

CHEMICAL ATTRACTION

S01 E01 "The Cage Effect"

Written by

Alan J. Field

OVER BLACK

SUPER: "I am proud of the fact that I have never invented weapons that kill." -Thomas Edison

WE HEAR a young woman's LABORED BREATHING as she fights to hold back tears. Then she gags. This is the end of the road for her.

FADE TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - A CLEARING - DAY

A dying KATELYN CARRIE (25), a pale bony skeleton of one whose life had been reduced to a perpetual search for her next high.

She looks down at the dirt, a purse and an open briefcase filled with money. Some bills lay scattered on the ground.

Kate peers up at a blurry VANESSA CARRIE (60), a professionally-dressed woman clearly out of her element here as a self-made woman of industry used to getting what she wants, when she wants it.

With a withering moan, Kate lunges forward and grabs hold of Vanessa's jacket, falling into her.

KATE
WHY DID YOU DO THA--!!!

Kate GAGS, VOMITS on Vanessa's jacket, and then collapses to the ground.

CLOSE ON the Kate's wide-open DEAD EYES.

KATE (V.O.)
If you know anything about chemistry,
and I do, there's this theory called
"The Cage Effect." It describes how
the properties of a molecule in a
solvent, like water, are altered by
its environment only if it can escape
from its solvent "cage", or prison.

Vanessa drops to her knees, strangely relieved by all this.

GUNTHER MCGORE (55), an imposing hulk with groomed facial hair and a scar across his left cheek, appears from behind to gather up the stray bills. He stuffs them into the briefcase, grabs the purse, and then walks to the edge of the clearing to uncover a bike hidden in some underbrush.

KATE (V.O.)

But even if it escapes from one solvent cage, another cage will recapture it, perpetuating its prison-like existence. The only way it can free itself is if it enters a another cage where an identical molecule resides.

Vanessa unzips her ripped, vomit-covered jacket and hands it to Gunther.

KATE (V.O.)

You might say I also was a prisoner in my own life until another prisoner showed me the way, for however short a time.

Gunther helps Vanessa up. She straightens her blouse as he ushers her out of the clearing. He rides off as Vanessa skitters away, leaving Kate alone to die.

POV Kate: An 8-YEAR-OLD KATE version of herself wearing pajamas and clutches a doll, shakes her disapproving head.

KATE (V.O.)

As I lie here thinking my last thoughts, the only question I have left to ask is: was it all worth it?

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONEEXT. A HIGHWAY WINDING TO THE BEIRUT SKYLINE - DUSK

CLOSE ON A PAIR OF UNBLINKING EYES that belong to SABIR AL-DAHAR-ESSA (35), a Middle Eastern man with dark shoulder length hair and beard, and wears a world-weary face, determined to fulfill his destiny.

A BURST OF WHITE LIGHT and then an aerial of a jeep as we close in. Dark-skinned hands grip the steering wheel, but we do not see his face. The skyline ahead is the Beirut skyline, a beautiful sunset view.

EXT. BEIRUT - CITY STREETS - DUSK

Sabir drives through the city's streets, first the modern buildings of downtown, then through the poorer sections.

SUPER: BEIRUT, LEBANON - THREE WEEKS EARLIEREXT. A STREET IN BEIRUT - NIGHT

Sabir parks the jeep. We pull back to see him sit

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Beside him sits ADALET (25), a prize worth fighting for and with a pair eyes that also wear vengeance.

Sabir cradles in his lap an elongated object wrapped in a paper bag. He turns to Adalet and they kiss. He steps out.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cradling the bag, Sabir steps out of the car and scans the street like a revenant lion, when his BURNER PHONE CHIRPS. He connects the call and listens.

DISGUISED VOICE (O.S.)
(through speaker)
Deposit the object and leave. And
make it clean, Sabir.

SABIR
I will.

DISGUISED VOICE (O.S.)
(through speaker)
Good. You know what will happen to
her if you don't.

The Voice clicks off as Sabir stares longingly at Adalet through the car window.

EXT. STREET MARKET - NIGHT

Sabir walks with determination as peddlers pack up their wares for the day. Boys play soccer in the street. Two MALE CIA AGENTS track Sabir from varying angles and positions as he walks.

JOANNE (O.S.)
(through speaker)
You have eyes on him? I need to know
where he's headed.

They speak into com-links. Sabir seems unaware.

CIA AGENT #1
Yeah, he's walking through the street
market.

INT. LANGLEY - SECURED ROOM - DAY

INSERT: on Joanne's chin as she talks into a headset.

