

= Nest of Angels =

" Nest of Angels " is the second episode of the second series of the British espionage television series Spooks , and the eighth episode overall . It was originally broadcast on BBC Three on 2 June 2003 , and repeated on frontline channel BBC One on 9 June . The episode was written by Howard Brenton , and directed by Bharat Nalluri . The episode centres on MI5 's actions in stopping Muhammed Rachid (Qarie Marshall) , a radicalised mullah in a mosque and community centre in Birmingham , who they believe is recruiting young suicide bombers . After their previous asset is discovered and brutally expelled , the team turn to Muhammed Ibhn Khaldun (Alexander Siddig) , an Algerian agent who left his country to work with the British .

Brenton came up with the idea to show an episode dealing with a Muslim hero set out to stop a group of Islamic terrorists . Brenton and the producers researched elements of Islam in order to provide a balanced view towards the religion , as well as the nature of the plot and to show Muslims in the episode who oppose the extremists among their religion . Although much of the episode was set in Birmingham , it was filmed entirely in London . The episode sees the introduction of regular character Ruth Evershed (Nicola Walker) , and the return of Christine Dale (Megan Dodds) , who first appeared in the first episode and returned so that the character 's role can be expanded .

The episode was seen by 7 @. @ 87 million following its broadcast on BBC One , however , despite the measures used to provide the balanced view , it was met with considerable controversy from Muslims , among them the Muslim Council of Britain , for fear that the episode would incite Islamophobia . Nearly a thousand complaints were made , although cast and crew members argued that the Muslims who opposed the episode did not understand the context .

= = Plot = =

MI5 plant an asset Johnny Patel (San Shella) at the Parkmount mosque and community centre in Birmingham to follow Muhammed Rachid , an Afghan @-@ born mullah who is acting more hostile to the West . Johnny however , is discovered to be a spy , and is thrown to the surveillance van outside as a result . Tom Quinn (Matthew Macfadyen) questions him in hospital , learning that the mullah is recruiting suicide bombers , however the stress of the questioning results in a cerebral hemorrhage . Superior Harry Pearce (Peter Firth) pressures Tom to find another agent . He turns to Tessa Phillips (Jenny Agutter) , now a manager at a security firm since she was fired in the first series finale for running phantom agents for monetary gain . However , she refuses to help .

Later , new officer Ruth Evershed , transferred from Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) , informs the team that Metropolitan Police have arrested Muhammed Ibhn Khaldun , an Algerian secret service agent . After his release Khaldun reveals that since the death of his family , he desired to leave Algeria to work for British intelligence , so he fooled his agency into believing he was killed while stopping a jihadist group in France , before smuggling himself into England via a Channel Tunnel freight train . The team allow him to work undercover in Parkmount , posing as a labourer at the local university , where he quickly gains Rachid 's trust . Beforehand however , Khaldun removes all the surveillance equipment on him . Furthermore , news of Khaldun 's arrival also gains the interest of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) , who also wish to use him .

In the meantime , Danny Hunter (David Oyelowo) persuades Tom to go on a date with Vicky Westbrook (Natasha Little) , a nurse introduced in the previous episode , in order to get over Ellie Simm , Tom 's previous girlfriend who broke up with him . Although Tom asks her out for dinner , the two end up having sex . Zoe Reynolds (Keeley Hawes) continues seeing Carlo Franceschini (Enzo Cilenti) , also introduced in the previous episode , at a bar .

When Khaldun fails to meet with Tom , the team worry that he had deceived them . However , that night , Khaldun sneaks into Tom 's bedroom at the university campus , and warns him that Rachid is keeping explosives , and a suicide attack will take place the next day , but will not disclose where . Tom turns to Parkmount 's imam Fazul Azzam (Roshan Seth) , who opposes Rachid 's radicalised views . After learning Fazzul 's daughter Aminah (Praveen Sond) is involved , he forces her into revealing the location of the planned attack . Rachid is placed under arrest when explosives are

found in his prayer room . Khaldun meanwhile , kills Rachid 's men in an empty building , and attempts to disarm the bomber , young Abu Hassan (Taahir Husein) , but he runs away into a playground . As Tom 's team and local police surround the playground , Khaldun attempts to talk Abu out of the attack . However , when he fails , Khaldun throws himself as Abu detonates the bomb , in order to avoid further casualties . Later , CIA liaison Christine Dale voices disappointment towards Khaldun 's death , but appears grateful that Tom is unharmed .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

The story idea came from writer Howard Brenton , who wanted to delve into the world of suicide bombings , a significant issue in national security . It became the first episode in Spooks that explicitly portrays Islamic extremism , which Oyelowo described as a " hot potato " because of this sensitive issue . The actor was also worried that the plot may " put ideas into people 's heads " after the audience would watch the episode . Brenton heavily researched the episode to provide a balanced view . He included characters , such as innocent Muslims who opposed the Islamic extremists , as well as a " Muslim hero " who would thwart the terrorists . The writer still wrote " Nest of Angels " as a classic spy story , where an operative goes undercover to subvert a villainous operation . Director Bharat Nalluri felt that making the hero a Muslim exemplified the balanced view . Series creator David Wolstencroft meanwhile , emphasised that the episode not only showed Islamic extremism , but a more peaceful side of the religion as well , and that the producers should not shy away from those issues .

