

THE PRICE OF LIBERTY

Written by
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based on the book:

Preventive Defense

By:

Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry

*Let every nation know, whether it wishes us
well or ill, that we shall pay any price,
bear any burden, meet any hardship, support
any friend, oppose any foe... in order to
assure the survival and the success of
liberty.*

- John F. Kennedy, Inauguration Day, 1961

EXT. ALMATY - AFTERNOON

After seventy years of Soviet rule, this town's construction is simple and brutal:

GARGANTUAN CONCRETE BLOCKS carved into buildings along WIDE AVENUES where no trees exist. Apartments, offices, schools-- all look imposing-- except for the air of dereliction among them.

In the distance, are severe and snow capped mountains.

A small group of older WOMEN-- dressed in heavy, home knit scarves-- haul FURNITURE out of an official, empty building. They begin to break it apart with hands and hacksaws... firewood for the coming winter...

CARD: **NOVEMBER 1991, ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN**

BEN BOWMAN (30)-- GEORGETOWN sweatshirt, cheeks rosy in the cold morning-- jogs by. He is all-American and cocksure-- *impervious if not oblivious to these humble surroundings.*

He waves to the WOMEN with a broad smile like the mayor on parade-- charming and winning.

BEN

Morning, Ladies.

A couple of the WOMEN look up-- bemused and baffled-- but they quickly return to the necessity at hand.

Ben continues towards a hulking IRON STATUE of STALIN with a CHAIN around its feet...

The chain extends a dozen yards to a LARGE TRACTOR-- *but the tractor is unoccupied--* its rear chassis has been ripped half off by the failed attempt to pull the dictator down. Ben capriciously salutes Stalin.

BEN

Another day, another dollar, Joe.

Then he accelerates and turns into:

EXT. MAIN SQUARE, ALMATY - CONTINUOUS

Ben jogs into a vast city square. *This is where thousands of Soviet troops once marched as tanks and missile carriers drove alongside them.*

The square is bisected by a large CANAL in the middle. There are several BRIDGES that cross it. On the other side of the canal-- running down the front of a monolithic government building-- are wide STAIRS.

Arranged on these concrete stairs are what counts for security in Kazakhstan-- *the mostly drunken MILITIAMEN--* bundled in their Soviet era uniforms with AK-47s.

There is SINGING and JOKING as they swig from VODKA BOTTLES-- *the only thing potentially more dangerous than an active soldier is an idle one.*

Three of them are trying to start an ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER (APC)-- twelve tons of Soviet steel and death on wheels.

It's parked at an angle on the steps... allegedly to defend the seat of the new Kazak government... but mostly for their amusement.

As it ROARS to life-- *every eye in the square looks up--* startled. Even Ben is surprised just as he jogs by a bread line:

HUNGRY CITIZENS-- ordinary people... workers, children and parents-- once proud, but now resigned to standing in line for the scraps of BREAD and weak potato SOUP being ladled out in front of a boarded up restaurant.

ON THE APC: the APC lurches down the stairs towards the canal and one of the bridges.

As it goes by: a MILITIAMAN on the stairs stuffs a RAG into his VODKA BOTTLE, LIGHTS IT, and then THROWS IT.

The MOLOTOV COCKTAIL explodes over the front of the APC-- **now twelve tons of FLAMING ARMOR--** headed down and gathering speed. The MILITIAMEN WHOOP and CHEER.

But not BEN... because he spots:

YURI (13, big heart) dancing in front of the very same bridge-- *a very fragile human unaware of the charging death machine.*

Yuri has a SONY DISCMAN on his belt and the classic YELLOW HEADPHONES on his ears. *His eyes closed-- rocking out to music recorded far from this forsaken place.*

BEN

Goddamn it, Yuri.

Ben pours the speed on-- this isn't a jog anymore-- he's got to be faster than a speeding APC.

ON MILITIAMEN: they've spotted Yuri and SCREAM at their comrades in the APC, who are blundering on-- blinded by the flames in front of the portholes.

A couple of the MILITIAMEN on the stairs FIRE their AKs into the air-- trying to alert the APC driver.

The APC barrels forward-- *straight toward the innocent Yuri-- dancing his heart out. The flames and steel twenty yards from him.*

ON BEN: he blazes over a footbridge and corners like the college track star he was...

He's close-- ten yards-- five--

And just then a MILITIAMAN POPS out of the top HATCH of the APC-- looks back at his buddies, sees them pointing, he spins and sees the kid ahead. He ducks back into the APC.

But turning twelve tons doesn't happen in an instant. The APC is five yards from Yuri-- **the kid is about to be burned and crushed**-- *merciless, awful.*

Finally, Yuri HEARS IT, turns, but he's stunned-- a deer in the headlights as the APC is four yards, three...

Two yards... and then...

