we just need to access it.

6. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. EARLY MORNING 6

MAHMOUD taps furiously at his computer. WALKER hovers behind him.

WALKER

Sam?

MAHMOUD

Firewall, better than I thought for a commercial hotel.

WALKER

Are our backup teams on site?

MAHMOUD

They've all been recalled for the meeting. We thought that he'd go for one of the North Terrace hotels.

WALKER

Cheap as well as slippery.

7. INT. HOTEL LOBBY. EARLY MORNING 7

BISHOP enters the hotel lobby. It's clean and well-presented, but not particularly expensive. He smiles at the desk clerk and moves to a stand full of 'What's on in Adelaide' pamphlets. He picks one up and pretends to study it.

BISHOP

(QUIETLY)

I need that data now.

MAHMOUD
(ON COMM)

I'm in the allocation system,
but you'll need to patch me
into the internal
surveillance. The security
office is on the seventh
floor.

BISHOP
En route.

BISHOP replaces the pamphlet and heads for the lifts.

8. INT. LIFT. EARLY MORNING **8**

BISHOP steps into a lift and presses the button for the seventh floor.

MAHMOUD
(ON COMM)

When you exit the lift take
your second right; the
security office should be
straight ahead. If we've timed
it right we should be directly
between a guard changeover.

BISHOP
Oh good, another variable.

The doors slide open and a middle-aged WOMAN gets into the lift. BISHOP smiles and nods at her.

BISHOP
Morning.

9. INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. EARLY MORNING **9**

The lift doors open with a 'ping' as BISHOP steps out into the hotel corridor on the seventh floor, smiling briefly at the WOMAN still in the lift. He turns and walks purposefully down the corridor, taking his second right and proceeding towards a security office.

BISHOP

Alright, I'm in position.

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

Right, now you're going to need to find me the model number of the pin pad so I can find the manufacturer's code.

As MAHMOUD is speaking, BISHOP puts his hand on the handle of the security office door and pulls. It opens.

BISHOP

No need. Some days I do enjoy working in a small town.

BISHOP steps inside.

10. INT. HOTEL SECURITY OFFICE. EARLY MORNING 10

The security office is basic set up - a series of monitors display images of the hotel corridors, foyer and stairwells. A bank of servers lines one wall. BISHOP takes a USB stick from his pocket and connects it to one of the servers.

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

Alright, I'm in. Sixty seconds.

BISHOP watches a clock on the wall as it ticks, each second seeming to take an agonisingly long time to pass.

11. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. EARLY MORNING 11

WALKER paces up and down behind MAHMOUD, who continues to type furiously.

WALKER

Have we got video yet?

MAHMOUD

(ANNOYED)

You will do... in forty-five seconds.

WALKER puts his hands up in protest.

WALKER

Okay, okay. (ON COMM) Hang in there, we've nearly got it.

12. INT. HOTEL SECURITY OFFICE. EARLY MORNING

12

BISHOP stands nervously, still watching the clock. There is an audible 'click' as the door opens. BISHOP swings around, stepping in front of the black box as he does so. A SECURITY GUARD in his mid-thirties walks into the room. He sees BISHOP and tenses.

SECURITY GUARD

(NERVOUSLY)

Care to explain just what you're doing in my office?

BISHOP looks up, the clock continues to tick.

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

Twenty-five seconds.

The SECURITY GUARD's hand hovers towards the 9mm pistol strapped to his belt.

BISHOP

(SLOWLY, CAREFULLY)

Now, no need for that. I'm going to reach into my jacket, very slowly, and show you my identification. Okay?

The SECURITY GUARD slowly undoes the safety clip on his weapon holster. It opens with an audible 'snap'. The clock continues to tick.

SECURITY GUARD
Alright. Slowly.

BISHOP nods and reaches into his coat pocket.

MAHMOUD
(ON COMM)
Fifteen seconds.

BISHOP takes out a leather wallet and holds it out. The SECURITY GUARD takes it and opens it, eyes flicking between the ID inside and BISHOP.

MAHMOUD
(ON COMM)
Ten seconds.

The SECURITY GUARD looks again at the ID in the wallet.

SECURITY GUARD
John Bishop?

BISHOP
Detective Inspector John
Bishop, if you don't mind.

MAHMOUD
(ON COMM)
Three, two, one... we're in.

The SECURITY GUARD relaxes, re-clips his holster and hands the wallet back to BISHOP. BISHOP takes it and puts it in his back pocket, sweeping up the black box as he does so.

SECURITY GUARD
Sorry Detective, gave me a bit
of a fright there.

BISHOP

Not a problem, we all have a job to do. Now listen, we've got intel that says there's a major drug deal going down *this morning* in your hotel. I need you to stay here and watch the cameras while I call for backup. Can you do that?

SECURITY GUARD

(SUDDENLY OFFICIOUS)

Of course. What floor should I be watching?

BISHOP

Floors six to nine, that's all we have to go on right now. I'll be right back.

The SECURITY GUARD nods, takes a seat and watches the screens intently, eyes flicking from one to the other. BISHOP rolls his eyes very, very slightly and walks out of the room into the corridor.

BISHOP

(QUIETLY)

Did we get it?

13. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. EARLY MORNING 13

On the largest screen in the Grid an image appears. The MAN sits on a hotel bed while a svelte WOMAN in her mid-30s stands over him, removing her top.

WALKER

(REPULSED)

Yep. Two-hundred and fifty pounds of cheating politician. Another job well done.

MAHMOUD grimaces slightly at the image onscreen.

MAHMOUD

Another marriage well ruined,
I'd say.

WALKER

Get as clean an exit as you
can, then get back here
pronto, the briefing is in an
hour, and Johnson wants all
hands on deck.

14. INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. EARLY MORNING

14

BISHOP grimaces as he walks along the hotel corridor.

BISHOP

Tell you what, let's hope this
new 'arrangement' means better
gear. Seriously, I've seen
better police badges in a box
of corn flakes. Look, I've got
some loose ends to tie up, so
feel free to start without me.
Bishop out.

BISHOP takes the comm unit out of his ear and pockets
it, heading for the lift.

15. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. MORNING

15

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 0830.

The Grid at The Section has now started to fill up with
people. Workers mill around, chatting and getting cups of
coffee. MAHMOUD sits at his desk, half paying attention
and half typing away at his laptop. WALKER sits stoically
nearby. JADE ZHU, a slim Chinese woman in her early 30s,
stands near the back, tapping her fingers.

The door to the head office opens and the boss - MALCOLM
RICHARDS, a man in his late 50s - enters the room flanked
by ERIC JOHNSON, a serious, boring looking lawyer in his
late 20s. JOHNSON looks around the room, annoyed.

JOHNSON
(QUIETLY, TO RICHARDS)
Where the hell is Bishop?

RICHARDS shrugs. JOHNSON frowns.

RICHARDS
Oh, all right. (LOUDLY) Sam!
Where's Bishop?

MAHMOUD
(OVER-ENTHUSIASTIC)
Tying up some loose ends,
boss!

RICHARDS
Really? Where is he tying up
these loose ends?

MAHMOUD looks down at his laptop and brings up a GPS
locator. He smiles.

MAHMOUD
At a small cafe as far as I
can tell.

RICHARDS
(TO JOHNSON)
Happy?

JOHNSON merely shoots him a withering glance. RICHARDS
turns and addresses the room.

RICHARDS
Alright, quieten down
everyone!

The noise level drops slightly. WALKER whistles.

WALKER
(SHOUTS)
Shut it!

People stop talking. RICHARDS smiles.

RICHARDS

Thank you, Alex. Alright everyone, thank you all for coming in so early. As you know, today is the final day of our old lives, and Mr. Johnson is here from the NSC to explain the particulars to us. Again. Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON steps forward, shuffling papers.

JOHNSON

Thank you Malcolm. As you know, in the previous 12 months ASIO have detected an unusually high level of terrorist activity in and around Adelaide. They believe that this city is being used as a staging ground for terrorist attacks as it's less exposed and controlled than Melbourne or Sydney.

JOHNSON pauses for effect. No one says anything - they've heard it all before.

JOHNSON

ASIO took this to the National Security Committee as they lacked the man-power to take on full-scale surveillance of the state. This piqued the interest of the NSC, who for sometime have wanted to create a deniable agency for intelligence collection and covert actions. Despite the objections of some serving on the NSC, they have picked you. Yes, what is it Mr. Walker?

WALKER has raised his hand.

WALKER

(DRILY)

Shame there's a few too many
of us or we'd be the Dirty
Dozen.

MAHMOUD

(GRINNING)

I guess we could be a Dirty
Baker's Dozen.

JOHNSON fixes them both with a withering look. RICHARDS suppresses a snort of laughter into a violent sounding cough. There is an awkward pause. JOHNSON waits a moment before continuing.

JOHNSON

In keeping with official vocab
guidelines, all conversations
and documents regarding this
agency are to refer to it only
as 'The Section'. You are now
only 'Dagda Security' for the
sake of your cover.

JOHNSON casts an eye over the room.

JOHNSON

Let me be perfectly clear -
there are lots of people who
don't want a formerly private
security company staffed by
misfits and malcontents
running around South Australia
making trouble for the AIC.
However, the PM has taken a
special interest in this
project. Despite problems,
your... *reclassification* is
nearly complete - so in the
meantime, tie up the loose
ends on your old cases, start

sifting through new data and
don't make fools of
yourselves. That's all.

WALKER gives MAHMOUD a discreet 'high five'. JOHNSON sees
this and addresses MAHMOUD.

JOHNSON

Ah, Mr. Mahmoud. You are the
chief data analyst, correct?

MAHMOUD

Guilty as charged.

JOHNSON

Quite. As you may be
occasionally required to go
into the field from now on you
need to be trained in the use
of firearms.

The grin on MAHMOUD's face disappears.

MAHMOUD

But-

JOHNSON

Thankfully, the company firing
range has just been completed,
and as Mr. Walker is a former
SAS operative, he's perfectly
placed to train you.

MAHMOUD

But-

WALKER slaps him on the shoulder.

WALKER

Come on killer.

They walk away, MAHMOUD looking rather aghast.

RICHARDS

Alright people, back to work,
we have a small but culturally
significant city to save!

People start to talk amongst themselves and head back to their desks. Richards heads towards his office.

16. INT. RICHARDS' OFFICE. MORNING

16

RICHARDS' office is essentially a large glass cage overlooking the Grid. Vertical blinds encase it, affording privacy if required.

RICHARDS desk is also glass - large and cluttered with paper. The only personal affectation is a photo frame containing a picture of an attractive woman in her mid-twenties. RICHARDS sits down at his desk and rubs his eyes before picking up the phone and dialling.

RICHARDS

(INTO PHONE)

That wasn't very smart, what
you just did. I've got enough
new problems around here
without Johnson on my back
about you.

17. EXT. RUNDLE STREET CAFE. MORNING

17

BISHOP sits outside a cafe on Rundle Street, slowly stirring sugar into a latte. He sighs and speaks into his phone.

BISHOP

Let me ask you something Mal.
Why exactly are we throwing
our lot in with the government
again? I thought we got out of
that life in order to make a
difference, not fill out
paperwork.

RICHARDS

(ON PHONE)

Yes, that was the plan John. But... I don't know, do you really call catching cheating spouses and co-ordinating corporate security 'making a difference'.

BISHOP says nothing.

RICHARDS

(ON PHONE)

Cause I sure as hell don't.

BISHOP picks up his coffee and takes a long sip.

18. INT. RICHARDS' OFFICE. MORNING

18

RICHARDS

That job you did this morning; let's say best case scenario that minister loses his position. We're just going to end up replacing one corrupt prick with another. That's not intelligence work, that's just maintaining the status quo, helping the great, filthy circle of political life along. I need more than that. I know you do too.

A light starts to flash on RICHARDS' phone.

RICHARDS

I have to go, John. Just... just think about what I said. And get back here, we've got work to do.

RICHARDS opens the other line on the phone.

RICHARDS

Richards. (SUDDENLY ATTENTIVE)
Hold on, I'm on my way down.

RICHARDS stands up and walks quickly to the door.

19. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. MORNING

19

The Grid buzzes with activity. MAHMOUD sits at his desk, somewhat peculiarly attired in a bullet proof vest, busily searching for information. The large screen that dominates the room displays a surveillance photo from Adelaide Airport, alongside a mug shot and documents from a file - of one Andrej Kovač. RICHARDS hurries down the stairs from his office, taking charge. WALKER and ZHU stand nearby, looking over intelligence files. JOHNSON surveys from a distance.

RICHARDS

Is this man an immediate
threat?

ZHU

(LOOKING UP FROM FILE)

No, it doesn't look like it.
Sam's facial recognition
pinged his picture to us from
the ASIS terrorist watch list.
His name is-

WALKER

(INTERRUPTING)

Andre Kovač. Mid-level arms
dealer with no particular
allegiances. No particular
scruples either, I might add.

RICHARDS

You're acquainted?

WALKER

Yeah. One of my teams spent
time in Iraq and Afghanistan,
looking for HVTs, which is

where we ran into him. He helped us, but only because it suited him at the time. I think one of our targets owed him money.

RICHARDS

Charming. What's he doing here?

ZHU

We're just looking at the DSD database now. Last ECHELON intercepts had Kovač moping around Eastern Europe. No reason for him to be here.

WALKER

He's an unknown quantity, Mal. I don't like it.

JOHNSON mutters something inaudible to RICHARDS, who nods and then pauses for a moment, considering a plan of action.

RICHARDS

(OFFICIOUSLY)

Right, listen carefully. Johnson and I are going to brief the NSC and get a search and seizure order. Walker, you're in charge in the meantime. Zhu, assemble a tactical team and be ready to grab Kovač if need be. Sam... Sam, what the hell are you wearing?

RICHARDS looks down at MAHMOUD's vest, just noticing it.

WALKER

Gun school was cut short.

RICHARDS

Never mind. Sam, start sifting through those ECHELON intercepts. If there's a reason we have arms dealers slipping through customs, I want to know why. This is our job now, people, get to it. (A BEAT) And can somebody please call Bishop and get him on task?

RICHARDS and JOHNSON turn and walk to the lift.

20. INT. LIFT INTERIOR. MORNING

20

RICHARDS and JOHNSON stand together inside the lift leading from the Grid. They remain silent until the doors slide shut.

RICHARDS

This constant politicking isn't making my job any easier.

JOHNSON

(CURTLY)

You want to make your job easier? Keep John Bishop on a short leash.

21. EXT. END OF RUNDLE STREET. MORNING

21

TITLE: Adelaide CBD. 0914.

The end of Rundle Street bustles with activity. Cars circle, looking for parking spaces. BISHOP approaches his company car, an average looking sedan with tinted windows, parked in a space next to the parklands, directly opposite the end of Rundle Street.

BISHOP goes to the rear of the car and opens the boot to reveal cache of equipment - surveillance equipment, weapons and so forth. He takes off his tie and throws it

in the boot, grabs a 9mm pistol and pulls the slide halfway back to check there's a round in the chamber. Satisfied, he tucks the pistol into the back of his suit pants and readjusts his jacket. He slips the comm unit back in his ear.

BISHOP

Can you read me Sam?

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

Gotcha. Target's heading towards the CBD in a cab. I'm tracking via the in-car GPS, but I'll lose him as soon as he gets out.

BISHOP

I'm on it.

22. INT. CAR. MORNING

22

The inside of a spacious sedan car. RICHARDS and JOHNSON sit in the back seat. JOHNSON is shuffling files around, reading documents; RICHARDS sits quietly, staring out the window.

RICHARDS

I thought the whole point of us was that we had *carte blanche* when it came to things like Balkan arms dealers. We're not going to get much done if we're running off to brief your bosses-

JOHNSON

(INTERRUPTING)

Our bosses.

RICHARDS

-every couple of hours.

JOHNSON sighs and puts his papers down.

JOHNSON

I know. We're waiting for the NSC to write a new set of guidelines to give you more discretionary powers. The 'Extraordinary Circumstances Act' I believe they're calling it. Until it's recognised, well... this is just what we have to do.

RICHARDS

Oh good, more politics. Just what I wanted.

The drive continues in silence.

23. EXT. RUNDLE MALL ENTRY. MORNING

23

TITLE: Adelaide CBD. 0927.

The start of Rundle Mall bustles with activity as the city starts its business day. Cars drive past on the nearby King William Street, while pedestrians hurry in all directions. JOHN BISHOP leans against a shop on the corner, pretending to use his phone while he watches the area.

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

He should be approaching your location right about now...

BISHOP peers into the distance and sees a cab pull up to a taxi rank. A man in his mid-fifties gets out of the car with a small suitcase on wheels in tow. BISHOP looks at his phone, which displays a picture of ANDREJ KOVAČ - it's the same man. BISHOP observes him pay the driver.

BISHOP

Got him.

MAHMOUD
(ON COMM)

Make sure you stay on him until you can place a tracker. I've got limited options if we lose him.

BISHOP
Roger that.

BISHOP watches as KOVAČ crosses the traffic lights and heads towards Hindley Street, directly opposite. He waits a few moments and nonchalantly strolls across the crossing, following KOVAČ at a distance.

24. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. MORNING

24

Back at the Grid, MAHMOUD monitors the situation on his screen. WALKER paces around, watching the main screen. ZHU approaches and hands him a tablet. WALKER flicks through the files on screen and activates his comm unit.

WALKER
Bishop? Zhu's been looking into Kovač with some of Sam's minions. She's going to give you some background.

WALKER nods to ZHU, who puts a comm headset on.

ZHU
Hi John.

BISHOP
(ON COMM)
What have you got?

ZHU furrows her brow and looks at her tablet.

ZHU
Well, Kovač's fairly cautious; he maintains a minimal online presence. We think we've

managed to crack how he's communicating within his organisation though - using a web mail but only saving outgoing email as drafts, not actually sending it.

BISHOP
(ON COMM)

Clever. No email bouncing around means nothing for ECHELON to pick up on.

ZHU

Right. His people obviously have access to the web mail, so all they need to do is go and look at the saved drafts to get their instructions.

ZHU taps a few times on the tablet and sends the display to the main screen. A web-based email account appears, displaying a draft folder containing three unsent messages.

BISHOP
(ON COMM)

So what's he doing here?

ZHU

From what we've found so far, Kovač's purpose in Adelaide is twofold. Firstly, he's meeting a contact for an arms deal. I can't get much info on who it is, I'm going to have Sam look into it when we're done here.

BISHOP
(ON COMM)

And the second?

ZHU

He's making a drop off. A payoff of some kind; we couldn't locate the specifics. That case he has didn't come off the plane, he retrieved it out of an airport locker. And if we're right, it contains about two hundred grand.

MAHMOUD whistles softly.

25. EXT. HINDLEY STREET. MORNING

25

BISHOP walks down Hindley Street, a slightly more down-market district than the nearby Rundle Mall. He strides past adult shops and questionable looking restaurants mixed in with trendy cafes and bookshops. KOVAČ walks some distance ahead, the wheels of his suitcase rattling on the pavement behind him.

KOVAČ takes a sudden left down an alleyway. BISHOP increases his walking speed to catch up, stopping at the corner of the alleyway. He peers around the corner and sees KOVAČ disappearing in the direction of a large multi-storey carpark.

BISHOP

Well, I think he's on his way to make a deposit. I've got him heading into a U-Park off of Hindley.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Standby.

BISHOP looks around, his gaze fixing on the steadily disappearing KOVAČ.

BISHOP

(CLIPPED)

Do I stay on him Walker? Yes or no?

WALKER

(ON COMM)

There's no network in the U-Park, so we can't access their CCTV. Get in there, but *stay out of sight*. There's not many places to blend in.

