

Bon Voyage, Jihad – One Pager

Title: *Bon Voyage, Jihad – by David A. Bradley*

Genre: Drama/War

Logline: Inspired by Real Events...Real People...A Real Disaster. Sama Hamid is a student doctor who dreams of one day practicing in London. The only problem is it's 2003 and she's living in Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

Synopsis: Driving on a dark highway, 21-year-old Sama Hamid and her Anglophile father, Professor Tariq Hamid, 65, practice their French by listening to Radio Monte Carlo. Prof. Hamid grows anxious as a police cruiser approaches. The policeman, familiar with the professor's kindness to his mother, bids them bonsoir, revealing he knows they were listening to the banned station. The cruiser drives off under a mural of Saddam Hussein. The Hamids pick up Sama's mother, Samira, 50, from a restaurant where she scolds Sama for expressing a futile dream of travelling to Europe. At the restaurant Sama's classmate Ahmed invites them to a party the following week. Seeing a marriage prospect for Sama, Samira accepts, only to discover Ahmed's father works for the Mukhabarat, Saddam's secret police. As the threat of war looms, friends and family members face conscription or flight from Iraq. Sama's best friend, Yasmina, reveals her betrothed has escaped to Detroit, though she is unsure about joining him in marriage.

When war arrives, the Hamids barricade themselves under their staircase for six weeks, cooking lentils and reading as bombs devastate Baghdad. Emerging at last, they watch Saddam Hussein's statue fall on TV with friends. Life resumes tenuously, but chaos persists. Sama narrowly survives a blast while cleaning her car. Prof. Hamid's elderly mother gives him an ancient revolver for protection. Tragedy strikes when Sama's uncle, Zaid, is kidnapped. Prof. Hamid and Sama search Baghdad's dangerous streets in vain. When a ransom is delivered, Prof. Hamid returns with the news that Zaid is dead. To escape the growing violence, the family retreats to Jordan for the summer. In Amman, Sama enjoys a glimpse of normalcy – jogging, partying, and meeting young people. On a trip to Wadi Rum, Sama overhears some French-speaking tourists discussing the UN refugee program. And Prof. Hamid explains what happened when he tried to retrieve Zaid. Funds dwindling, the family returns to Baghdad, now gripped by worsening instability. Power outages are frequent, militias roam freely, and doctors face threats or murder. Sama, balances studies and survival. When her grandmother falls ill and passes away due to a heart-condition during a wave of deadly bombings, Sama steps up at the hospital to help manage the influx of victims, making heart-wrenching triage decisions.

Yasmina reveals she is leaving for the US to marry her fiancé, Ammar. Soon after, Sama is contacted by the UN with a place in the UK refugee program. Sama feigns interest in a marriage Samira arranged, convincing her parents to leave Iraq. En route to the airport, they are stopped at a militia roadblock. Prof. Hamid is nearly taken when Samira draws the ancient revolver, holding it to an insurgent's head. A tense standoff ends when the French-speaking policeman, now a militia commander, intervenes and lets them pass, remembering the professor's kindness. Landing in the UK, Sama and Samira find themselves in the grey northern city of Hull instead of the London Sama dreamed of. Sama begins planning her future, determined to move south. Devastating news arrives that Yasmina and her family were killed in a car bombing while collecting their passports. The story ends with a montage of Sama's future: becoming a doctor in London, starting a family, and fulfilling her dreams of travel. Living a normal life.

Themes: The film explores resilience, family bonds, and the pursuit of dreams against impossible odds. It delves into themes of war, identity, sacrifice, and the power of hope to guide individuals through loss and adversity toward a brighter future.