To further provide the fair and balanced view of the topic , script editor Karen Wilson furthered her research by consulting with a Muslim advisor throughout the scripting and filming stages , as well as consulting the Muslims who played extras in the episode . Although Wilson does not usually talk to cast members beforehand , it was the first time she became aware of the research and advice behind a storyline , and felt that the advice she was given was useful in staging the scenes . It was also based on real life instances , something that Brenton considered a hallmark of the series , as many episodes are based on such events . News stories detailing similar instances to the plot came out sometime after the episode 's broadcast , and the producers believed it justified the episode . The ending was written to be melancholic , in which there were no winners .

In writing the pre @-@ title sequence of the episode , Brenton wanted to include a " frightening thriller set up " where spies would listen in as an agent is undercover , and be absolutely helpless to aid the agent when he is in trouble , yet be nearby as this happens . He also wanted the audience to admire the villains , especially from the conversation between Tom and Rachid . Furthermore , the episode exemplifies Tom 's brutality in his professional life ; in one scene Tom questions Johnny who is recovering in hospital , but came to want the information more than care for his wellbeing .

The episode also further explores the Grid characters ' private lives , however some of the ideas had to be dropped due to the amount of plot towards the main storyline . " Nest of Angels " continues the relationship between Tom and Vicky Westbrook which began in the previous episode . Vicky was included more in the episode , and it further delved into her personality , namely she differs vastly from Ellie Simm , Tom 's previous girlfriend , who was depicted as more of a normal human being ; Vicky was portrayed as more " flakey " and " insane " who would often wrongfoot Tom . The producers also decided to introduce a potential relationship between Danny and Sam Buxton (Shauna Macdonald) . However , the idea was dropped later in the series as it " never seemed to click . "

= = = Casting = = =

The episode included a guest appearance from Alexander Siddig , who played the " Muslim hero " Muhammed Ibhn Khaldun . Siddig was already well known as playing regular character Julian

Bashir in Star Trek : Deep Space Nine . The producers viewed Siddig as a " noble " actor when he was playing the character . Siddig described the role as a " godsend " to him , because it enabled him to " portray various aspects of an Arab man who was readily credible . He came out of a new identity I was looking for , trying to take a snapshot of this guy before he disappears . He was my father . He was your father . He was the father of all the generations that had a liberal upbringing and didn 't make a lot of money . " Roshan Seth played imam Fazul Azzam ; he was cast because Brenton wanted him to appear in the episode . Meanwhile , Taahir Husain played the bomber Abu Hassan . The producers felt that the child actor was " a find " for them ; it was his first television appearance , but they believed his performance " carried it off . "

The episode also marks the return of American actress Megan Dodds , who first appeared in a handful of scenes in the first episode of the first series . The producers enjoyed the actress ' company , and wanted her to return where the character would appear more often and developed throughout the second series . Jenny Agutter returns as Tessa Philips ; it allows the audience to see what happens to her since her sacking in the first series finale . The episode introduces new regular character Ruth Evershed , played by Nicola Walker . The producers needed another " interesting , strong " member of the team following Tessa 's departure . The character also came from GCHQ in the series ; the producers were aware that the organisation employs 70 @,@ 000 people , and the producers did not want to ignore this aspect of British intelligence gathering . Describing Walker 's casting , producer Jane Featherstone recalled " Nicola is extraordinary in it . I think she 's completely brilliant . And she 's developed that and I think once Nicola became that role that writers had just loved writing for that part , and she 's really made it her own . " The character was created by Brenton . Her introduction depicted her as clumsy , mirroring the writer .

= = = Filming and soundtrack = = =

The episode was directed Bharat Nalluri ; he continued to portray a balanced approach towards Muslims during filming . Although much of the episode was set in Birmingham , it was all filmed in London . The mosque interior was shot at the basement of a building in Portland Place , while another street of terraced houses was used to double a typical residential street in the city . One of its most best looking houses doubled the home of Fazul and Aminah . Other scenes were shot in Kensington Gardens , with one of them being filmed in front of the park 's Peter Pan statue . The scenes leading up to Abu 's suicide attack was filmed at a playground . The scenes were originally set to be shot at a shopping centre , but it was deemed " unfilmable . " Producers later considered using a bus , but they thought that too was impractical . The final scenes of the episode were shot at the shore of the River Thames near the National Film Theatre , which houses a beach during low tide . The shootout scene between Khaldun and Rachid 's men was among the last to be shot . In addition , the producers made use of actual news footage following a suicide attack in Israel , in order to show the audience the consequences of such attacks .