BISHOP

Got it.

BISHOP looks back up the alleyway, but KOVAČ has disappeared inside the building. BISHOP moves off quickly after him.

26. INT. MULTI-STOREY CARPARK. MORNING

26

The grey, utilitarian and largely concrete ground floor of a multi-storey car park. A pay station sits near the entrance, positioned right near the lowered boom gates. BISHOP walks in just as the doors of the elevator close.

BISHOP watches the digital display over the elevator count upwards as the car ascends the structure. It counts up steadily before stopping at level six with an audible 'ding'.

BISHOP

Seriously?

BISHOP looks around and spots the door to the stairwell. He takes off his jacket and throws it over the pay station before heading quickly to the stairwell door.

27. INT. STAIRWELL. MORNING

27

In the cold, harsh light of fluorescent strips, BISHOP quickly takes the stairs two at a time. He races past the first floor exit, moving faster and faster.

28. INT. MULTI-STOREY CARPARK - SIXTH FLOOR. MORNING

28

KOVAČ exits the lift onto the sixth floor of the U-Park. The floor, located near the top of the structure, is roughly half full and very quiet. KOVAČ spots a group of

men in the distance and begins to walk towards them, suitcase in tow.

As KOVAČ approaches, the men become clearer. There are four of them clustered around the rear end of an expensive looking sedan. All four are physically intimidating - large, violent looking men. These are low level enforcers; the very bottom of the criminal chain. One of them holds a baseball bat. KOVAČ comes to a stop several feet away from them, smiles slightly too enthusiastically and claps his hands together.

KOVAČ

Gentlemen! Good morning.

The LEADER of the group nods towards KOVAČ, but says nothing. One of his MINIONS approaches KOVAČ and begins to pat him down, looking for weapons. KOVAČ grimaces.

KOVAČ

I assure you that's not necessary.

The LEADER merely raises his eyebrow. The MINION finishes patting KOVAČ down and nods to the LEADER. The MINION then steps forward and jerks the case from KOVAČ's hand, taking it back to the LEADER, who puts it on the boot of the car and flips it open. The case is full of stacks of Australian \$100 bills, banded together.

KOVAČ

I assume you're going to insult me further by counting it?

The LEADER smiles nastily at KOVAČ. He looks over the suitcase and, satisfied, puts it in the boot of his car.

LEADER

My boss wanted me to make certain that there was no... misunderstanding this time.

KOVAČ

(DEFENSIVE)

Hey, last time was a total communication error. You know, you said one thing, I said another. Wires crossed. You know how it is.

LEADER

Do I?

Several rows of cars back, BISHOP creeps from vehicle to vehicle. Finally taking up position at the corner of a car and peeking around to watch the exchange.

KOVAČ continues to speak quickly and defensively, obviously nervous about the situation.

KOVAČ

Well, the important thing is that everyone's happy. I'm happy. You're happy.

KOVAČ smiles over-enthusiastically again. One of the MINIONS smiles back. This unnerves KOVAČ even further.

KOVAČ

Anyway, I should be going now. You know how it is - busy, busy. Tell your boss I say 'hello'.

KOVAČ turns and begins to walk away. There is the audible 'click' of a gun slide being pulled. KOVAČ freezes in place and sighs.

LEADER

We were thinking more like 'goodbye'.

KOVAČ

You know the irony? I sold you that gun.

LEADER

The boss will take the money.
But he needs to make an
example of you. Demonstrate
what happens when people don't
settle their debts.

In the distance, BISHOP observes the situation.

BISHOP

(QUIETLY)

They're going to kill him.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Stay put John, I'm sending
backup.

BISHOP

No time. We lose Kovač, we lose
his contact.

BISHOP takes the comm unit out of his ear and pockets it.
He takes the pistol out of his waistband and clicks the
safety off.

29. INT. ELEGANT OFFICE. MORNING

29

The expensive, old-world office of a politician. Wood-
panelling is prevalent. A large desk dominates the room.
Behind it sits CARLTON LESSING, a politician in his late-
fifties. RICHARDS and JOHNSON occupy the other side. A
tense discussion is underway.

LESSING

Listen, Malcolm. I've agreed to
work as a go between to the
NSC, but that doesn't mean I'm
going to bend to the Section's
every whim. You need to bring
me some hard evidence that this
Kovač is a credible threat
before I authorise *anything*.

JOHNSON

Carlton, we're just asking for a bit of room to manoeuvre, that's all...

LESSING

(EXASPERATED)

And I understand that. Look, as soon as this new legislation passes the whole process will become much easier. In the meantime though, I need your patience.

RICHARDS is starting to look visibly irritated.

RICHARDS

(SARCASTICALLY)

And in the *meantime*, Carlton, I have a suspect on the terrorist watch list doing god-knows-what all over my city! Festival season is eight months away, so he certainly isn't here for the vibrant arts scene.

LESSING rolls his eyes and sighs.

30. INT. MULTI-STOREY CARPARK - SIXTH FLOOR. MORNING 30

KOVAČ has turned around to face the LEADER. The other MINIONS have closed in around him, boxing him in. Silently, BISHOP moves from car to car, getting closer.

The LEADER motions downwards with his gun.

LEADER

On your knees.

Visibly shaking, KOVAČ kneels down. Behind the group, BISHOP silently sneaks up on one of the MINIONS and quickly grabs him in a choke hold, his pistol pushed to the man's temple. Everyone, including KOVAČ, jerks around to look.

BISHOP

Morning lads. Now why don't we all be good little scumbags and drop your weapons?

The LEADER frowns and tightens his grip on his gun. He stares at BISHOP, his eyes hardening. BISHOP raises his eyebrows and pushes the barrel of his pistol harder into the temple of his prisoner, who winces.

31. INT. ELEGANT OFFICE. MORNING

31

LESSING rests his head on his hand, rubbing his forehead as if trying to clear an unpleasant thought from his mind.

LESSING

(SLOWLY, DELIBERATELY)

Look, the new legislation gives you the room you need. Until then I can't give you anything without some sort of guarantee that your... field operatives aren't going to engage in any behaviour that could be deemed as outside the confines of the law.

RICHARDS

Oh come on, Carlton. When have we ever done *anything* outside the confines of the law?

32. INT. MULTI-STOREY CARPARK - SIXTH FLOOR. MORNING **32**

A few moments of thick silence pass as the LEADER thinks, before he aims his pistol and shoots BISHOP's prisoner in the upper leg. The man drops, screaming, a sudden dead weight BISHOP can't support. Before the LEADER can get off another shot, BISHOP fires, hitting the large man in the shoulder. He falls down, clutching at the wound. He drops his gun as he goes down. KOVAČ flattens himself on the ground.

Two MINIONS remain. In the moment after BISHOP has fired, the one holding the baseball bat runs at BISHOP and uses the bat to smack the pistol out of his hand. The gun goes skittering across the ground towards KOVAČ. The MINION goes to hit BISHOP again, but BISHOP grabs the baseball bat in mid-flight, takes it and hits the man in the jaw. He goes down.

The last MINION stands a few feet away, sizing up BISHOP. BISHOP tightens his grip on the baseball bat.

KOVAČ

Hey!

KOVAČ slides BISHOP's gun back along the ground towards him. BISHOP and the MINION both watch it slide for the briefest of moments before making their respective moves: BISHOP drops the baseball bat and goes for the weapon, the MINION charges straight at him. BISHOP gets to the gun first, grabbing it and firing from his position on the ground. He hits the MINION's foot, and the man drops to the ground, screaming.

BISHOP picks himself and raises his weapon, checking the various thugs who are all either unconscious or in considerable pain.

BISHOP

Get his car keys.

BISHOP motions towards the LEADER, who is awake, but grimacing. KOVAČ looks unimpressed at this idea.

BISHOP walks over to the LEADER and, gun still raised, puts his foot on the man's gunshot wound and presses down hard. He screams in pain, and BISHOP reduces the pressure, but only slightly.

BISHOP

He's not going anywhere. Come on, grab them.

KOVAČ runs over to the LEADER and puts his hand in the man's pocket, taking out a set of car keys. BISHOP motions towards the car.

BISHOP

Let's go, you drive.

They run towards the car. KOVAČ frowns at BISHOP.

KOVAČ

Who the hell are you?

BISHOP

Your only option right now if
you intend to keep breathing.

They both get in the car. KOVAČ starts up the engine, puts the car in reverse, and roars backwards, pulling around and towards the ramp leading downwards and to the exit.

33. INT. THE SECTION INTERROGATION CONTROL. MORNING 33

TITLE: The Section Interrogation Suite. 1017.

The interrogation room of The Section is divided into two sections - a concrete, featureless room containing a table and chairs, all bolted securely to the floor. Behind a two way mirror lies the control area, where observers can watch. Banks of monitors display different CCTV angles on KOVAČ, who is seated at the table.

ZHU sits at the bank of controls, watching. BISHOP stands behind her, hovering. WALKER enters the control room.

WALKER

How has he been?

ZHU

I'd characterise him as-

KOVAČ

(SHOUTING, FROM OTHER ROOM)

Who the hell are you people?
ASIO? AFP? I know my rights!
I'm a tourist. You can't keep
me here!

ZHU

-unhelpful.

BISHOP

If he hadn't been so rattled, I
doubt I would have got him
here. I was thinking maybe
seeing a... *familiar* face might
make him more co-operative.

WALKER sighs, and walks to the door.

KOVAČ

(SHOUTING, FROM OTHER ROOM)

I know my rights!

34. INT. THE SECTION INTERROGATION ROOM. MORNING 34

WALKER opens the door and steps into the interrogation
room, eyes fixed on KOVAČ.

WALKER

Andrej, Anrej. Come on now. I
have you on travelling under a
false passport, making payoffs
to small-time drug dealers
and... what was that other one
John?

BISHOP's voice comes over the loudspeaker from the other
room.

BISHOP

Stealing a car.

WALKER

Right. Car theft. So how about you stop protesting your innocence and we get down to business.

KOVAČ looks perturbed at the presence of WALKER.

KOVAČ

Walker? What are you doing here? I thought that-

WALKER

(INTERRUPTING)

You thought that I was dead in a ditch outside Kabul? Sorry Andrej, the best laid plans and all that.

KOVAČ shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

WALKER

Now, I *might* be persuaded to turn a blind eye to the whole affair and put you on a plane back to wherever-that-isn't here.

KOVAČ looks at WALKER suspiciously.

KOVAČ

What do you want?

WALKER

Your contact. Who is it that you're supposed to meet today?

KOVAČ sighs heavily and looks down at the desk.

KOVAČ

I only know him as Ghuma Khaled. He's a North African, represents a group who've purchased small arms from me a

few times. I don't know who they are.

WALKER leans down on the desk, near KOVAČ.

WALKER

(QUIETLY, DANGEROUSLY)

Are you sure that's all you know?

KOVAČ

In my business, it doesn't pay to get too inquisitive. I'm supposed to meet him this afternoon. Ask him yourself.

WALKER holds his glance for several moments, then looks towards the two-way mirror and nods to BISHOP. WALKER moves to the door, lightly hitting KOVAČ in the head as he passes.

WALKER

I'm going to check out your so-called intel. Don't go anywhere, Andrej. Okay?

KOVAČ looks up at WALKER sarcastically.

35. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. MID-MORNING

35

TITLE: The Section. 1123.

MAHMOUD remains, as ever, glued to his workstation, going over files and banking records. Considerably more tech operatives are on the Grid now, taking orders from MAHMOUD and steadily processing work. WALKER and ZHU stand, watching files appear and disappear on the large monitor screen. BISHOP enters the Grid and walks over to them.

BISHOP

How's it going, Sam?

MAHMOUD looks up, stirred from the hypnotic trance of his work. He shakes his head and presses a few keys. A black and white CCTV image of a young Arabic man appears on the main screen.

MAHMOUD

Ghuma Khaled is an alias - falsified British passport and citizenship. The man in that photo is Abdelhakim al-Hasidi, a mid-level member of an unnamed terrorist group who've been active throughout Northern Africa.

BISHOP looks to the screen, staring at AL-HASIDI.

BISHOP

What do we know about the organisation?

MAHMOUD

Not a lot. They've got ties with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group and the GICM, but they're only just starting to appear on the radar.

WALKER

So we can assume a similar ideological bent then?

MAHMOUD

Unknown. There's some chatter suggesting that the group was set up and partly funded by MI6 in the mid-80s.

ZHU

Another anti-Soviet squad?

MAHMOUD

Bingo. But as to what they've been up to since then... I've

got nothing. The general thought is that they conduct a lot of their business out of country to stay off the radar.

BISHOP

Which would explain the presence of the-terrorist-formerly-known-as-Khaled.

WALKER

Indeed. One little fish isn't going to do us much good though.

WALKER, BISHOP and ZHU all glance at each other for a moment.

ZHU

Yeah, I think that will work.

BISHOP

Kovač makes contact, we get a bead on al-Hasidi...

WALKER

... and we follow him up the chain to whoever his boss is.

MAHMOUD suddenly looks up from his screen.

MAHMOUD

Um... guys?

The trio turn and look at him.

MAHMOUD

I just found an ECHELON intercept of a phone call from a burner between al-Hasidi and what's believed to be *this* man.

MAHMOUD puts an image on the big screen - another black and white CCTV image of an Arabic man in his mid-forties. His brow is furrowed, his face pockmarked and serious. The name on screen reads 'Tahir Benhammedi'.

MAHMOUD

If the yanks were still using playing-card for their high value targets, this guy would be their ace of spades.

WALKER

Who's after him?

MAHMOUD suppresses a snort of laughter.

MAHMOUD

Who *isn't* after him? I've got standing detention requests from CIA, MI6, CSIS... not to mention the whole of Northern Africa. Even we're looking for him.

BISHOP suddenly tenses up.

BISHOP

(QUICKLY)

Wait. What?

MAHMOUD

ASIS. He's high on their watch list.

BISHOP frowns, suddenly very intense.

BISHOP

Sam, the data line to Canberra, is it active?

MAHMOUD

(PUZZLED)

What? Yes, why?

BISHOP

Pull it.

MAHMOUD

Why?

BISHOP

Because everything on that screen is about to be sent to our government. If they realise who we have down here the entire *state* is going to be swarmed by every intelligence agency we have. Al-Hasidi will spook, we'll never get him.

MAHMOUD looks to WALKER for guidance.

WALKER

(URGENTLY)

Do it. Go!

MAHMOUD

Right.

MAHMOUD gets up and runs for the door.

36. INT. THE SECTION SERVER ROOM. MID-MORNING

36

MAHMOUD tears into the open door of the server room of the Section. Large banks of mainframe computers line the walls. A TECHNICIAN stands by one of the mainframes, checking it. MAHMOUD pushes him out of the way.

MAHMOUD

'Scuse me!

MAHMOUD locates a series of Ethernet cables and begins to tear them out, watching as lights on the router begin to turn off.

ZHU stands over MAHMOUD's computer, watching the screen.

ZHU

...and the link's down.

BISHOP

Now we just have to work out what to tell Canberra.

WALKER

Let me worry about that. You and Jade start working on a plan for Kovač's scheduled meet.

Back in LESSING's office, the discussion regarding KOVAČ continues. RICHARDS and JOHNSON sit at one side of the desk, looking exhausted. LESSING looks like he could continue to berate them for hours.

LESSING

(EXASPERATED)

Look, it's in paragraph four of your new charter-

LESSING is interrupted by his phone ringing. He picks up the receiver and holds his finger up to RICHARDS and JOHNSON. RICHARDS looks at JOHNSON and mouths the words "Kill me" silently. JOHNSON frowns.

LESSING

Really? Right now?

LESSING looks up at RICHARDS suspiciously.

LESSING

I'll look into it and call you back.

LESSING hangs up the phone and fixes RICHARDS and JOHNSON with a serious-looking stare.

LESSING
(SLOWLY)

Either of you care to tell me why the Section's data link to Canberra has just gone offline?

There's an awkward pause. RICHARDS takes his mobile out of his pocket and points at it.

RICHARDS
I'll go and find out, shall I?

LESSING
(ANNOYED)
Yes, do that.

RICHARDS exits the room. LESSING turns his attention to JOHNSON.

LESSING
Listen Eric, there were a lot of people at the NSC who didn't think you were the right choice for this job. If you can't handle it...

JOHNSON
I can handle it.

LESSING
Yes, well, see that you do.

39. INT. FOYER. MID-MORNING

39

RICHARDS stands in the foyer of LESSING's office, a somewhat less elaborate, but still luxurious room, all wood-panelling and plush carpets. He holds his phone to his ear, mid-conversation.

RICHARDS

You're sure that this intel is solid.

WALKER

(ON PHONE)

As sure as we can be, given the circumstances.

RICHARDS sighs and rubs his eye with his free hand.

RICHARDS

All right, you've got a go. When is the meet happening?

WALKER

(ON PHONE)

Thirteen-thirty hours, the railway station. We're prepping the surveillance team now.

RICHARDS

Good. I'll try and buy you some time.

WALKER

What are you going to tell Lessing?

RICHARDS laughs, cynically.

RICHARDS

I don't know - training exercise, power surge... hell, I'll just tell him Sam spilled tea on the mainframe again.

On the other end of the phone, WALKER chuckles.

RICHARDS

Just bring me something actionable, Alex, or our first day on the job might be our last.

RICHARDS walks back into the office and sits down next to JOHNSON. There's a brief, pregnant pause.

LESSING

Well?

RICHARDS

What? Oh, scheduled training exercise.

LESSING rolls his eyes. RICHARDS smiles, ever so slightly.

The rear section of a large transport van has been outfitted with a suite of surveillance equipment. BISHOP and ZHU sit in the back, checking the equipment, as the van drives. KOVAČ sits nervously in the corner. ZHU carries a radio.

ZHU

(INTO RADIO)

We're coming up on the target area now. Ready to move.

WALKER

(ON RADIO)

Alright. Remember, this is strictly a surveillance op. Observe and gather evidence. And stay off your mobiles. We're under lockdown until this is over.

ZHU

Roger that.

The van pulls to a stop. The DRIVER in the front cabin leans back.

DRIVER

We're here.

BISHOP walks over to KOVAČ and hauls him up by the corner of his jacket.

BISHOP

Are we clear on this?

KOVAČ

(NERVOUSLY)

I meet Khaled, he hands over the briefcase with the order and the money. He leaves first, I wait.

BISHOP

Good. Don't screw it up.

Before KOVAČ has a chance to respond, BISHOP hauls him out of the back door of the van.

42. EXT. NORTH TERRACE. EARLY AFTERNOON

42

BISHOP and KOVAČ emerge from the van, which is parked just outside the North Terrace entrance to the Adelaide railway station. The DRIVER of the van gets out and begins to put traffic cones around the vehicle. The sky is grey and overcast. KOVAČ looks around, getting his bearings.

BISHOP

Know where you're going?

KOVAČ

(IRRITATED)

Platform four. By the seats. I'm not stupid, you know.

BISHOP

Yeah? Prove it.

BISHOP gives him a shove to start walking, and follows him through the glass doors into the railway station.

TITLE: Adelaide Railway Station. 1324.

BISHOP and KOVAČ emerge from the glass doors. After the lunch rush, Adelaide railway station is moderately quiet; only small groups of people are scattered around the large area, waiting for trains or passengers. A large, wide staircase leads down to the main part of the station. The station itself is divided into a large, high ceilinged area containing seating and shops, and the railway platforms proper, separated by a bank of ticket turnstiles.

KOVAČ begins to walk down the steps. BISHOP leans on the railing at the edge of the stairs, looks around and touches his finger to the comm unit in his ear.

BISHOP

Comm check. Alpha team, signing on.

Downstairs, a woman by the ticket sales window lightly touches her ear.