There's BEN BOWMAN-- he closes the last yard-- *in a flying tackle. **KNOCKING YURI OUT OF THE WAY JUST IN TIME.***

The APC veers away-- hits the corner of the BRIDGE. The STONE EMBANKMENT SHATTERS-- flaming debris flying everywhere-- *and the APC tumbles head first into the canal.*

STEAM and WATER BLASTS back up as the APC sinks halfway into the canal and rests on the bottom.

After a beat, the MILITIAMEN onboard lurch out of the rear HATCH, spitting water and cursing. Their friends rushing down the stairs-- laughing and hollering.

The Kazaks around the square go back to their bread line and business. It's just another day in the Wild East.

Except for:

A MECHANIC who CLOCKS BEN's save from across the square-- his shop surrounded by Soviet clunkers in various stages of repair... or disrepair. *He watches Ben closely as:*

From a different direction:

CHARLIE LOMAX (55, Hawaiian shirt, blue jeans) and SERGEANT VIOLA WILKINS (25, African-American, Marine fatigues) rush up to Ben and Yuri, helping them up off the pavement.

Ben checks the shattered DISCMAN on the ground-- it's destroyed. He pulls the CD out, *two halves of the Stones' OUT OF OUR HEADS album.*

BEN

Damn it, Yuri-- you think I can get another Discman anywhere within six thousand miles of here?

He chucks the disc into the canal and then with a *furious kick*-- delivers the rest of the Discman to the water with a SPLASH. Sergeant Wilkins is checking a petrified Yuri.

SERGEANT WILKINS

It's just a CD player, Bowman.

LOMAX

Don't blame the kid. I told him he could take it.

BEN

Then you owe me two hundred bucks.

Yuri stammers his apology in Russian (**all in italics**).

YURI

I'm sorry, Ben.
(sheepish English)
I love rock-n-roll.

Lomax suppresses a laugh, barely.

Ben sees the kid's pained expression, he relents-- what else can he do... responds in Russian:

BEN

Just rock out with your eyes open next time...

They walk towards the edge of the square and what counts for America in this part of the world: *a dilapidated two-story executive building* with a LITTLE AMERICAN FLAG awkwardly placed above the door.

CORPORAL DUART (20, gung ho Arkansas native)-- *M-16 in his hands*-- stands fast as they approach. Wilkins waves him back inside.

SERGEANT WILKINS

For God's sake, Corporal, put that rifle back in the cage before you scare the locals.

CORPORAL DUART

They didn't seem too bothered by an APC crashing into the canal...

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - MOMENTS LATER

They all pile into the offices-- paint peeling off the walls and ramshackle furniture.

SERGEANT WILKINS

Duart, get the kid cleaned up.

Yuri and Corporal Duart exit into an interior room that doubles as small gun cage and first aid center... mostly a handful of CRATES labelled *US MARINE CORPS*.

Ben pulls off his scuffed sweatshirt-- examining the tear in the shoulder.

BEN

And my favorite sweatshirt.

LOMAX

God, you're a prima donna, relax-- I once had to jump into the Nile in a six thousand dollar tuxedo--

(off Sergeant
Wilkins)

Yes, I had been drinking.

BEN

We get any kind of communications working today?

SERGEANT WILKINS

Got through to the Moscow Embassy for a couple of hours this morning.

LOMAX

They said we might get a fax machine on the next Aeroflot flight.

They take a few quick stairs up and into:

INT. LOMAX'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The last member of the outpost, PRIVATE ORTIZ (19), is on his belly on the floor. He has his left arm stuck-- halfway up his bulging bicep-- into the wall.

LOMAX

What's happening, Ortiz?

Ortiz pops up, his hand pulling out of the mouse hole.

ORTIZ

Almost had him this time, sir.

BEN

'Him'? It's not just one mouse, Ortiz. There's got to be a dozen.

ORTIZ

I'm talking about the big one with the grey streak down his back. 'Ralph'.

BEN

'Ralph'? We should just get a cat.
(to Wilkins)
Can we get a cat?

SERGEANT WILKINS

Right after the fax machine.

Ben picks up the phone, clicks the buttons-- *it's clearly dead.*

BEN

(re: phone)

What are we going to do with the fax machine? At least a cat would work.

ORTIZ

Depends on the cat, sir.

SERGEANT WILKINS

C'mon, Ortiz.

Ortiz and Wilkins exit.

There are two large FOOTLOCKERS. One is open to reveal BOTTLES of BOOZE. The other reveals rows of BOOKS. The only other thing of note in the room is a small SAFE.

Ben grabs a WRENCH off of Lomax' desk and goes to the RADIATOR on the far wall and cranks it. There's the vague WHISTLE of steam.

Lomax pours a drink, nods to Ben who waves him off.

