

"THE NINETY SECOND MINUTE"

By

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CLOSE ON:

TEST CARD

The color bars waver slightly while a 1Khz tone can be heard in the background.

MERVE (O.S.)
You ready Ghassan?

GHASSAN (O.S.)
All ready.

The tone fades down, gradually replaced by the sound of a car crossing over a battered road. An engine spitting out whatever energy it can and the heavy nervous breathing of the two occupants.

INT. CAR - DAY

MERVE KURTZ, 23, wearing a flak jacket and combat pants. This man isn't carrying a gun, his only weapon is a 35mm Nikon around his neck and his rapid action mouth. His hands fixed on the steering wheel.

GHASSAN ABDULLAH, 39, the cameraman part of the team. He plays around with a large TV camera. Professional yet always relaxed. There isn't anything that can surprise him now.

MERVE
Got the call ten minutes ago. Man,
are we going to have an exclusive
today.

Merve presses hard on the brakes.

EXT. CAR - DAY

A few burnt out wrecks litter the street. The road is peppered with shell holes. All the sensible adults scurry indoors.

Merve negotiates the car through the debris.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ghassan is loading a new tape into the video camera.

GHASSAN

So what do they want you to record
this time?

MERVE

AP haven't got it. Reuters haven't
got it and CNN would kill to get
it. An exclusive Ghassan. I got
myself and exclusive.

The mobile phone rings, Merve picks it up.

MERVE (CONT'D)

We're getting close, we're close.
What's your man going to look
like...

But Ghassan is already slowing down. Through the dirty
windshield is a SOLDIER waving them to slow down.

He is carrying an automatic rifle and is dressed in a desert
uniform. But the most threatening part of his uniform isn't
the gun but the hooded mask he wears. Two darkened eyes look
through the holes for his eyes. A closed zipper for his
mouth piece.

The car slows down next to the Soldier. Ghassan winds the
window down.

MERVE (CONT'D)

Press.

EXT. SAND DUNES - DAY

The Soldier leads Merve and Ghassan through the temporary
valleys that have formed here. Ghassan struggles with his
camera while Merve keeps up with the Soldier.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

The Soldier leads them down to the beach. No one else is
here. In the distance, a hazy mirage becomes stronger and
stronger.

Merve squints his eyes trying to make out details within the
haze.

Six Soldiers stand around, all wearing hoods and carrying weapons. As they get closer and closer, more details become apparent. Shovels buried halfway within mounds of dirt and three soiled Prisoners, all covered in wet beach sand.

Ghassan looks at the camera and switches it on. A red light appears at the top of the camera.

The trio arrive at the scene. It's obvious that the three Prisoners have been digging a shallow grave.

Merve gets out his press card.

MERVE

Press. Press.

The Soldiers are unimpressed. The LEADER, who wears sergeant stripes and a tartan hood comes up to Merve and Ghassan. He says something to both of them.

GHASSAN

He's asking what you want to shoot.

MERVE

Just pretend we're not here. Do what you do regularly.

Ghassan translates to the Leader. The Leader indicates for all three Prisoners to kneel down next to the grave. A gun at the back of each Prisoner's head.

POV - GHASSAN'S CAMERA

The camera focuses on each Prisoner.

PRISONER #1 - A young man, a bit of his beard has been ripped away from his face. The scab tissue is still forming on his face.

MERVE (CONT'D)

So who are these guys?

GHASSAN

Looters. Informers.
Collaborators.

PRISONER #2 - A teenage schoolgirl. Her school uniform partially ripped, her eyes blank and empty.

PRISONER #3 - An old man in his seventies. His mouth whispering an old prayer.

The Leader goes to Prisoner #1 and hits him in the face. Ghassan puts the camera on his shoulder and points at Merve who has put on his most serious TV smile.

MERVE

The city is still divided and old hatreds are hard to lose. On the beach, once a haven for tourists, is now the killing ground for this beleaguered country...

The Leader shouts at Merve.

GHASSAN

He wants to know which one you want to die on camera.

Merve looks at the three Prisoners.

MERVE

It's not up to me.

The Leader asks Ghassan again.

GHASSAN

You have to pick one. They picked them specially for us.

MERVE

What? Pal, I don't want to choose any of them. That's your job.

The Leader looks at the three prisoners. They gaze pitifully at Merve and Ghassan. Prisoner #1 makes a sound. The Leader turns around and pistol whips him across the face.

Ghassan is still filming. The Leader walks and points the camera towards the Prisoners.

GHASSAN

They want us to choose one.

MERVE

Shut the camera off.
 (switches camera off)
 No filming. We're not filming anymore.
 (gestures wildly at the soldiers)
 No film. Send them back. Send them back.

Ghassan lowers the camera.

MERVE (CONT'D)

We're going. I'm not taking part
in this.

The Soldiers shrug their shoulders. Ghassan and Merve begin
to walk away from the scene.

The Leader gets out his gun.

Ghassan and Merve continue to walk away.

MERVE (CONT'D)

Don't look back. Don't look back.

Suddenly, three shots ring out. Merve slowly turns around.
The bodies of the three Prisoners are lying in the shallow
graves.

The Leader shouts at Ghassan.

Ghassan raises the camera at his shoulder. Merve looks at
the scene in front of him, he turns around to the camera.

Ghassan is already filming, his camera focused on Merve's
pale face.

MERVE (CONT'D)

The city is still divided and old
hatreds are hard to lose. On the
beach, once a haven for tourists,
is now the killing ground for this
beleaguered country...

FADE OUT.