

INT. STUDY - SALIM'S FLAT. DAY

An old wooden-paneled study in a South Kensington flat.

On the walls, DIPLOMAS and CERTIFICATES-

A FRAMED PHOTO of a young man with a pregnant wife. The man has the look of an explorer confident in his journey ahead-

A PORTRAIT on the wall of the man in his late sixties. He looks a real patriarch, a fierce gaze, wrinkles and a beard-

PROFESSOR SALIM MURAD (80) reclines with sofa and footstool, covered with a blanket. He looks frail and ill, like any moment could be his last. He still has a well-combed head of hair. He is surrounded by home-care medical equipment.

He squints into the distance, beyond the walls of the room. It's an ambiguous expression that at first seems one of dotage, but might also express acute perceptiveness.

Next to him is a bottle of wine and a small wine glass half-full. On his lap he holds a crossword puzzle and pen.

CLOSE UP ON SALIM his brow furrowed with pain and concentration.

SALIM

(slow, laboured)

I hope you share some of my
relief...that this tedious farce
has ended...

SLOWLY PULL OUT TO REVEAL TALIA (38) sitting in armchair nearby:

SALIM is dictating a letter to his daughter TALIA who is diligently tapping away on a laptop.

SALIM (CONTD)

...In view of the outrageous
despotism your people
exercise...over us tax-paying
motorists...I, as well as hundreds
of thousands like me...have come to
the conclusion...that your Director
of Parking Services...and his
colleagues...are absolutely not fit
for office...and should be sacked
at once...

The violin SOUNDS drift in, going over the same passage, and stumbling at the same place.

(CONTINUED)

SALIM
That racket...

TALIA
It's Harry. He's practicin-
The buzzer for the front door goes off.

TALIA
(picking up the intercom)
Hello?

SALIM
...I can't hear myself think.

TALIA
One minute Dad...

LAWYER 1 (O.S)
Hello Ms Murad, we're downstairs,
what number is it?

TALIA
Hi, it's floor 2, flat 4.

LAWYER 1
Okay, see you in a moment.

Talia buzzes them in.

TALIA
Dad, the lawyers that I told you
about are here. They're going to
ask you some questions for the
will, okay?

SALIM
(to himself)
Interrogated by a pair of imbiciles.

TALIA's phone goes off.

TALIA
Amin?...The lawyers are here for
Dad...

SALIM
Is that Amin? Ask him if he can
pick up some more wine.

TALIA
Ok Dad...

She walks out into the hallway for the next part of the conversation...

TALIA (CONTD)
(quietly into phone)
What's the verdict?

She listens to the response at the other end of the phone crestfallen.

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Two lawyers stand in front of SALIM.

LAWYER 1
Professor Murad, as we discussed with your daughter on the telephone we're going to ask you some questions so that a court of law will consider you... healthy enough, at the time of writing your will for it to be legally sound.

SALIM
Fine.

LAWYER 2
If it's okay with you Professor we'll begin now.

LAWYER 1
Uh, could you please tell us what day it is today?

SALIM stares them down.

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AMIN has arrived. He's the spitting image of SALIM only 40 years younger. He and TALIA are in the middle of a heated debate.

TALIA
I don't understand. They just outright rejected his paper?

AMIN is shaking his head and eating sunflower seeds with single-minded determination...

AMIN

The people on the board say it was incomprehensible. They're so fucking political. I'm positive someone on there had a vested interest. I'm going to demand a reassessment.

(nodding towards the study)

Do you think they're done with him in there?

TALIA

Amin... I don't want you to tell him. Not yet.

AMIN

What are you talking about? He's waiting to find out.

TALIA

This is *not* what he needs right now. He's been up and down. And I don't want to rock the boat.

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The LAWYERS continue with their questioning. They talk overly slowly and loud at SALIM in a professional but condescending manner.

LAWYER 2

Now Mister-

SALIM

Professor...

LAWYER

Pardon me, Professor Murad, could you please tell me what year it is?

SALIM looks away as if wracking his brains for an answer. Eventually...

SALIM

(wryly)

Nineteen...Fifty-two.

LAWYER 2 glances over at his colleague.

LAWYER 2

Uh... I'm af-

(CONTINUED)

SALIM
Twenty...seventeen.

LAWYER 2
That's correct. And where were you
born?

SALIM
Baghdad, Iraq.

LAWYER 2
Very good Sir. Now, could you
please confirm for me if you are,
or were married?

SALIM looks up at the two faces in front of him
contemptuously.

LAWYER 2
Professor Murad?

SALIM
Are we quite done?

LAWYER 1
Sir, we have to complete this so
that your will can take effect in
court...

Beat.

SALIM
(to LAWYER 2)
Are you married?

As the LAWYERS continue to handle SALIM, they notice a wet
patch growing on his lap which he is oblivious to.

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TALIA and AMIN's debate has gone from 0-60:

AMIN
*Talia, you don't know what you're
talking about okay, so please.*

TALIA
*I'm here every day looking after
him. And you pop in whenever suits
you. If I think that it's unsuit-*

The lawyers enter the hallway.

(CONTINUED)