

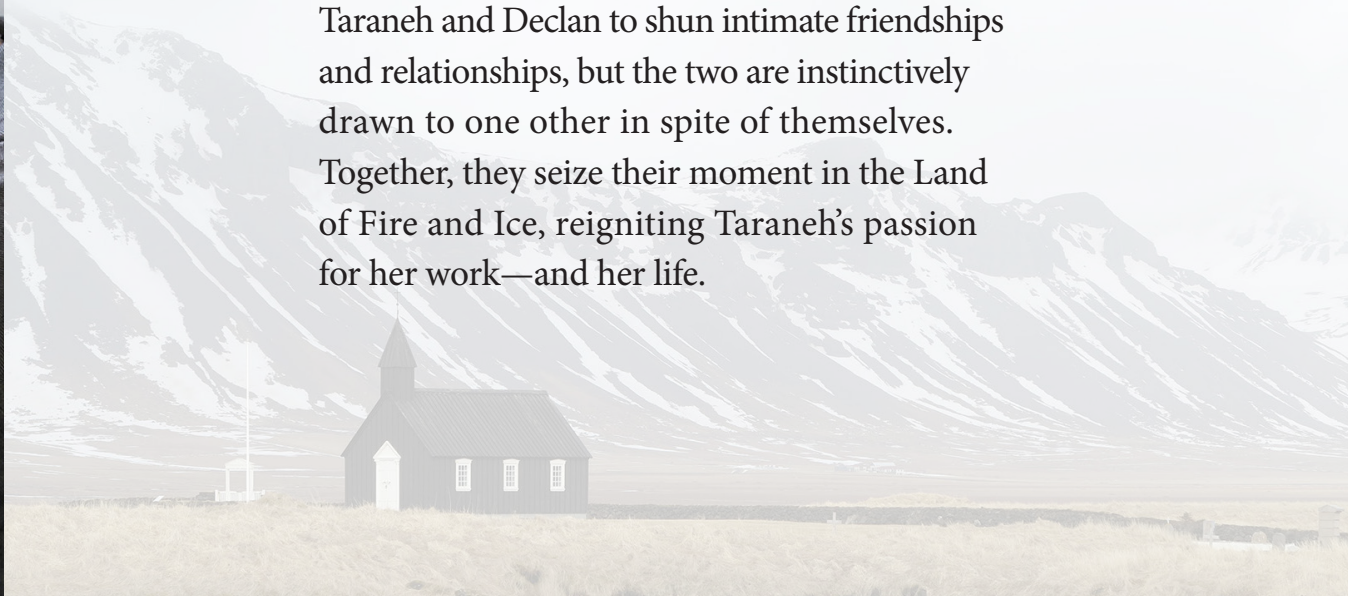
IN THE LAND OF FIRE & ICE





SYNOPSIS

Brilliant and civic-minded, Taraneh Al-Haqeeb founded her own bank in Kuwait twenty years ago and devoted herself to helping Middle Eastern women successfully navigate a financial world dominated by men. Now settled into a numbing life of awards and accolades, she finds her company under attack by an activist investor — a man who threatens to destroy everything she has created. Alone and adrift, she makes a strategic retreat to a remote Icelandic peninsula. There she encounters hotelier and expatriate Declan McBride, who fled his own demons to Iceland many years ago. Misfortunes in both of their pasts have led Taraneh and Declan to shun intimate friendships and relationships, but the two are instinctively drawn to one other in spite of themselves. Together, they seize their moment in the Land of Fire and Ice, reigniting Taraneh's passion for her work—and her life.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The genesis of *In the Land of Fire & Ice* was the moment I was struck by actress Shohreh Aghdashloo's intense chemistry with a male late-night talk show host during a promotional appearance for her autobiography. I had been working with Shohreh on another project and knew instantly a film had to be made centering on her as a romantic lead.

To craft the classic Hollywood romantic drama I had in mind, a sweeping backdrop as captivating as the leading lady would be required. Budir, Iceland, where I had vacationed some years earlier, popped into my head immediately. Budir is a stunning remote hamlet with a small country hotel bordered by the ocean on one side and mountains, a waterfall and a glacier on the other. And it has yet to be featured in a film.

For her character, I wanted to capture Shohreh's innate passion, strength, and intelligence. I had been watching the remarkable Danish television political drama series *Borgen*, about the first female Danish Prime Minister, and it occurred to me how rare it is to see women portrayed in top-down leadership positions. Thus, Taraneh Al-Haqeeb was created as a CEO.