BEN

(re: Marines)

What do you suppose they did to get shipped here?

LOMAX

Sergeant Wilkins says Duart took the governor off the engine of an Abrams tank in Kuwait, took it for a joy ride-- she saved him from the stockade. As for her and Ortiz... I think it's still a white man's army-- or Marine Corps.

BEN

Last time I checked Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was black.

Lomax shrugs.

BEN

You get anything else out of the Moscow Embassy this morning?

LOMAX

Just headlines. Sounds like the Russians are rounding up the rest of the coup plotters. Yeltsin's secure. Everyone is still nervous, but sounds like things are settled for now.

(beat)

Desert Storm and fall of the Soviet Union-- Bush'll coast through the next election, got an eighty-nine percent approval rating.

BEN

Best since FDR?

LOMAX

Be my guess.

(beat)

We recognized Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia-- calling them the Baltic Three.

BEN

The poor guys that Foggy Bottom will send there. Think they'll have mice?

LOMAX

Hey. Bill Whittier said you basically begged for this gig.

BEN

That's when I thought the Kazaks had something to trade. I'm a trade liaison officer, Lomax. You see anything around here worth trading?

They look around at the peeling paint, wheezing radiator, Soviet-era-pressed-metal furniture.

Lomax gestures out the window at the mountains.

LOMAX

Maybe there's oil in them there hills.

(off Ben's look)

You kids... Raised during Reagan, 'the business of America is business.' People aren't commodities. For diplomacy to work you have to believe the person you're sitting opposite is human. Who knows if that APC would've turned in time, you probably saved the kid's life, doesn't matter if he can't afford a Coca-cola.

BEN

Well, I know he can't afford a new Discman.

LOMAX

(ignoring him)

The whole point is to show them what's best about America--

Ben cuts him off-- his face darkening.

BEN

'Best about America'? Lomax, my father was State Department for even longer than you-- told me a story once-- about the fall of Saigon.

(beat)

You remember the pictures? The helicopters on the roof of the embassy? People clinging to the landing skids-- desperate-- terrified-- anything to get out...

(beat)

My father was on that chopper and you know what he told me... he could see two of his friends... two locals that he worked with for five years... guys who started out as errand boys like Yuri, guys he couldn't get out when the time came.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

They were there with their families...
their fucking toddlers on their
shoulders... arms outstretched, begging--
begging to be taken... before the
Communists could wipe them out as
collaborators.

(beat)

And my Dad had to get on the chopper.
The Marines put him on that chopper. He
had to get on the chopper and come home
to me and my Mom and Fairfax, Virginia
and suburban barbecues and t-ball games.

(beat)

He told me that story a dozen times. How
badly he wished he could change things,
how he worked with the boat people,
refugees all over the world, how he
devoted the rest of his life to the
State Department-- to diplomacy...
Trying to make up for it. Trying to save
the world.

Lomax sits-- listening-- not sipping. There's the faint
SOUND of scittering, they both turn to see a MOUSE poke
his head out of hole-- look at them-- then disappear.

BEN

I used to be inspired by that story-- my
Dad's story... and then I grew up.

(beat)

Now I know that if you make friends with
locals, then there's going to come a day
when you have to leave them... or lose
them.

(beat)

I don't want to make friends, Lomax.

(beat)

I want to make money.

(beat)

There's no more Commies left to fight.
No more diplomacy left to do. No world
left to save. We won.

LOMAX

What about Kuwait-- we just fought a new
war...

BEN

Over oil.

(beat)

That's what we do now. I'm here to see
what products American companies can
sell the Kazaks.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

General Motors, General Electric,
General Dynamics... and Coca-Cola. And
I'm here to assess what they have to
trade us. Despite making the colossal
mistake of transferring here, I'm
actually pretty good at what I do and at
the end of this tour, I'll have ten
years in the State Department and the
resume and the contacts I need to get a
job in private industry. Travel the
world for corporations... business
class.

(beat)

The twentieth century was about
ideology, Lomax... The twenty-first is
going to be about money.

They stare at one another-- the old hippie and the young
cynic. And then just as Lomax opens his mouth to rebut--
the PHONE RINGS. They both react-- startled. Lomax grabs
the handset.

LOMAX

Lomax.

Lomax listens then hands the phone over to Ben.

BEN

Hey.

(checks wristwatch)

Yeah, need a shower, see you in an hour
at Oleg's?

(listening)

I like the sound of that.

He hangs up.

BEN

She's wearing a dress.

LOMAX

How does she always get the phones to
work?

BEN

KGB?

LOMAX

Definitely.

(beat)

Well, here's to old enemies and new
friends.

Lomax downs the drink.

