

COUNTERPART

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Episode One

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SLOW MOTION. Small particles of glass rain down with snow. Touching soundlessly, elegantly, on concrete. It's peaceful. Almost lyrical. Until --

THUD -- A HUMAN CORPSE crashes with it, snapping us into the violence of real time.

AERIAL: we're looking down from the window this man just fell out of. He's a heavy Romanian THUG, shot in the chest, splayed out like a dying snow angel, gasping his last coughs. And he's staring up at --

EXT. BUCHAREST CITY SQUARE -- NIGHT

FIREWORKS exploding in the night sky. THE ROMANIAN NEW YEAR. Drunken revelers. Crowds, chaos.

TWO SUVs screech up in front of an apartment building. POLICE RAPID INTERVENTION SQUAD -- twenty soldiers, tactical gear, ski masks, semi-automatic rifles.

Led by AGENTS in plainclothes. The lead is AMERICAN (40s). Arguing with a Police Chief through a ROMANIAN TRANSLATOR.

TRANSLATOR

Please, it is not customary...

AMERICAN AGENT

Why should that be his fucking business.

TRANSLATOR

He asks for a photograph. Of suspect --

AMERICAN AGENT

There is no photo. Listen. Six months we've been hunting this guy. He is up there, right now. So why are we arguing down here?

INT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Dead calm. CORPSES in the aftermath of a gunfight. THE DOOR KICKS IN and the Intervention Squad rushes the room.

There's no one alive in here. No survivors, unless you count the HYSTERICAL, BLOODIED PROSTITUTE hiding in the bathroom, high on cocaine, rambling in Romanian.

The American Agent runs to a broken window -- the dead THUG in the street below. Glances at an adjacent rooftop (possible escape route) but sees no footprints in the snow.

AMERICAN AGENT

He didn't leave. Search every room.

Flurry of action. Time is of the essence. A SUBORDINATE comes over with a DUFFEL BAG.

SUBORDINATE

Blank visas. Didn't get what he came for...

The Translator meets the American Agent next to the shivering Prostitute.

AMERICAN AGENT

What did he look like. The one who did this. Where did he go??

Translation. But the strung-out Prostitute doesn't hear a word they're saying. She's lost.

AMERICAN AGENT (CONT'D)

Get her to an icebox. She saw his face, I want a perfect composite.

The Subordinate nods, drags out the duffel bag, along with the Translator and the screaming Prostitute...

INT. STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

...while the rest of the squad is rapidly going door-to-door. Pulling out hookers, junkies, children. The Prostitute screams hysterically, her stilettos clicking down the stairs.

INT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The American Agent stands lost amidst the bodies. Behind him, another agent comes in. This one is an ENGLISHMAN. He leafs through a pile of money.

ENGLISHMAN

Baldwin comes to buy transit, the Romanians sell him out. And before we even kick in the bloody door...

The American kneels beside a puddle of blood.

ENGLISHMAN (CONT'D)

How does a man slip past us without
anyone giving him a second look.

Just then, the American notices something in the blood...
eyes widening... beginning to put it all together...

AMERICAN AGENT

Goddamnit.

He's running out. The Englishman glances down at the puddle
of blood: the STILETTO FOOTPRINTS embedded within.

EXT. BUCHAREST CITY SQUARE -- NIGHT

The New Years countdown is down to ten seconds now. The
crowd is about to reach its peak.

But we're not there. We're IN THE FRONT SEAT of the SUV,
where the Subordinate is DEAD with a KNIFE to his chest.
"FRONT DOOR AJAR" blinking...

Outside the truck, the Translator crawls on his hands and
knees, gurgling because his throat has been SLIT. He fumbles
for the walkie-talkie on the ground. Fingers stopping at --

TWO STILETTOED HEELS.

The Prostitute stands over him. Only she's not a prostitute.
This is BALDWIN (30s). An assassin. Composed, sober, wiping
other men's blood from her face. She raises the pistol --

-- but doesn't fire. Icy eyes twitching to the square.
Waiting instead for the countdown... 3... 2... 1... FIREWORKS.

Under the exploding sky, no one hears the solitary CRACK of
a gunshot. Nor does anyone see the stilettoed Baldwin as
she grabs the duffel from the SUV, discards the pistol, and --

DISAPPEARS INTO THE CROWD.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOCAL BUCHAREST NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY

Early morning. Eastern European feel. Clotheslines between
windows. An old woman receiving groceries from her third
story balcony by pulling them up on a rope.

And outside the local BAKERY...

A daily game of "GO" is being played. Simple grid, black and white stones. Two fierce competitors, different ages. One is ANDREI (20s), unkempt, with the friendly, excitable air of a local student. The other is...

HOWARD SILK (50s). An AMERICAN. Understated, calm intelligence, worn down by life. He's in a suit. Keeps a briefcase at his side. Friendly banter as they take turns --

ANDREI

Why do you punish yourself.

HOWARD

Even a game lost is a game well-played.

ANDREI

Spoken like a man who is about to lose. You should try a simpler game.

Howard stares down at the board. Deep in thought.

HOWARD

Don't say chess. I despise chess.

ANDREI

(rolls eyes)
Too many rules...

HOWARD

Dozens. Go has one rule, but no two games are the same. One choice expands into millions of emergent possibilities. Is it deterministic, is it random...?

ANDREI

Are you distracting me, are you boring me...?

HOWARD

I'm trying to *teach* you.

ANDREI

You're too nice.

Andrei moves his piece into position. The kill stroke. He's won. Howard looks at the stones, defeated. Finally, he shrugs, smiles. They shake hands.

HOWARD

Well, next time.

Andrei clears the board. Howard checks his watch, finishes his coffee, and rises to leave.

ANDREI

Sometimes I get the feeling you
let me win these games.

HOWARD

(winks)
Where would be the lesson in that?

EXT. BUCHAREST STREETS -- DAY

Howard ambles through morning commuter traffic. Foreigner in a strange land. He doesn't belong here, but it's home.

INT. TRANSIT BUS -- DAY

Back of the bus. Reading a tattered copy of some biography. Earmarked, detailed. A man with an active mind.

EXT. INTERCHANGE HQ -- DAY

Approaching a nondescript, contemporary, steel-and-glass structure. **The Office of Interchange.** Built off the remodeled shell of what was once a Pre-War building. A UNITED NATIONS LOGO on the front.

INT. THE OFFICE LOBBY -- DAY

The glass shimmer of a modern lobby. Heightened security. UN SOLDIERS stand watch. A ROW OF WOMEN at reception. Eastern European. Almost identical in their cold demeanor.

Howard is one of many GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES plodding through. Nobody speaks a word in these halls. We're going to get very specific for this next little sequence, and it's all for good reason. So for now, just bear with us...

He swipes his card in the turnstile. The light goes green.

He goes to a very deliberate elevator system. *1st floor Security. 2nd floor Interface. 3rd floor Analysis. 4th floor Operations. 5th floor Control. 6th floor... no label.* Each elevator bank will only bring you to a certain floor.

He waits at the 2nd floor elevator. Checks his watch.

INT. INTERFACE RECEPTION -- DAY

Elevator doors open. Howard emerges with a pack of co-workers -- international, many different languages and cultures. Uses a PERSONALIZED CODE to pass another turnstile.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Co-workers change out of their suits. Howard removes his jacket, tie, shirt, pants. Also changing is MARCEL (30s), a fast-talking Frenchman who's entertaining the others with an extemporized story. The men laugh along.