While searching for a powerful Middle Eastern businesswoman to use as a template, I stumbled upon the *Arabian Business Magazine's* "100 Most Powerful Women" list and was surprised to discover how many female CEOs exist in that region. Why don't we know about these women? Why are they not profiled or depicted in the global media?

I then approached David MacGregor to write the script. We had just completed a successful collaboration on the feature film *Vino Veritas* and I knew he would bring the same insight, intelligent use of language and romantic soul he contributed to that piece.

David and I both agreed we did not really know who this woman would be. I traveled to Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates and interviewed several prominent female CEOs in various fields. They were all extremely generous with their time and shared personal and professional experiences which served as fantastic fodder for the script.

And so we present an intelligent, adult romance showcasing an extraordinary woman framed by the rarely seen exotic landscapes of Kuwait and Iceland.





C A S T

SHOHREH AGHDASHLOO

Shohreh Aghdashloo was nominated for an Oscar for her performance in *The House of Sand and Fog*. She won an Emmy for the BBC/HBO miniseries, *House of Saddam* and currently plays masterful UN politician, Chrisjen Avasarala, on Amazon's *The Expanse*. Other films include *Star Trek Beyond*, Jon Stewart's feature directorial debut, *Rosewater*, *The Stoning of Soraya M*, *The Nativity Story*, *The Lake House*, *X-Men: The Last Stand*, *American Dreamz* and *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*. Television credits include *Elementary*, *Scorpion*, *Grimm*, *Portlandia*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *Will and Grace*. Born in Iran, she left during the Revolution in 1979 following a successful theatre and film career there. Harper Collins published her autobiography, *The Alley of Love and Yellow Jasmines*.



CREATIVE TEAM

SARAH KNIGHT

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, STORY BY

Sarah won the 2020 NYWIFT Ravenal Grant for *In the Land of Fire & Ice*.

Her narrative feature debut, *Vino Veritas*, starring Emmy winner, Carrie Preston (*The Good Fight*, *Claws*), was released by Gravitas Ventures. Mark Adams of *Screen Daily* writes, “A smartly and slickly made indie drama, blessed with four fine performances. Director Sarah Knight keeps *Vino Veritas* moving nicely, and makes good use of her interiors.”

Sarah’s documentary, *Diamonds are a Girl’s Best Friend* (Media Education Foundation), is a portrait of Nicole Sherry, Head Groundskeeper for the Baltimore Orioles at Camden Yards—one of only two women ever to hold that position in Major League Baseball. *Diamonds* premiered at the Cooperstown Baseball Hall of Fame, where it remains an active part of the library.

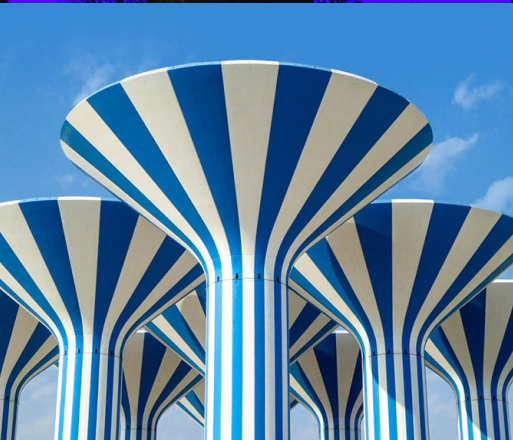
Hot Flash (EPF Media), her documentary about the band Saffire-The Uppity Blues Women, was nominated for a Blues Music Award, was featured at IFP Independent Film Week-Spotlight on Documentaries and won the Audience Favorite Award at the Cinema on the Bayou Film Festival.

She attended the 2019 Stowe Story Labs Spring Writer’s Retreat with *An Ideal Wife*, her gender-reversal updating of Oscar Wilde’s *An Ideal Husband*.

Her adaptation (co-written with Sarah Skibinski) of Michael Dorris’ bestselling novel, *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, about three generations of Native American women, was featured at IFP Independent Film Week-Emerging Narrative and invited to the FIND Screenwriting Lab.

Sarah has won fellowships to Tribeca All Access, the Berlinale Talent Campus and the Rotterdam CineMart Producer’s Lab.





