

DIAL M FOR MURDER

MARGOT

We were at the Home Office. They'd taken me there from my cell just after breakfast. I was kept in a room while they discussed the case. I sat there, thinking "They're not going to hang me tomorrow, they can't possibly. The Home Secretary won't allow it." Then the door opened, and they told me to come in. My solicitor wouldn't look at me. The Home Secretary was very brisk, very efficient. "Clemency denied." But I suppose that was too efficient because he added that only a brazen woman would have the nerve to request clemency after such a sordid trial, called me wanton, a degenerate. Then it was over. My solicitor still refused to look at me. They took me back to the car. I got in the backseat. There were only two guards, one in front to drive, the other in the back with me.

"They're going to hang me tomorrow. They're going to hang me and no one will help."

And then I noticed.. the door was unlocked. They have no problem believing a woman's capable of committing murder in cold blood but not that she'd try to escape when she's to be hanged the next morning.

The car pulled away and started back to the prison. The streets were crowded. Traffic. "They're going to hang me tomorrow, they're going to hang me in the.."

I kept looking at the lock on the door, thinking one of them's got to notice, the guard sitting next to me will see, he'll reach over and lock it. But he didn't.

We stopped at a light. Regent's Park.

It was my only chance. I grabbed the door handle, pulled. And I ran, ran across the park.

TONY

Tomorrow evening, at exactly eight o'clock you will enter the house by the street door. The street door is always unlocked. You'll find the key to the front door under the stair carpet out in the hall. On the fifth step. Use it to unlock the front door and go straight to hide there in the alcove. She'll be upstairs listening to a radio program. The radio is in our bedroom. At exactly ten

minutes past eight that phone will ring. It will be me, telephoning from the BBC studios across Regents Park. That's my alibi. The radio program's an interview with the female novelist. I shall be there with her.

I shall use the phone in the control booth. I shall dial this number. There's no extension in the bedroom, so when the phone rings she will come downstairs to answer it. You stay hidden in that alcove until she answers the phone. When you've finished, pick up the phone and give me a soft whistle. Then hang up. When I hear your whistle I shall hang up. Make a mess of things. Upend the coffee table, knock over that cigarette box and those silver trays. But leave it all here. Then go out exactly the same way as you came in. And here's the most important thing. As you go out, return the key to the place where you found it. The police will assume you entered by way of the French Doors. You thought the flat was empty and went to work. She heard something and came downstairs. You attacked her. When you realized you'd killed her, you panicked and bolted into the garden leaving your loot behind.

SELLING KABUL

TAROON

Bibi, I would sneak into her father's house to see her.

And we would talk about Afghanistan.

Kabul in ten years.

One night, her cousin Srosh had just signed up.

To interpret, for the Americans.

And I saw how strong she thought him, and how brave.

So the next day, I signed up.

I signed up for the way I saw her look at her cousin.

And that night, I saw Bibi and her father in the street.

I told them the news.

He looked from me to her and he said, quickly,

That's it, you're getting married tomorrow.

He was nervous about the way she was looking at me.

All of this to say, Jawid.

I am not a pillar of strength.

It is Bibi, only.

Bibi, who wanted the Taliban gone.

Bibi, who was tired of war after war.

Bibi, who wanted more than this.

And now, she will see me in this uniform.
Reduced to hiding in a truck, with the neighbor and her son.
What will she think?

JAWID

All you have told me.
All the spite
All the insults.
All the provocations.
I don't answer because it's all true.
It's all true.
Will my wife be safe?
I think so.
And our children, god willing?
I think so.
But my country?
I have willed myself not to think of it.
I have given up my right to opinions.
I experience only shame.
If my father could see, Taroon, what I am doing.
He would die twice over.
If he could retrace his footsteps from the grave
He would have never moved inside my mother.
He would have drowned me quietly when I was born.
He would take back the gunshots in the city, celebrating my birth.
He would tell the neighbors, hush.
Let no sounds escape your lips
In celebration of this thing.
Who is not my son.
Who has sold Kabul for a television set.