

**THE MORTAL MAZE**

Written by

Ian D. Richardson

Opening Scenes Only

**THE MORTAL MAZE** by Ian D. Richardson  
<http://www.preddonlee.com>

OPENING CREDITS, AS APPROPRIATE

EXT. SHABBY STREET, ARMIBAR, CENTRAL ARABIA - DAY

The street is in a rundown area with buildings damaged by gunfire and shelling. About 100 Arab men -- mostly young -- are in a protest march, watched by armed Central Arabian security police.

The demonstrators chant anti-American, anti-British and anti-Israeli slogans in Arabic and English. Women and children stand in doorways and applaud.

TV cameraman PETE, mid-20s wears a faded Crocodile Dundee T-shirt, shorts and sandals as he films a 30s-something reporter JACKSON "JACKO" MONRO doing a piece-to-camera.

Jackson is medium height and weight. His face is smooth and tanned. His hair is dark but showing signs of thinning. His preferred work wear is casual shoes, neat jeans and plain open-necked shirts. In summary, his appearance is very ordinary. He is a person who would rarely attract attention in the street, but he is gifted with an intuitive talent to project authority when in front of a TV camera.

JACKSON

(neutral English accent)

This is another spontaneous protest against the consequences of the conflicts that could tear apart this once-flourishing city.

A dozen young ARAB MEN emerge from a side street and silently infiltrate the demonstration.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Like previous demonstrations, this one is peaceful, though the anger of the protesters is intensifying. Whether this anger can be contained is the question on many lips today.

The piece-to-camera ends. Pete turns his camera on the crowd and they respond with renewed slogan-shouting.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

(to Pete)

Boring! Let's go.

PETE  
 (an Aussie accent)  
 I'll stay a bit, I think -- at  
 least until the others have gone.

Pete nods to CNN and Al-JAZEERA crews filming nearby.

JACKSON  
 Please yourself! I've got my  
 expenses to fill in.

I/E. BBC CAR, BUSINESS DISTRICT, ARMIBAR - SOON AFTER, DAY

Jackson is in the front passenger seat of a BBC 4x4 as it travels along a busy upmarket shopping parade.

Driving the car is YASSIN AZIZI, the staff chauffeur and an Arab with a moustache, aged about 30 and neatly dressed in casual western clothes. PRESS and BBC signs are prominently displayed on the car.

Jackson's mobile rings. He sees Pete's name on the screen.

JACKSON  
 Hi Pete. (LISTENS) What?! (BEAT)  
 Hello. Hello! Hello!!

The line goes dead. Jackson returns the phone to his shirt.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
 Bloody phones!

Jackson points to a bank further along the street.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
 Pull over, Yassin.

Yassin swings the car into the kerb.

EXT. BANK IN BUSINESS DISTRICT - CONTINUOUS

Yassin watches Jackson go to an ATM and insert his card.

There is a pause, then Jackson kicks the wall in anger and returns to the BBC car.

JACKSON  
 Bloody banks!

Yassin sighs and hands Jackson a \$50 note from his wallet.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
 Thanks, Yassin. I'll give it back  
 as soon as I get my exes.

Yassin shrugs and they drive away.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE BBC BUREAU, ARMIBAR - SOON AFTER

SAMIRA, the BBC office manager, paces anxiously near a door bearing the BBC logo. She is Anglo-Arab, late 20s and in stylish western trousers and top.

She sees the BBC 4x4 approaching and runs to it as it pulls into the kerb. Jackson winds his window down.

SAMIRA  
 (hint of Arab accent)  
 Go back! Go back!!

I/E. BBC CAR OUTSIDE BBC BUREAU - CONTINUOUS

Jackson's mobile rings. He sees it's Pete again.

JACKSON  
 Pete? (LISTENS) Shit!

Yassin does a squealing u-turn and speeds back down the street.

I/E. SHABBY STREET, ARMIBAR - SOON AFTER

Jackson and Yassin arrive back at the scene of the demo.

Jackson jumps from the 4x4 and surveys a chaotic blood bath. Injured men are loaded into ambulances and the backs of utility trucks. Bodies of dead demonstrators lie scattered about, watched by the nervous security police, their automatic weapons at the ready.

Jackson sees Pete who runs over with his camera.

JACKSON  
 Did you get all this?

PETE  
 Yeah. Most of it, I think.

Jackson sees the CNN and Al Jazeera 4x4s pulling away. They toot boastfully as they go and he waves back, embarrassed.

JACKSON  
What about them?

PETE  
(SHRUGS) They got the lot and Omar  
and Jane did pieces-to-camera  
during the shooting.

JACKSON  
Oh shit! Mack'll rip my nuts off.

Jackson looks around, desperate to salvage his situation.

He points to a dilapidated building with a large hole blown  
in the front.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
You run in with the camera rolling,  
then catch me 'on the fly' as I run  
in after you.

Pete hesitates.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
Go on, for Christ's sake!

Pete runs towards the building, camera on his shoulder.

I/E. SHABBY STREET, ARMIBAR - CONTINUOUS

Pete leaps through the hole in the wall and swings the camera  
around to catch Jackson following him.

Jackson appears, affecting breathlessness. He crouches down  
as though taking cover. He turns to the camera.

JACKSON  
What started out as a peaceful  
protest has turned violent. It--

Jackson suddenly flinches and anxiously looks around, without  
apparent reason.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
(resuming)  
Um. It isn't quite clear why the  
protest turned into such a savage  
confrontation, but there are a  
number of dead and wounded. This  
unhappy event is sure to place  
pressure on the... (FADE)

I/E. BBC CAR, BUSINESS DISTRICT - SOON AFTER

Yassin speeds through the traffic. Jackson is in the front seat and turns to Pete who is in the back studying the piece-to-camera on the camera monitor.

JACKSON

Just add some shooting and bullet pings to the sound track. That should do the trick.

Pete shakes his head.

PETE

I'm not going to fake it, Jacko.

JACKSON

We're not really faking it. It's no more than a reconstruction of what I would have done if I'd been there a few minutes early. Anyway, you must've done it all the time in Australia.

PETE

But this is the BBC.

JACKSON

Don't get pompous with me.

Pete fiddles with the camera, then turns back to Jackson.

PETE

I've deleted it. Debate over!

Jackson sinks back into his seat, crushed.

JACKSON

You shit!

=====