CREATIVE TEAM

DAVID MACGREGOR SCREENWRITER

Pulitzer Prize nominee David MacGregor is a resident artist at Jeff Daniels' Purple Rose Theatre in Michigan, where seven of his plays have been produced. His newest play, *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Ghost Machine*, will premiere in 2021 at the Purple Rose.



David wrote the screenplay for *Vino Veritas*, based on his stage play, which was revived by popular demand in 2017 at the Purple Rose as part of their 100th production celebration. His screenplay for *In the Land of Fire & Ice* was a 2016 Athena List Winner (best screenplays featuring strong female protagonists).

His plays have been performed from New York to Tasmania and his work has been published by Dramatic Publishing, Playscripts and Heuer Publishing.

Three of his screenplays are currently in pre-production: *Shadowplayers* (Fishbowl Films), *When You Gaze Into the Abyss* (Confluent Films) and *The Malthus Directive* (Fire Starter Studios). More information can be found at www.david-macgregor.com.



CREATIVE TEAM

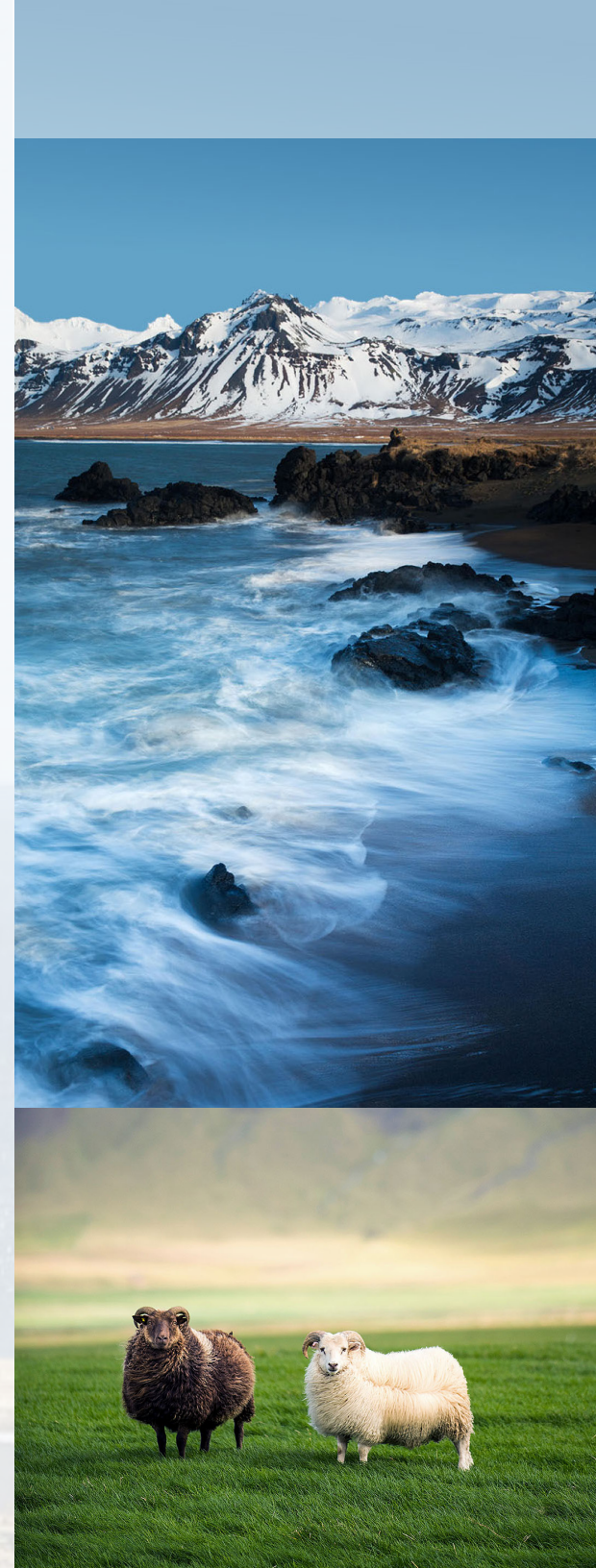
LINDSAY LANZILLOTTA PRODUCER

Lindsay Lanzillotta is an independent producer who has embarked on a career of supporting filmmakers and discovering new talent. She was VP Production and Partner with Candleridge Entertainment where she was lead producer on Lee Toland Krieger's *The Vicious Kind*, which was an Official Selection of the Sundance Film Festival and nominated for two Film Independent Spirit Awards. *The Vicious Kind* was also honored with the Emerging Filmmaker award at the Denver International Film Festival, and won Best Narrative Feature at the New Orleans Festival.