We're not really paying attention. We're with Howard, aloof, on the periphery. He removes his wedding ring, watch, wallet, ID tag. All of them go into a RED BIN in his locker. From a GREEN BIN he pulls another watch, ID tag.

Then he dresses into another suit. Pinstripes, whatever. Doesn't matter. What matters is, it matches the suit that all the other men are putting on.

INT. CUBICLE ROW -- DAY

Howard and his co-workers pass cubicles. Howard's beautiful ROMANIAN SECRETARY (20s) places a BRIEFCASE on her desk.

 HOWARD
 ("thank you")
 Multumesc.

She lifts her eyes. Howard smiles politely. Walks on.

INT. INTERFACE SECURITY CHECKPOINT -- DAY

Passing through metal detectors, x-rays. GUARDS with blank expressions. Sign on the wall, many languages: **"ABSOLUTELY NO PERSONAL EFFECTS BEYOND THIS POINT"**

Marcel is behind Howard, humming a club tune. All routine.

INT. ACCESS HALL -- DAY

A long, straight corridor. It's probably important that we describe this. On the left are 25 unsmiling SECURITY GUARDS. On the right are 25 doors, each with a number.

Howard checks his badge. Finds a number above a door that corresponds to it. He tries the handle. It's LOCKED. Hermetically sealed. Very high security.

He checks his watch, 9:04am.

SECURITY GUARD

Early.

HOWARD

Yes. Thank you.

Howard waits patiently. Hands clasped. Up and down the line, his co-workers are waiting too.

Then the hand ticks to 9:05am and all the doors BUZZ simultaneously. Howard clasps his handle and walks into --

INT. INTERFACE ROOM 3242 -- DAY

A stark, simple room. Symmetrical. A long table. A chair on one side, a chair on the other. Two cameras, one above Howard's door, and the other above --

A SECOND DOOR on the opposite side of the room. Identical to Howard's door. Closed. Howard checks his watch, curious.

Moments later, the door opens and a MAN hustles in. Different suit, different briefcase. Eye contact, an apologetic look.

They sit at the table. Unlock their briefcases. Pull out two folders each -- one SEALED. Open the unsealed folders and read documents in silence. Finally --

MAN

I took the long way to work today.

Howard, lost in a thought. The Man looks up at him.

HOWARD

Hmm?

MAN

I took the long way to work today.

HOWARD

Of course. Sorry. The weather was too damn hot for riding.

MAN

It never cools off at this time of year.

HOWARD

My mother loves the winter. I'm
beginning to understand why.

MAN

Mine is partial to spring.

If this conversation doesn't make sense, it's because that's
the point. As we --

CRANE UP OVER THEIR SHOULDERS

We realize that each of them is reading from a specific
script... it's a tree branch diagram of a conversation.
They're speaking in code. Every time the Man says something,
Howard circles the phrase on his own sheet and responds with
an assigned phrase of his own. The Man is doing likewise.

HOWARD

Flowers in the air.

MAN

Orchids.

HOWARD

Always a good season for orchids.

End of script. They close their pens. Slide the SEALED
FOLDERS across the table to each other -- switching -- and
put them away in their briefcases.

Then they rise, not shaking hands, not so much as smiling.
Howard is struck by something on the man's tie --

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You have...

The Man is at first surprised by the interaction. Then he
looks down at his tie, sees a jelly stain.

MAN

Right. Thank you.

He rubs it with his finger, walks hastily out his door.
Howard leaves through the other side.

INT. ACCESS HALL -- DAY

Howard and his co-workers all exit their rooms at the same
time. Silently walking past the guards.

INT. CUBICLE ROW -- DAY

Howard slides the briefcase into a GLASS CUBE with one-inch-thick plexiglass, which his Secretary locks with a key. Howard uses the other key. Heads past her, into his office.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The end of the workday. Howard changes from his work suit into the one he wore coming in. Switches out his ID tag, his wallet, puts back on his wedding ring.

Marcel leans up against the locker next to him...

MARCEL

Your girl says you've got a meeting upstairs.

HOWARD

Stop charming my girl.

MARCEL

Is it the analyst job?

Howard betrays it with a look. Marcel sighs.

MARCEL (CONT'D)

Howard. *Mon frere*. Personally? Honestly? I do not think you should waste your time.

HOWARD

Oh you don't, do you.

MARCEL

No. I think it is a waste, you should let it go, forget it ever happened. Quayle is nothing but a fifth-grader's prick...

Howard closes the locker, smiles.

HOWARD

You're just afraid you're going to miss me.

He walks off. Marcel watches after him, concerned.

INT. THE OFFICE LOBBY -- DAY

Howard stands before the 5th floor elevator kiosk: Control.
An ARMED GUARD sits at a booth.

HOWARD

Going to Five for a meeting with
Peter Quayle.

Holding out his temporary credentials for the guard to look
at. The guard picks up the phone, waiting for an order.

INT. CONTROL LOBBY -- DAY

Stark interior. Everything is polished, expensive. Like a
bank. Howard sits in an undersized, uncomfortable chair.
An attractive FEMALE ASSISTANT approaches.

INT. QUAYLE'S OFFICE -- DAY

The domain of PETER QUAYLE (late 20s). Polished, boyish
Englishman, looks even younger than he is. Sharp dresser
with a short attention span and wayward eyes. Munching on a
Danish as Howard is led in by the Assistant --

QUAYLE

Sorry, they just brought this in.
I'd share it, but...

Quayle gestures for him to sit. Howard pulls out a dossier.

QUAYLE (CONT'D)

God, what's that, your resume? We
have it on the...

(gestures at computer)

Let's see. Howard Silk. Sixteen
years at the Office. Worked your
way up to Interface. Before that,
United States Treasury. Twelve
years. Married, no children. I
was sorry to hear about your wife.
Is she better?

HOWARD

Improving.

QUAYLE

Very good. Her co-workers all
speak fondly of her.

Howard shifts slightly, changing the subject.

HOWARD

You can see there, I've made Row
Designation four years now --

QUAYLE

Yes, I can read that. You're one
of our best Interface men, Howard.
No one has ever had a complaint.

Howard, staring at his hands. His faded wedding band.

HOWARD

At my last review, they mentioned
there was an opening in Analysis.

QUAYLE

(mouthful)
Where do you live?

HOWARD

The Old City.

QUAYLE

You like it there?

HOWARD

It's quiet.

QUAYLE

Drives me mad. Dated a girl there--
not long, she wasn't a keeper. It
was so boring. Had to take a cab
just to get a decent meal.

Howard, patient. Enduring this little shit is not easy.

HOWARD

Mr. Quayle, as you can see, I've
been Interface for quite a while.
And I was hoping there might be
room for me in Analysis.

Quayle wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

QUAYLE

Why do you want the post?

HOWARD

A chance to serve at a higher level.
Assess intelligence, not just
passing code with foreign assets...

QUAYLE
I'm sorry, Howard. The post has
been filled.

HOWARD
(crestfallen)
When?

QUAYLE
Look chap, you're an Interface
man. Everyone likes you there.
No need to upset the apple cart.