TICKET BUYER

Alpha one, signing on.

A middle-aged man sitting on a bench reading the paper does the same.

NEWSPAPER MAN

Alpha two, signing on.

The process is repeated by an elderly man sitting on the other side of the ticket partition, on one of the metal benches.

ELDERLY MAN

Alpha three, signing on.

Finally, a woman standing by the timetable directory does the same.

TIMETABLE WOMAN
Alpha four, signing on.

BISHOP nods, satisfied, and gets back into the transport van. By the ticket stall, KOVAČ can be seen purchasing a ticket.

44. INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN. EARLY AFTERNOON

44

BIHSOP takes a seat next to ZHU, who is watching several screens, all showing live images of the railway station.

BISHOP
(ON COMM)
Alright, we're about to kick off. Stay sharp, we do not want to lose the target.

ZHU
Sam's got the station CCTV cameras up.

ZHU's radio crackles.

ELDERLY MAN
(ON RADIO)
Sighted target. Coming in on the thirteen-thirty.

ZHU
Roger that, Alpha three. Stay well clear.

ZHU examines the various monitor screens, trying to find the target. Eventually she spots him, a man in a hat getting off of a train that's just arrived on platform four. She points at the monitor.

ZHU
There.

A crowd of people get off the train behind the man, ZHU loses him in the milieu.

ZHU

Damn it, I can't get a clear picture.

BISHOP

We're going to need a positive ID.

ZHU

(INTO RADIO)

Alpha one, can you do a mid-range pass, confirm the target?

45. INT. ADELAIDE RAILWAY STATION. EARLY AFTERNOON 45

The TICKET BUYER walks towards the turnstile, puts her ticket in and walks through. She walks, eyes down, towards the far end of the station, passing the moving group of people as she does. Her eyes flick up as she passes the crowd, but all she sights is the man's hat as he walks.

TICKET BUYER

No good. I can't get close enough. And he has a hat on.

46. INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN. EARLY AFTERNOON 46

BISHOP frowns at the response. Stands up and moves to the door.

ZHU

What are you doing?

BISHOP

We need that ID. I'll get in close.

ZHU

Just hold tight, we'll-

BISHOP slips out of the back door, stopping her mid-sentence.

47. INT. ADELAIDE RAILWAY STATION. EARLY AFTERNOON 47

KOVAČ sits on the metal benches near platform four, trying to look relaxed. He looks to the side and sees AL-HASIDI approaching. He stands up straight. AL-HASIDI moves towards him, revealing his features - a dark-skinned man, clean shaven, dressed plainly, wearing a baseball cap and carrying a briefcase. He nods at KOVAČ, who returns the nod.

AL-HASIDI holds out the briefcase and looks at KOVAČ before slowly placing it on the ground. KOVAČ moves forward, picks it up and turns to walk away.

48. INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN. EARLY AFTERNOON 48

In the van, ZHU squints at the image of AL-HASIDI and KOVAČ on screen. She sees AL-HASIDI take something out of his pocket. Her eyes go wide and she gets up and bursts out of the doors of the van, yelling into her radio.

ZHU

(YELLING)

EVERYONE PULL BACK, RIGHT NOW.

49. INT. CAR. EARLY AFTERNOON 49

JOHNSON and RICHARDS sit in the back of their sedan, finally on the way back from the meeting. Both look worn out.

RICHARDS

I must admit, Eric, you're being very... cool about this whole thing.

JOHNSON

Lying to our NSC liaison, you mean? Not an ideal start to our first day, but a necessary evil, perhaps.

RICHARDS

(SMILING SLIGHTLY)

Quite. (A BEAT) We should be
just about to pass the op now.

RICHARDS cranes his head to look out the window as the car turns onto North Terrace, near the railway station. He sees ZHU running towards the doors.

RICHARDS

Stop the car!

50. INT. ADELAIDE RAILWAY STATION. EARLY AFTERNOON 50

ZHU runs down the stairs towards BISHOP, who is crossing the open expanse and approaching the turnstile. Outside, the car containing RICHARDS and JOHNSON screeches to a halt. RICHARDS gets out and starts running towards the doors.

Everything seems to slow down. ZHU glances away from BISHOP for a moment, locking eyes on AL-HASIDI. He becomes larger and larger as ZHU and BISHOP draw nearer. In his hand is a small device, a remote detonator. KOVAČ glances over his shoulder, sees the device, drops the briefcase and starts to back away.

AL-HASIDI, for just a moment, locks eyes with ZHU before pressing the button on the detonator. There is a small, but loud "pop", like the report from a handgun, and gas starts to spill out of the briefcase. KOVAČ tries to run, but is caught in a violent bout of coughing. All around, people are panicking, unsure what to do.

ZHU pauses for a moment on the steps and looks around. On a wall in the distance she spots a small, red box. It's marked "In case of fire, break glass". ZHU pulls out her handgun, takes quick but precise aim, and fires. The bullet smacks into the alarm, shattering the glass. A siren starts to sound. People run for the entrances.

BISHOP is caught in the crowd. He pushes people aside, trying to see what's going on. He fights his way past and sights AL-HASIDI, who stands, completely calm, being

enveloped in the gas. KOVAČ lies still on the ground, unmoving. BISHOP goes to pull out his gun, but as he does so a pistol appears in AL-HASIDI'S hand. He points it at BISHOP and pulls the trigger. Everything goes black.

51. EXT. NORTH TERRACE. EARLY AFTERNOON

51

First, there is only blackness. Then a ringing tone. JOHN BISHOP opens his eyes. The world seems muffled somehow. RICHARDS is there, standing over him, watching worriedly. He is laid on a stretcher outside the entrance to the railway station. A MEDIC leans down and tends to a wound on BISHOP'S head. An oxygen mask is on his face. RICHARDS speaks, but BISHOP only hears a muffled rumble. BISHOP shakes his head and the world slowly starts to come into focus. He pulls the oxygen mask off of his face.

RICHARDS

(CONCERNED)

John, are you okay?

BISHOP

Yeah, yeah, I'm fine Mal. What the hell happened?

RICHARDS

There was a nerve agent in the briefcase. Kovač's dead. So is Al-Hasidi. Though not before he managed to shoot you in the head.

BISHOP puts his hand to the wound on the side of his head and winces slightly.

RICHARDS

You're going to be fine. It just grazed your temple.

BISHOP

(WORRIED)

My team?

RICHARDS

Everyone's okay. Jade got them
out in time. Pulled you out
too.

A look of relief spreads BISHOP's face. He tries to sit
up, but falls back down. RICHARDS leans down.

RICHARDS

Don't try to move just yet. I
need you fit and back in this
fight.

RICHARDS and BISHOP lock eyes for a moment. A beat, and
then BISHOP nods.

52. INT. THE SECTION BRIEFING ROOM. MID-AFTERNOON 52

TITLE: The Section. 1530.

The Section briefing room contains a large, long table,
surrounded by chairs, a large speaker-phone in the
middle. All the department heads are settling down -
RICHARDS sits at the head of the table with BISHOP, now
with a bandage on his head. WALKER and MAHMOUD sit to one
side. JOHNSON sits by himself at the other end. ZHU walks
in and sits down.

ZHU

John, should you be here?

BISHOP waves his hand to dismiss her concern.

BISHOP

I'm fine. Let's get on with
this.

RICHARDS

Eric, how are we handling the
railway station?

JOHNSON

We're calling it a gas leak.
The media's having a field

day, but I think it's containable.

RICHARDS nods, satisfied.

WALKER

What the hell was that stuff?

JOHNSON

As far as we can tell it's a nerve agent. Some sort of derivative of Sarin, probably developed in the Middle East. Luckily it was manufactured poorly; full of impurities. If it hadn't been, I daresay Mr. Bishop, and a lot of other people, would be dead.

RICHARDS

Right, let's look at the facts shall we? We were just led directly into an ambush. This leads me to two unenviable conclusions - one, somebody wants us dead, and two, we're not seeing the whole picture.

At the other end of the table, JOHNSON frowns.

RICHARDS

Someone knew that Kovač arriving here would ping our system. The gas attack was supposed to both act as a distraction and take out as much of our senior staff as possible. Something that it very nearly achieved.

RICHARDS casts a glance at BISHOP.

MAHMOUD

But how could a bunch of extremists and arms dealers know to target us? I thought the only people who were cleared to know we exist were the members of the National Security Committee?

RICHARDS

Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON nods, suddenly looking pale.

RICHARDS

Right, so a major breach in the highest levels of government aside, we have a more immediate issue - what's happening today that's so important that someone has gone to all this trouble?

JOHNSON gingerly raises his hand.

JOHNSON

I think I may know.

All eyes dart to JOHNSON.

JOHNSON

Do you remember about ten years ago, when the government proposed a nuclear waste dump in northern South Australia?

BISHOP

(DARKLY)

You mean the one that was never built because of negative public opinion and the potential for massive environmental damage?

JOHNSON

Err... yes. You see, the thing is, nuclear waste doesn't just go away, and the government still needed somewhere to store it, so-

WALKER

So they did it anyway.

JOHNSON

The trucks carrying the waste move in utmost secrecy - their routes are randomly generated; the drivers don't even know what they're carrying.

BISHOP

And I suppose they travel without security details too, to avoid detection?

JOHNSON

Yes. And one is coming through the outer edges of the city today.

RICHARDS, who has been quietly fuming, speaks up.

RICHARDS

(QUIETLY)

There are extremists out there about to acquire the capability to make a dirty bomb powerful enough to make this city uninhabitable for generations, and our government basically put it in their hands. Make sure you put *that* in your report, Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON just looks down. RICHARDS pauses for a split second before taking charge.

RICHARDS

Right, everyone listen carefully. Johnson, quit sulking and find out the truck's route. Do it without attracting attention. We're also going to need an identical truck.

JOHNSON nods, nervously.

RICHARDS

Sam, study the route - work out the most likely place for an ambush. John, you and Jade take charge of the tac team and stand by. Alex, we may need your heavy vehicle licence. And Eric?

JOHNSON looks up.

RICHARDS

Do we have enough time to stop them?

JOHNSON shakes his head.

JOHNSON

I just don't know.

53. EXT. QUIET ROADWAY. LATE AFTERNOON

53

TITLE: Buckland Road, Buckland Park. 1815.

A quiet road some distance from Port Wakefield Road. There aren't any cars or people around; the road is surrounded by fields. The last gasps of daylight are surrendering to the dusk. The sky is a deep shade of grey, clouds threatening rain at any moment. The wind whistles across the open space. A non-descript truck with government plates proceeds along the road, moving at a fair speed. It looks not dissimilar to a moving van, with a small cabin and a large storage area in the back.

In the distance behind the truck a car approaches at speed, its lights off. It takes up position behind the truck.

As the truck continues up the road another car, its lights most definitely on, comes into view. It's a modern BMW, dark blue, and parked horizontally across the road. The silhouette of a man can be made standing in front of the car, waving his arms at the truck.

The truck slows to a stop. The car behind parks directly behind it, boxing the truck in. Two men get out of the car behind the truck and move, quietly but quickly, up the side of the truck towards the cabin. The cabin door opens and the DRIVER gets out. His features can't be made out in the dark, and he sports a baseball cap pulled over his head. He peers towards the silhouette of the man, holding his hand up against the glare of the lights.

DRIVER

Hey, what's going on?

The two men from the car behind the truck have snuck up behind the DRIVER. One of them pokes a pistol into the DRIVER's back. The DRIVER flinches and slowly raises his hands.

DRIVER

(PANICKED)

What the hell is this?

The silhouetted man approaches the DRIVER slowly. His features are revealed to be that of a North African man in his mid-thirties. When he speaks he sports an accent.

SILHOUETTED MAN

Shut up and you might live
through this.

The DRIVER nods. The other man (not holding the pistol) grabs the DRIVER's wrist and forces it behind his back. The DRIVER winces in pain. The man pulls him towards the back of the truck. The entire group, the DRIVER and his

four captors, move to the back of the truck. The SILHOUETTED MAN stands back and gestures to one of the men.

SILHOUETTED MAN

Open it.

The man opens the door. They are greeted by the sight of BISHOP, ZHU and a large tactical team, assault rifles trained on them.

BISHOP

Surprise.

The DRIVER kicks the man immediately in front of him in the back of the knee. He goes down. The team uses the momentary distraction to fan out and subdue the would-be attackers. The DRIVER throws a heavy punch at the last standing attacker, who falls heavily to the ground. The DRIVER takes off his baseball cap to reveal the face of ALEX WALKER. He shakes his head from the impact of the punch.

WALKER

Thanks Bishop. (INTO COMM) We have the package. Repeat, we have the package.

54. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. EARLY EVENING 54

WALKER and BISHOP walk onto the Grid, followed by the tactical team, dragging the uncooperative men with them. RICHARDS greets them.

RICHARDS

Good work. Let's get them into interrogation and find out what else they know.

The tactical team take the prisoners away.

BISHOP

We found these in the car.

BISHOP hands RICHARDS four passports.

RICHARDS

Moroccan passports. Part of this terrorist network Sam's tracking?

BISHOP

I don't know Mal... Outside of Africa they've only ever operated in France and Western Europe. What the hell are they doing in Adelaide?

WALKER cracks his knuckles.

WALKER

Time to find out.

JOHNSON comes racing onto the Grid, ending a call on his mobile.

JOHNSON

Hold it right there! I've just spoken to the NSC, they want the prisoners transferred into the custody of the AFP immediately.

WALKER

The federal cops? Are you serious?

BISHOP walks dangerously close to JOHNSON.

BISHOP

That's the wrong play Johnson.

JOHNSON

(DEFENSIVELY)

It wasn't my call. The order came from a *long* way up. They need to go *now*.

RICHARDS

Fine. But I want us kept in the loop. Any actionable intelligence ends up here. Alright?

JOHNSON

I'll see what I can do.

JOHNSON walks off, dialling a number into his phone. RICHARDS shakes his head and walks to his office. BISHOP walks off angrily, leaving WALKER by himself. He looks around and, spotting MAHMOUD, walks over to him, placing his hand on MAHMOUD's shoulder.

WALKER

Come on killer, time to finish your firearms training.

MAHMOUD looks up from his desk, worried.

55. INT. THE SECTION BRIEFING ROOM. EVENING

55

TITLE: Two days later.

The Section. 2043.

RICHARDS sits in the middle of the conference table in the briefing room, files spread out on the desk in front of him. He absent-mindedly spins a glass of whiskey around with his fingers. JOHNSON hovers around him, reading over his shoulder. MAHMOUD sits at the far end, hooking up his monitor to the large screen that fills the wall.

WALKER, ZHU and finally BISHOP file in and sit down. RICHARDS looks up from his papers and nods to them.

RICHARDS

Thank you all for coming in late.

WALKER

What's going on, Mal?

RICHARDS nods to JOHNSON.

JOHNSON

Yesterday evening the men you apprehended were being transported to a holding facility. There was an accident.

WALKER, ZHU and BISHOP look shocked.

BISHOP

(FROWNING)

What kind of 'accident'?

JOHNSON

A fatal one. They're all dead. So are the two AFP officers who were transporting them. The police have... no leads on the other vehicle.

RICHARDS

That's not all, either. Sam's been looking into Tahir Benhammedi's organisation. Sam?

MAHMOUD pulls up a world map on his laptop; it appears on the large screen.

MAHMOUD

I managed to trace funding for Benhammedi's group to a numbered Swiss bank account.

He pauses for effect.

MAHMOUD

And, I know, right? Try getting information out of the Swiss. Anyway, I *did*

manage to find a sizeable deposit that was made just before al-Hasidi boarded his plane into Australia.

A red line starts to appear on the monitor. It starts in Switzerland, then flies across to the U.S. It then crosses back to Turkey, then to Mongolia, then jumps to Siberia, then Brazil. BISHOP looks on, frowning, WALKER whistles appreciatively.

WALKER

This guy is good.

MAHMOUD

I traced it all the way back, through VPNs and fake servers, until it stopped *here*.

The line zips across to Australia, Canberra.

MAHMOUD

I couldn't get an exact fix, but it definitely originated in Canberra. Somewhere where a lot of acronym agencies have their headquarters.

Silence descends on the room. No one seems to know what to say. BISHOP stares into the middle distance.

ZHU

So it's...

RICHARDS

It could be rogue agents inside ASIO, DSD, ONA... We just don't know. What we do know is there's someone up there who doesn't like us, someone who wants us out of the picture, and won't stop at killing federal officers

to prevent us from learning
the truth.

WALKER

(WORRIEDLY)

And two days ago they got
pretty damn close to getting
their hands on a DIY dirty
bomb kit.

ZHU

So what do we do?

BISHOP

(QUIETLY)

I know what to do.

Everyone turns to look at BISHOP.

BISHOP

(QUIETLY, DANGEROUSLY)

We find them. And then we
make them stop.

RICHARDS

Exactly. Be on your guard,
take nothing for granted, and
only trust the people in this
room. There is a game being
played here, and we can't
even see the board yet.

RICHARDS takes a sip of whiskey. WALKER and ZHU sit back
in their chairs, deep in thought. BISHOP continues to
stare into the middle distance.

The camera pushes into the large speakerphone on the desk
until we are inside the mechanism. Inside, a red light
flashes on and off. The camera shoots off rapidly down
the phone line. We follow the wiring, twisting and
turning until the wire has left the building.

We continue up the wire to a telephone pole, where we
enter a small black box perched on the top. A light on

that box flashes and we dissolve to outer space, where a satellite takes the signal. We hear the sound of data being transmitted before we swoop back down to Earth. Back to Australia and towards the East coast, closing on the ACT. The camera continues to swoop down onto the roof of an office building and onto a satellite dish.

We enter the wiring once again and follow through twists and turns until we end up in a server room full of mainframes. The camera turns and follows the network to a suite of offices, full of computers. We pull out to observe the computer screen, full of lines of text, continuing to scroll.

The final line scrolls across the screen: 'M.R.: Be on your guard, take nothing for granted, and only trust the people in this room. There is a game being played here, and we can't even see the board yet. TRANSCRIPTION ENDS.'

Fade out.

END

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THE SECTION
EPISODE 1.2 - BLASPHEMOUS RUMOURS

By
PATRICK J. LANG

THIRD DRAFT
AUGUST 2016
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1. EXT. SUPERMARKET LOADING DOCK. EARLY MORNING 1

TITLE: Unley, Adelaide. 0534 hrs.

The loading dock of a suburban Adelaide supermarket. It's dark outside - dawn is still several hours away. A large truck slowly backs in, its red brake lights creating shadows on the walls. From the inside of the dock two workers step out in orange high visibility jackets and begin to start waving the truck into position.

The truck stops. The driver steps out and pats his pockets. The two workers open the truck's back door and start unloading goods.

Inside the truck, unseen to the workers a small electronic device ticks over, it's LED switching from green to red.

The driver takes a cigarette out of his pocket, produces a lighter and tries to light it. The lighter fails to ignite. He shakes it, annoyed.

Inside the truck, a mobile phone vibrates three times. There is a distinctive 'beep'.

The driver finally manages to spark a flame from the lighter.

Everything explodes.

2. INT. BISHOP'S BEDROOM. EARLY MORNING 2

In BISHOP's bedroom the early morning light just begins to creep in through the window. The room itself is dark; a bed can barely be made out. On the side table a mobile phone rings.

The sleeping shape of JOHN BISHOP is quickly awakened. He grabs the phone and switches on a lamp on the side table.

BISHOP
Go for Bishop.

He pauses, listening to the response.

BISHOP

I'm on my way.

3. INT. THE SECTION CONFERENCE ROOM. MORNING

3

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 0756 hrs.