Lindsay teamed up with emerging producer Tony Mancilla to support Karyn Kusama's return to independent filmmaking with *The Invitation*, a psychological thriller. She was co-producer alongside producer Martha Griffin and writer/producers Matt Manfredi and Phil Hay. It premiered as the opening night midnight selection of the SXSW Film Festival to critical

acclaim. It won various awards including Best Feature at the Sitges International Film Festival, the most prestigious genre festival in Europe.

Lindsay is also a producer on Sony and Vega Baby's thriller *Shortwave* written and directed by Ryan Gregory Phillips, and produced Samuel Goldwyn's film noir *Obsession* with Erika Portnoy and director Goran Dukic. She has also produced the comedic web pilot *Scenes from a Real Marriage* with Michelle Krusiec, a collaborator from *The Invitation*, and the dramatic pilot *Delivery Girl* that premiered in the Episodic category at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. Lindsay continues to develop various projects with emerging and established independent filmmakers while being a co-founder of The 51 Fund, a fund designed to raise \$51 million to fund independent films directed, written and or produced by women.





CREATIVE TEAM

DENIZ GUMUSTAS

PRODUCER

Deniz Gumustas is an emerging independent producer with a background in fashion, wardrobe and production design. She partnered with producers Lindsay Lanzillotta and Kate Krieger to produce the dramatic pilot *Delivery Girl*.

Delivery Girl premiered at the 2019 Sundance International Film Festival in their second year of featuring the category of Episodic. Deniz is developing television and film projects with Lindsay, as well as emerging film directors and writers. Deniz is currently Director of Film Curation at CherryPicks, a website dedicated to female and non-binary identifying critical voices for cinema.

She is a graduate of the film studies program at Towson University.



WOMEN AND HOLLYWOOD

Exclusive: NYWIFT Announces Ravenal Foundation Feature Film Grant Awardees

[Posted December 15, 2020]

New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) has named the awardees of the NYWIFT Ravenal Foundation Grant. Funded by the Alan M. & Mildred S. Ravenal Foundation, the grant supports the production of a feature film from a female director over 40. Funds may be used for pre-production, production, or post-production. Sarah Knight and Signe Baumann were selected from “a wide range of submissions from women filmmakers around the country,” a press release from NYWIFT details.

Knight received the first-place \$5,000 NYWIFT Ravenal Foundation grant for Athena List Winner “In the Land of Fire & Ice,” a portrait of a powerful Kuwaiti CEO who finds herself under attack by a hostile activist investor. She “makes a tactical retreat to a remote peninsula in western Iceland to clear her head and strategize her return. There she meets a reclusive innkeeper who fled to Iceland many years ago for reasons of his own. Together, they explore the Land of Fire and Ice, reigniting her passion for her work—and for life itself,” NYWIFT teases.

“In the Land of Fire & Ice” is currently in pre-production with Oscar winner and Emmy nominee Shohreh Aghdashloo (“House of Sand and Fog”) attached to star.

“I am thrilled the NYWIFT Ravenal Grant has recognized and embraced this project. ‘In the Land of Fire & Ice’ was sparked by a desire to put the mesmerizing Shohreh Aghdashloo front and center in her own delicious, romantic drama,” said Knight. “In searching for a character template that would match her intelligence and strength,

I discovered the Arabian Business Magazine’s ‘100 Most Powerful Women’ list and was surprised to learn how many female CEOs exist in the Middle East. I traveled to Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates and interviewed several prominent female CEOs in various fields. All were extremely generous with their time and shared a wealth of personal and professional experiences, which formed the lead role’s foundation. I cannot wait to introduce audiences to this magnificent character and the support from NYWIFT Ravenal will help tremendously in that effort!”

Knight made her feature narrative debut with 2013’s “Vino Veritas.” “Strong female-driven stories have been a hallmark of her work, which include the documentaries ‘Diamonds are a Girl’s Best Friend,’ about the female head groundskeeper of the Baltimore Orioles, and ‘Hot Flash,’ about the band Saffire-The Uppity Blues Women,” the press release notes.