HOWARD
If I could just have an interview --

QUAYLE
Oversight was looking at your tape
from this morning. Apparently
there was a non-approved exchange.

Howard looks up, curious.

HOWARD
"Non-approved?"

QUAYLE
You should know better.

HOWARD
The man had jelly on his...
(calms himself)
With all due respect. Mr. Quayle.
I have come through these doors
every day. I understand secrecy.
National security. *Sixteen years*,
I've given to this Office. But
sometimes it scares me-- I have no
idea why telling some stranger
he's got a stain on his tie makes
one shred of difference.

Howard settles, eyes on his lap. Quayle stares. No empathy.

QUAYLE
It's been sixteen years, man. If
it were going to happen? It would
have happened.

Howard, the faded look of defeat.

INT. THE OFFICE LOBBY -- DAY

Emerging from the elevator, tight on his face. Walks for the exit, runs into MARCEL and his co-workers.

CO-WORKER

Drinks!

HOWARD

What's the occasion?

CO-WORKER

Marcel, the cagey bastard. He got himself that promotion.

Howard, trying to mask his devastation. Marcel, guilty.

MARCEL

Why don't you come?

HOWARD

Sorry. Plans. Congratulations though, Marcel. Really.

It's all he can do to leave before he comes apart.

EXT. MARKET -- NIGHT

Snow. A crowded arcade. Not much elbow room. Howard sits at a table outside a CHINESE NOODLE KIOSK. Eating, keeping to himself. One man, alone in a crowd.

INT. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BOOKSTORE -- NIGHT

Howard runs his finger along the classics, looking for the right title amidst a sea of second-hand books. Finding RAINER MARIA RILKE. Collected poetry. Studying it delicately.

EXT. BUCHAREST STREETS -- NIGHT

Howard carries the book under his arm. Stops by a FLOWER VENDOR and purchases a bundle of daffodils.

EXT. HOSPITAL FRONT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

Approaching a run-down local hospital, daffodils in hand.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY -- NIGHT

Entering through a set of sliding glass doors. The OLD NURSE smiles, familiar.

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Moving through a quiet ward. Two women sit at a desk together. One is a BURLY NURSE (50s), tough and unsmiling. The other is TALIA (20s), beautiful Romanian. She lights up as Howard passes. Always the highlight of her day.

He notices a vase on their desk. Wilting roses. He strips a few fresh daffodils from his bundle and drops them in. Talia looks up, surprised --

TALIA (in Romanian)
It's not necessary...

HOWARD
(polite smile)
I insist.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Entering a lonely, sparse room. In the bed...

IS A WOMAN IN A COMA. This is EMILY (40s). Howard's wife.

He greets her with a touch from his left hand. The faded wedding band grazing her cool fingers.

A wilting vase of daffodils sits on the bureau. Howard takes a pair of shears and trims off the dead buds. Replacing them with the new flowers. He lingers on her expressionless face. A meditative beat. Interrupted by --

ERIC (O.S.)
All week I've been calling.

ERIC BURTON (40s), Emily's brother, is standing in the hallway with his jacket in hand. English elite, Oxbridge.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Should have occurred to me I could
have just found you here.

HOWARD
Yes it should have.

Eric steps in. Drops PAPERWORK on the tray beside him.

ERIC

My father has always been an asshole. It's no secret. I'm the one who still lives with the bastard. She ran, I had to pay for it. But he wants what he wants. And he's not going to stop.

HOWARD

Came all the way to tell me that?

ERIC

Six months now. Nothing.

HOWARD

Concussive trauma can take anywhere from nine months to one year --

ERIC

Howard, I spoke with them too, I'm sorry. You need to acknowledge the reality now. All he wants is to have her home when it happens. Surrounded by family.

Howard, deep breath. Defeated.

HOWARD

He'll lose.

ERIC

You're right. He's mad. He will never win in court, and we all know it. But he will bleed you dry, and he will ruin you. Do you have the endurance for that?

Howard bottles his anger, stares at the ground.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Please think it over.

Eric leaves. Howard listens to his footsteps recede. The paperwork remains on the tray. Finally he pulls the Rainer Maria Rilke out of his pocket. Puts on his glasses. Leans in next to her and begins to read...

HOWARD

You, you only, exist. We pass away, till at last, our passing is so immense...

TRACKING OUT, framing his utter loneliness, and --

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOWARD'S APARTMENT -- DAY

An alarm clock ringing. Howard is already up. His apartment, a home for two. Inhabited by one.

EXT. BUCHAREST STREETS -- DAY

Snow. Another day, another walk to work.

INT. THE OFFICE LOBBY -- DAY

Howard passes the receptionists, as he's done many times before. Swipes his card. Only this time...

IT BEEPS RED. He looks down, curious. By the time he looks up, THREE GUARDS are blocking his path.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

A dark, grimy utility basement. Audio equipment in the corner. Howard is escorted to a table.

Standing against a wall, cigarette in hand, is CHEKHOV (40s). Gruff Russian, Chief of Housekeeping. Security. Not a man you want to be alone in a room with. He crosses to the audio equipment, turns up many dials. WHITE NOISE hums audibly.

CHEKHOV

You know who I am?

HOWARD

Chekhov. Housekeeping.

CHEKHOV

You have any idea why we might want to speak?

HOWARD

None at all.

CHEKHOV

This will be your last chance to tell me.

Howard, staring at his unflinching gaze. Uncomfortable.

Then the door opens behind him and Quayle walks in. Busy, shuffling folders, Danish shoved into his mouth --

QUAYLE

I told you he doesn't know a goddamn thing. He's nobody. Go get him.

Chekhov leaves, slamming the door.

QUAYLE (CONT'D)

Sorry. It's his job to be disliked.

HOWARD

Have I done something wrong here?

QUAYLE

Listen, Howard. We have a bit of a situation. Something we need to bring you in on.

HOWARD

Me.

QUAYLE

Someone's come over from the other side. A defection of sorts. I don't know what else to call it...

HOWARD

A defection. What are you talking about?

QUAYLE

More than anything else, I need for you to stay calm.

Howard's eyes twitch to a security cam. The light is OFF.

QUAYLE (CONT'D)

Typically we don't entertain this sort of business. Strangers come from the other side, we turn them away. But this one is different. Very high up. And he's only willing to speak to you.

HOWARD

What the hell would any of this have to do with me?

The door opens BEHIND HIM and Chekhov escorts in a HOODED PRISONER. Cuffs on his hands. Solid build. He drops him in the seat opposite Howard.

CHEKHOV
This is a bad idea.

QUAYLE
(to Howard)
Just stay calm. Whatever you do,
please don't panic.

Howard stares curiously at the man behind the hood. Quayle
nods at Chekhov, who pulls off the hood to reveal --

HOWARD.

We're staring at a man who looks, in almost every respect,
identical to Howard Silk. Same age, same genetics, etc.
Except he's dressed differently, built differently, and
possesses a starkly different personality.

His name is also Howard Silk. But for clarity's sake, we'll
call him PRIME.

HOWARD
Christ. Fuck.

PRIME
Hi Howard.
(to Quayle)
Look at me. I'm a prick.

HOWARD
Is this a joke...?

QUAYLE
(to Prime)
All right, we gave you what you
asked for. He's here.

PRIME
Frankly I'm a little disappointed.

QUAYLE
Why did you come over, Howard?