INT. OLEG KARIMOV'S CLUB - NIGHT

In the deprivation of collapsing economies and uncertain futures, there's always one watering hole that thrives... and there's always one man who can get you what you need:

OLEG KARIMOV (50s) entrepreneur, raconteur, and ranking colonel of the Kazak militia... He's former Soviet Army and he immediately notices the Americans enter.

He speaks accented, but excellent English:

OLEG

Mister Lomax! So nice to see you again.

LOMAX

You see me every night, Colonel Karimov.

Oleg and Lomax hug like old enemies and new friends-- traditional kisses on both cheeks. Oleg turns to Ben.

OLEG

How's the apartment?

BEN

I don't have any hot water, Oleg.

OLEG

It is the unfortunate circumstances of our times, Benjamin.

Ben can read a pro because he is a pro. He smiles wide.

BEN

I bet when the Mongols descended from the mountains, your ancestors negotiated the copper piss pots for the Khan. You're telling me you can't find a little hot water for me...

OLEG

And what about your ancestors?

BEN

American mutts... I'm probably a quarter Irish and one quarter Kazak....

(closing the deal)

I know you live in the penthouse, Oleg-- you don't have hot water?

OLEG

It would cost a hundred dollars more per month. Hard currency. And it may not be possible at all.

BEN
Fifty and it's done tomorrow.

OLEG
(smirks)
Deal.

Oleg looks off-- momentarily distracted by a lazy waiter.

OLEG
Hey! Get those drinks to table five.

LOMAX
(under his breath)
You're a quarter Kazak now?

BEN
I could be, you never know...
(to Oleg)
Pleasure doing business with you, Oleg.

Ben heads off to find...

The woman who stands out amidst the rest...

ELIZAVETA 'VETA' IVANOV (mid-30s) in a modest, but form fitted blue and white dress. *She's an alluring, charming and curious soul.*

She lifts her hand from her drink on Ben's approach. He takes it-- *courtly*-- and kisses it.

And then she pulls him in fast and plants one on him-- they are lusty and eager. When their lips part, his exhale is fresh, *breath taken away by her and...*

BEN
Where the hell does Oleg find fresh mint in Kazakhstan?

She raises her drink to her lips and finishes it.

VETA
You should be wary of your new friend.

BEN
He's not my friend. But he did hook me up with a great, new apartment. You really want to sit through another dinner being lectured by Oleg about the history of Russian aggression and the annexation of Kazakhstan?

VETA

I think I'd rather see this apartment.

ON LOMAX: as he clocks Ben and Veta making for the exit.

LOMAX

(to Oleg)

Looks like she didn't want to hear your lecture tonight. Do I want to know where you got single malt?

OLEG

I am a capitalist now. Everything can be had for a price. You-- my other guests-- you pay. I deliver.

LOMAX

You sound like Ben. Greed serves no one.

Oleg gestures around.

OLEG

Winter will be here soon; people will starve. Would you rather I starve? Only those who do not know hunger have ideals, Charlie Lomax.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is opulent, a relic of some Soviet chieftain's expensive and corrupt tastes. Brass fixtures, wood paneled walls, and rugs made of Siberian Tiger fur.

Ben and Veta are sprawled-- *sweat still glistening*-- on one of the furs, the nearby bed untouched.

BEN

Do you like the Beatles or the Stones?

VETA

Western pop music wasn't part of my education at the Leningrad Institute for Foreign Affairs.

BEN

Fair enough. But I like the Stones... so if you're a Beatles kind of girl that could be a problem.

VETA

How did you phrase our relationship... a 'roman holiday'. I don't think taste in music matters...

She stands to find her bra.

VETA

I heard about the excitement in the square today.

BEN

I knew you were KGB.

VETA

You were very brave.

BEN

Just trying to save my Discman.
(off her curious
look)
Handheld music player.

VETA

Do you know what Mister Churchill said about the Americans?

BEN

'We can always be depended on to do the right thing.'

VETA

'After you've exhausted all the other options.'

BEN

And yet you still want to work in D.C.?

VETA

Yes.

BEN

Why? Do you want my help? Stay the night-
- let's talk about it.

She smiles.

VETA

No. But thank you. A job in the West would be very good for my career. But it is risky to try for such things.

BEN

Sometimes you have to take risks.

VETA

I cannot.

She pulls on her dress. He zips her up.

BEN

Why?

She picks up her shoes, goes to the bed and sits--
considering him-- for a long beat... trying to decide how
much to share... Finally:

VETA

I have a daughter.

Ben-- definitely surprised-- plays it cool.

BEN

Is she here in Almaty?

VETA

She stays with her grandmother at our
apartment-- when she's not out getting
into trouble.

BEN

Her father?

VETA

He died in Afghanistan.

Beat.

BEN

I'm sorry, Veta.

VETA

It was a long time ago.

BEN

Still. I'd like to meet her.

VETA

No.