Baumann received a second-place prize of \$2,500 for “My Love Affair with Marriage.” Currently in production, the animated feature “uses music and science to examine the biological chemistry of love and gender, as well as the societal pressures on an individual to conform to social mores.” “Latvian-American filmmaker Signe Baumann has written, directed, and animated 16 shorts and one feature film, many of them with a strong female point of view,” the press release details. “She believes passionately that animation is a perfect medium for adult storytelling. Her films collectively have screened at over 560 film festivals including Sundance, Berlin, Venice, and Karlovy Vary.”

Filmmaker Cornelia Ravenal, who initiated the grant, said, “Women directors have stormed the industry’s ramparts in the last few years, so while barriers to women working at full capacity and pay still exist, they’re falling fast. But for women over 40, there’s an additional obstacle: ageism. We hope this grant begins to address that inequity and encourages all women directors to forge ahead.”

This is the sixth year the NYWIFT Ravenal Foundation Grant has been presented. Previous winners include Lydia Dean Pilcher’s “A Call to Spy” and Diane Paragas’ “Yellow Rose.”

NYWIFT also announced the recipients of four scholarships for aspiring women filmmakers studying at Brooklyn College and Hunter College, funded by the Ha Phuong Foundation: Brooklyn College Film Production students Osa Faith Adu and Destiny Blackwell, and Hunter College students Melissa Lent and Tanisha Williams. This year’s NYWIFT Sabrina Wright-Gilliar Award, Academy for Careers in Television & Film (TvF) was presented to Katarina Dacanin. The scholarship “honors the memory of the legendary prop master Wright-Gilliar (“The Good Wife”) and supports a high school senior committed to a career in production.”

“We recognize the importance of supporting women at every stage of their careers – especially now, when so many in our industry are facing unprecedented challenges and uncertainty due to COVID-19. We offer our heartfelt congratulations to the scholarship recipients and thank Ha Phuong for her generous support. We are so proud to join forces with the Ravenal Foundation once again to support two incredible — and wildly different — films that speak to the diversity of women’s stories and the breadth and depth of their creative voices,” said NYWIFT Executive Director Cynthia Lopez.

Entertainment WEEKLY

The Athena List: Meet the winners of the female-centric Black List

Winners feature mobsters, motorcycle riders
and Marie Curie

NICOLE SPERLING

In the Land of Fire and Ice by David MacGregor

When a high-powered Kuwaiti CEO finds herself betrayed at the investment bank she founded, she makes a tactical retreat to Iceland to assess her position and to strategize some way to salvage her career. At a small hotel on a remote Icelandic peninsula, she meets an innkeeper who helps re-connect her not only to passion for her job, but for things beyond. Having once pioneered investment strategies for women in the Middle East, she conceives of a new banking model, which will combine the best aspects of Sharia-based investing in the Arab world and socially responsible investing in the Western world. Having closed herself off from any meaningful human contact for years, her reignited desire to make the world a better place also opens her up to the possibility of a better life. Shohreh Aghdasloo (*The House of Sand and Fog*, 24) is attached to star. Robert Shapiro (*Empire of the Sun*) is attached to produce.

Did you like Mad Max: *Fury Road* last year? Did *Brooklyn* sweep you away? How about the tortured love story of *Carol*? All three of these films have one thing in common — female protagonists. And though that seems like an logical centerpiece for a film, considering the XX chromosome makes up over 50 percent of the population, creating female-centric stories in films remains a rarity. According to a recent study published by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State, central female characters made up only 22 percent of the protagonists in the top 100 films last year — and that was an increase from the previous year.

So with that in mind, the programmers at the Athena Film Festival, which in its sixth year is dedicated to highlighting female leadership in real life and fiction through films, have established their own gender-specific Black List — a grouping of the best unproduced screenplays that feature women at the center. The scripts go through a rigorous selection process, and all must have been work-shopped at either a lab, a film festival, or a screenwriting program to be eligible.

In the three years of the list, the festival is still waiting for its one big Athena breakthrough. Only one film, *Little Pink House* from writer/director Courtney Balaker and starring Catherine Keener, has been produced — and it has yet to secure distribution. Yet there still is progress. Margaret Nagle, the screenwriter behind last year's *The Good Lie*, generated some renewed momentum for her script *Diekey Chapelle*, about the female Vietnam War photographer, which landed on the Athena List last year. Nagle's script was lying dormant at Brad Pitt's Plan B Entertainment, the company behind *The Big Short* and *Selma*, but the Athena boost revived interest and the script is in the process of securing independent financing.