Howard, like he's watching a ping-pong match, cuts in --

HOWARD
Howard. I'm Howard.

QUAYLE
He's Howard too.

PRIME

He doesn't know what's going on?
What level is he?

QUAYLE

He's an Interface man.

Prime, reacting. Chekhov finally slams the table.

CHEKHOV

Enough! He is wasting our time.

PRIME

Believe me I'm not. But I have to
be back in twelve minutes, so let's
discuss terms. First, no one knows
about this arrangement except the
people in this room.

CHEKHOV

Why should we listen to a word you
have to say...

PRIME

Because if you don't, people start
dying.

Quayle and Chekhov both wait for him.

PRIME (CONT'D)

We don't have time for this. Here's
what I can tell you right now. A
kill order came from my side. At
least a dozen names. They're
targeting people on your side.

CHEKHOV

So we'll take this to the Sixth
Floor. Why do we need you?

PRIME

Because your Sixth Floor may be
compromised. Your names came up
clean, but your bosses? Unclear.

CHEKHOV

(to Quayle)

He's lying. We have no intelligence
that confirms this --

PRIME

Maybe our intelligence is better
than your intelligence. Because
all due respect, your intelligence
is kind of a shitshow right now.
Either way, I have to go back.

QUAYLE

Who is on the list.

PRIME

Not until I know where you stand.
I'll be here tomorrow under a longer
visa. Courier duty. You have
until then to make up your mind.

Prime rises. Waits. Quayle nods at Chekhov, who leads him
out. Prime takes one last look back at the stunned Howard...

PRIME (CONT'D)

Interface. Unbelievable.

The door closes. Howard just stares. Quayle is like a deer
in headlights. He turns back to Howard --

QUAYLE

Outside.

EXT. OPEN COURTYARD -- DAY

Employees gather for a smoke break. Separate from them,
Quayle fumbles with a pack of cigarettes. Howard is with
him, intense, shaking --

HOWARD

What is this.

QUAYLE

Shut up, Howard. Let me think.

HOWARD

You let me in that room.

QUAYLE

I didn't want to. Christ...

Quayle tries to light the cigarette. Fails. Fuck. Throws
them both out. Hands shaking.

QUAYLE (CONT'D)

You don't have the clearance.
Please don't ask.

HOWARD

That man looks just like me.

QUAYLE

He is you, Howard. Really, do you have any idea how lucky you are? No one, I mean *no one*, meets their counterpart. Everyone wonders about it, but Christ...

HOWARD

I need to know what the hell is going on. Before any of this goes any further, I need to know.

Quayle makes sure they're out of earshot. Whispering.

QUAYLE

It was a Cold War thing. I don't know. I really don't. They don't tell me anything. Twenty-three years ago there was some experiment, an accident. In this building. German scientists, NATO... what we're told is, they opened a passage. The only of its kind. Walk down that hallway through one door, you come out in... another world. Identical to ours. There's one of them for every one of us.

HOWARD

Identical to ours...?

QUAYLE

The same events, experiences. Where this building stands, we call it the Crossing --

HOWARD

What are you talking about, identical to ours? He's nothing like me!

QUAYLE

When that door opened, our paths branched off. Subtly at first, but it snowballed over two decades now. Christ, it's not my job to tell you this, you shouldn't even...
(settles)

What you need to know is, what we do at this Office, we keep a lid

(MORE)

QUAYLE (CONT'D)
on it. Trade information, gather
intelligence from the other side.

Howard is running over all this at a thousand miles an hour.

QUAYLE (CONT'D)
But this is not normal. I need
your discretion, Howard. Can you
promise me that?

Howard doesn't know what to say.

Just then, Chekhov emerges from the door. Comes over. Gives
Quayle a look to say Prime is gone. Gives Howard a look.
As if to ask. Quayle nods. He's good.

CHEKHOV
He gave me a name.

QUAYLE
From the list?

CHEKHOV
(gestures at Howard)
His wife.

HOWARD
What about her?

Quayle turns to Howard. Chekhov steps closer.

CHEKHOV
She is in the hospital. St. Peter.

HOWARD
How do you know that...

QUAYLE
Put a watch at the hospital. Just
as a precaution.

HOWARD
You're saying she's in danger?!

But they're done talking. Chekhov walks away. Quayle turns
back to Howard, hands on his shoulders --

QUAYLE
Go home, go about your life. We'll
be in touch.

HOWARD

What does any of this have to do
with her.

QUAYLE

Who knows, with these things.
It's complicated, Howard.

He pats his shoulder. Joins Chekhov by the door.

EXT. HOSPITAL FRONT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

Howard, walking alone. Haunted by his thoughts. Across the street, a CAR is idling. Chekhov's men. Tailing him.

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Daffodils in the vase, starting to wilt. With Howard as he passes the nurses. Smiles vaguely, but he's distracted tonight. Talia watches him as he goes into Emily's room.

The Burly Nurse comes up behind her, drops a pile of folders.

BURLY NURSE (in Romanian)

Leave sad men to themselves.

Talia goes back to work. But steals another glance at Howard as he clips off the buds in Emily's flower arrangement.

TALIA

He has kind eyes, no?

The Burly Nurse doesn't respond.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Howard sits and stares at Emily. Holding her hand. Alone.

As we PRELAP loud house music...

INT. NIGHT CLUB -- NIGHT

A party is underway -- seedy Euro trash underbelly. Marcel is here, with friends, living it up.

He sees a YOUNG MAN eyeing him at the bar. Flirty. The games begin. Marcel reciprocates the look. The young man gets up and walks out a side exit. Marcel's drink is delivered. He downs it in one shot and follows...

EXT. SIDE ALLEY -- NIGHT

...into an alley. Footsteps. The young man is RUNNING away.

MARCEL (in Romanian)
*Hey! Don't be afraid. Where are
 you going?*

Marcel, standing there, confused, when --

WE PAN AROUND to reveal BALDWIN behind him. A silenced pistol drawn. Marcel doesn't see it.

BALDWIN
 Marcel.

He turns, registering his name. Which is all the confirmation she needed...

THWIP! A bullet through his forehead and he drops to the ground. Baldwin fires two more shots. THWIP! THWIP! Shell casings hit the ground. Marcel's body twitches, goes still.

She reaches into her coat, pulls out a BURNER CELL PHONE. A camera feature. Takes two photos, one of Marcel's face. Then she walks off down the alley without another word.

EXT. LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD BAKERY -- DAY

Another morning, another game of GO. Andrei adds pieces to his pattern. Howard studies the board. Silent.

ANDREI
 Very quiet this morning.

Howard picks up two pieces -- the black and the white -- studying them in the palm of his hand.

HOWARD
 Do you think our life is just a
 sum of choices?

ANDREI
 Ah-hah. Yet another attempt at
 distraction...

HOWARD
 Your PhD program is Psychology.

ANDREI
 Sociology.

HOWARD

Okay, fine. Answer me something.
You do something, and I react. Do
it often enough, my reactions
change. We're changing every day.
These choices define our identity.

ANDREI

No, identity is not about choice.

HOWARD

It's not?

ANDREI

It is design. We are what we were
born to be. Maybe experience makes
some difference. But no. You are
who you are. I am what I am...

He makes a winning move. Smiles.

ANDREI (CONT'D)

And this game always ends in the
same way.