The team has assembled in the conference room. WALKER and ZHU cluster around one end of the table. BISHOP and RICHARDS sit at the head, JOHNSON off to one side. MAHMOUD sits just outside the circle, busy with a laptop.

On a large television mounted on the wall, the news is playing. The team watches intently. On screen, the camera pans across a blackened heap of wreckage. Emergency workers mill about, but the place is chaos.

REPORTER

(V/O, ON TELEVISION)

The three explosions, which all occurred at five-thirty this morning, appear to be part of a co-ordinated attack on suburban supermarkets around the city.

The screen shows shaken survivors being bundled into ambulances, wrapped in blankets.

REPORTER

(V/O, ON TELEVISION)

The premier is expected to make a statement later this morning, but at this time no one has claimed responsibility for the attacks. However, officials have stated that there is no link with the gas leak at the Adelaide central railway station several weeks ago, which some sources have

claimed was a terrorist
action.

BISHOP picks up a remote and mutes the screen.

WALKER

So who's our perp?

BISHOP

Actually, we know that
already. Immediately after the
explosions a video was
released to the media. Sam,
could you pull it up?

MAHMOUD nods and taps away at his laptop. He places it on
the desk and whips it around for all to see. On screen we
see the silhouette of a man. The backdrop is a deep blue,
and emblazoned with the letters 'EOT' in large type. When
the man speaks, his voice has been digitally altered.

MAN

(ON SCREEN)

We, the Empowered Order of the
Taxiarch take full
responsibility for the attacks
on suburban supermarkets this
morning. We congratulate our
brothers in the cause on this
joyous day.

WALKER

(QUIETLY)

Christ.

MAN

(ON SCREEN)

This attack is a wakeup call
that the right and Christian
people of this glorious nation
will not stand for the
Islamisation of our society.
We will not stand for secret
indoctrination into Muslim

practices through our
supermarkets stocking halal
products.

BISHOP

Pause it.

MAHMOUD freezes the video.

ZHU

(INCREDULOUS)

Are we really back on the
halal conspiracy theorists
again?

MAHMOUD

This is different. The anti-
halal brigade are bigoted
idiots, sure, but they're
mostly a bunch of keyboard
warriors on social media.
Nothing like this.

BISHOP

It seems that several of the
big supermarket chains were
buying halal products to *avoid*
issues of faith. Looks like it
backfired on them. The video
goes on, but you know the
drill... "revenge for *this*, we
furiously warn *that*, Australia
cleansed of Islam, blah, blah,
blah..."

WALKER

So, the "Empowered Order of
the Taxiarch"...

RICHARDS

Are SA's first genuine right-
wing Christian extremist
group.

WALKER

Makes a change.

BISHOP

The only major difference is that they say "Amen" instead of "Insha'Allah" at the end. A murderous bastard is still a murderous bastard, no matter which direction he faces to pray.

RICHARDS

Indeed. But they're not our immediate concern. Due to the high profile nature of the case the AFP and ASIO will be handling the direct investigation of the EOT. Our job is rather more... subtle. Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON clears his throat.

JOHNSON

Canberra has intelligence that suggests the EOT is linked to two other groups, one religious, one political. The former is the 'classically Pentecostal' Australian Christian Church of Continuationism, or the ACCC.

ZHU

I've heard of them... Pulling in the young conservatives. Rock music and Jesus, that sort of thing.

JOHNSON

Precisely. The political side comes from the 'AFA' party. That's-

MAHMOUD

(INTERRUPTING)

'Australia For Australians',
don't worry, I know. I had one
of them tell me to "go home,
Paki" down the shops one day.

WALKER

What did you do?

MAHMOUD

I went home. Then I tracked
down his bank account and had
him make a sizeable donation
to a refugee association.

WALKER smiles. JOHNSON fixes MAHMOUD with an "I didn't
hear that" look.

ZHU

Anyway, what's the link?

JOHNSON

This man.

JOHNSON places an 8x10 headshot on the table. It shows a
neatly but conservatively dressed man in his mid-40s.

JOHNSON

Andrew Ealing. He's the leader
of the AFA and a pastor in the
ACCC. If anyone has the
motivation and the
capabilities to support the
EOT, he's it.

RICHARDS

We need to establish concrete
links between these three
organisations. Walker, the AFA
have scheduled a press
conference for later this
morning, you're going to be

there and get on Ealing's good side.

WALKER

(SMILING)

You know me boss, all charm.

RICHARDS

Quite. Bishop, you're going back to church. Jade, Sam, you're running support on this one, so let's get cover stories implemented asap.

Everyone nods.

RICHARDS

I want regular updates. Canberra's going to be breathing right down our necks on this one. Ladies and gentlemen, let's catch some Christ-loving terrorists.

The team pack up and get ready to go.

4. EXT. PARLIAMENT HOUSE STEPS. MID-MORNING

4

TITLE: Parliament House, Adelaide. 1003 hrs.

A crowd has gathered on the steps of Parliament House. Part way up a lectern stands with the AFA logo on the front. The sky is dark and ominous. WALKER stands nonchalantly near the front of the crowd, to the right of the lectern, dressed in a leather jacket and blue jeans.

A few members of the media mill around, cameras and microphones at the ready. The crowd is mostly white, except for a group of Pakistani men at the back, who are being eyed off nervously by the majority. One of the Pakistani men holds a sign that reads "Sunni Muslims for Racial Tolerance". The atmosphere is tense.

ANDREW EALING, easily recognisable from his photograph steps out from behind a pillar and walks up to the lectern. He is dressed sharply in an expensive business suit, and is flanked by two men, obviously security. The white portion of the crowd applauds loudly. The media quickly train their cameras on EALING.

EALING

(SERIOUSLY)

Thank you, thank you my friends. This morning a most heinous act of violence was perpetrated by the terrorist group calling themselves the Empowered Order of the Taxiarch.

The crowd listens intently. All that can be heard is the passing of cars and the noise of camera flashes.

EALING

I am here to tell you that the Australia For Australians party utterly condemns this violence and those who have perpetrated it upon ordinary Australians and working families.

The crowd murmurs, unsure what to make of Ealing's position. EALING holds up his hands for quiet.

EALING

The AFA believes that violence is *not* a solution. However, I, along with my advisors, also believe that these actions are indicative of something far greater; that true Australians like you and I will no longer stand for unwanted indoctrination into Islam!

The crowd cheers. The Pakistani men boo. Everyone shifts uncomfortably.

PAKISTANI MAN
(YELLING)

Hypocrite!

EALING merely smiles. The Pakistani group hold back the yelling man, who struggles to break free of them.

EALING

WE are here to ask Parliament the HARD questions. The questions that the major parties will NO LONGER ask for fear of 'political correctness' and their standing in the polls. WE are here to say that our views are not extreme, but the views of ordinary Australians!

The crowd erupts in applause. The YELLING MAN breaks free of his compatriots and rushes up the steps towards EALING. WALKER steps quickly in front of EALING and throws a punch at the oncoming YELLING MAN. It connects with his jaw and the man drops to the ground.

WALKER
(YELLING)

SIT DOWN, SUNSHINE!

The now-no-longer YELLING MAN groans quietly. EALING looks down at the scene and raises an eyebrow.

EALING

And with that, I think we will call it a day. Ladies and gentlemen, my thanks for your time.

EALING turns and walks away. A number of the Pakistani men rush forward and pick up their compatriot before bundling him away. The crowd glares at them evilly and then slowly begins to disperse.

The Pakistani group move to the edge of the area. The formerly YELLING MAN takes a mobile out of his pocket and dials a number.

YELLING MAN

(INTO PHONE)

This is Alpha One. Mission complete.

5. INT. DAGDA SECURITY GRID. MID-MORNING

5

MAHMOUD sits at his desk, a comms headset on. ZHU stands nearby, observing.

MAHMOUD

(INTO COMM)

Roger that, Alpha One. Bring the troops home, I'll put the kettle on.

YELLING MAN

(ON COMM)

Confirmed, on our way back. And I'll be needing a worker's comp form for that sucker punch Walker just gave me.

MAHMOUD looks at ZHU and raises an eyebrow. She shrugs.

6. EXT. PARLIAMENT HOUSE STEPS. MID-MORNING

6

The crowd continues to slowly disperse. WALKER sits on one of the steps and takes out his mobile.

One of Ealing's SECURITY GUARDS appears and approaches WALKER from behind. He taps WALKER on the shoulder. WALKER stands up and turns to face him, blinking against the bright sky.

SECURITY GUARD

The boss would like a word.

The SECURITY GUARD gestures down the steps. WALKER nods and starts walking.

A dark, grey, concrete multi-storey car-park in the Adelaide CBD. It is several levels above the ground; the cityscape can be seen stretching out through the metal bars that surround the floor.

A black four wheel drive with tinted windows sits in a 'Reserved' parking space. There are no other vehicles around it - a rarity considering that every other space on the floor is occupied.

There is a lift nearby. Its doors open with a 'ding'; WALKER and the SECURITY GUARD step out. The SECURITY GUARD motions towards the four wheel drive, but stays put near the lift door. WALKER approaches the vehicle.

The back window rolls down to reveal ANDREW EALING, who smiles at WALKER.

EALING

So this is the man responsible
for saving me from a black
eye.

EALING extends his hand out.

EALING

It seems I owe you a favour,
Mr...?

WALKER takes his hand and shakes it.

WALKER

Porter. Alex Porter.

EALING

English I take it? Been in the
country long?

WALKER

(DRILY)

No, I'm just off the boat, so to speak.

EALING chuckles.

EALING

Ah, a sense of humour. So rare in politics I'm afraid. How is the dear old homeland these days?

WALKER

(SIGHS)

Full of Pakis and ragheads, mate. That's a soft government for you though.

EALING smiles.

EALING

You're refreshingly blunt, Mr. Porter. Tell you what, why don't you join me for a coffee tomorrow morning, as a thank you for avoiding a media incident?

WALKER

That's very kind of you, Mr. Ealing.

EALING

Oh, it's 'Andrew', please. My associate will furnish you with the particulars. Shall we say eight o'clock?

WALKER nods in agreement.

8. INT. RICHARDS' OFFICE. EARLY AFTERNOON

8

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 1344 hrs.

RICHARDS sits at his expansive glass desk, busily typing something on his computer. The door slides open and JOHNSON walks in, carrying a file in a manila folder. RICHARDS says nothing. A few moments go by before JOHNSON quietly clears his throat. RICHARDS speaks, but does not look up.

RICHARDS

Yes Johnson, I know you're there. Now what do you want?

JOHNSON steps forward and holds out the folder to RICHARDS, who does not take it.

JOHNSON

This just came through from Canberra.

RICHARDS continue to examine the folder as if it has some sort of exotic skin disease.

RICHARDS

What is it?

JOHNSON gives up, drops the folder on the desk and sits down.

JOHNSON

Orders. The NSC has decided that the AFA are dangerous. They want them removed from the political arena.

RICHARDS raises an eyebrow.

RICHARDS

Ah. So what kind of assassination are we talking, character or literal?

JOHNSON

The former. I have an order here to put your best agent in

charge of a dirty tricks
campaign.

RICHARDS smiles a little.

RICHARDS

Ah, proper intelligence work.
Reminds me of simpler times,
when you still knew who the
enemy was and you could leak
falsified information about
him to the press.

JOHNSON looks alarmed.

JOHNSON

Mal, don't you think that this
is a bit... well, *off*? Okay
the AFA are bigoted fools, but
isn't this seriously
interfering with their
democratic rights?

RICHARDS

(SMILES)

Oh Eric, you *do* have a lot to
learn. Ashamed of getting your
hands dirty?

JOHNSON frowns angrily, gets up and heads to the door. He
pauses just before he leaves.

JOHNSON

Who do I put on this?

RICHARDS

Take Sam. Underneath that
geeky exterior is a devious
miscreant just waiting to
emerge.

JOHNSON walks out without saying anything.

TITLE: Australian Christian Church of Continuationism, North-Eastern Adelaide Suburbs. 2016 hrs.

The chapel of the ACCC is huge - less a traditional place of worship and more something in line with the stage for a Eurovision Song Contest final. There are huge video screens behind the main stage, massive lighting setups and a full house band off to one side.

The band are playing upbeat, rather tepid rock music with full force. The music comes to a Biblical climax. The crowd applauds wildly. BISHOP sits in the audience, trying his best to appear inconspicuous.

A PASTOR runs onto the stage - he's in his mid 30s, with short blond hair and the most incredibly square jaw, a nice smile on his face adding to the overall air of charisma. He's dressed in blue jeans and a button up shirt. The crowd goes wild.

PASTOR

Yeah, yeah! I think we can
well and truly say that Jesus
is in the house!

CROWD

(LOUDLY)

YES HE IS!

PASTOR

And now we're going to take a
minute to get ourselves some
Bible truth from our man
himself; founding member of
the ACCC, Andrew Ealing!

EALING steps onto stage to wild applause, dressed more casually now and acting like a rock star. He approaches the front of the stage, all smiles. The industrial sized video screens behind him are split into two images, one a close up of his face, the other a shot of the expansive crowd.

EALING

Thank you, Peter! And thank you friends, for joining me here tonight in praise of our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The crowd yells back "Amen!" rather loudly.

EALING

Now I'd like to speak seriously for a moment if I may. Some of you may have seen the press conference this morning, and I just wanted to comment on it, though you know I like to keep my religion and my politics separate.

The crowd hushes suddenly.

EALING

The Bible teaches tolerance. It teaches us to turn the other cheek, and with that in mind I must say that I abhor what this 'Empowered Order of the Taxiarch' have perpetrated on our fellow Christian brothers and sisters.

EALING pauses for breath.

EALING

But I will say this: Jesus Christ could not have predicted that, on the eve of his return that we would be facing demons incarnate in the form of Islam. And if he did know, I say with the certainty of the Lord that he would think it be right and just that the demons be CAST OUT!

The crowd cheers in a bloodthirsty manner.

EALING

(PASSIONATELY)

Friends, I sense that there is a WAR coming, and while that pains me, I know for sure that God is with us, every single one. I also know that Jesus has the ability to get into the lives of influential people and politicians, and will once again be our saviour.

The crowd cheers again and begin to wave their arms in the air with their fingers outstretched. BISHOP fixes his gaze on EALING.

From further down BISHOP's row a collection plate is being passed along. BISHOP reaches into his pocket, looking for change. When the 'plate' arrives BISHOP is examining the small collection of silvers in his hand, only to look down and see not a plate, but a *bucket* filled with a series of forms with room for credit card details. Underneath lie a large pile of donated notes, most \$50 and \$100.

10. INT. ACCC FOYER. EVENING

10

The foyer of the ACCC is just as elaborate as the chapel itself - plush carpet lines the floor and the ceiling stretches to an almost unbelievable height.

Groups of people stand around chatting over cups of coffee after the service. There's a lot of smiling involved. BISHOP leans against a wall, discreetly sipping from a mug. He looks over to where EALING is standing, smiling and chatting with a group of people. Seeing that he is distracted in conversation BISHOP puts his cup down and moves off in the direction of the hallway.

11. INT. ACCC CORRIDOR. EVENING

11

BISHOP moves purposefully through a dark corridor, where the opulence of the chapel and foyer gives way to a far more corporate appearance. BISHOP walks up to a door marked 'PRIVATE' and reaches into his pocket, removing a small roll of lock picking tools. He takes out a pick and a torsion wrench and inserts them into the lock, carefully turning them. After a few seconds there is a 'click'. The lock has been opened.

Looking around to make sure he is alone, BISHOP turns the door handle and steps through.

12. INT. ACCC OFFICE. EVENING

12

BISHOP closes the office door behind him. He blinks several times as his eyes adjust to the darkness. Inside the office looks like a typical corporate setup - there are filing cabinets and computers scattered around, though the quality of the equipment suggests that the ACCC have very deep pockets indeed.

BISHOP ducks down behind a computer desk and, reaching into his pocket, removes a very small USB device. He reaches around the back of the computer and slots it into a spare USB slot. The device is so small that it can barely be seen. BISHOP boots the computer up, his face bathed in the glow of the LCD screen. He takes out his mobile and makes a call.

BISHOP

This is Alpha. We're good to go.

MAHMOUD

(ON PHONE)

Roger that Alpha, receiving now.

Suddenly there is a creaking noise near the door. BISHOP quickly flicks the monitor off and hides behind a filing cabinet.

BISHOP
(WHISPERING, INTO PHONE)
Standby.

The door opens and a WOMAN walks into the room; though it is dark her curly blond hair can be clearly made out. She holds a lock pick gun in one hand, and has a handbag slung over her shoulder.

The WOMAN quickly puts the lock pick gun in her handbag and takes out what looks like a pen. She steps over to a desk opposite BISHOP, turns on a lamp and ruffles through the papers on the desk, pulling several out. She takes the pen and uses it to scan the documents, a small LCD screen on the device itself indicating that it's working. She moves fast, scanning each document efficiently, before restoring the papers to their proper places, turning the light off and stepping outside. The whole exercise has taken about 30 seconds.

BISHOP waits until the sound of the WOMAN's footsteps have moved away before slipping out from behind the filing cabinet. He double checks that the USB bug is properly installed and takes his phone out again.

BISHOP
(INTO PHONE)
This is Alpha. Do we have a
go?

MAHMOUD
(ON PHONE)
Affirmative Alpha, we're in.

BISHOP
Roger that.

BISHOP closes the phone and moves to the door.

13. INT. ACCC FOYER. EVENING

13

BISHOP re-emerges into the ACCC foyer. A few people have left, but there's still a sizable crowd hanging around to socialise.

BISHOP looks around and spots the WOMAN from the office, standing, smiling and chatting in the group gathered around EALING. He takes his phone out of his pocket and holds it up in the air, as if attempting to get reception. A MAN in his mid-20s, dressed in a trendy button down shirt, sees him and smiles.

MAN

I know, terrible reception in here, isn't it?

BISHOP shrugs his shoulders and smiles.

BISHOP

Well, you know what our Lord said, "Let he who is without 4G coverage cast the first un-received text message".

The MAN laughs and moves away. BISHOP waves the phone in the air as he moves around until he is positioned directly in front of the WOMAN. He smiles and quickly takes a photo of her.

On the phone, BISHOP attaches the photo to a message with text that reads, "ID. Try DMV" and sends it. He smiles and waves around the room, and leaves through the main doors.

14. INT. AFA OFFICES. MORNING

14

TITLE: Australia For Australians (AFA) Party HQ. 0812 hrs.

ANDREW EALING's office is a surprisingly understated affair; though large it gives the impression of a busy lifestyle. A bookcase lines the back wall, full of books which look well thumbed and used on a regular basis.

EALING sits behind his desk in a high-backed leather chair, WALKER sits on the other side. They both have lattes in small glasses sitting in front of them and are deep in conversation.

WALKER

...I was doing some work for the British National Party. You know, just trying to do the right thing and make my country safe for those of us who belong there.

EALING nods sagely in a gesture of understanding.

WALKER

But they went soft, mate. Too worried with their 'popular image' in the press and not representing the views of everyday people like you and me.

EALING

So you came here?

WALKER

Figured a British colony was sure to be full of poms. I've got a grandmother here too. But you know all that, don't you... Andrew?

EALING pauses, the latte glass halfway to his mouth. He puts the glass down slowly.

EALING

Why Alex, what makes you say that?

WALKER

You don't get to be a man in your position without being a little paranoid, and you don't invite a stranger into your office unless you know a thing or two about them.

EALING smiles and throws up his hands.

EALING

Been rumbled, have I? I'd ask for your pardon Alex, but it seems like I already have it.

WALKER

I understand how this business works, mate. I'd be a little insulted if you hadn't at least glanced at my record.