(kisses him)

You are also risky, Benjamin.

Veta heads for the door.

INT. LOMAX'S OFFICE - DAY

Ortiz is on his hands and knees setting a mousetrap. But
this isn't a traditional American one-- *it's a steel cage
with a long piece of twine coming off the top.*

BEN

And what happens if you catch 'Ralph'?

ORTIZ

Yuri says you hold the twine and then
throw the cage in the canal until he...

LOMAX

Poor Ralph.

Yuri enters carrying some PAPERS-- hands them to Lomax
who tosses the kid a small BAG of CHEETOS.

LOMAX

Thanks, kid-- wash your hands of cheese
before the cultural meeting.

Yuri rips into the Cheetos and exits nodding-- munching.

BEN

You're taking the kid?

LOMAX

You don't want to come. Besides, he
speaks Kazak. You know another
translator that speaks English, Russian
and Kazak and works for Cheetos?

BEN

Cheetos are the 'best of America'?

LOMAX

(chuckling)
Go fuck yourself.

Yuri appears again.

YURI

(munching)
Someone to see you, Ben.

Ben nods and goes. Ortiz motions at Yuri.

ORTIZ

Hand me a couple of those.

Lomax looks up from his papers at Ortiz and Yuri and the
Cheetos in the mousetrap... they all shrug... *maybe it'll
work?*

EXT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - MOMENTS LATER

Ben steps out of the consulate building to find the
MECHANIC-- who clocked him in the square-- waiting. Ben
extends his hand, they shake.

BEN
Hey, Lyosha, what's up?

LYOSHA
 (nervous)
I'm sorry to bother you.

BEN
 What's going on?

LYOSHA
Your Lada will take a bit longer to fix.

BEN
You came all the way over for that?

Lyosha shifts awkwardly. Finally:

LYOSHA
My nephew... Well, we need help with a particular matter. We have been looking for someone specific.
 (beat)
You understand what used to happen to people in this country who talked to foreigners-- It was very dangerous.

BEN
It's a new world, Lyosha. What can I do for you? Do you have something you want to trade... something you want to sell?

Lyosha pulls a SCRAP of paper-- hands it to Ben.

LYOSHA
*I was asked to tell you... to be...
 (English)
 'Discreet'.*

He turns and leaves without another word. Ben is baffled. Truth is stranger than fiction... and this is a true story. Ben looks down at the SCRAP. On it is scrawled:

URANIUM 235

WEAPONS GRADE

20 KILOS

INT. LOMAX'S OFFICE - EVENING

Lomax is staring at the scrap. Ben is across from him.

BEN

It's bullshit. A con. My last posting, west Africa, a Liberian wanted me to help him start a business selling Kevlar vests and when we checked-- he was a friggin' fisherman...

LOMAX

You really think your Kazak car mechanic just got up one morning and decided to find an English language dictionary and look up the word, 'discreet'?

BEN

I think a Lada is piece of shit Soviet car and I could fix it myself if I had a hammer and some duct tape... and he's taken almost two weeks... I think he's a con man and it's a con.

LOMAX

Look, I don't remember much from Foreign Service school, but I do remember the class on World War II... an atom bomb isn't hard, Ben. You can go to the library and look up how to make one yourself.

(beat)

It's the centrifuges-- the fissile material-- the uranium-- that's the hard part. Took Oak Ridge most of World War II to produce just enough for Hiroshima.

Lomax goes to his FOOTLOCKER-- the one filled with BOOKS.

BEN

I was sure you were going for a drink.

LOMAX

Books and booze. All you need in the diplomacy game. You'll see. Now, make yourself useful and pour me one.

Ben gets up while Lomax pulls a JANE'S DEFENSE GUIDE.

Lomax goes back to his chair, puts his feet up on his desk and starts flipping pages-- searching...

Then his face changes... Just as Ben sets a DOUBLE down in front of him. *Lomax downs it in a single swallow.*

BEN

I'm on pins and needles over here.

LOMAX

'Twenty-four kilos is considered the minimum necessary for one full nuclear detonation.'

BEN

So, even if it's true-- and that's a big freakin "IF"-- he's got twenty kilos, not even enough...

LOMAX

Enough for a dirty bomb that takes out lower Manhattan?

BEN

You think the guy changing spark plugs in my car in middle-of-fucking-nowhere-Eurasia wants to blow up Times Square?

LOMAX

I think that the two of us are the only representatives of the sovereign, federal government of the United States of America and this guy has something he wants to sell us-- and you're the trade liaison officer.

BEN

Oh, c'mon.

LOMAX

Look, I don't like broccoli, but my mother was a vegetarian, life's tough sometimes, go talk to your mechanic.

Behind them-- a SNAP.

They spin to see a MOUSE in the TRAP-- nibbling on Cheetos.

