

RICHARD: The usual bullshit. Scheduling. It was just a matter of timing.

JAMES: They've had it for months!

RICHARD: I know.

JAMES: They've been *sitting on it* for months!

RICHARD: That was part of the problem: its shelf life expired.

JAMES: Whose fault was that?!

SARAH: Jamie . . .

RICHARD: It was *on* the board, then it was *off* . . . Then they wanted to cut it . . .

JAMES: Cut it?! I already cut fifteen hundred words!

RICHARD: I knew you would have a fit, so I got them to leave the length alone and bump it a week. Then it had to get bumped *three* weeks, 'cause the week after *that* was a special issue.

JAMES: What special issue?

RICHARD (*Hesitates*): The annual Hollywood issue.

JAMES (*To Sarah*): The Hollywood issue.

RICHARD: That's a big one for us. All the movie studios buy a shitload of advertising space. (*James laughs*) Don't laugh; the ad revenue for that one issue helps us stay afloat all year. But then we realized your story *couldn't* run the week after that . . .

JAMES: Why not?

RICHARD (*Hesitates*): 'Cause we'd already committed to a cover story on relief workers in Africa.

(*A beat.*)

JAMES: You're kidding me.

RICHARD: Come on . . . you know how it works.

JAMES: You can't have relief workers in Africa and Iraqi refugees in the same issue? What is there, *a quota*?!

RICHARD: It wasn't my call!

JAMES: Bullshit. You sold me out!

SARAH: Jamie . . .

JAMES (*To Sarah*): We go to these fucking hellholes . . . put our lives on the line . . . For what? Stories that nobody wants?

SARAH: It's not true nobody wants them.

JAMES: It's true for *me* . . . You're a star; somebody will always publish your pictures. Me, I peddle stories around like a traveling salesman! Pieces get killed, or cut to shreds.

RICHARD: Editorial has the final say what goes in the magazine, not me!

JAMES: You were in the room! Sitting there!

RICHARD: I'm only the photo editor, for Christ's sake! The only reason *I'm* telling you, is 'cause you're my friend.

JAMES: Oh, I see.

RICHARD: I didn't want you hearing about it from someone else.

JAMES: Well, thanks a lot, *buddy*.

RICHARD: Listen: I fight at work every fucking day! Every fucking day is another battle! I go into these staff meetings . . . everybody's got their own agenda! The fashion people, the style people . . . We're all fighting for the same goddamn space. Somewhere in there, between the ads for imported silk lingerie and twenty-million-dollar condos, *maybe* I'll get four pages on boy mercenaries in Uganda. Six if I'm lucky. So don't tell me how I sold you out.

JAMES: You talk out of both sides of your mouth, you know that?!

SARAH: James.

JAMES: You're the reporter's advocate one minute; one of Them the next!

RICHARD: Jamie, come on, that's not fair.

JAMES: Who are you really? Huh? My friend? Or just another "suit"?!

MANDY: Stop it!

(*They look at her.*)

Richard *agonized* over this!

RICHARD: Honey . . .

MANDY: He was sick about it! For days! He couldn't sleep! He loves you. Why would he want to hurt you? I mean, really. He's only doing his job. They have a magazine to put out. And it has to have different things *in* it, not just stories about how *miserable* most of the world is. So they're not going to print your story—too bad. They've already got a “bummer” story running that week.

JAMES: Excuse me?

MANDY: No, I mean it, I'm really sorry, I bet you worked really hard on it.

JAMES: What the fuck do you know?

RICHARD: Hey.

JAMES: Hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake. That's why I write these fucking things. People need to know.

MANDY: But what am I supposed to do with this information?

Me: an ordinary person. It's not like I can *do* anything. Besides feel bad, and turn the page, and thank God I was born in the half of the world where people have food to eat and don't go around hacking each other to death. The people who are killing each other have always been killing each other, and terrible things are always going to happen, so . . .

JAMES: You can stop whining and *do* something for crissake!

RICHARD: All right that's enough.

JAMES: Don't just throw your hands up and say, (*Mocking*)

“Oh, dear. What can *I* do? Little me. I'm powerless; I can't do *anything*.”

SARAH: James.

(*Sarah reaches out to James. He brusquely pulls away, throwing her off balance. Mandy gasps. Silence.*)

RICHARD (*To Sarah*): I'll call you tomorrow.

(*Richard gets his and Mandy's things. Silence. Mandy turns before she goes.*)

MANDY: You know what I wish? There's so much beauty in the world. But you only see misery. Both of you. I wish you'd just let yourselves feel the *joy*. Y'know? (*A beat*) Otherwise . . . what's the point?

(*Richard and Mandy leave. Sarah looks at James.*)