EALING

And quite a record it is too... Former SAS, stints as a mercenary in Sudan, the Middle East.

WALKER

We prefer to call it "freelancing for Private Military Companies" these days.

EALING smiles.

EALING

And a grasp of semantics to boot. Where *have* you been hiding, Mr. Porter?

EALING presses a discreet button on his desk, the door swings open and another man steps into the room. He's in his early 40s, solidly built and with a dark beard covering his face. He looks like a remarkably serious character. WALKER turns to look at him. EALING leans forward on his desk.

EALING

Now that we know each other a little better I was wondering if I could offer you a job.

WALKER turns around.

WALKER

Doing what?

EALING puts his hands in the air again and smiles.

EALING

Call it... "freelance problem solving". You'll be working with my associate, Mr. Lexington.

WALKER nods his head, thinking.

15. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. MORNING

15

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 1037 hrs.

On the Grid, RICHARDS stands behind MAHMOUD at his desk, watching over his shoulder. MAHMOUD is busy making sure a video feed is being recorded. The feed itself is playing on the main screen, it's from a camera obviously hidden in one of WALKER's shirt buttons. The engorged image of ANDREW EALING looms large on screen, slightly distorted by the short focal length of the concealed lens.

RICHARDS

Are we getting all of this Sam?

MAHMOUD

Oh yeah. He keeps up like this and we're just a YouTube upload away from reputation-ruining controversy.

RICHARDS

Easy tiger, just store it somewhere safe, okay?

MAHMOUD mocks an offended look.

MAHMOUD

On my network? It's *all* safe.

BISHOP walks onto the Grid and up to RICHARDS and MAHMOUD. He looks up at the screen and grimaces.

BISHOP

Sam, get that off the screen.
The man makes my skin crawl.

MAHMOUD

Sure thing.

MAHMOUD taps a few keys and the image of EALING is replaced by a city-wide grid map.

BISHOP

So what have we got?

MAHMOUD

Well, I tracked down your
mystery woman.

MAHMOUD brings up a headshot of the woman from the ACCC service on the main screen.

MAHMOUD

She's posing as Elizabeth
Drazen, a born again
Christian; real name is Megan
Jones. She's an investigative
journalist.

BISHOP

Let me guess, "Profiling the
church behind the politics".

MAHMOUD

Bingo, I have the entire
article proposal, grabbed off
of her editor's webmail.

RICHARDS

She could be a liability, and
a dangerous one.

BISHOP

Agreed. I'll try to discreetly pull her out. What about the church office computer, did we get anything from it?

MAHMOUD

It was pretty clean. No dodgy financials, no usefully placed terrorist videos.

BISHOP

Damn.

MAHMOUD

But after some digging I found a ghost drive, one that someone went to a lot of trouble to hide. Inside I found a document with a couple of pieces of intel inside. *This* is the most interesting.

MAHMOUD taps a few keys and a string of numbers appear on the main screen. BISHOP scrutinises them.

BISHOP

What am I looking at?

MAHMOUD

It's a GPS tracking code. As far as I can tell it's on a ship heading for the South Australian coastline. Judging from the GPS movements, they've come a *long* way around to prevent being discovered.

BISHOP

Is it commercial?

RICHARDS

No. Johnson's been looking into it. As far as we can tell

it's an unlicensed trawler. Satellite is showing a big spike on thermals though. They're carrying something heavy.

BISHOP

People smugglers?

RICHARDS

Most likely. They're coming in via the Southern Ocean to try and avoid detection.

BISHOP furrows his brow.

BISHOP

What the hell are they playing at?

MAHMOUD

It could be related to the other file-

ZHU walks up to the desk, a folder in hand.

ZHU

(INTERRUPTING)

I've finished running down the two addresses we got off the ACCC system. One belongs to a Saudi national, Marwan al-Hamzi.

MAHMOUD looks up.

MAHMOUD

I know him! He's on our watch list.

RICHARDS

What do we know about him?

MAHMOUD

Well, let's just say he puts
the 'mental' in fundamental.

BISHOP

So he's devoted?

MAHMOUD

No, just stupid. As far as
jihadi's go he's about as much
use as a tea cosy on an RPG.

RICHARDS

Ah.

MAHMOUD

We weren't planning to bring
him in, we're waiting to see
if he accidentally stumbles
onto something more
worthwhile.

BISHOP

What about the other address?

ZHU consults her folder.

ZHU

The electoral roll has it
registered to a Petya
Gorchakov.

RICHARDS laughs and shakes his head.

RICHARDS

Well, well, Petya's still with
us.

ZHU

You know him?

RICHARDS

I assisted in his defection
when I was still with ASIS.

Petya was a high level biochemist in the Russian government. We got him out just as the USSR started eating itself.

BISHOP

What does he do now?

ZHU

Well, according to the Yellow Pages he manufactures fake blood for wound simulation.

RICHARDS chuckles. MAHMOUD frowns.

MAHMOUD

Wait... we have a former Soviet biochemist and a slightly shit jihadi who have something to do with a refugee boat in the middle of nowhere. What am I missing here?

BISHOP

What was the other file in the folder?

MAHMOUD

Hmm? Oh that. It was just a string of six letters in two letter groups. "PA", "EF" and "LF".

BISHOP and RICHARDS freeze.

RICHARDS

(OFFICIOUS)

Right - Bishop you're with me, we're going to get Gorchakov. Zhu, take Sam and pick up al-Hamzi.

MAHMOUD

(SURPRISED)

Me? Wait, I don't do field-

RICHARDS

(INTERRUPTING)

I need you in his computer system the moment you get there. Leave your most competent minion in charge.

ZHU

What's going on?

BISHOP and RICHARDS look at each other, then back to ZHU.

BISHOP

"PA", "EF" and "LF"... they're the three protein strands that make up anthrax.

16. EXT. GILBERT STREET, ADELAIDE. MORNING

16

Two black sedan cars emerge from The Section building on Gilbert Street in the Adelaide city centre. They break off and head in different directions.

17. EXT. SMALL SUBURBAN HOUSE. LATE MORNING

17

TITLE: Residence of Marwan al-Hamzi, Forestville. 1112 hrs.

A black sedan, driven by ZHU with MAHMOUD in the passenger seat, pulls up outside a small, somewhat rundown bungalow. The suburb is a moderately nice one, but many of the surrounding houses are old and in various states of disrepair. A tram line runs along the other side of the street.

Al-Hamzi's house is shut up and quiet - there are no signs of anyone at home. In the car ZHU rolls down the window and assesses the situation.

ZHU

Stay here until I've secured
the house.

MAHMOUD

You don't have to tell me
twice.

ZHU gets out the car and walks briskly to the door of the house, discreetly drawing her 9mm as she does so. She quickly checks the front windows before silently disappearing around the side of the house.

In the car, MAHMOUD sighs looks around and takes out a manila folder. He opens it to reveal a file on Marwan al-Hamzi; employment history, immigration status and so forth. MAHMOUD takes out an 6x8 photo of al-Hamzi, obviously taken from a surveillance position. He studies it for a moment before putting it back down.

MAHMOUD looks up, and in the distance down the street sees a man approaching, carrying a bag full of shopping. As he approaches, MAHMOUD looks more closely, before taking out the 6x8 and examining it. The man approaching him is most certainly MARWAN AL-HAMZI.

AL-HAMZI comes closer and suddenly their eyes meet. A second passes as both look incredibly freaked out, unsure what to do. At that moment, ZHU reappears from the back of the building, tucking her gun back into its holster; she has not yet seen AL-HAMZI. He panics, drops his shopping bag and starts to run in the opposite direction.

MAHMOUD

(SHOUTING)

ZHU!

He points in the direction of the fleeing Saudi.

ZHU

Shit.

She takes off after him. MAHMOUD shuffles over into the driver's seat and attempts to start the car. He fails a few times before he the engine finally kicks over.

18. EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. LATE MORNING **18**

AL-HAMZI bowls along the suburban street, ZHU closing in after him. He tries to knock over garbage bins as he runs, but keeps missing. Eventually he puts on an extra burst of speed and ducks into a narrow side alley. It's not a road, more a connecting patch of dirt from one street to another.

At the entrance to the alley, ZHU slams up against a fence and draws her gun before moving in.

19. EXT. TRAIN STATION. LATE MORNING **19**

ZHU emerges from the alley to the outskirts of the Goodwood train station. It's a large station, with several platforms and shelters painted with colourful murals. A tunnel runs under the station itself to allow pedestrians to cross from one side to the other.

ZHU looks around for any sign of AL-HAMZI, but the station is deserted. Frowning, she moves forward, gun drawn towards the tunnel.

20. INT. TRAIN STATION TUNNEL. LATE MORNING **20**

The interior of the train station tunnel is smooth, grey and concrete, from the Soviet-tower-block school of industrial design. There's little light apart from what streams in at either open end.

ZHU proceeds along quickly, checking each side as she goes. She reaches the opposite exit.

ZHU

Damn it.

At that moment an arm appears from outside the tunnel and tries to grab her gun arm - it's AL-HAMZI. Hardly flinching, she grabs *his* arm, twists it behind his back

and slams him up against the concrete wall. She pushes the 9mm into his back and speaks into his ear.

ZHU

Immigration. Stay still.

AL-HAMZI says nothing. ZHU takes out a couple of cable ties from her jacket, securing his hands before hauling him out of the tunnel, the gun still in his back.

21. EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. LATE MORNING

21

On another street near the train station, ZHU pushes AL-HAMZI along. The black sedan appears - MAHMOUD behind the wheel. The car bunny-hops along before stalling on the spot. ZHU rolls her eyes, opens the back door and throws AL-HAMZI in. MAHMOUD moves back to the passenger seat as ZHU takes up the driver's position.

AL-HAMZI, who can now be seen clearly as a panicky looking man with some facial fuzz masquerading as a beard, looks at ZHU and MAHMOUD.

AL-HAMZI

(TO MAHMOUD)

As-Salaam-Alaikum, brother.
You're a believer, yes? You
can help me?

MAHMOUD doesn't even turn to look at him.

MAHMOUD

Don't even bother. You're
nicked, mate.

ZHU starts the engine and they drive away.

22. EXT. LARGE HOUSE, ADELAIDE HILLS. LATE MORNING

22

TITLE: Residence of Petya Gorchakov, Aldgate. 1127 hrs.

A black sedan driven by BISHOP, RICHARDS sitting in the passenger seat, pulls up outside a large red brick house on a back road of Aldgate, a small town in the Adelaide

Hills. It's largely quiet and green, though the surrounding houses suggest a sort of cut-off opulence, for the sorts of people who make their fortune and then want to enjoy it without being bothered by others.

BISHOP and RICHARDS get out of the car and start to walk up the drive.

BISHOP

For a former communist Mr. Gorchakov seems to be doing alright for himself.

RICHARDS smiles.

RICHARDS

You're probably too young to properly remember the fall of the USSR. It was like an intelligence fire sale over there. Petya made quite a few bucks before he realised he wanted somewhere nice to spend them.

BISHOP

Can we trust him?

RICHARDS

The Cold War was over a long time ago, John. These days he's only interested in making the most convincing fake blood in the industry. Funny really, I thought he would have seen enough of the real stuff.

The two men approach the front door.

RICHARDS

I'll handle Petya, you check around the perimeter. I don't want any nasty surprises.

BISHOP

You got it boss.

BISHOP moves around to the side of the building, RICHARDS presses the doorbell. After a brief pause the door opens to reveal an elderly Russian man sporting a white beard and dressed in practical work clothing. He looks at RICHARDS with surprise and speaks with a heavy Russian accent.

GORCHAKOV

Well, well, if it isn't the master spook himself.

RICHARDS

Hello Petya.

GORCHAKOV

As nice as it is to see you, old friend, you wouldn't be here if it was good news.

RICHARDS smiles slightly.

RICHARDS

Any chance of a cup of tea?

GORCHAKOV graciously beckons inside. RICHARDS walks through the door.

23. EXT. OUTSIDE OF HOUSE. LATE MORNING

23

The outside of GORCHAKOV's house is green and leafy, with a large garden typical of certain Adelaide Hills residences. BISHOP creeps slowly around the outer walls of the house, looking discreetly around for any threats.

As he reaches the back right corner of the house there is a slight but perceptible rustling sound. BISHOP freezes, then very slowly creeps up to the corner and peers around.

A woman can be seen around the corner, facing the opposite direction. She is dressed in a leather jacket

and practical jeans. BISHOP sneaks up behind her and grabs her, putting his hand over her mouth. She starts to struggle and tries to cry out.

BISHOP

(SOFTLY)

Quiet. I'm not going to hurt you. I'm a cop. I'm going to take my hand away now, and we can have a civilised conversation. Okay?

The woman nods. BISHOP takes his hand away. She turns around - it's MEGAN JONES, the journalist.

JONES

Let's see some ID.

BISHOP takes out a police badge and shows it to her.

BISHOP

John Bane, Australian Federal Police. And you're Megan Jones, right?

JONES looks surprised.

JONES

How did you-

BISHOP

(INTERRUPTING)

No time now. I know you're investigating the ACCC and the AFA. The question is, what are you doing here?

JONES

I found out that something was going down at this address today. I didn't know what, so I got here first.

BISHOP
Something today? When?

JONES
Midday.

BISHOP looks at his watch, it's 11:40.

BISHOP
Damn it.

BISHOP's phone rings. He answers.

BISHOP
Yes?

MAHMOUD
(ON PHONE)
Bishop, we just got a message from al-Hamzi's computer. Someone set a meeting with him for tonight, said they were "picking up the Russian first".

BISHOP
That's not good.

MAHMOUD
(ON PHONE)
No, it's not. I'm tracking the GPS in Walker's phone - he's on the freeway and heading in your direction - fast. I'd say they'll be at your location in about 20 minutes.

BISHOP
Standby, will advise.

BISHOP slams the phone shut.

BISHOP
Right, into the house.

TITLE: AFA Storage Facility, Location unknown. 1141 hrs.

A black four wheel drive pulls up to a large, insulated shed on a large plot of land. There is nothing else around. The shed is protected by a heavily locked door.

The four wheel drive comes to a stop. WALKER and LEXINGTON from EALING's office step out. LEXINGTON walks to the shed door and opens it.

LEXINGTON

Right, let's get geared up.
The boss is coming to the
handover with us, so no screw
ups.

WALKER nods. The man opens the door to the shed to reveal a stockpile of weaponry - everything from shotguns and pistols to assault rifles and sub-machine guns. WALKER lets out a low whistle of appreciation.

GORCHAKOV's living room is filled with comfortable looking couches and expensive furniture, but is devoid of any personal items. GORCHAKOV and RICHARDS sit on opposite sofas, drinking tea. RICHARDS looks rather queasily at a large container of fake blood on a nearby table.

GORCHAKOV

... I make many types of
blood. Arterial, rubber,
reusable-

RICHARDS

Reusable?

GORCHAKOV mimics a painting motion.

GORCHAKOV

Yes, you paint on fake wound,
let dry, peel off. Little
water, good to go again.

RICHARDS

(DRILY)

How... economical.

BISHOP comes into the house, JONES in tow. RICHARDS
stands up and examines JONES, puzzled.

BISHOP

No time Mal. Alex and an ACCC
crony are on their way here to
pick up Gorchakov.

GORCHAKOV stands up.

GORCHAKOV

Now wait one minute-

RICHARDS

(INTERRUPTING)

Hold that thought, Petya. Ms.
Jones, I have no doubt that
you've sunk your claws
suitably deep into the ACCC;
care to tell us what's going
on?

JONES looks to BISHOP, he nods in approval.

JONES

Ealing is behind the EOT.

RICHARDS

(DRILY)

Bravo.

JONES

He's used international
connections to sneak several
vials of the Anthrax virus

onto a refugee boat heading for the shore. If the boat sinks, it's more political clout for him, if it makes it...

BISHOP

He gets his hands on one of the deadliest viruses known to man. But what does he do with it?

JONES

From what I've been able to put together, he's got a connection with a local jihadi - one of his people is posing as an Islamic extremist. He's going to give the Anthrax to the fundamentalists.

RICHARDS nods in understanding.

RICHARDS

They set off a biological attack, and suddenly he has the political clout he needs to get the AFA into power and kick out every non-white in the country.

BISHOP

(AMAZED)

He's insane.

RICHARDS turns to GORCHAKOV.

RICHARDS

That's why they're coming for you - they need someone to verify the authenticity of the virus.

GORCHAKOV
What would you have me do?

RICHARDS frowns.

RICHARDS
I need you to trust me one
last time, old friend.

GORCHAKOV considers for a moment, then nods.

RICHARDS
I also need to borrow a couple
of things.

GORCHAKOV raises an eyebrow.

26. EXT. GORCHAKOV'S FRONT DOOR. MIDDAY **26**

WALKER and LEXINGTON move silently up to GORCHAKOV's front door. WALKER holds an assault rifle, LEXINGTON a nasty looking double barrelled shotgun. LEXINGTON nods at WALKER, who raises a foot and kicks the wooden front door.

It flies open, and LEXINGTON charges in. He spots GORCHAKOV sitting on a couch, cup of tea halfway to his mouth. He points his shotgun directly at him. GORCHAKOV calmly puts the tea down and his hands up.

27. INT. FOUR WHEEL DRIVE. MIDDAY **27**

WALKER sits behind the wheel of the black four wheel drive, concentrating on the road. GORCHAKOV sits in the back seat with LEXINGTON next to him, who trains a pistol on GORCHAKOV.

WALKER
Sorry about your door.

LEXINGTON pushes GORCHAKOV slightly.

LEXINGTON
Just drive, don't talk to him.

GORCHAKOV shrugs.

GORCHAKOV

Is no problem. Back in Russia
in old days, KGB kick door
down every other week. I get
to know carpenter so well I
send him card at Christmas
each year.

They drive on in silence.

28. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. LATE AFTERNOON 28

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 1640 hrs.

The Grid is full of activity. MAHMOUD works at his station, a mess of maps, diagrams and files cluttering the main screen. ZHU sits at a nearby desk, working. Everywhere workers buzz around with files, walking with a sense of purpose.

RICHARDS exits his office and approaches the main screen.

RICHARDS

(LOUDLY)

Status update!

ZHU rushes over.

ZHU

We're tracking Walker - he's
with Gorchakov and on
schedule. Ealing's still at
his office, as we thought.
Bishop's nearly good to go,
just putting the finishing
touches on.

RICHARDS

Good. Any problems?

ZHU

Just one. Al-Hamzi is being rather... *un-cooperative*, and we need him for the handover, or Ealing will be out of there.

RICHARDS

Right, so all we need is someone to pose as him. Someone we can trust, say about 25 with a Middle Eastern appearance?

ZHU and RICHARDS look at each other for a moment. ZHU raises her eyebrows, RICHARDS nods his head.

ZHU

(TO MAHMOUD)

Hey Sam, are you busy right now?

29. EXT. ALDINGA BAY BEACH. NIGHT

29

TITLE: Shoreline, Aldinga Beach. 2214 hrs.

The isolated stretch of Aldinga Beach is nearly silent at night, save for the crashing of waves. The sea appears an inky black colour in the darkness. In the distance the light of a boat can be seen, moving away.

Gasping and thrashing can be heard as people try to make their way to the shore - the refugee boat has dumped its cargo.

On a road close to the beach a black four wheel drive sits, idling. The passenger door opens and LEXINGTON, only visible in silhouette, steps out and begins to walk towards the beach, screwing a suppressor onto the barrel of his pistol as he walks. In the driver's seat the muted orange glow of a single cigarette can be seen.