EXT. MECHANIC SHOP, ALMATY - DAY

Ben and Yuri sit on the hood of a BLUE LADA that is up on blocks... surrounded by a sea of Ladas-- all clunkers.

BEN

Is this the only car the Soviets made? They must've made tens of millions of them.

YURI
Which one is yours?

BEN
You're sitting on it.

Yuri giggles as the mechanic, Lyosha, walks out of the shop with:

EVGENI KARPOV (22, headstrong).

LYOSHA
This is my nephew: Evgeni.

Ben stands and shakes hands.

EVGENI
(re: Yuri)
Who is this?

BEN
*He's my translator. I don't speak Kazak.
Are we going to be speaking Kazak? Are
we going to visit the President? Or is
this a scam? Where are we going?*

Evgeni considers-- then without a word-- heads for a nearby PICKUP truck and just starts the engine.

Yuri, without hesitation, goes and gets into the truck. Ben-- pissed-- has no choice but to follow.

EXT. HILLS AROUND ALMATY - DAY

Ben looks out at the spectacular countryside as the truck winds its way to:

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

The road ends in a small clearing.

Evgeni parks his truck amidst a small horde of vehicles and they get out.

BEN
Who's the party for?

EVGENI
It is my godfather's birthday.

BEN

*Your uncle the mechanic. Your godfather
the party animal...*

Ben grabs Evgeni-- spinning the kid-- face-to-face.

BEN

*I came here because you gave your uncle
a note... Which he gave to me... Which I
think is...*

(to Yuri)

What's Kazak for 'bullshit'.

Evgeni shoves Ben off him... Then hands him a FLASK.

EVGENI

*I do not know you. No one in my country
knows you. You will drink with us. Hunt
with us. Prove yourself worthy.*

Evgeni heads towards the woods.

BEN

'Hunt'? What are we hunting? Snipe?

EXT. DEEP WOODS - AFTERNOON

A motley crew of KAZAKS are assembled as a TALL MAN
(august, patriarch) speaks in Kazak. Yuri translates for
Ben.

YURI

'We have come here to hunt the mighty
Kazak Ibex-- be ready-- if you miss, it
will charge. And kill you.'

BEN

What the hell is an 'Ibex'?

Evgeni ignores him and holds out a RIFLE.

BEN

I haven't shot a rifle since Boy Scouts.

Ben looks to Yuri-- who shakes his head: no.

YURI

My mother would kill me.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON

Ben, now with the RIFLE, stalks through the woods. Beside him is Evgeni. Evgeni hands Ben his FLASK again.

BEN

Is that really the best idea?

Evgeni is as silent and scathing as ever. Ben reluctantly drinks, then hands it back.

BEN

Who are all these people?

In the distance are a half dozen Kazak UNCLES and AUNTS... the whole family out for an afternoon of fun.

EVGENI

(shrugs)

Uncles. Aunts.

Behind Ben: Yuri HISSES. Ben and Evgeni FREEZE.

Evgeni instinctively kneels-- Ben glances over and then does the same.

Evgeni points ahead... and then-- through the thick trees-- Ben sees it:

AN IBEX-- **enormous**-- like the monstrous love child of a moose and mountain ram-- with fearsome, razor sharp and looped HORNS.

Evgeni motions to Ben-- well... go ahead. Ben reluctantly shoulders the RIFLE and aims--

JUST AS THE IBEX SPINS-- wheeling to face them. Who exactly is the hunter and the hunted is the question that suddenly occurs to Ben.

EVGENI

Shoot!

Ben PULLS the TRIGGER. CLICK. Nothing happens.

The IBEX CHARGES-- crashing through the undergrowth-- fifty yards-- forty-- thirty-- *barreling straight at them, ready to kill... or be killed.*

Ben fiddles with the rifle... desperately trying to find the safety. And then-- THE IBEX IS TEN YARDS AWAY... almost on them.

BEN FIRES.

EXT. OMAROV DACHA - EVENING

The dacha (Russian cabin) is a two story, wooden structure. Sturdy and made for cold nights.

It is framed by the imposing mountains behind it-- already clouded by snowstorms-- *the same ones that will descend on Almaty in a few weeks as winter arrives.*

INT. OMAROV DACHA - EVENING

In the center of the dining room TABLE is a severed IBEX HEAD-- ram horns and all-- blood staining the table cloth.

An unsentimental trophy auguring in the celebration at hand. *Ben-- staring straight at it--*

BEN

I guess that's an Ibex.

Evgeni passes his flask-- this time Ben gratefully takes it.

INT. OMAROV DACHA - NIGHT

Ben is drunk... as a skunk. And-- with Yuri's help-- trying to lead a chorus of "*Satisfaction*" to a packed house of Kazaks.

