

Surveillance

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(It's pre-dawn, the day after Halloween. The set is at once two places on top of each other: a non-descript FBI office and the living room of an Arab man. In the design of the space, the office should be the dominant feeling. Jake, an FBI agent in his late twenties is sitting in front of a laptop, listening to the activities of the living room. Dad and Kid's dialogue is in Arabic, except when in quotations.)

DAD
(to his Kid offstage) Come

KID
I'm so full!

DAD
They let you eat too much candy I'm sure.

KID
Candy's good for you, Dad. It builds brain cells. (gives a smile) I have to tell you about last night.

DAD
After.

(Dad smiles and begins the Call to Prayer and both go to their knees in prayer.)

PHILKLOS
(entering, he's an FBI agent more senior than Jake)
So- how was it big man?

JAKE
Huh?

PHILKLOS
How was it – you dress up?

JAKE
Oh. I couldn't hear you with these things on. (indicates headphones)

PHILKLOS
So?

JAKE
So?

PHILKLOS
So? What were you? Did you dress up like a superhero or a dirty slut? A ballerina, anything like that?

JAKE
(the coffee) Is this for me?

PHILKLOS
Yeah.

JAKE
(he sips). It's cream.

PHILKLOS
No milk.

JAKE
Yeah, I dressed up.

PHILKLOS
No shit?

JAKE
No shit.

PHILKLOS
As?

JAKE
Super Mario.

PHILKLOS
What's that – that video game guy?

JAKE
That's the one.

PHILKLOS
You're supposed to dress up as a scary monster. Instead you dressed up like a video game, that works in your community? You get any?

JAKE
I don't kiss and tell chief.

PHILKLOS
Right. That's means no. How's towel head this morning?

JAKE
He's fine.

PHILKLOS
They celebrate Halloween?

JAKE
He's American.

PHILKLOS
And?

JAKE
So he celebrates Halloween. And he doesn't wear a towel on his head.

PHILKLOS
Yeah, I know – what's it – a Kufi?

JAKE
Keffiyeh. He doesn't wear that either.

PHILKLOS
We got video on him?

JAKE
No.

PHILKLOS
So, you don't know how he's dressed then. Homo. What was his kid? A ghost? That's what my kid used to be.

JAKE
I don't know – they didn't talk about it.

PHILKLOS
(opening the paper.)
Every time I open this thing up, I'm nervous I'm gonna hear about some other place they've hit.

JAKE
Hm.

PHILKLOS
They hate us. (Jake gives a start) And it's not because we're any worse than anybody else. It's cause we're winning.

JAKE
Okay.

PHILKLOS

You know the report's due today.

JAKE

I know.

PHILKLOS

So, what do you think – drop him or go to the next level?

(Jake shrugs.)

Put it on, so I can listen. (Jake removes the headphones. We hear the following dialogue live and then with a slight delay, playing through the computer.)

DAD

(after the prayers) Okay, so tell me about last night. Did you make friends?

KID

This girl came and she was dressed like the Statue of Liberty, okay?, and every house we went to, her mom told her to go up to the house and shout, "Let Freedom Ring!" and everyone would give her all the candy.

DAD

(laughs) Right.

KID

And I thought it was stupid at first because, um, the Statue of Liberty can't talk and so it's stupid to have her go up and say, um, "I'm the Statue of Liberty. Let Freedom Ring!" because that could never happen, because the statue can't talk, but then I saw and she got so much candy.

DAD

So, you've learned your lesson.

KID

What do you mean?

DAD

Now, you know how to get candy on Halloween. (beat) Come on, go get your bag and get ready for school.

(Kid exits.)

PHILKLOS

What happened?

JAKE

They stopped talking. The kid's getting ready for school.

PHILKLOS
And Hussein?

JAKE
I don't know – don't have any video.

PHILKLOS
My God you're a wise-ass.

JAKE
They were talking about the Statue of Liberty.

PHILKLOS
Mark that down.

JAKE
They were talking about it as a joke. The kid went out last night and one of the other kids was dressed up as the Statue of Liberty.

PHILKLOS
Still, you know the rules. Mark it down. It could be some kind of code or something.

JAKE
It's the kid talking about trick or treating.

PHILKLOS
You know they know we're listening. They're not idiots. You want to be the guy who passes on something? It could be a code. Mark it down.

(Jake marks it down.)

PHILKLOS
Did you check the recordings from last night?

JAKE
Yup.

PHILKLOS
And?

JAKE
There's a gap.

PHILKLOS
What do you mean?

JAKE
We don't have any surveillance from 7 to 10pm.

PHILKLOS
Why not?

JAKE
His phone could have run out of battery.

PHILKLOS
I thought it works even if the phone is off.

JAKE
He doesn't have to be talking on the phone, cause we go in through the microphone, but there has to be a charge in the microphone. There has to be some power for it to run on.

PHILKLOS
So, what? He took the battery out to avoid us? He made a lot of calls last week. Maybe he was setting up a meeting that happened last night. On Halloween. That's good.

JAKE
Well. That or his phone lost power and he didn't plug it in for a few hours.

PHILKLOS
Mark it down.

JAKE
Okay.

PHILKLOS
Don't screw around with this.

JAKE
I'm not.

PHILKLOS
The report's due this afternoon.

JAKE
I know.

KID
Dad!

PHILKLOS
Sh.

DAD
What?

KID
Will you help me with my shoe?

DAD
Yes. Bring it out here. And bring your knapsack too.

PHILKLOS
What'd he say?

JAKE
The kid's getting ready for school.

PHILKLOS
You know some groups are using kids now. They're recruiting younger and younger.

JAKE
I know.

PHILKLOS
It's funny, here we worry about our kids growing up too fast with sex and drugs and all that and with them, all they can think of is hurting us, even if it kills they're own kids.

(beat)

JAKE
According to that logic, all we think about is sex and drugs.

PHILKLOS
What's the kid doing?

JAKE
He's packing his backpack for school.

PHILKLOS
They're packing a bag?

JAKE
Yeah. (pause, then, reluctantly) I'll mark that down.

PHILKLOS
You're not scared are you?
(no response)

PHILKLOS
It's not a game, kid. You know they can hit you anywhere. We're watching them and they're watching us. I'm nervous just coming into work everyday. I'm not thrilled about

PHILKLOS (cont'd)

the fact that we work in a government building. Anybody could do something to this place. You can't protect everything. That's why we listen, so we can make smart decisions. (beat) I'm gonna recommend to Thompson that we upgrade the watch on this guy.

JAKE

Okay.

(The Kid comes on with his knapsack and shoes untied. Dad helps him get ready.)

DAD

Let me help you with your knapsack.

PHILKLOS

He's packing the bag, right?

JAKE

(nods yes)

PHILKLOS

And they were talking about the statue of liberty and laughing. Do we have any info on these guys?

JAKE

(shakes head no)

PHILKLOS

I'm going back to my desk to work on the report. (He exits.)

(Dad kisses his boy on both cheeks.)

DAD

Are you ready?

KID

I love you, Dad.

DAD

I love you too, my sweet boy. Here, take this. (He hands his son a lighter.)

(Jake opens his arms, his hands extended and facing upwards, as if in some kind of prayer. He seems to almost be able to see the Dad and Kid.)

(phone rings offstage at Philklos' desk.)

PHILKLOS

(offstage)

Hello? Yeah. Got it.

(then, hollering to everyone in the office.)

They hit a train in Boston! The hajis got a hit!

(Jake runs off towards Philklos' desk)

DAD
Okay, let's get going.

(He lifts his son and carries him off.)

END PLAY