LEXINGTON takes out a small device and activates it, following a beeping sound towards the shore. It leads him

to the dark shape of a gasping man laying at the edge of the water. LEXINGTON pulls him up and drags him over to a nearby amenities block.

There is silence for several seconds before the muted 'thud' of the suppressed pistol can be heard. LEXINGTON re-emerges from behind the amenities block and makes his way back to the four wheel drive, a small esky in hand. He gets in the passenger seat, the four wheel drive starts up and turns around.

30. EXT. CONTAINER WHARF, PORT ADELAIDE. NIGHT 30

TITLE: Container Wharf, Port Adelaide. 0128 hrs.

Massive shipping containers in vibrant oranges and reds line the edge of the Port Adelaide Wharf. At nearly 1:30AM the place is deserted, though several lights provide pools of brightness in the dark. MAHMOUD leans nervously against a container, a messenger bag over his shoulder, chewing his fingernails. His comms unit buzzes.

ZHU

(ON COMMS)

Stop it Alpha One, you'll chew
your finger off. Just
concentrate on remembering the
code phrase.

MAHMOUD jumps slightly at the voice.

ZHU

(ON COMMS)

Standby. Target is arriving.

MAHMOUD straightens up and brushes himself off. Two of the black four wheel drives pull up. WALKER and LEXINGTON step out of the lead car, assault rifles slung over their shoulders. They quickly scan the area before LEXINGTON nods at the other four wheel drive.

The door opens and EALING steps out. He moves quickly towards MAHMOUD, ignoring WALKER and LEXINGTON.

EALING

Where is God's paradise?

MAHMOUD

(NERVOUSLY)

In the shadow of the swords.

EALING smiles and offers his hand. MAHMOUD takes it and is shaken by EALING's steely grip.

EALING

As-Salaam-Alaikum, brother. I trust you weren't followed?

MAHMOUD shakes his head.

EALING

Excellent. Let's get on with this then, shall we?

EALING snaps his fingers. WALKER hurries to the car, takes out the small esky and hands it to EALING.

EALING

Bacillus anthracis, verified and completely deadly. More than enough there to make the infidel quiver.

He hands the esky to MAHMOUD, who takes it and sets it down gingerly. An awkward moment of silence ensues.

In the distance a clapping sound can be heard - as if someone is applauding very, very slowly. EALING and LEXINGTON look around, trying to locate the source of the noise. The clapping gets closer until RICHARDS emerges from behind a container, steadily clapping his leather-gloved hands together.

RICHARDS

Bravo, bravo.

Floodlights come on, bathing the scene in bright, white light. LEXINGTON raises his gun, but RICHARDS merely raises his hand.

RICHARDS

Oh, I wouldn't if I were you, I have so many snipers around this wharf that they're thinking of calling it their annual convention.

LEXINGTON lowers his gun. EALING growls.

EALING

Who the *hell* are you?

RICHARDS

(SMILING)

Tut, tut, Mr. Ealing, language like that won't get you into heaven. Who I am isn't important; what's important is what I *have*.

EALING

And what's that?

RICHARDS

Several things, Mr. Ealing, several *important* things. Like a recording of this conversation, like documents from your inaccurately named 'ghost drive'. Like your pathetic little stash of Anthrax.

EALING goes to move towards MAHMOUD, but he has already grabbed the esky and moved back. RICHARDS looks at EALING and frowns, exaggerating exasperation.

RICHARDS

Are you *listening* Ealing? What did I say about snipers?

RICHARDS clicks his fingers. A shot rings out and one of the smaller overhead lights explodes. EALING and LEXINGTON duck.

RICHARDS

Right, now that I have everybody's attention, here is what's going to happen. We will take you into custody, where you will reveal to us the names, identities and locations of all EOT members. They will be quietly arrested and jailed. As will you.

EALING merely stares at RICHARDS.

RICHARDS

Your church will refocus its time, energy and - this one is important - *money* to teaching tolerance to others - *especially Muslims* - or else we will find some legal way of running it into the ground - say that you're secretly Scientologists or something.

EALING

Why would I agree to this?

RICHARDS

Because Mr. Ealing, for all your failings, you have a family. I myself have a family, and if I did something horrifying, I know I wouldn't want their names dragged through the mud. And if you don't agree and come quietly I will make sure it's some *thick* mud.

EALING huffs on the spot.

RICHARDS

Oh, and there's also this.

RICHARDS gestures to MAHMOUD, who takes a tablet out of his messenger bag and hands it to EALING.

EALING takes the tablet and looks at the screen. The image is a live video feed - it shows, in low light, EALING's wife tied to a chair, her mouth covered in gaffer tape. Her hair hangs over her face, obscuring it. BISHOP stands by, a gun in hand. EALING looks up at RICHARDS.

RICHARDS

(QUIETLY, DANGEROUSLY)

Now do what I say or I'll kill your wife.

EALING

(SHOUTING, ANGRY)

You son of a bitch! If you touch even a hair on her-

RICHARDS

(INTERRUPTING)

Too late. (INTO COMM) Do it.

On the screen, BISHOP steps back and fires the guns. Two rounds rip into the woman's chest. Blood flies up as she slumps, lifelessly. EALING cries out and sinks to his knees, sobbing.

EALING

(SOBBING)

How... how *could* you?

RICHARDS

(FORCEFULLY)

You tipped my hand, Mr. Ealing. The rules are different these days - you escalate and we escalate right along with you. The words "a line we will not cross" ARE

NOT IN MY PLAYBOOK ANYMORE!
NOW ARE YOU GOING TO AGREE TO
MY TERMS, OR DO I HAVE TO
START KILLING YOUR SONS?

EALING
(SOBBING)

Okay, okay, I'll do whatever
you want.

EALING begins to stand up. Suddenly, the crack of a
sniper rifle rings out. A bullet hits EALING square in
the head. He drops to the ground, dead. LEXINGTON goes to
raise his gun, but WALKER raises the butt of his rifle
and hits LEXINGTON with it. He goes down like a tonne of
bricks. Everyone else has hit the ground.

RICHARDS
(INTO COMMS)

Status! Who the hell fired?

ZHU
(ON COMMS)

It wasn't ours. Repeat, it was
not our shooter.

RICHARDS takes out his earpiece and throws it to the
ground.

RICHARDS

Damn it!

We pull back as the crew begin to pick themselves up.

31. INT. EALING RESIDENCE KICHEN. NIGHT

31

In the kitchen of the Ealing household, BISHOP stands
over the body of EALING's wife. Behind him sits a camera
and an operator. The operator presses a button; a red
light blinks out on the camera.

OPERATOR

Right, we're clear.

EALING's wife suddenly sits up and starts mumbling. BISHOP unties her and rips the gaffer tape off her mouth. She winces in pain.

WOMAN

Ow.

She removes a wig from her head.

BISHOP

Thanks Sophie, you were a big help.

The woman now identified as SOPHIE grumbles.

SOPHIE

I don't know Bishop, middle of the night...

BISHOP

Can I help that you're the only admin member who looks vaguely like the wife of a lunatic?

SOPHIE looks down at her 'wounds' and nods in appreciation.

SOPHIE

That was a pretty spectacular death.

BISHOP

Best fake blood in the industry.

32. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. EARLY MORNING 32

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 0530 hrs.

A few dedicated staff members man the Grid, mopping up the mess. MAHMOUD sits at his desk, going over ACCC computer files. WALKER and ZHU work at a conference table, looking over photos. BISHOP and RICHARDS walk in,

looking tired. RICHARDS warms his hands on a cup of coffee. WALKER looks up.

WALKER

We finished sweeping the site,
found the weapon.

WALKER pushes a photo of a sniper rifle across the desk. RICHARDS and BISHOP examine it.

WALKER

I've seen a few of these -
M89SR sniper rifle. Smaller
than an assault rifle,
incredibly lightweight and
deadly accurate. We found it
nearly a click away from the
target. Someone was a very
good shot.

RICHARDS

Anything else?

WALKER

The rifle was wiped clean - no
surprise there. We found *this*
caught under the barrel
though.

WALKER holds up a small evidence bag. It contains a fine strand of long, slightly curly blond hair. BISHOP kicks the table.

BISHOP

Shit. I knew there was
something off about 'Megan
Jones'.

MAHMOUD pipes up from his workstation.

MAHMOUD

We swept her last known
address. Barely anything
there. Managed to recover her

passport though. It's a fake, but a spectacularly good one.

BISHOP

Anyone we know capable of making something of that quality?

MAHMOUD

It's a short list, but I'd put money on this being a Mossad job.

ZHU

We've been doing some checking amongst Ealing's 'international connections' - he managed to seriously piss off the Israeli government. Enough that they would want him eliminated.

RICHARDS

And Jones?

ZHU

An invisible. Spent some time in Tel Aviv, where she was undoubtedly recruited. We could never have seen it coming, and can't prove a thing, of course...

BISHOP

Have we still got enough to take down what's left of the AFA?

WALKER

Lexington broke disappointingly quickly. We're rounding up the EOT stragglers as we speak. Johnson's been in for a few hours already,

working out how to dismantle
the organisation through tax
pressure... or something.

WALKER gestures towards the conference room, where
JOHNSON can be seen gesticulating wildly on a phone call.

BISHOP

That man loves his job way too
much.

RICHARDS

Alright people, not an ideal
outcome, but a job well done,
nonetheless. It's a new day;
let's get on to dealing with
the next crisis, shall we?

RICHARDS walks off to his office. BISHOP joins WALKER and
ZHU. MAHMOUD gets up and goes after RICHARDS, something
in his hand.

33. INT. RICHARDS OFFICE. EARLY MORNING

33

RICHARDS enters his office and is just sitting down when
MAHMOUD walks in nervously.

RICHARDS

The next words out of your
mouth had better be, "yes
boss, I'll wake you in an
hour".

MAHMOUD frowns.

MAHMOUD

The dirty tricks campaign on
Ealing.

RICHARDS

Oh yes, good job.

MAHMOUD

That's just the thing, I sent a team to cut off his hot water supply and they found... this.

MAHMOUD places a small cylindrical device in a plastic bag on the desk. RICHARDS picks it up and looks at it quizzically.

MAHMOUD

It's a filtration device, attached to Ealing's water supply. I've had it run through forensics - there are enough psychoactive ingredients to make an *elephant* twitchy and paranoid.

RICHARDS

Hmm.

MAHMOUD

Plus, no fingerprints, no distinguishing features, no manufacturing marks. Someone beat us to it, boss. Someone with serious resources.

RICHARDS

(CAREFULLY)

Alright Sam, don't mention this to the others, I'll deal with it.

MAHMOUD nods but looks unsure. RICHARDS puts the device down on the desk.

RICHARDS

Thankyou Sam, this is good work. Now get back to looking for UFO's or whatever it is you do with government

satellites when I'm not paying
attention.

RICHARDS makes a 'shooing' motion. MAHMOUD leaves.
RICHARDS picks up the phone.

RICHARDS
Johnson, call the NSC. We've
got a problem.

END

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THE SECTION
EPISODE 1.9 - IN A SILENT WAY

By
PATRICK J. LANG

THIRD DRAFT
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1. INT. INTERROGATION ROOM. NIGHT

1

A dark room, so dark that only shapes can be made out. The outline of JOHN BISHOP lies on the floor, unconscious with a bag over his head. A man approaches and throws a bucket of water at BISHOP, who stirs.

The MAN grabs BISHOP and pulls him upright onto a chair, before pulling off his hood and turning a bright light on, directly in BISHOP's eyes. BISHOP has a two week beard and rings under his eyes.

MAN

Wakey, wakey sunshine.

TITLE: Unknown location. 0045 hrs.

BISHOP blinks and struggles to focus in the searing white light. Slowly his eyes adapt and he can see the scene around him. The MAN moves behind BISHOP, fixing his hands behind his back with cable ties. The room is a small, dark and nasty looking interrogation cell. The walls and floors are concrete. Even the chair is bolted to the floor.

The door opens and SARAH, an attractive woman in her late 20s, dressed in a business suit and with her hair tied back, walks into the room, carrying a briefcase. BISHOP looks at her.

BISHOP

Sarah?

SARAH

You and I both know that's *not* my name, but it'll do, I suppose.

BISHOP

(GROWLING)

Just what the hell is going on here?

SARAH

We were hoping you could tell
us that, *Peter*.

BISHOP

I'm a chef, that's all.

SARAH studies BISHOP for a moment, like an eagle eyeing
off a rather crafty mouse who thinks it can escape death.

SARAH

Fine, if that's the way you
want to play it.

SARAH nods towards the MAN, who takes a step towards
BISHOP, revealing a syringe. BISHOP struggles, but cannot
move. The MAN places the syringe against BISHOP's vein
and pushes it in, before pressing the release in an
agonisingly slow fashion.

BISHOP's face becomes a mask of pain, he breathes heavily
and quickly, trying to get it under control; he loses. He
screams. SARAH turns and walks out of the door.

2. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. EARLY AFTERNOON 2

TITLE: 12 Hours Earlier.

It's early afternoon at the Section. WALKER is running
the Grid, supervising staff and examining documents.

MAHMOUD sits at his desk. His computer makes a 'beeping'
sound and a message flashes up on screen.

MAHMOUD

Message from Bishop.

WALKER moves over to MAHMOUD's desk.

WALKER

What have we got?

MAHMOUD

He's requesting an ID on a target. The GPS tag says the photo came from inside the cafe.

MAHMOUD taps a few keys and an image appears on screen - it's a photo obviously taken on a mobile phone camera. The surrounds are some kind of cafe, with wicker chairs and an earthy colour scheme; in the photo a well-dressed man in his mid-30s sits at a table. He has a rather square jaw and a wide grin on his face.

WALKER

Alright then, let's get it into the photo recognition software and start running it through the databases. Start with our own, then police, AFP etc etc. You know the drill.

MAHMOUD

(ANNOYED)

Ugh, this is going to take hours.

WALKER

Hey, you wanted the late shifts. I'll try and sympathise for you when I'm knee deep in Bond films tonight.

MAHMOUD

Alex, sometimes you're a walking stereotype.

WALKER

...says the gangly tech geek behind the keyboard.

MAHMOUD

(SMILING)

Hey, I'm willowy, not gangly.

WALKER

You're gangly, trust me. You have to be older and wiser to be willowy. Now get cracking.

MAHMOUD sighs and starts typing. WALKER moves to walk away, but then comes back, remembering something.

WALKER

Oh, and tread carefully with Richards on this one, this whole operation has him a bit... edgy.

They both look over to RICHARDS' office, where they can see his gesticulating at JOHNSON.

3. INT. RICHARDS' OFFICE. EARLY AFTERNOON

3

MALCOLM RICHARDS sits behind his desk, his fingers pressed together into a peak. On the other side of it is ERIC JOHNSON. A digital recorder sits in the middle of the desk, playing a phone conversation.

BISHOP

(ON RECORDING)

The op's a bust, Alex. I've been under with these guys for weeks now - no sign of extremist activity *whatsoever*.

WALKER

(ON RECORDING)

The NSC seem to think they're a genuine worry.

BISHOP

(ON RECORDING)

Well the NSC have their heads up their arses then. The group

is a bunch of washed up hippies and student idealists. "Left-wing extremists"? These guys' grand plan is to start up a *second* organic food co-op, not to blow up parliament.

JOHNSON leans across and stops the recording.

JOHNSON

I think that's about enough.

RICHARDS raises an eyebrow.

RICHARDS

Really? John had a few choice words about you I'm sure you'd like to hear.

JOHNSON curls his lip.

RICHARDS

Mr. Johnson, could you please enlighten me as to why I have an agent who is wasting his time investigating a bunch of Woodstock dropouts?

JOHNSON goes on the defensive.

JOHNSON

The NSC had a very clear indication of a threat-

RICHARDS

(INTERRUPTING)

Yes, you keep saying that, and I keep asking where this so called "clear indication" has come from, because at the moment it's wasting time and agency resources.

JOHNSON

Fine, I'll talk to the council

RICHARDS

You'd better. When Bishop calls in tonight I want to tell him that he can pack up his hemp shirt and come home. If not, I'll tell him it's *your* fault. *Make it happen.*

JOHNSON says nothing, gets up and leaves.

4. INT. SECTION SAFEHOUSE. NIGHT

4

TITLE: Section Security Safehouse, Goodwood. 2155 hrs.

BISHOP wanders around the lounge room of a sparsely furnished safehouse, collecting various items and putting them in a backpack, which he puts by the door.

His phone beeps with a message. He takes it out of his pocket and looks at it. It reads, "No ID from standard databases, continuing search". He puts it down in frustration, placing it on a table by the door.

BISHOP

Damn it.

There is a knock at the door. BISHOP walks over and opens it. SARAH, casually dressed in pants and a loose shirt, leans against the door frame.

SARAH

Ready to go?

BISHOP

Yeah, just a minute.

BISHOP walks around the lounge room, picking up a shirt and stuffing it in his backpack.

BISHOP

So who was that guy who came into work today? Seemed like you two knew each other?

SARAH

Oh, that was my brother, Tim. He's coming to the meeting tonight.

BISHOP looks surprised.

SARAH

What?

BISHOP

Nothing. He just didn't strike me as the hemp and natural oil type.

SARAH

Guess some people are just full of surprises.

BISHOP grunts and slings the backpack over his shoulder. He walks to the front door. Just as he gets there SARAH stands aside and three large, imposing looking men dressed in black step inside. They grab him and push him back into the house.

BISHOP struggles and tries to break free, but their grips are vice-like in their intensity. One of the men throws his hand over BISHOP's mouth and tries to get a hood on his head. BISHOP cries out, but is muffled by the man's hand. He tries to grab for his phone but one of the other men grabs his hand.

As the three men subdue BISHOP one of them grabs the phone, throws it to the ground and stomps on it. The flip phone cracks in the middle, completely dead. The men tie BISHOP's hands behind his back and hustle him outside.

5. EXT. OUTSIDE SAFEHOUSE. NIGHT

5

Outside the safehouse on a quiet suburban street a black, unmarked van sits, the engine running, an unmarked sedan behind it. The three men come out of the house with a struggling BISHOP. SARAH follows closely behind, leaning on the sedan.

SARAH

Come on, get him in the van. I haven't got all night.

The men haul BISHOP towards the van. He continues to struggle, kicking out in all directions. Eventually one of the men, sick of his violence, punches him in the head. BISHOP flops unconscious. They throw him in the back of the van, get in the front and drive off. SARAH gets in the sedan and follows closely behind.

6. INT. RICHARDS' OFFICE, THE SECTION. NIGHT

6

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 0008 hrs.

MAHMOUD knocks softly on RICHARDS' glass office door. When he gets no response he peers in to see RICHARDS at his desk, his head down, dozing lightly. He carefully opens the door, steps inside and softly clears his throat. RICHARDS stirs and, seeing MAHMOUD, sits up with a start.

RICHARDS

Er... Sam. Don't mind me; I was just catching up on some...

RICHARDS hurriedly looks down at his desk.

RICHARDS

Er... financial reports. What's up?

MAHMOUD

It's Bishop. He's 8 minutes late calling in.

RICHARDS
(SERIOUS)

That's not like him. Alright,
let's go to the backup
procedure.

MAHMOUD hurries out the door to the Grid, RICHARDS close behind.

7. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

7

The Grid is sparsely staffed by a skeleton crew, all of whom try doubly hard to look busy when RICHARDS walks in the room. RICHARDS ignores them and walks straight up to MAHMOUD's desk.

MAHMOUD

I tried his mobile after 5
minutes, as per the protocol,
but it must be off.

RICHARDS

What about the GPS locator?

MAHMOUD

It's still transmitting, says
it's in the house.

RICHARDS

I don't like this; it's not
like Bishop to miss a call in.
Have we got any surveillance
in the area?