He's actually having a blast-- he can't admit it to himself, even inebriated-- *but he likes these people.*

BEN

Keep them going, Yuri! I have to piss.

Ben stumbles out-- as AUNTS kiss his handsome American cheeks and UNCLES bear hug him-- he's at least won this crowd over... *and we'll see many of them again...*

EXT. OMAROV DACHA - NIGHT

Ben stumbles out of the party into the cold, mountain night. He meanders past the cars and towards a small grove of trees.

He unzips and starts to PISS-- staring out at the mountains in the moonlight. Ben shivers. He's surprised by a voice behind him speaking in crisp English

CAPTAIN OMAROV (O.S.)

Damn cold.

Ben spins-- *piss going everywhere*-- to find:

The TALL MAN from the woods... CAPTAIN OMAROV (50s, an officer and gentleman), standing a few yards away.

BEN

Beg your pardon...

He spins back to finish his peeing and zips up as the Captain walks closer.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

You were thinking-- it's beautiful. But cold. Damn cold.

BEN

Yeah... I guess so.

(beat)

So. You're...

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Evgeni's godfather. Captain Omarov.

Ben rubs his hands on his pants. Then looks out at the mountains... trying to sober up.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

I commanded him on my last tour. I was a missile boat captain in the Soviet Navy.

BEN

Submarines?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Yes.

BEN

So you dragged me all the way out here? Why?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

(nods to the dacha)

I want my friends and family to be safe.

(beat)

People think that Mutually Assured Destruction kept them safe. What will they think when nothing is mutual any longer?

BEN

Okay... look, you want to sell me twenty kilos of uranium--

CAPTAIN OMAROV

No.

BEN

No?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

No. Not "sell". I want to give it to you.

BEN

So just give it to me already. Whatever sort of weird test... I've proven myself here tonight-- certainly my liver has-- so hand it over... Or are you just conning me?

Omarov studies Ben for a long beat.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Come to the mechanic shop tomorrow morning-- and leave your 'translator' at the consulate.

He walks back to the dacha.

INT. OLEG KARIMOV'S CLUB - NIGHT

It's the wee hours of the morning, but the party's still going at Oleg's club.

Ben stumbles in-- still a little tipsy-- and heads straight for the usual table of: Oleg and Lomax.

INT. OLEG'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Ben, Lomax and Oleg stand in the small, bustling kitchen-- avoiding trays of food and busy WAITERS racing by.

OLEG

A Geiger counter? Are you drunk?

LOMAX

To be fair, we all are.

OLEG

What do you want that for? Has the American consulate become radioactive?

Oleg considers Ben...

OLEG

It won't be cheap.

BEN

(to Lomax)

You're the one with the petty cash...
And you got me into this...

LOMAX

(to Oleg)

Just so long as it works.

INT. LOMAX'S OFFICE - MORNING

Ben is holding his hungover head. Sergeant Wilkins hands him some ASPIRIN.

BEN

Thanks.

Lomax is staring at the large GEIGER COUNTER on the desk. It's a rectangular box the size of a football with a GRIP, small METER on the top, and a 'SNIFFER'-- like a shower head-- sticking out of the front.

SERGEANT WILKINS

I don't like any of this. It's
dangerous. It's unauthorized--

Ben picks up the phone-- holds the receiver up for them to hear-- no DIAL TONE.

BEN

Look, I'm happy to ask the bosses in
D.C. but last time I checked we still
don't have a working phone...

SERGEANT WILKINS

What if it's a kidnapping operation?

BEN

I don't know, just didn't seem the type.

SERGEANT WILKINS

He didn't seem like the 'type' who
kidnaps and ransoms idiotic, drunk State
Department employees?

BEN

I'm not drunk anymore.

Sergeant Wilkins picks up the Geiger and walks out of the room.

BEN

Hey!

INT. THE CAGE/FIRST AID ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sergeant Wilkins is in the cage-- digging through one of the CRATES. She pulls out a small DEVICE-- yellow and black-- that looks like a Walkie-talkie.

She gestures at Corporal Duart who is hanging by the door as Ben and Lomax enter.

SERGEANT WILKINS

Duart, get me a screwdriver.

Duart pulls out his LEATHERMAN MULTI-TOOL, snaps the flathead screwdriver attachment out, and hands it over. In exchange, Wilkins hands him the DEVICE in her hands.

SERGEANT WILKINS

Prime this.

CORPORAL DUART

Yes, ma'am.

He starts to fiddle with the DEVICE, as she takes the screws off the back of the GEIGER COUNTER.

BEN

What the hell are you doing?

SERGEANT WILKINS

If you're crazy enough to go out there alone--

BEN

You think I want to do this? I'm a trade liaison--

SERGEANT WILKINS

At least we can find out where they're hiding it... if you come back.

Duart hands her the DEVICE.