For Nagle, the list is imperative in an era where the opportunities and interest for female-driven films are at a nadir. "The film industry is less interested than ever in women writing, directing or starring in films," she says. "Women actors have few parts and fewer lines in films than men. Women over 40 work less in all the guilds. I'm on the diversity committee at the WGA and it's bad."

The Athena Festival is trying to do its part to change this situation. According to the festival's co-founder Melissa Silverstein, this year's submissions for the Athena List were incredibly robust, featuring mobsters, motorcycle riders, and Marie Curie.

Whittling the finalists down to four winners was grueling.

"The Athena List is our intervention. It's us saying, 'Hey, here are some scripts that are great that you can make tomorrow,'" says Silverstein. "Women screenwriters are 10 percent of the writers and we need more stories. We've got to have someone pushing the scripts out there."

Take a look at this year's winners. Hopefully, they will be hitting a theater near you soon.

Virginia by Bess Wohl

The irresistible rise of Virginia Hill, moll to multiple gangsters like Ben "Bugsy" Siegel and the business mastermind behind the mob's move into marijuana and drug smuggling.

In the Land of Fire and Ice by David MacGregor

When a high-powered Kuwaiti CEO finds herself betrayed at the investment bank she founded, she makes a tactical retreat to Iceland to assess her position and to strategize some way to salvage her career. At a small hotel on a remote Icelandic peninsula, she meets an innkeeper who helps reconnect her not only to passion for her job, but for things beyond. Having once pioneered investment strategies for women in the Middle East, she conceives of a new banking model, which will combine the best aspects of Sharia-based investing in the Arab world and socially responsible investing in the Western world. Having closed herself off from any meaningful human contact for years, her reignited desire to make the world a better place also opens her up to the possibility of a better life. Shohreh Aghdashloo (*The House of Sand and Fog*, 24) is attached to star. Robert Shapiro (*Empire of the Sun*) is attached to produce.

Ride the Wind: The Bessie Stringfield Story by Denise Meyers

Based on the remarkable true story about the first African-American woman inducted into the Motorcycle Hall of Fame, Bessie Stringfield was a Jamaican orphan adopted by a rich Irish widow, who encouraged her daughter's wanderlust and the "penny tours" that eventually landed Bessie a place in history as the only female military dispatch rider in World War II.

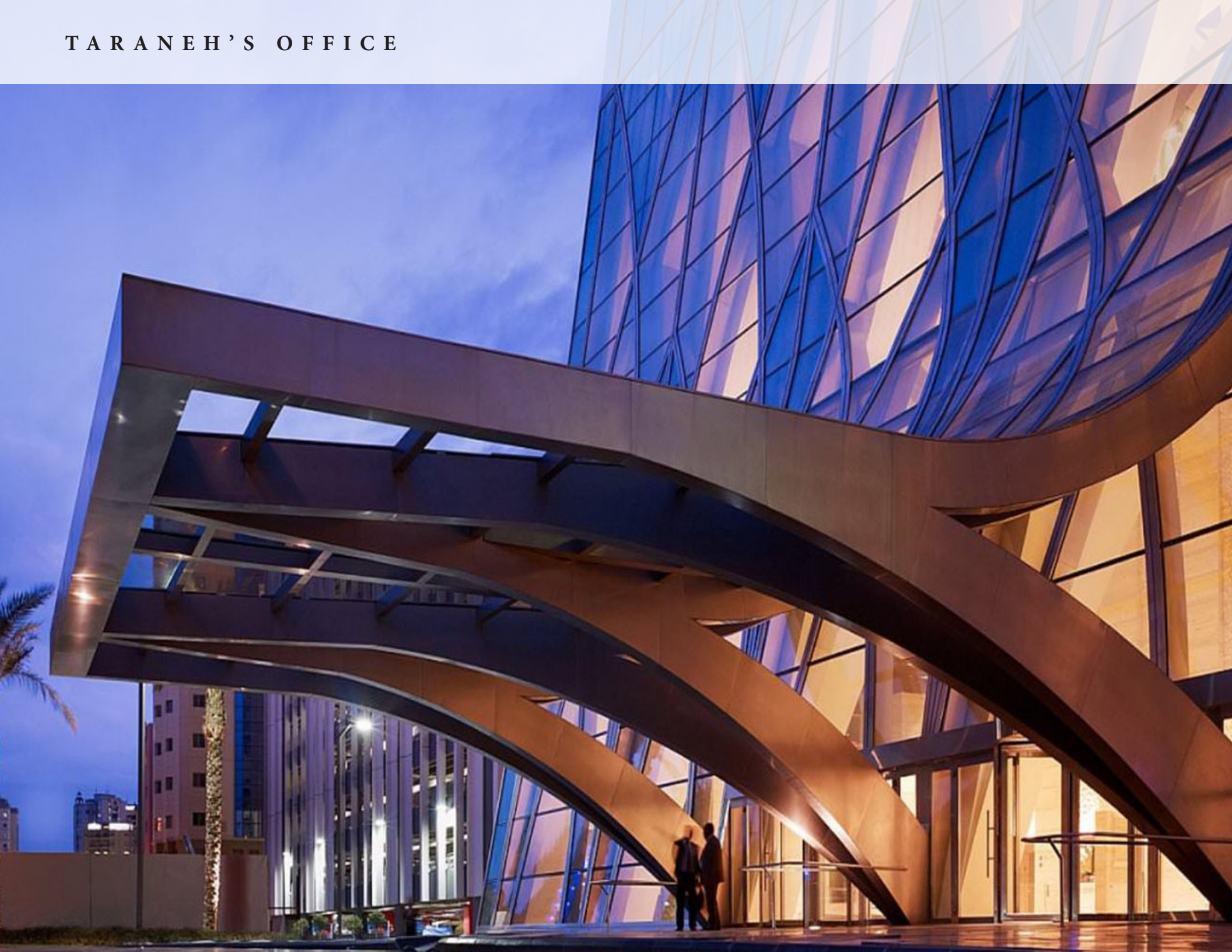
A Noble Affair by Anil Baral & Kathryn Maughan