MAHMOUD

I have a camouflaged UAV
sitting on top of a nearby
house, but it's out of range.
If we want the footage I'll
need to pull it off the server
of our relay station. Hang on.

MAHMOUD re-directs his display to the large screen which dominates the Grid. Through it, he accesses a remote

relay station and starts downloading the video feed from the UAV.

RICHARDS

There's hours of footage here.

MAHMOUD

Don't worry, I've been working on a macro that scans for motion. Hang on.

MAHMOUD opens up the footage and starts the software, which begins scanning through it at high speed. It slows and stops as a woman passes the camera, walking her dog.

MAHMOUD

I'm still fine tuning it, hang on.

The footage continues to scan, then stops as a collection of cyclists in lycra pass the camera.

RICHARDS

Bloody Adelaide.

The footage slows again, showing BISHOP being bundled into the back of the unmarked van. MAHMOUD and RICHARDS freeze up for a moment before RICHARDS jumps into action.

RICHARDS

Red flash Zhu and Walker, I want them here 15 minutes ago. Start checking traffic cams and CCTV footage. Hell, go to satellites if we have to - *find that van.*

MAHMOUD

Got it.

He starts typing furiously. RICHARDS turns to a terrified looking staff member.

RICHARDS

You, bring me updates from Sam every 5 minutes. I'll be in my office

MAHMOUD turns to him.

MAHMOUD

What are you going to do?

RICHARDS sighs.

RICHARDS

I'm going to call Johnson in. We may need the whole resources of the NSC for this one.

RICHARDS looks around at the frozen staff members.

RICHARDS

Do you all have your fingers in your ears? MOVE IT.

Everyone scatters.

8. INT. ZHU'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

8

Moonlight shines in the window of ZHU's bedroom, highlighting the neat, organised nature of the place. A packed bookshelf covers one wall, obviously used often.

In the bed ZHU sleeps soundly until her mobile, sitting on the bedside table, starts to ring. She struggles awake and picks up the call in the darkness.

ZHU

Zhu... Sam, this had better be good.

She pauses, listening to MAHMOUD on the phone. Suddenly she wakes up, attentive and professional.

ZHU

When? Alright, I'm on my way
in now, give me 20 minutes...
What's that? No, I'll call
Walker.

ZHU ends the call, sits up in bed and turns on the light. She gently shakes the sleeping form next to her. A very sleepy looking ALEX WALKER rolls over and opens his eyes, squinting against the light.

WALKER

What is it?

ZHU

It's Bishop. We have to go in.

WALKER groans. ZHU gets up and starts to get dressed. She does to her dresser and takes her 9mm pistol out of the top drawer.

WALKER

If he's lost his phone again
I'm going to *kill* him.

ZHU pauses for a split second and smiles at him as she checks the pistol and puts the magazine in with a 'click'.

9. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

9

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 0035 hrs.

The Grid has gotten considerably busier. MAHMOUD sits at the centre of it all, directing staff members whilst also operating his bank of computers.

ZHU and WALKER march in, all business. They approach MAHMOUD, who doesn't look away from his screen.

MAHMOUD

I'm glad you're here, it's
bloody bedlam.

WALKER

Where's Richards?

MAHMOUD

He's in his office talking with Johnson. He arrived about 10 minutes ago.

WALKER

(ANNOYED)

Who called him?

MAHMOUD shrugs. RICHARDS walks onto the Grid, followed by JOHNSON. RICHARDS nods to ZHU and WALKER. Everyone looks tired, but alert.

RICHARDS

All we have so far is that Bishop has been kidnapped by persons unknown. Sam?

MAHMOUD brings up the footage from the UAV showing BISHOP being thrown into the van.

RICHARDS

...as you can see. How are we going on the van?

MAHMOUD shakes his head.

MAHMOUD

No dice, boss. No CCTV in the area. We got them on a traffic cam heading north, but the plates are coming up blank.

RICHARDS

We need options. Anyone?

Everyone thinks very hard for a moment. Suddenly MAHMOUD's computer emits a 'beeping' noise. MAHMOUD looks down at it

MAHMOUD

Oh, shit.

WALKER

What is it?

MAHMOUD

The ID that Bishop requested - after I couldn't find anything in the standard databases I set up a macro to scan through government departments. Look what just came back.

MAHMOUD taps a few buttons and on screen an image appears - it's a personnel file, the image is 'Tim' from the photo, but the stated name is 'Joseph Wheeler', and the file is stamped 'ASIO'.

ZHU

(SURPRISED)

He's a spook?

MAHMOUD

Whoever he is, he's definitely security services. ASIO Intelligence Officer, according to the file.

RICHARDS

Now there's an oxymoron if ever I heard one.

WALKER

Wait. ASIO have taken Bishop?

RICHARDS

A reasonable assumption. They don't know we exist and they're investigating the same group, so they've taken Bishop. Sounds like a classic AIC SNAFU.

JOHNSON, who has been brooding in the background, steps forward towards MAHMOUD.

JOHNSON

(SLOWLY, ANGRILY)

You *cannot* just go prancing around the central ASIO server like that.

MAHMOUD

(SARCASTICALLY)

Give me a break Johnson, what do you think 'deniable black ops unit means'?

RICHARDS

(QUICK, FORCEFUL)

Right, everyone stop talking. I'll fix this. For Christ's sake, someone put some coffee on.

RICHARDS marches off towards his office.

JOHNSON

(TO MAHMOUD)

I'll deal with you later.

JOHNSON goes after RICHARDS. MAHMOUD pulls a face at JOHNSON, ZHU and WALKER stare at him dubiously.

MAHMOUD

(DEFENSIVE)

What?

10. INT. RICHARDS' OFFICE. NIGHT

10

RICHARDS is sitting at his desk, his phone in his hand, about to dial. He looks serious, intent and not very happy. JOHNSON bursts in the door and thumps his hand on the phone, cutting off the dial tone. RICHARDS looks up at him, slowly and dangerously.

RICHARDS

(QUIET, DANGEROUS)

Take your hand *off* my desk.

JOHNSON reluctantly removes his hand.

JOHNSON

What are you doing Mal?

RICHARDS

What do you *think* I'm doing *Eric*? I'm going to wake up the head of ASIO and find out why they've taken my lead case officer to god knows where!

JOHNSON

What don't you understand about the term 'deniable'? You can't just go revealing our existence every time someone screws up.

RICHARDS

(ANGRILY)

What don't you understand about loyalty?

JOHNSON pauses for a moment, collecting himself.

JOHNSON

What I *understand* is that if you make that call the NSC will sweep you and this whole operation under the rug. Then you'll be out of the game and we won't be able to help anybody.

RICHARDS looks at JOHNSON for a long, penetrating moment, before placing the phone down.

JOHNSON

We need another option.

Back in the interrogation room, the MAN steps back from BISHOP. A cannula has been installed in BISHOP's arm, and has a drip attached to it. He looks a little worse for wear. SARAH stands a few steps away, leaning on the wall.

MAN

He's hooked up and good to go.

SARAH smiles and takes a step forward.

SARAH

Good. Peter - we thought you might need something to calm you down after my friend finished with you.

The MAN grins.

SARAH

So let's try again - who are you?

BISHOP's head rolls around. He opens his eyes and stares directly at SARAH, speaking through gritted teeth.

BISHOP

(SLOWLY)

I *told* you. I'm a chef.

SARAH

Yeah, a chef who also happens to be a member of a dangerous activist group.

She walks up to BISHOP and leans down, close to his face.

SARAH

(SMILING)

In fact, I would say that they're borderline terrorists.

BISHOP

That's bullshit and you know it.

SARAH

Well you're going to help us with that, aren't you?

BISHOP

I demand my right to a lawyer.

SARAH sighs again, opens her briefcase and takes out a thick legal document.

SARAH

I thought you might say that, so I brought this along for you to have a look at.

She drops the document on the floor in front of him. It lands with a 'thud'.

SARAH

That's the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Amendment Bill. It gives me legal authority to hold you for 28 days, without telling anyone where you are, without access to a lawyer and it gives me the right to interrogate you.

BISHOP's face hardens into a snarl.

SARAH

It also gives me the right to demand you hand over any documents or - I love this part - "other requested things" that may pertain to the case, even if they're later used against you in a court of law. Failure to meet

any of these demands could lead to... oh dear! A five year term in a federal prison! Wouldn't that be a shame?

SARAH mocks a concerned look and nods to the MAN.

SARAH

I'll leave you for a while to ponder that. My... colleague is more than capable of looking after you.

SARAH turns and exits the room. The MAN takes a step towards BISHOP, who struggles in his seat.

17. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

17

WALKER and ZHU stand over an operations table on the Grid, talking quickly. MAHMOUD sits at his desk, typing at his computer.

MAHMOUD

Alright, I've got three potential sites, but narrowing that down is going to take time.

WALKER

Good work Sam; let's get them up on the screen.

MAHMOUD taps a few keys. A map of the greater Adelaide CBD area appears on the main screen. Several areas of the map start to flash, indicating three locations.

RICHARDS and JOHNSON re-emerge from the office. A low-level employee appears and pushes a cup of coffee into RICHARDS' hands. He sips from it. JOHNSON looks annoyed.

RICHARDS

Somebody tell me some good news.

WALKER and ZHU look up and walk over.

WALKER

How did we go?

RICHARDS looks to JOHNSON.

RICHARDS

The political option is...
untenable. We need another way
to get Bishop out. Tell me you
have something.

ZHU

We have something.

RICHARDS

Dangerous?

WALKER holds his hand out in a 'kind of' motion.

WALKER

You remember I told you about
Zagreb? The plan is about
Zagreb level. Give or take.

RICHARDS

(WEARILY)

It's not like we have much of
an option right now. Let's
hope for more give and less
take. Let's hear it.

WALKER

Sam's deep in the ASIO server
right now, trying to locate
Bishop.

MAHMOUD doesn't turn around, but puts his hand up in a
thumbs up gesture. JOHNSON opens his mouth, but then
thinks better of it.

MAHMOUD

I've had to call in a few favours on this one. Not that I had to work too hard to find friends wanting to crack the ASIO database.

He turns around and looks at JOHNSON.

MAHMOUD

Oh, and their website might be a little... hacked in the morning. You know, for cover.

JOHNSON rolls his eyes, MAHMOUD smiles.

ZHU

As it is we've managed to narrow Bishop's location to three potential target sites - all office buildings in the CBD.

WALKER

They're basically a series of rolling blacksites. These are temporary holding facilities - Bishop won't be there for long.

RICHARDS

Alright, so soon we'll know where he is - then what?

WALKER and ZHU look at each other for a moment.

WALKER

Then I go in and get him.

JOHNSON steps forward, shaking his head.

JOHNSON

If you're talking about a stealth extraction, we're not

equipped for that kind of mission.

WALKER holds up his hand.

WALKER

Don't worry, I've got an old SAS buddy who retired here. He'll deal with the extraction. As for the equipment, I've been assembling a stealth kit for a while now.

ZHU leans down and picks up a bundle from under the table, dropping it in the middle. She starts pulling pieces of equipment from it.

ZHU

Low-noise, non-reflective clothing with SPIE harness, night vision goggles, snake cam, encrypted comms unit, field knife. Standard, low risk equipment. Oh yeah, apart from *this*.

ZHU picks up a modified 9mm pistol and a magazine, sliding it into the gun with an audible 'click'. JOHNSON jumps slightly.

ZHU

Standard silenced 9mm semi-automatic modified to hold specially designed piezo-electric tipped rubber bullets.

JOHNSON looks worried.

JOHNSON

Non-lethal I hope?

ZHU

It'll drop a target at 100 metres with the force of a Taser. They'll wake up... eventually.

WALKER

Just like a three day bender. Nothing a weekend off, some headache pills and worker's comp can't fix.

RICHARDS looks around, and then to JOHNSON, who reluctantly shakes his head.

RICHARDS

Eric?

JOHNSON

Those are your *colleagues* in that building Walker. No killing.

RICHARDS

You heard him Alex - no neck snapping, no knee-capping.

WALKER

Non-lethal. I get it. No promises on kneecaps though.

RICHARDS

Only if you avoid any *permanent* damage. Right, we have a plan. Let's make it happen.

Everyone scatters. WALKER takes his phone out and begins to dial.

18. EXT. CITY STREET. NIGHT

18

TITLE: Morialta Street, Adelaide. 0153 hrs.

A dark side street off of Grote Street near the Adelaide Central Markets. The area is deserted. The street itself leads off down behind a large, ominous building. A walkway overhead joins it to the smaller building next door.

A black car pulls up at the entrance to the street. The door opens and WALKER, now dressed in full stealth gear - black clothing with an inbuilt SPIE harness, stripes of camo face paint, fingerless gloves, equipment in a backpack, his night vision goggles resting on his head, large earpiece in place - steps out. He walks around to the driver's side. The window winds down - RICHARDS is at the wheel.

RICHARDS

Be careful in there, the last thing I need is two of my operatives being tortured by their own government.

WALKER

Reminds me of the SAS days, to be honest.

RICHARDS raises an eyebrow.

RICHARDS

Quite. I'll be back on the Grid in ten. Zhu is running ops. Stay in touch.

WALKER nods. RICHARDS winds up the window and backs the car out. WALKER examines his surroundings to make sure he's alone and approaches the wall of the large building.

About six feet above ground level there is a large ventilation shaft. He reaches into his pocket and takes out a black-handled screwdriver. He uses it to remove the screws on the grill leading into the shaft. He lifts it away, placing it quietly on the ground before pulling himself up into the shaft by his forearms. He slides his body forward, into the shaft.

19. INT. VENTILATION SHAFT. NIGHT

19

The inside of the ventilation shaft is about four and a half feet high - just enough for WALKER to crouch in an upright position and move around. The walls are smooth and in the distance the shaft veers off to the left.

WALKER

(QUIETLY, IN COMM)

Zhu, are you receiving?

ZHU

(ON COMM)

Roger that Walker, have you
loud and clear.

WALKER

Proceeding.

WALKER starts to move down the shaft slowly but consistently, attempting to minimise his noise. He follows the shaft as it curves around before he comes to a T-junction.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Sam, where am I going?

20. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

20

On the Grid, MAHMOUD examines a floor plan on his computer screen. ZHU stands behind him, observing. JOHNSON paces in the background.

MAHMOUD

You want to take the right
passageway. Go ahead another
fifty metres or so, you'll hit
a grill - it'll take you into
the building proper.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Resistance?

MAHMOUD

I've got the thermal feed up from the satellite. Looks like one security guard, not far from the grill.

ZHU

Walker, the satellite's moving. Once it's directly overhead we'll be able to detect heat signatures, but we'll have no depth perception - we won't be able to tell what floor they're on.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Guess I'd better move fast then.

21. INT. VENTILATION SHAFT. NIGHT

21

WALKER has moved along the ventilation shaft and approaches the end. The grill leading to the main building looms up.

WALKER sinks back down onto his back and lifts a heavily booted foot, pressing it firmly onto the grill at the location of the screw. His face screws up with the effort, but slowly the grill starts to move before the screw breaks with a slight 'popping' noise.

WALKER moves up and slides the grill out of the way. He looks into the building - it's about an eight foot drop to a carpeted floor. He slides out, feet first, and drops into the hallway.

22. INT. OFFICE HALLWAY. NIGHT

22

WALKER drops silently out of the ventilation shaft and lands lightly in the hallway. It's a typical looking office hallway with neutral coloured carpet. The lighting is off - it's very dark.

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

The security's guard's almost on top of you. He should be coming around the corner.

WALKER pushes himself close up against the wall just as the sound of footsteps start to approach. A SECURITY GUARD in a navy blue security jumper walks past, flashing his torch from left to right. The torch beam swings past WALKER, missing him by centimetres. WALKER stays absolutely still until the GUARD is a good ten metres away before crouching and stepping in the opposite direction very slowly.

The corridor curves around, taking WALKER away from the GUARD. He comes to a four-way junction.

WALKER

(QUIETLY, INTO COMM)

Sam, I'm at a four way junction. What way?

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

Take a left, the security office should be down there, third door on the right.

WALKER starts to creep forward quickly.

WALKER

He wasn't exactly an ASIO quality recruit back there.

23. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

23

ZHU, standing behind MAHMOUD, raises an eyebrow.

ZHU

That's because he's not. It's all genuine offices down here. No one even knows that ASIO

operates upstairs. Why do they do that, Johnson?

JOHNSON looks up, surprised.

JOHNSON
Err... it's cheaper.

MAHMOUD rolls his eyes.

MAHMOUD
Of course it is.

24. INT. SECURITY OFFICE. NIGHT

24

WALKER opens the door and steps into a security office. It's lit by a single lamp on the desk, which is a mess of papers and administrative debris. A computer lies under the mess, a screensaver showing on the monitor.

WALKER takes a small USB-flash drive out of his pocket and inserts it into a USB port on the computer keyboard. The drive flashes for a moment.

WALKER
Sam?

MAHMOUD
(ON COMM)
I'm in. Hang on.

A floor plan appears on the computer screen. One of the onscreen doors flashes red and then turns green.

MAHMOUD
(ON COMM)
I've disabled the magnetic lock on the door to the upper floor. You've got 120 seconds before the alarm reboots though, so you'd better move it.

WALKER

Got it.

WALKER moves quickly out of the office.

25. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY OFFICE. NIGHT

25

JOHNSON has started to look very nervous. MAHMOUD and ZHU are focussed on the screen. RICHARDS walks into the room, taking off a pair of leather gloves and a long jacket.

RICHARDS

Status?

ZHU speaks without looking around.

ZHU

He's about to hit the third level.

RICHARDS walks towards the screen, examining the floor plan.

RICHARDS

Do we know where they're keeping Bishop?

MAHMOUD taps a few keys and a nearly overhead wireframe image of the building appears onscreen, red dots indicating thermal signatures.

MAHMOUD

Most of the heat signatures are concentrated on the sixth floor. Unless someone's left a couple of kettles on, I'd imagine Bishop is up there. As for an exact location... Walker will have to play it by ear.

JOHNSON has walked forward, looking even more nervous.

JOHNSON

(SLIGHTLY PANICKY)

Damn it Richards, I don't *like* this. What if something goes wrong?

RICHARDS

Keep it together, Eric. That sort of panic is what landed you in trouble in Syria.

This shuts JOHNSON up, who walks away again.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Zhu, I'm approaching a lift. Advise?

26. INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR. NIGHT

26

WALKER stands backed up to a wall in the darkness. He stands by a high-tech looking lift, its doors closed.

ZHU

(ON COMM)

Stand by.

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

The lower floors are relatively clear. You should be able to take it up to the fifth and move up from there. Let's get eyes on the control panel.

WALKER stands up and turns to the lift, pressing a button on his comm unit.

WALKER

Transmitting now.

The feed from WALKER's camera appears onscreen, showing the control panel of the lift. It has a scanner of some description above it. MAHMOUD frowns.

MAHMOUD

That's a problem.

ZHU

What?

MAHMOUD

It's a retinal scanner. Looks like it's on a closed network too.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Sam, is anyone else on this floor?

MAHMOUD brings up the wireframe view again. He spots a red dot on the third floor.

MAHMOUD

That's an affirmative. We have a guard on the opposite side of the floor and moving around.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Got it. Standby.

MAHMOUD

What's he going to do?

ZHU merely raises an eyebrow.

28. INT. NARROW CORRIDOR. NIGHT

28

WALKER rounds a corner into a narrow corridor. He moves into a recessed doorway, his form receding into the darkness. In the distance soft footsteps can be heard.

29. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

29

The team watch the video feed from WALKER's comm. WALKER's breathing can be heard on the speakers. It is even, controlled, rhythmic.