But Howard isn't even paying attention. Looking up at Andrei --

HOWARD

You know what your problem is?
You're too young.

INT. OPERATIONS RECEPTION -- DAY

The 4th Floor. A higher level of security. Soundproof rooms,
missions planning, etc.

INT. THE CROSSING ROOM -- DAY

A wide open space, like a gym, with a fenced-in border, and
doors on either side. Armed BORDER GUARDS on both sides of
an ELECTRIFIED FENCE, staring each other down. It's like an
interior version of the Korean DMZ.

Every day, people go in, come out. Incoming and outgoing
are being counted, recorded for credentials, photographed.
They carry briefcases, grocery bags, their contents are
searched. Flashing DIPLOMATIC VISAS. Each person is paired
with an ESCORT, given a curfew stamp.

Prime moves through the central crossing from his side to
ours. Showing credentials to guards on both sides.

He's carrying a small grocery bag, which guards itemize:
bread, correspondences, a bottle of 30-year distilled vodka.

BORDER GUARD

Purpose of visit?

PRIME

Bringing the embassy pouch. I'm
on a 12-hour visa.

The guard holds up the bottle of vodka.

PRIME (CONT'D)

Consulate's request. It's better
on my side than yours.

The guard puts it back into the bag, passes it all over.

Prime walks through the next line of fences, showing his
credentials at least two more times. He's now legally crossed
over. He comes to an un-speaking FEMALE ESCORT.

INT. HOLDING ROOM -- DAY

Silent. Prime, sitting at a table in front of one-way glass.
He's hooked up to a LIE DETECTOR, being asked questions by a
FEMALE INQUISITOR. Responding calmly. The needle, flat.

INT. VIEWING ROOM -- DAY

On the other side of the glass, Chekhov is watching. He
sips tea off a saucer. Unreadable. Skeptical.

Quayle comes in behind him.

CHEKHOV

He confirms the weather, what day
it is. Answers nothing else. It
would take days to break him.

(beat)

We shouldn't trust him.

QUAYLE

Let him out.

Quayle walks out. Chekhov sighs, puts down his tea.

EXT. DMZ CLEARANCE -- DAY

The outskirts of the building. Prime follows his escort to --

Quayle and Chekhov, hands stuffed in their pockets. Chekhov dismisses the escort with a word in Russian. She goes. Prime waits for them to speak.

QUAYLE

One of ours was killed last night.

Prime nods. He was expecting it.

PRIME

We can't talk here.

EXT. HOWARD'S BUILDING -- DAY

A small army of guards outside, maintaining a perimeter.

INT. HOWARD'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Prime, Quayle, and Chekhov sit in a living room, stacked with books. Howard dutifully brings out coffee on a tray. They're not paying him any attention.

QUAYLE

Who is carrying this out?

PRIME

We don't know much about her.

QUAYLE

Her?

PRIME

Didn't even know *that* until the other night. She skipped out on a crash meeting by posing as a hooker. She's good. Can I see the dead man's dossier?

Chekhov slides across Marcel's file. Howard looks down at the image, in shock.

HOWARD

Marcel.

CHEKHOV

Double tap entry. No witnesses.

HOWARD

Marcel's been killed?

QUAYLE
(pointed)
Howard, you wouldn't happen to
have any cream, would you?

Howard returns to the kitchen. Prime leafs through the file.

PRIME
This makes sense.

QUAYLE
What. He was a double agent?

PRIME
His father is Francois Ricard.

QUAYLE
Yes, it's in the file here.
General, stationed in Berlin.

PRIME
On my side, Francois Ricard is
Deputy Chief of Affairs for the
Office. His son was killed as a
teenager. Car accident, years
ago. I signed the condolence card.

QUAYLE
So why kill Marcel's counterpart?

PRIME
Because a living copy of his son
is a carrot.

CHEKHOV
A temptation to defect.

PRIME
(nods)
See, I had a suspicion you weren't
as stupid as you looked.

Chekhov doesn't smile. Howard returns with the cream.

QUAYLE
What you're saying is, they're
killing people on our side who
might give officers on your side a
reason to defect?

PRIME
More or less.

QUAYLE

And you're asking us to believe
that makes any sense.

PRIME

There was a leadership transition
on my side. Are you aware of this?

CHEKHOV

(nods)
Six months ago.

PRIME

New bosses came in. Bunch of hawks.
We spend years minding our business,
guarding the Crossing. These people
show up, arguing that economically
speaking, the best option would be
to escalate this relationship into
a cold war. Others disagree.
They start talking defection, then
this starts happening.

Quayle stands, begins pacing.

QUAYLE

Christ...

CHEKHOV

Calm down.

QUAYLE

We have to tell the Sixth Floor!

PRIME

That would be the surest way to
get yourselves that war, yes.

Howard, listening from the fringes, finally interjects.

HOWARD

Why Emily?

Quayle looks up, irritated that he's speaking. But Prime
turns to him, probing.

PRIME

Because of me. She's my carrot.

HOWARD

Don't you have your own wife?

PRIME
(after a beat)
Dead. Cancer. Four years ago.
They're trying to kill yours to
keep me from coming over.

Howard, face fading as this sets in.

QUAYLE
What is your rank?

PRIME
I'm Operations, Colonel 4C.

Quayle and Chekhov react. Fuck that's high.

PRIME (CONT'D)
As you can guess, they don't want
me becoming a liability.

Chekhov glares at Prime, never giving him an inch.

CHEKHOV
A man of your rank must take on
many complex missions.

PRIME
You think I want to turn you inside-
out? Send me back. See who dies
next. We can have a guessing game.

CHEKHOV
Do you know me, on the other side?

PRIME
Yeah. I like the other you better.

Prime glances around the apartment.

PRIME (CONT'D)
Where's Emily? Does she work?

The others exchange glances. Prime reads it.

HOWARD
She crossed the street six months
ago, motorcycle came out of nowhere.
Some kid. Wasn't looking. They
say it's a vegetative state.

Prime, betraying emotion. Eyes glazing over.

PRIME

She's in a hospital? I need to know everything. If Baldwin started with Marcel, she's working her way down the Bucharest list. Which means your wife isn't far off.

CHEKHOV

We have guards.

PRIME

Hold them back, keep them at a safe perimeter.

HOWARD

Hold them back??

PRIME

This woman is a shark. She sees one break in the routine, one audible just for the sake of precaution... she calls it off, and we lose her. When do you visit?

HOWARD

Every night.

PRIME

I'm going in your place tonight.

(off his look)

Howard, you thought I brought you into this because I wanted to say hello? I have to pretend to be you, take her out myself.

CHEKHOV

You do not make these decisions --

PRIME

(re: Quayle)

No. He does.

Chekhov, simmering. Quayle, overwhelmed. Until finally --

QUAYLE

You've got a very short leash.

CHEKHOV

Mr. Quayle.

QUAYLE

We'll arrange things on our end.

(MORE)

QUAYLE (CONT'D)
Should take a few hours. We'll be
ready by... when do you think?

CHEKHOV
(sighs)
1900 hours.

QUAYLE
1900 it is. The two of you will
stay here until then.

Prime nods. Quayle rises, Chekhov follows. To Howard --

QUAYLE (CONT'D)
Get acquainted.

EXT. HOWARD'S BUILDING -- DAY

Quayle and Chekhov leave together.