JOANNE
Not good enough. Get me a fucking
visual. I need drone eyes on him.

A BEEP on her headset as she clicks to a new line.

JOANNE (CONT'D)
I need that drone, now!

EXT. STREET MARKET - NIGHT

Sabir sees a small crowd and walks into it.

CIA AGENT #2
Dammit, I can't see him. He's--

Sabir comes out of the far end of the crowd and scurries to:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Sabir enters the courtyard gate. CIA Agent #1 has run around the crowd in time to see Sabir enter the building courtyard.

CIA AGENT #1
Got him. He went into an apartment
building.

INT. LANGLEY - SECURED ROOM - DAY

INSERT: On Joanne's chin.

JOANNE
But which apartment?

CIA AGENT #1 (O.S.)
(through speaker)
We'll pursue into the courtyard.

JOANNE
Negative. Pull back. He made you.

CIA AGENT #2 (O.S.)
(through speaker)
But--

JOANNE
I said pull back.

ON MONITOR: aerial view of the apartment building.

JOANNE (CONT'D)
I've got my feed.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING COURTYARD - NIGHT

Sabir walks up to an apartment door on the second floor and KNOCKS. An OLD FRIEND, appears. They embrace and exchange "Allahu Akbars".

SABIR
Are the chickens ready?

FRIEND
As ready as they need to be.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sabir sees four TEEN-AGED RECRUITS lounging on a sofa watch a soccer match on a TV on a wall. Wine bottles litter the floor.

Four shiny AK-47s rest against an open window sill. Their ripped-open boxes LIE on the floor. Sabir clenches his jaw and glares at the Friend.

All italicized dialogue is spoken in Arabic.

FRIEND
*They, ah, wanted to show you their
commitment to Jannah.*

SABIR
*You are to leave these weapons
behind, understood?*
(MORE)

SABIR (CONT'D)
 (to one recruit)
How old are you?

RECRUIT #1
Nineteen.

SABIR
Still a virgin?

RECRUIT #1
I save myself for Allah.

Sabir steps forward and bends over the coffee table that sits between him and the Recruits, then sweeps all the empty bottles and trash onto the floor. The recruits flinch.

SABIR
How can we expect to defeat the enemy if you carry yourselves in this way? The time is now, my Brothers. We must act quickly to fulfill Allah's will. A most powerful weapon to destroy the infidels will soon be ours, And it lies in America. We leave tomorrow. But if any one of you are not strong enough for this...

Sabir points to the door. One Recruit starts to open his mouth but Sabir waves him off. Then Sabir grins, permitting all the recruits to relax.

SABIR (CONT'D)
I will make your travel arrangements. For now, enjoy, my friends.

He sets the paper bag down on the coffee table and removes what is a shiny Taybeh wine bottle.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Sabir leaves the apartment.

EXT. COURTYARD OF APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Sabir walks through the courtyard out to the:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sabir walks on the sidewalk leaving the apartment building, behind him EXPLODES IN A FIREBALL.

As he walks swiftly down the street his BURNER PHONE CHIRPS and Sabir listens.

DISGUISED VOICE (O.S.)
 (through speaker)
 Very good, Sabir. You passed the
 first test. Now destroy this phone
 and await instructions from the next
 phone in the sequence.

The Voice clicks off as Sabir reaches the car and drops the phone underneath a tire. He gets in the car, crushes the phone with the tire and then drives off.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - CIA LANGLEY - DAY

SUPER: LANGLEY, VIRGINIA

JOANNE DAWSON (45), a African-American senior agent, sits in a room reading dossiers on her laptop. She faces a wall of satellite monitor feeds, most of which are turned off except for the drone view of a dark smoke cloud over the smoldering rubble where the apartment building once stood.

CIA AGENT #1 (O.S.)
 (through speaker)
 Holy shit, did you see--?

JOANNE
 Are you fucking kidding me? Yeah, I saw it. So where the Hell is Sabir?

CIA AGENT #2 (O.S.)
 (through speaker)
 Guess we lost him.

JOANNE
 No shit.

Her cellphone BUZZES.

JOANNE (CONT'D)
 I gotta take this.

Joanne rips off her headset and answers the call.

JOANNE (CONT'D)
 Hi, baby. What's wrong?... Soon. Very soon... I know baby, but Mommy's job keeps everyone safe, for you and your brothers. And keeping everyone safe is hard! I love you, baby. I need to speak with Daddy.

COMPUTER SCREEN: photo of a Kate wearing thick horn-rimmed glasses entering a taxi.