On MAHMOUD's monitor, a thermal reading edges closer to WALKER's position.

30. INT. NARROW CORRIDOR. NIGHT

30

A SECURITY GUARD rounds the corner into the corridor. WALKER waits in the shadows of the recessed doorway as the guard passes. Silently, he moves behind the SECURITY GUARDS and puts the man in a choke hold.

The SECURITY GUARD struggles, alarmed.

WALKER

Shh. Shh.

The SECURITY GUARD stops struggling. His body sags unconsciously in WALKER's arms. WALKER gently and quietly lets the man slide to the ground.

WALKER gets up and stretches before bending over and lifting the GUARD onto his shoulders in a fireman's lift. He stands up and walks away.

31. INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR. NIGHT

31

WALKER approaches the lift, the GUARD still draped over his shoulder. As he reaches it he drops the GUARD from his shoulder and positions the man's head to face the scanner. Holding the GUARD's eyelid open with one hand, WALKER punches several keys on the keypad with the other.

The scanner opens and proceeds to scan the GUARD's eye.

MAHMOUD

(ON COMM)

Oh, I get it now...

The scanner beeps and the lift doors slide open. WALKER quickly pushes the GUARD into a dark corner and jumps into the lift just as the doors close.

32. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

32

On the main screen, the wireframe thermal satellite feed of the building has started to shift - as the satellite moves further overhead, depth perception becomes impossible. ZHU studies it and a floor plan.

ZHU

(INTO COMM)

Alright Walker, up the nearest set of stairs and you should be right on top of Bishop's location.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Roger that.

MAHMOUD

Alex, I've got a blip somewhere near you, but the satellite's overhead and I can't tell if it's on your floor or not. Keep an eye out.

33. INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR. NIGHT

33

A very dark office corridor with the entrance to a lift. The lift doors slide open and WALKER steps out, silhouetted by the light behind him. He quickly presses himself against the wall and lowers his night vision goggles over his head.

The perspective switches to a first-person view and we see the corridor lit up in green-tinted night vision. WALKER starts to slowly creep forward. In the distance he

sees a GUARD facing the other direction, standing under a pool of light.

WALKER slowly manoeuvres himself behind the GUARD, carefully shifts the goggles off of his eyes and takes out his modified 9mm pistol. Then in one swift, fluid movement he stands up, pulls his left arm around the GUARD's neck and places the pistol against the GUARD's temple with his right. The GUARD struggles, but WALKER tightens his grip around the man's neck.

WALKER

I need some information.

GUARD

(ANRGILY)

Forget it, it's more than my job's worth.

WALKER clicks off the safety of the pistol with his thumb.

WALKER

What about your life?

The GUARD gulps, audibly.

GUARD

(SCARED)

Alright, alright. There are other jobs.

WALKER smiles.

WALKER

Now that's more like it. No time like the present to make changes in your lifestyle.

The GUARD struggles slightly. WALKER tightens his grip again.

WALKER

The man they bought in

tonight. I know he's upstairs.
Where is he?

GUARD

They're holding him in the
interrogation room. Second
door on the right at the top
of the stairs. You'll never
get through though - there's a
security office between the
hallway and the chamber.

WALKER

Anything I should know about?

GUARD

They have guns. Lots of guns.

WALKER

(DRILY)

I'm shocked and amazed.
Anything else?

GUARD

(PANICKY)

That's it, that's all I know!

WALKER raises his gun above his head and brings the butt
crashing down on the GUARD, who crumbles in a heap.
WALKER drags him out of the light and drops him in the
darkness.

WALKER crouches down again and slowly starts to move up
the stairs. He emerges onto the sixth floor - yet another
nondescript office corridor. He moves to the second door
on the left. He takes off his backpack and removes a
small fibre optic camera. WALKER slides the minute camera
under the door. He takes out his phone and opens an app -
a live feed from the camera appears.

He moves the camera from side to side, trying to get a
picture. On screen he can see a long hallway leading to
another door. On the left hand side of the hallway is a

security office with a long, clear window. Shapes move around in it - it's obviously guarded.

WALKER

(INTO COMM)

Radio silence until further notice.

ZHU

(ON COMM)

Roger, standing by.

34. INT. LONG HALLWAY. NIGHT

35

The hallway is in darkness, but the security office next to it is brightly lit. Through the plexiglass window two ASIO agents can be seen. They have their backs to the window, and are talking and drinking coffee.

The door to the hallway opens quietly and WALKER creeps through, crouched down low. He moves quickly to the wall under the long plexiglass window and presses himself up against it. He starts to move along the wall.

In the office, one of the agents turns around and peers in the darkness.

ASIO AGENT #1

This coffee is *awful*.

The other agent doesn't even turn around.

ASIO AGENT #2

Standard issue sludge. Have you not worked in government before?

WALKER keeps slowly moving along the wall. The door to the interrogation chamber is getting closer, but agonisingly slowly.

ASIO AGENT #1

That's it, I'm going back to the kitchen, there has to be something better than this.

ASIO AGENT #2

Be back before the boss. You want to end up transcribing wiretaps again?

ASIO AGENT #1 walks to the door and opens it, stepping into the hallway. WALKER remains absolutely still, pressed up against the wall. ASIO AGENT #1 opens the outer door and steps into the corridor. WALKER waits for a long moment before quickly closing the distance to the door of the interrogation room. He takes off his backpack and removes a device which looks like a small box with a credit card attached. WALKER takes the credit card and puts it in the card-lock on the door, presses a few buttons and waits. The device whirs and the lock opens with a 'click'.

WALKER

(INTO COMM)

Sam, how are we going on that surveillance footage?

35. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

35

MAHMOUD types furiously at the computer screen. On the main monitor is the security feed from the interrogation room, showing BISHOP slumped on a chair.

MAHMOUD

Working on it, their firewall was tough. Finishing the loop... now. You're good to go.

36. INT. INTERROGATION ROOM. NIGHT

36

BISHOP is slumped unconscious in a chair, his hands still tied behind his back. The cannula in his arm is linked to a drip.

The door eases open and WALKER slips into the room. He shuts it softly and hurries over to BISHOP. He leans down and shakes BISHOP, trying to wake him. BISHOP is non-responsive. WALKER starts to carefully but firmly tap his face.

WALKER

Bishop, come on!

BISHOP's eyes roll lazily open. He looks up, struggling to focus - he's disorientated.

BISHOP

Alex?

WALKER smiles.

WALKER

That's it mate. Come on, we have to get out of here.

37. INT. SECURITY OFFICE. NIGHT

37

ASIO AGENT #2 sits in the security office, reading a magazine and sipping on his coffee, grimacing slightly. He peers up at the bank of surveillance monitors. The cameras inside the interrogation room still show BISHOP slumped unconscious in his chair.

38. INT. INTERROGATION ROOM. NIGHT

38

BISHOP gestures to the drip. WALKER stands up and examines it.

ZHU

(ON COMM)

Walker, we're looking at your feed. What have they put him on?

WALKER examines the drip packaging.

WALKER

I'm not sure, but he's groggy as hell.

RICHARDS
(ON COMM)

Probably a synthetic opioid.
Get it out of him and put him
on comm.

WALKER quickly detaches the drip, leaving the cannula in BISHOP's arm. BISHOP struggles to wake up. WALKER takes out a flesh coloured comm unit and places it in BISHOP's ear. He then moves to BISHOP's back and, taking out a pair of clippers from his bag, starts to cut the cable ties.

RICHARDS
(ON COMM)

You with me Bishop?

BISHOP
Yeah Mal, just.

39. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

39

RICHARDS has put on a headset. He covers the mic and sighs audibly with relief before speaking.

RICHARDS
Listen to me John - they've had you on a sedative to disorient you, but it has a very short half life. Get moving and you'll start feeling better.

BISHOP
(ON COMM, SHAKY)
Got it boss.

RICHARDS
You stay on Walker, we'll debrief when you get it. Hang in there John.

RICHARDS covers the mic again.

RICHARDS

(TO MAHMOUD)

Take John off the line for a moment.

MAHMOUD taps a few keys and nods.

RICHARDS

(INTO COMM)

Alex, if John's been on heavy opioid's he's going to have some pretty severe withdrawal symptoms very, very soon. Get a move on.

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Got it.

40. INT. INTERROGATION ROOM. NIGHT

40

WALKER has managed to free BISHOP and is now standing by the door. BISHOP struggles to get up, but gets behind WALKER nonetheless.

WALKER

We move quickly and quietly.
You stay behind me. Got it?

BISHOP nods.

WALKER

(INTO COMM)

Zhu, how are we going on the exfiltration?

ZHU

(ON COMM)

Helicopter is en route.
Rendezvous is on the roof in 4 minutes.

WALKER

Roger that, we'll be there.

BISHOP
Helicopter?

WALKER smiles.

WALKER
Old favour and a long story.
Ready?

BISHOP
Let's get the hell out of
here.

WALKER eases the door open quietly, and they step into the hallway.

41. INT. LONG HALLWAY. NIGHT

41

The door to the interrogation room opens and WALKER and BISHOP step through, crouched low. BISHOP closes the door softly behind him. WALKER motions to him to follow. They start to move along the wall, underneath the window of the security office.

They move quickly, approaching the outer door. When they are about 10 feet away the outer door opens and ASIO AGENT #1, two cups of coffee in his hands, appears.

ASIO AGENT #1
I found some-

He spots BISHOP and WALKER and drops the coffee cups, sending scalding brown cascading over the floor. The AGENT goes for the gun on his belt, but WALKER is too fast; he pulls the modified 9mm pistol out and fires at the agent. The rubber bullet hits him with a 'thock' sound before a small electrical discharge sparks. The agent goes down, unconscious.

WALKER immediately moves through the door to the security office and fires at ASIO AGENT #2. The startled agent falls to the ground, but manages to pull an alarm switch on the way down. The whole sequence of events has taken about 6 seconds.

A siren starts to sound. WALKER and BISHOP look at each other.

WALKER

Fancy a brisk stroll in the general direction of the roof?

BISHOP

I thought you'd never ask.

WALKER backs up and takes a run at the outer door, which flies outwards violently. He breaks into a run, BISHOP follows, struggling to keep up.

42. INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR. NIGHT

42

WALKER and BISHOP run along another office corridor. Sirens sound everywhere. In the distance a group of ASIO agents appear in pursuit. One raises a gun and fires. The slug pings off of the wall. WALKER and BISHOP pick up the pace.

WALKER

(YELLING, INTO COMM)

Zhu! We're compromised and coming in hot! Repeat, we are coming in hot! Advise the pilot!

WALKER spots a door leading to a stairwell and crashes through it. BISHOP follows just as another shot pings off of the doorframe.

43. INT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT. NIGHT

43

Over the Adelaide night skies a 'Squirrel' helicopter (Ecurueil EC130 B4 utility) flies. Painted completely black, its outline is just visible against the distant lights of the Adelaide CBD.

In the cockpit a grizzled looking British man in his mid-50s sits behind the controls.

ZHU

(ON COMM)

Alpha, be advised that the target has been compromised. You will be coming in hot.

PILOT

Roger that. Preparing for evac. ETA 120 seconds.

The PILOT flicks several switches and starts to take the helicopter down.

44. EXT. ROOF. NIGHT

44

WALKER and BISHOP come flying out of a door at the top of a stairwell and onto the roof of the office building. Flood lights have come on, bathing the entire area in blinding white light. Air conditioning units are dotted across the roof space.

WALKER and BISHOP run towards the first air con unit, looking for cover. Halfway there BISHOP falls to the ground. WALKER, hearing the noise, turns back towards BISHOP.

BISHOP

Alex.

WALKER looks down at BISHOP, who has started to shake uncontrollably. Just as he is leaning down to look at BISHOP the door to the stairwell opens and an ASIO agent emerges, sees WALKER and moves for his gun. WALKER quickly removes his pistol, aims and fires. The agent goes down in a heap.

WALKER grabs BISHOP and pulls him along the ground, his gun still in the other hand. Another ASIO agent appears in the stairwell door - WALKER drops him instantaneously. Finally they make it behind an air conditioning unit for cover. WALKER checks the magazine in his pistol.

BISHOP

(SHAKY)

What the hell is wrong with me?

WALKER

Just withdrawal symptoms from that shit they had you on. Hang in there mate, we're nearly home.

As if on cue the sound of rotor blades can be heard, and the Squirrel chopper appears at the side of the building. It hovers in position, just close enough for its landing gear to touch the edge of the roof.

A team of six ASIO agents quickly stream through the door and start to fan out on the rooftop.

WALKER

(YELLING OVER NOISE)

BISHOP! THAT'S OUR RIDE.
YOU'VE GOT TO GET UP!

BISHOP grimaces in pain, but nods nonetheless. He painfully pulls himself up into a crouching position behind the air con unit.

WALKER

I'LL COVER YOU. ON THREE. ONE.
TWO. THREE!

WALKER leans up out of the cover and starts to fire. The ASIO agents scatter and try to return fire, but their shots fly wide. BISHOP is running towards the chopper. Bullets fly past him as he runs for his life, trying to close the distance.

He hurls himself the last few feet, using every ounce of strength remaining. He lands in the helicopter with a thud. Bullets from the ASIO agents start to thump into the fuselage.

The PILOT turns around to look at BISHOP.

PILOT
(YELLING OVER NOISE)
WE CAN'T STAY HERE!

BISHOP
WE'RE NOT LEAVING HIM BEHIND!

PILOT
THE ROPE! SEND THE ROPE DOWN.

BISHOP looks at the open door - next to it is a spooled rope. He grabs it, preparing to throw it down.

WALKER looks up and sees the Squirrel rising above the building. It moves overhead and begins to hover. A rope drops out of the chopper and lands next to him.

Still ducking bullets, WALKER takes the carabiner on the top of his harness and attaches it to a D-ring on the hovering rope. He then quickly attaches a second safety line to another D-ring above the first.

WALKER
(INTO COMM)
I'M SECURE! GO, GO, GO!

The Squirrel starts to rise up, taking WALKER with it. Quickly the helicopter ascends and moves away from the rooftop.

PILOT
(ON COMM)
Just like Zagreb all over
again, hey Alex?

WALKER laughs, exhilarated by the adrenalin.

WALKER

Give or take.

47. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. NIGHT

47

RICHARDS paces nervously in the back of the Grid. JOHNSON sits down, looking forlorn. ZHU and MAHMOUD arm the main screens intently. ZHU presses her earpiece, listening.

ZHU

They're clear. Walker and
Bishop are clear.

The sigh of relief is audible and universal. RICHARDS walks up and takes an earpiece.

RICHARDS

(INTO COMM)

Good work Alex. Did you get
out clean?

WALKER

(ON COMM)

Depends. Do you count half a
dozen unconscious federal
agents as "clean"?

RICHARDS frowns. JOHNSON, somewhere in the background, grimaces.

RICHARDS

Alright, best head to safe
house 12 then. Lay low for a
couple of hours and head back
to the city for mid-morning.

WALKER

(IN COMM)

Roger that.

RICHARDS puts the headpiece down and sits down heavily.

RICHARDS

Mr. Johnson, time for some of
that damage control you seem
to excel at.

48. INT. CAR INTERIOR. SUNRISE

48

TITLE: Old Dukes Highway, Coomandook. 0719 hrs.

A clean new sedan drives along a quiet highway. The sun is just beginning to peek over the horizon. WALKER sits behind the wheel, now dressed in casual jeans and a jumper. In the passenger seat sits BISHOP, asleep. He stirs slightly, slowly opening his eyes to the sunlight. He looks confused.

WALKER

Morning.

BISHOP sits up and looks around.

BISHOP

Where are we?

WALKER

About two hours out of town.
After that messy exit the old
man thought we should lay low
for a while. How are you
feeling?

BISHOP

Like I've been out drinking
with the Spetznaz.

WALKER

Try and get some more sleep.
You'll need it for the giant
pile of paperwork Johnson is
no doubt eagerly preparing for
us.

BISHOP groans and shuts his eyes.

BISHOP
(EYES CLOSED)

Alex?

WALKER
Yeah?

BISHOP
Thanks.

WALKER
No problem, mate.

The car continues along the lonely road.

49. INT. THE SECTION SECURITY GRID. MORNING

49

TITLE: The Section, Adelaide. 0923 hrs.

The Grid is full of workers, but no one is working. Instead, everyone is crowded around the main screen, which is playing the morning news. RICHARDS, JOHNSON, ZHU and MAHMOUD, all exhausted, nonetheless watch intently.

REPORTER
(ON SCREEN)

...the emergency session of parliament, called in the early hours of the morning, is attempting to address a perceived security threat from what government sources are calling "internal left wing extremist groups".

On screen, the reporter pauses, listening to an update.

REPORTER
We are just receiving word that the opposition has tabled a bill for the suspension of certain civil liberties to aid in the apprehension of these groups, one of whom, the Green

Earth Alliance, is said to have violently removed one of their members from police custody last night.

WALKER and BISHOP enter the Grid. They both look up at the screen.

BISHOP

What the hell is going on?

All eyes turn to face them. ZHU, RICHARDS, JOHNSON and MAHMOUD walk over to them.

RICHARDS

Politics.

RICHARDS offers his hand. BISHOP shakes it.

RICHARDS

Welcome back, John.

ZHU turns to WALKER. They lock eye contact for a few brief moments and ZHU smiles, just very, very slightly. MAHMOUD however, has been watching the main screen.

MAHMOUD

Uhh... guys?

They turn to face the screen, where an identikit rendering of BISHOP's face has appeared.

REPORTER

(ON SCREEN)

Police are seeking any information leading to the arrest of this man, who is believed to play a key role in what is now being called an immediate terrorist threat against the country, perpetrated by left wing extremists.

BISHOP steps backwards, shaking his head - unable to take it all in.

BISHOP

No, no they *can't*.

REPORTER

Police have started setting up roadblocks and are examining CCTV footage in what commentators are calling the "manhunt of the decade".

RICHARDS turns to BISHOP.

RICHARDS

(SLOWLY, CAREFULLY)

John, just calm down. We can *fix* this.

BISHOP

No. I can't drag you all into this, Mal. I have to *go!*

WALKER steps forward and puts a hand on BISHOP's shoulder.

WALKER

Don't be stupid Bishop. We can handle this much better if we have you here.

BISHOP shakes his head, backing up.

JOHNSON

(YELLS)

STOP!

Everyone looks at JOHNSON.

JOHNSON

We need to contain this situation, and for now that

means containing Bishop. Hold
him!

JOHNSON gestures to two SECURITY GUARDS, who step either side of BISHOP, one produces a set of handcuffs. JOHNSON walks up to face him.

BISHOP

(QUIET, DANGEROUS)

Are you really going to let
him do this, Mal?

RICHARDS grimaces, conflicted.

RICHARDS

You're not exactly giving me a
choice, John.

BISHOP nods slowly.

BISHOP

Okay then, so be it.

BISHOP puts his wrists together to allow them to be cuffed. As the security guard moves to put them on him he spins around, elbowing one in the face before turning and bringing the full weight of his fist down on the man's head. Both guards go crashing to the floor. BISHOP turns again and swiftly punches JOHNSON in the nose - he goes down like a tonne of bricks.

BISHOP turns and runs for the door. WALKER starts after him, but BISHOP has a head start. JOHNSON sits up, his hand covering his bloody nose.

JOHNSON

(ANGRY)

God-DAMN-it Bishop!

50. EXT. GILBERT STREET, ADELAIDE. MORNING

50

A black sedan comes screaming out of The Section, screeching onto Gilbert Street and taking off at speed. We come in close to see the driver - it is JOHN BISHOP,

tired, haggard and bloody, with an intense look of determination on his face.

TITLE: To be continued...

END

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