QUAYLE
If he makes one left instead of a
right... kill him.

Chekhov nods. Gets in the car with Quayle and they drive
off. The guards remain behind.

INT. HOWARD'S BATHROOM -- EVENING

Outside, the sun is beginning to set. Prime, in a mirror,
shaves himself down to a photograph of Howard. Takes shears,
trims his hair. Approximating a likeness.

INT. HOWARD'S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Howard is drying the coffee cups. Prime comes in, dressed
in Howard's clothes. Looking in wonder at --

PRIME
This was my favorite tie. Lost it
years ago.

Howard looks up, struck by their physical similarities.

PRIME (CONT'D)
Like looking in a mirror?

HOWARD
Almost.
(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

(beat)
Keep it.

PRIME

I couldn't.

HOWARD

I haven't worn it in years.

Prime nods, grateful. Walks around the apartment. Studying details now. The record collection, the books, etc.

PRIME

So let's talk routines. You go straight in, up to her room. Anyone you interact with regularly?

HOWARD

Nurses. I say hello. No one, really...

Howard comes in with a box of SMALL CAKES.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I want you to try this. It's from the bakery on the corner.

PRIME

No thank you.

HOWARD

Just indulge me. There was a summer I spent in New York...

PRIME

I was there.

HOWARD

Right. Sorry. We spent. Do you remember, Dad used to bring home those funnel cakes? Certain tastes just bring me back...

PRIME

I can't. High cholesterol.

HOWARD

Really.

PRIME

You don't have it?

HOWARD

I don't think so.

PRIME

You will.

Howard sits, considers the cake. Changes his mind.

HOWARD

There are so many things I want to ask you. Memories. Feelings I've had all my life-- they only belonged to me. And now it's... us. We share genetics. A childhood.

PRIME

So?

HOWARD

So how are we this different?

PRIME

You'll go insane trying to chart it out. Trust me, people have.

HOWARD

What's your favorite music?

PRIME

Don't care for it.

HOWARD

Food? Taste buds must be the same.

PRIME

I don't know. American. You?

HOWARD

Chinese. Fascinating.

Prime looks out towards the worn-down Bucharest skyline.

PRIME

You wanna know what I was wondering? How come you never got out of Interface. Your post. You didn't move up. What stopped you?

HOWARD

I don't know. Life, I guess.

PRIME

That's your excuse?

HOWARD
I wasn't making excuses.

PRIME
Do you have regrets?

HOWARD
Some.

PRIME
This is what's so fucked. Genetics,
upbringing. Doesn't matter. We're
so helpless to experience. The
only difference between you and me
might have been a single moment.
One thing gone wrong.

HOWARD
(indignant)
Or right.

Prime turns to photos on the wall.

PRIME
Routine. At the hospital.

HOWARD
I read to her. Books she likes.
Poetry, mostly. I can't make heads
or tails of it, but...
(gestures at books)
You know how she always was.

Prime hones in on a photo of Emily as a child.

PRIME
You stay in touch with her family?

HOWARD
Just Eric.

PRIME
What a prick he was.

HOWARD
Is. He's here now, in Bucharest.

PRIME
He's a bully. Always reminded me
of Tony Jacob. Fifth grade.

HOWARD

God yes. The cowlick. Eric tried to upstage our wedding. Did he do that to you?

PRIME

(surprised)
Wedding.

HOWARD

Fourteen years ago, October.

Howard rises, goes to a picture on the wall. A wedding photo of himself and Emily, over a decade old. Prime stares --

PRIME

We eloped. Fourteen years, that must have been when you just met.

HOWARD

Well, when you know, you know.

Prime, struck by this. Howard puts the wedding photo back.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Never met anyone like her. First date, she left the table to wash up, I said to the waiter, "I'm going to marry her." I just *knew*.

(then, saddened)

I couldn't sleep last night-- thinking if there's another *me*, there's another *her*. I honestly thought I might see her again.

PRIME

Sorry.

HOWARD

Were you there for her in the end?

PRIME

I wasn't perfect.

HOWARD

You have regrets.

Long beat. Then --

PRIME

Every day.

A KNOCK. Prime opens the door. Chekhov, taking him in.

CHEKHOV
Which one are you?

PRIME
Fuck off.

Chekhov nods. That's what he thought.

CHEKHOV
It's time.

EXT. BUCHAREST STREETS -- NIGHT

Chekhov's car, moving silently through the crowded streets.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR, MOVING -- NIGHT

Prime sits front passenger. Howard in the back. Prime stares out at the sidewalks. Howard, looking out too, when suddenly --

HOWARD
Wait. Stop.

EXT. BUCHAREST STREETS -- NIGHT

Chekhov pulls up and Howard gets out. Prime and Chekhov wait by the car, looking around nervously.

CHEKHOV
Shouldn't be out here together.

PRIME
What is it?

Howard walks up to the FLOWER STAND. The same one he goes to every night. Hands the old woman money. She smiles, passes him the daffodils. He brings them back to Prime.

HOWARD
It's for Emily. She'll need a new arrangement.

Prime, holding the flowers, struck by the sentimental gesture. Howard gets back into the car.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Pulling up at the front entrance. Quayle is waiting in front, reading a newspaper. He gets in...

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

...shaking off the cold.

QUAYLE
Twelve men, two on every exit.

PRIME
Radio.

Chekhov hands Prime an earpiece.

QUAYLE
You two have gone over everything?

PRIME
She's on the 4th floor. Corner
suite. Replace the daffodils.
(re: Howard)
Give him a radio too.

Quayle nods. Prime starts to get out, when Quayle puts a
hand on his arm. Hands him a REVOLVER.

QUAYLE
Remember, our guard is never down.

Prime takes the gun. Sees a SHADOW standing in the alley.
A waiting THUG, smoking a cigarette.

PRIME
Keep them out of sight. Last thing
we need are your little pavement
artists turning this into a circus.

Starting to leave again when --

HOWARD
Talía.

Prime looks back.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
It's Thursday. The nurse on shift
is named Talía.

Prime nods. Goes inside.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY -- NIGHT

Prime walks in through the sliding doors. The nurse behind the desk smiles warmly. Prime walks past her.

EXT. HOSPITAL FRONT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

Quayle gets out, joins his men across the street from the hospital. Chekhov pulls the car around the corner, reverses, parks in the side alley, kills the lights.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Chekhov hands Howard an earpiece. He puts it in, waits.

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Prime comes up the elevator. Talia, behind her desk, glances at the daffodils in her vase -- now dead. She sees Prime coming, nudges the vase forward on the counter...

...but Prime smiles -- blank -- and walks past.

He stops at Emily's door. The BEEP of a heart monitor. He steels himself. Going inside...

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

And freezing before her. Emotion welling up. A lot beneath the surface. He places the daffodils into the vase. Gently touches her hand. Just as Howard did.

He sits beside her. Pulls out the Rainer Maria Rilke. But he doesn't read. Just... sits there. Staring.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Time passes. Chekhov momentarily turns off his earpiece.

CHEKHOV
What did you talk about.

HOWARD
Talk about?

CHEKHOV
The two of you. In your apartment.

Howard looks at him. Chekhov waiting. Probing. Finally --

HOWARD
Cholesterol.