KUWAIT EXTERIORS



KUWAIT EXTERIORS

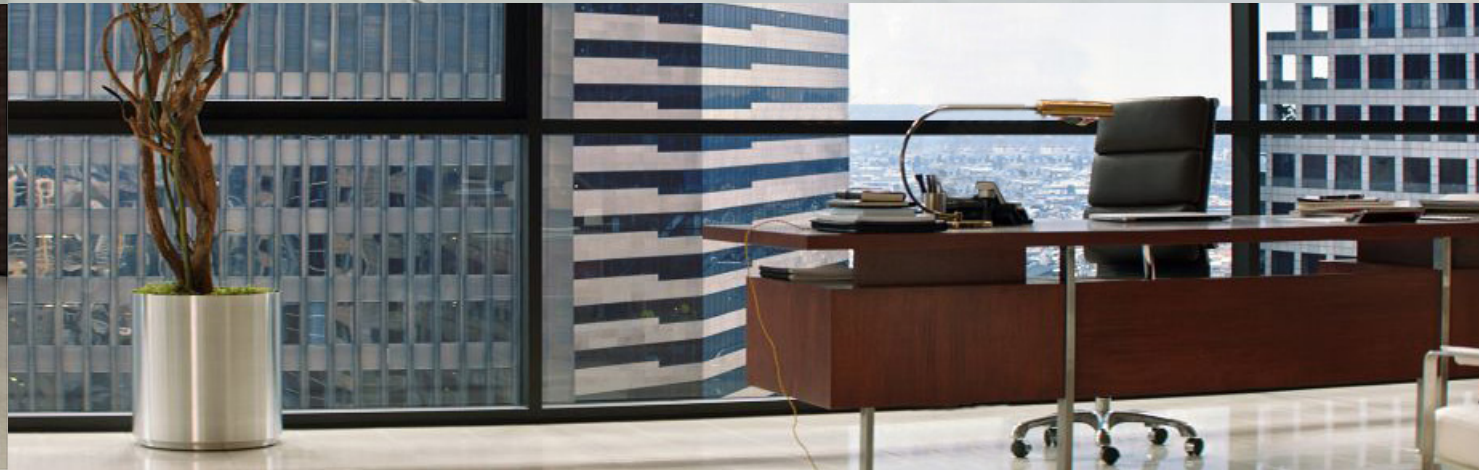




TARANEH'S OFFICE



TARANEH'S OFFICE



ICELAND EXTERIORS



ICELAND EXTERIORS



ICELAND EXTERIORS



ICELAND EXTERIORS



ICELAND EXTERIORS



DECLAN'S HOTEL



DECLAN'S HOTEL



DECLAN'S HOTEL



DECLAN'S HOTEL