Filming the pre @-@ title sequence went through some alterations . One of the scenes saw Johnny being foot whipped , however the shot where the stick struck the soles of the feet was cut out due to its brutality . Also , when discussing how Johnny would be expelled from the mosque afterwards , Nalluri suggested using the idea where he is thrown to the top of the surveillance van , which would give the audience the impression that the antagonists were on to them . Later on in the episode , Nalluri wanted to include some exposition shots , which shows Khaldun 's actions while he narrates them to MI5 . In one scene , Tom observes Khaldun inside a prison cell by opening a slide view at the prison door . However one had to be made because no such doors exist in the United Kingdom . Following the broadcast of the episode , the producers were surprised to hear that the BBC were unhappy with a scene showing Harry holding a Costa Coffee cup , as the corporation believed it was done out of product placement . They were also surprised to learn that they did not take notice in a scene with Malcolm Wynn @-@ Jones delightfully eating a piece of chocolate from a Black Magic chocolate box , which they thought was a more obvious example . Portraying actor Hugh Simon had to spit out the chocolate after the take as he disliked the confectionery .

The episode 's soundtrack was composed by Jennie Muskett , who also composed for the series .

When reviewing the scenes leading to the conclusion she felt sympathetic towards the suicide bomber , and wanted to portray the background music through the bomber 's point of view . Musckett also hired vocalist Paul Gladstone @-@ Reed to become the voice behind his emotions . In addition , regular pieces of the soundtrack were reused throughout much of the episode . Musckett saw the episode as among the most rewarding she worked on .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" Nest of Angels " was first broadcast on digital channel BBC Three from 10 : 30 p.m. on 2 June 2003 , following the first episode of the second series on BBC One . The BBC One repeat of the episode was broadcast on 9 June , between 9 and 10 p.m. According to overnight figures , ratings were down by 200 @,@ 000 from the previous episode , with an average of 7 @.@ 6 million viewers and a third of the audience share for BBC One , peaking at 7 @.@ 8 million . Spooks won its timeslot against the other terrestrial channels . The final numbers posted on the Broadcasters ' Audience Research Board website went up slightly to 7 @.@ 87 million viewers , making the episode the fifth most viewed BBC One broadcast , and the thirteenth most viewed broadcast in total the week it aired .

= = = Controversy = = =

The episode gained a considerable amount of controversy , largely by Muslims who believed the episode showed Islam in a negative light , and that it could incite Islamophobia . Following the broadcast of the episode on BBC Three , the BBC received around 800 complaints , of which 500 of them were telephone calls , and 300 were emails , and a further 150 complaints were made after the BBC One repeat , totalling nearly one thousand complaints . The complaints made on its original broadcast appealed to the BBC not to repeat it on BBC One . The corporation chose not to drop the episode from the schedules . However , since fewer complaints were made after the repeat , members of the broadcasters believed that viewers realised the content was not as bad as expected . Inayat Bunglawala , the media secretary for the Muslim Council of Britain , stated " We can 't deny that the BBC have a right to screen a drama about this ? it is topical , " but " It is the treatment of the subject that will lead to attacks . "

Following the episode , a Muslim student in Birmingham was assaulted by two attackers , who said " you have been spooked . " Furthermore , the Birmingham Central Mosque was vandalised , with the slogan " suicide bombers inside ? kill the bombers " in graffiti . The BBC however denied that the episode had influence on the incidents , and West Midlands Police ruled that there was no evidence linking the attacks to the programme . The BBC further defended the episode , by stating the Muslim involvement towards making it , and that it does not suggest that mosques breed terrorists . In July 2003 , the Broadcasting Standards Commission dismissed some of the complaints as the episode was presented as a drama and not a factual account .

In the Friday before the BBC One repeat , Bunglawala wrote to Lorraine Heggessey , the BBC One controller , stating " the programme , which was of a very sensational nature , unfortunately only serves to reinforce many negative stereotypes of British Muslims . Instead of being a well @-@ informed piece of film @-@ making , this episode of Spooks pandered to grossly offensive and Islamophobic caricatures of imams , Muslim students and mosques , " and warned that the " increased amount of Islamophobia that is sure to result from the broadcasting of this programme at peak @-@ time is wholly unacceptable and a gross violation of your responsibilities as a public service broadcaster . " Heggessey however , argued that the episode presented a balance view and that it fell " legitimately within the story lines of Spooks . " Also , Ahtsham Ali of the Islamic Society of Britain claimed that the episode " adds fuel to the fire of already negative perceptions of Muslims and fans the flames of British National Party rhetoric . "

The controversy invoked responses from some cast and crew members from the series . Gareth Neame , the executive producer for the BBC was glad that the episode provoked debate , and the producers would adequately defend the episode from their research into making the story . That

said Neame was also surprised by some of the responses , rationalising that those responders did not understand the context , and that it was not intended to offend anybody . Stephen Garrett , the director of Kudos Film and Television , the producer of Spooks agreed , further stating that the episode " deals with very real stuff that 's happening in the world . It touches nerves on a regular basis , and deals with uncomfortable truths . " Brenton meanwhile stated that " people are free to make what they want of drama , " and believed the audience did not like the villains as they portrayed something disturbing in their culture , religion , world or profession . Oyelowo had said that the episode did not say that all Muslims are terrorists , only that some fanatics can give " millions of good people a bad name . " The actor also believed that the Muslims who were " up in arms " about the story did not see the episode , but merely heard the basis of the plot and did not consider the Muslims in the episode who tried to stop the antagonists .