EXT. HOSPITAL FRONT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

More time passes. Quayle, standing with his guards in the shadows. Checks his watch. One of the men taps him on the arm. Gestures to a TAXI pulling up.

QUAYLE
(into radio)
We have a visitor.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime, staring at the comatose Emily. Looking up. Alert.

EXT. HOSPITAL FRONT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

The taxi idles. The PASSENGER is motionless inside. Quayle, his men, staring. Waiting.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime, listening. Waiting too.

PRIME
Is it her?

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Howard leans forward from the back seat, watching as well, as the figure gets out of the taxi...

HOWARD
Christ, it's Eric.

EXT. HOSPITAL FRONT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

Eric pays the taxi, heads into the lobby. Quayle, watching --

QUAYLE
Who the hell is Eric?

HOWARD (O.S.)
Her brother.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime crosses to the window to look out.

PRIME
What do I need to know.

BEGIN INTERCUT. Cutting to Quayle, Howard, as necessary --

HOWARD
Don't engage. Tell him what he
needs to hear, and he'll go.
There's a contract by her bedside.

Prime goes over, picks it up. Reads it. Understanding.

PRIME
You didn't sign this.

HOWARD
Of course not...

PRIME
You weren't going to.

HOWARD
It's complicated! Look, just, if
you tell him what he needs to hear,
he will leave. Please.

Prime, glaring at the contract. Jaw clenched.

Moments later, Eric appears in the doorway.

ERIC
Well. I'm leaving for the airport.

Prime looks up at him. Unreadable. Eric sees the contract.

ERIC (CONT'D)
So what do I tell him?

HOWARD
(in earpiece)
Listen to me. Their father. He
wants her back in England...

Prime, looking down at the contract.

ERIC
It's time to let go, Howard. Let
her be with family. It's proper.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Long beat of silence. Howard begins to plead...

HOWARD
I know how it sounds. It's
complicated. What's important is
we get him out of there...

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime, staring at the paperwork. Then looking up at Eric --

PRIME
This is about me, isn't it.

ERIC
Don't be daft --

PRIME
You tried to warn her away from
the very beginning. No one in the
family liked me, did they.

ERIC
Stop it.

PRIME
She was in love. And you tried to
ruin the one good thing she had.

ERIC
I'm going to ask you one more time,
and then I'm going to leave.
Because this is childish.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Howard, listening, tense.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime, conflicted. Eric steps closer.

ERIC

He will sue you until you submit.
 You understand that? He will break
 you, for what? Pride? Sign it.
 Let's be done with this. Finally.

And then Prime puts down the paperwork. Resolve funneling
 into something else. Something dangerous.

PRIME

No Eric, if you want to break me,
 you're going to have to come with
 something harder than that.

Eric, stunned. Prime steps towards him. Indignation rising.
 A sense of emotional catharsis.

PRIME (CONT'D)

Let me tell you something that not
 a lot of people are willing to
 admit: you're an asshole. People
 like you mistake words for action--
 I don't. So I'm going to make
 this clear: if you, or anyone else
 in your family, even try to take
 her from me, we will be done. No
 more words between us. There will
 be nothing left to say. And Eric,
 I mean this when I say it... the
last thing you want, is me with
nothing left to say.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Howard, Chekhov, waiting as that hangs there.

EXT. HOSPITAL FRONT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

And Quayle, seeing something else...

A WOMAN approaching the hospital. Blonde, well-composed.
 High heels clicking. Wearing a fur coat. IT'S BALDWIN.

QUAYLE

Incoming. Female. Blonde.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime, reacting. Drawing his pistol now --

ERIC
Howard, what in God's name...

Prime spins him around, directing him to the closet.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY -- NIGHT

Quayle follows behind Baldwin. Watching as she gets into the elevator. It closes behind her.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime rips open the closet door, yanking an old wire coat hanger off the rack, unthreading it and furling it into a makeshift set of handcuffs. He crumbles up a face towel, jams it into Eric's mouth, then rips the belt off a bathrobe and threads it around his face.

PRIME
Stay here.

Slamming the closet door and hastily returning to his seat.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Howard, leaning forward.

HOWARD
What did you just do?

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime sits down, conceals his pistol by his side.

PRIME
He's fine. How long do I have.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY -- NIGHT

Quayle watches as the elevator stops on the 4th floor.

QUAYLE
She's on your floor.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime, frozen, finely-tuned. Listening to the BING of an elevator. The CLICK-CLACK of approaching heels.

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Baldwin, walking past the nurses. Hands in her fur coat.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Howard, Chekhov, waiting in agonizing silence.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

The click-clack getting closer and closer... and then finally STOPPING. Prime, waiting, alarmed. What's happening?

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Howard, hanging on every second.

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Baldwin, standing frozen, her icy face unreadable. As she clocks her surroundings. The nurses. Emily's door is open. But something strikes her attention...

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime, waiting, gun at his side.

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Baldwin, her face twitching into concern. As we now realize she's focusing on THE VASE WITH DEAD FLOWERS on Talia's desk.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Prime now hears the click-clack of heels as they rapidly RECEDE in the opposite direction down the hallway. He rises and readies his pistol.

PRIME

She's running.

Sprinting around the edge --

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

-- just as Baldwin opens fire with a SILENCED PISTOL, taking off chunks of plaster on the wall behind him -- a blindfire --

-- THE NURSES SCREAM

-- a shot whizzes past Talia's head

-- Prime returns fire

-- Baldwin flees around the corner

Talia, on the floor, looking at Prime. How he holds the gun, his impassive, focused stare. He sprints past her.

Rounding the corner. Sees Baldwin has removed her high-heels.

INT. CHEKHOV'S CAR -- NIGHT

Chekhov opens his door. Howard makes a move for his, but --

CHEKHOV

Stay.

HOWARD

I need to make sure she's all right!

Chekhov forcefully grabs Howard's wrists and draws him forward, handcuffing him to the headrest.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

Prime sprints down the stairs after Baldwin. Another shot wings past from below, hitting the ceiling light. He ducks back, pressing to the wall. Hears the swinging of a door.

PRIME

Hallway, 2nd floor.

EXT. HOSPITAL FRONT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

Chekhov joins Quayle at the front door.

CHEKHOV
All exits are covered.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

Prime barrels through the door after her.

PRIME
She's not going to an exit!

EXT. REAR ALLEY -- NIGHT

CRASH -- the breaking of glass! As Baldwin fires a shot that shatters a window and her BODY LEAPS THROUGH IT!

GLASS AND SNOW, mingling together. That same image from before. She lands in a snow drift. Barefoot, but rising like a goddamn phoenix covered in snow.

Two THUGS, standing by a door, surprised by her emergence -- THWIP THWIP! Two bullets catch them and they go down.

Baldwin is running again.

EXT. SIDE ALLEY -- NIGHT

Howard, struggling against the bindings in his car when he hears light footsteps, like a deer, moving through the alley. He pauses, looks out --

At BALDWIN creeping by. Unaware that she's not alone.

Howard, helpless, tries to remain very still. But now she sees the movement in the car. Moving closer, gun pointed...

EYE CONTACT WITH HOWARD. Raises her pistol --

-- when a BULLET catches her in the side of the face! Baldwin SCREAMS -- the first time we've heard her make a noise -- swings, drops. The gun clattering to her side. The shot just grazed her. She sits up, hands to her cheek, blood pumping between her fingers. Look at --

PRIME, moving his way closer, pistol smoking.

Eye contact with Prime. Then she looks back at Howard in the car. Recognizing something. Understanding.

She darts off into the night. Prime takes two more shots, runs to the end of the alley. Sees three possible paths.

She's gone. He opens the car door and looks at Howard.

PRIME

You all right?

Howard, enraged, staring back. Chekhov and Quayle run over.

PRIME (CONT'D)

You've got men down in the rear alley.

QUAYLE

Did she get away??

(re: Howard)

Christ, get him out of those handcuffs.

Chekhov removes them. Now free, Howard pushes him back -- a sudden EXPLOSION OF RAGE -- something else coming awake --

GRABBING CHEKHOV and shoving him against a wall!

HOWARD

DOES MY LIFE EVEN MATTER TO YOU?!

Chekhov, silent. Quayle, stunned. Prime, fascinated. Finally Howard shoves him off. Calming himself. Marching off towards the front entrance.

PRIME

Where are you going?

HOWARD

To check on my wife.

Prime gives the others a look. Let him go.

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Silent, horrifying. The aftermath of the chaos. Drywall dust on the floor. Shattered vases from gunfire. Nurses, CRYING. One of them grazed by a bullet.

Howard comes through like he's in a dream. Moves straight for Emily's door --

INT. EMILY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

-- standing over her bed. She's safe.

He hears something in the closet. Opens the door --

ERIC shields his eyes, protective. Howard removes the gag, the handcuffs. Eric's hands are shaking.

HOWARD
Are you all right?

But Eric is afraid of him. Howard sees it. Trying on the feeling of being feared...

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Get on the plane, Eric. We'll talk about it another time.

INT. INPATIENT CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Howard emerges from the room, sees Talia crying a little ways off. Being consoled by the Burly Nurse. Howard starts to approach, but when he does --

Talia cries out. She's looking back at him like she's looking at the devil. Hysterical.

Quayle comes up behind him.

QUAYLE
Time to leave.

Howard, frozen on Talia's terrified gaze. He walks away.

EXT. INTERCHANGE HQ -- NIGHT

It's late. Prime, Howard, Quayle, and Chekhov climb out of a car in front of the office building.

Prime is changing back out of his clothes. Hands them to Howard. Quayle stands frozen, like a deer in headlights.

QUAYLE
What happens now.

PRIME
She's gonna come back.

QUAYLE
So?

PRIME
So I come back too. I'll get another 12-hour visa. Probably take me a few days.
(MORE)

PRIME (CONT'D)

(re: Howard)

In the meantime, he needs
operational status.

QUAYLE

Don't be ridiculous.

CHEKHOV

He is Interface.

PRIME

He is my cover. I come to this
side, I'm him. And I'm not getting
anything done with Interface access,
you understand? Take care of it.

A glare between them. Quayle turns to Howard.

QUAYLE

Will you help us?

They all turn to him, waiting for his answer. And finally --

HOWARD

Fuck off. Someone take me home.

PRIME

Howard.

He storms back to the car. Prime watches him go.

Chekhov's female escort approaches, waiting expectantly.

CHEKHOV

Time to go.

PRIME

I'll be back. Soon as I can. 48
hours at the most. We need him.

QUAYLE

I know. I'll talk to him.

Prime nods at them, walks with the escort into the building.

INT. THE OFFICE LOBBY -- NIGHT

With Prime, walking, the damaged Bucharest skyline filtered
behind him. Not looking back as he goes.

INT. QUAYLE'S CAR, MOVING -- NIGHT

Quayle driving. Howard, stoic in the front passenger seat.

QUAYLE

I know you don't like me, Howard.
No one does. But I'm not... see,
my father used to say, none of us
choose what happens to our lives.
We react. And it's our reactions
that define us. This is your
chance, you realize. To make an
impact. For the better good.

INT. THE CROSSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Under the supervision of border guards, Prime walks back through the detectors. Returns his temporary visa. Removing keys for the metal detector. Catching sight of his TIE, folded in his pocket -- the one Howard gave him -- lingering.

Finally he clears the row of detectors, crosses the center gates and moves through a door...

INT. THE OTHER SIDE, CROSSING ROOM -- NIGHT

...emerging in a nearly identical room. Like walking through a mirror. This is Prime's world, which should appear like a loose imitation of ours.

INT. QUAYLE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Quayle pulls up in front of Howard's building. Neither man says anything for a long beat.

QUAYLE

Can we count on you?

Howard, silent. Pensive.

INT. THE OTHER SIDE, OFFICE LOBBY -- NIGHT

Prime, leaving the office. The lobby is identical to the lobby on our side, except filled with different guards, different secretaries. And through the windows, we can see...

A FAR MORE IDEALIZED VERSION OF BUCHAREST.

Resplendent, beautiful, clean. A city bathed in light. Economically much better off. This is Prime's world. And Prime's world is much better than ours.

INT. QUAYLE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Quayle, Howard, sitting in silence.

QUAYLE

You have the promotion. With Marcel gone, we'll need to fill it anyway. That's what you wanted, isn't it?

And Howard finally turns.

HOWARD

No. I want more than the promotion, Mr. Quayle. If I do this, I want authority. Access. Real knowledge and operational authority.

QUAYLE

Are you mad?

HOWARD

Or would you rather keep me handcuffed in the back seat.

QUAYLE

This has gone far enough. You are still my subordinate --

HOWARD

No. Everything's changed now.

Howard gets out of the car. Standing there --

HOWARD (CONT'D)

If you're not on board, then we have nothing left to say. And the last thing you want, is me with nothing left to say.

-- then slamming the door. Quayle, staring.

EXT. HOWARD'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

Howard climbs the steps. His face has cooled. There's a glimmer of his counterpart here. Something only beginning to come out.

INT. THE OTHER SIDE, BUCHAREST BAR -- NIGHT

Prime walks into a bar. Late night crowd. He sits at a high-top, orders a drink to the BARTENDER by gesturing with his fingers. He's waiting for someone. Watching the door.

INT. HOWARD'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Howard comes into his empty living room. Pours himself a glass of scotch. Neat. Eyes a Ray Charles record. "I Will Never Let You Go." He puts it on the player, then crosses to a photo of himself and Emily, from long ago.

INT. THE OTHER SIDE, BUCHAREST BAR -- NIGHT

A glass of scotch is put down before Prime. Neat. A song comes over the radio. Ray Charles. "I Will Never Let you Go." Prime mouths along to the words. Conscious or unconscious. May not even realize he's doing it.

The door opens. A woman steps in. Prime looks up, expectant. Seeing the absolute last face we expected to see...

EMILY.

Or as we will know her: EMILY PRIME. Emily's counterpart from the other side, who is very much alive. She's not wearing a wedding ring. And she doesn't look happy to be here. She sits across from Prime. Silent. Tense.

PRIME

Thanks for coming. You look good.

He reaches out for her fingers, but she RECOILS.

EMILY PRIME

What do you want, Howard?

INT. HOWARD'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The Ray Charles record. The same song carrying over. Howard sits in a chair. Mouthing along to the words.

AND AS WE TRACK OUT on this lonely, inscrutable man, we...

FADE TO BLACK.

* * * END OF EPISODE * * *