SERGEANT WILKINS

It's a Global Positioning Satellite tracker. G-P-S.

(beat)

(MORE)

SERGEANT WILKINS (CONT'D)

Got 'em last year during the Gulf War.
Found it when I did the inventory.

She takes the back off the Geiger Counter and stuffs the GPS in the innards-- amidst the wiring. Then she jams the back closed and starts putting the screws back in.

LOMAX

'G-P-S'?

CORPORAL DUART

You can find yourself-- down to a few feet-- the exact coordinates--

SERGEANT WILKINS

-- anywhere in the world-- no map.

BEN

Bullshit.

CORPORAL DUART

Satellite navigation. Just give it a couple of years-- Gonna' be in your Chevy soon-- you'll never be lost again.

BEN

You've got a magical device that could tell me the exact longitude and latitude of a Marine helicopter in the middle of the Pacific ocean... but you can't tell me when we're going to get the phones working?

SERGEANT WILKINS

They're not storing nuclear material in your sub captain's cabin. If you make it back, we'll know where it is.

(beat)

Just try not to mouth off and get yourself kidnapped.

BEN

No promises.

EXT. MECHANIC SHOP, ALMATY - MORNING

Ben carries the Geiger toward Evgeni who is leaning on his truck door-- waiting for the American. He nods at Ben to go around to the passenger side.

Lyosha opens the door for Ben and he gets in, but Lyosha doesn't close the door-- instead he pulls a dirty RAG from his hip pocket.

LYOSHA

I need to blindfold you.

BEN

(to Evgeni)

I thought I was trusted? No?

Evgeni pulls a small PISTOL from his pants and sets it on the seat beside him.

EVGENI

No.

INT. EVGENI'S TRUCK - AFTERNOON

They're driving higher and higher into the mountains. The road is steep and there is a light dusting of snow on it. *Ben is shivering a little.*

They take a turn and he WHACKS his blindfolded head on the door.

BEN

Damnit.

(re: blindfold)

Do I really have to keep this on?

EVGENI

I could knock you out and throw you in the back...

Ben resolves himself to a long, cold, quiet ride.

Outside they come to a CROSSROADS.

Evgeni turns left-- onto a single lane, paved road-- higher into the mountains-- if Ben could see the view, he'd see nothing but six thousand foot drops and no guardrails... *maybe it's better to be blindfolded.*

EXT. SEMIPALATINSK-16 - LATE AFTERNOON

Evgeni's truck pulls up at a long, chain-link FENCE. *Snow is a couple inches thick on the ground.*

At the GATE is Captain Omarov and a single KAZAK GUARD with an AK-47. Evgeni stops the truck. And as the GUARD opens the gate, Captain Omarov approaches.

He opens Ben's door and Ben RECOILS at the freezing air.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

You may take off your blindfold, Ben.

Ben takes it off and blinks in the fading daylight.

BEN

Where am I?

Captain Omarov motions for him to scoot over. Ben does and Omarov climbs in beside him. Evgeni puts the truck in gear and the three men proceed.

INT. EVGENI'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Captain Omarov points out as they pass through the fence.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

You are in a place with no name.

(beat)

Last year-- when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics still existed-- it was known only to those who worked here... and only by its post office box in Almaty-- Semipalatinsk number 16... not that they were allowed to receive mail.

Ben looks out-- bewildered.

INT. EVGENI'S TRUCK - EVENING

Ben is still looking out the window as they pass row after row of abandoned buildings.

BEN

Where is everyone?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

They left when the Soviet government disintegrated. No more money, no more salary... no more scientists, no more workers. They would freeze to death-- starve to death in these mountains.

(beat)

The reason we blindfolded you, Ben... the only people who know how to get here... have been here before. It is known as a 'closed city'-- not on any map. If you don't know where it is... then you can never find it.

BEN

How do you know where it is?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

I was brought here to advise on the development of a new submarine reactor. I met my wife here-- she was a worker-- the only Kazak woman I ever met who liked Pushkin. Do you like Pushkin?

Before Ben can answer, Omarov motions to Evgeni.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

There.

EXT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - MOMENTS LATER

The truck pulls up outside a decrepit looking warehouse.

The only signs of life are two SECURITY GUARDS with AKs and a giant steel CHAIN around the doors. Captain Omarov gets out of the truck and heads for the doors.

He pulls a LARGE KEY from his pocket and inserts it into the ancient looking PADLOCK (yep, padlock, true story). Ben is incredulous.

BEN

We have computerized fingerprint scanners... at least I hope we do. And you've got uranium in a warehouse with a padlock from World War II?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

The Soviet Union was a vast nation... with too little money and too many secrets. When it fell... it fell hard.

He gestures around to the GUARDS.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

These men are loyal to me, I feed them what I can, from my savings and our hunting, I knew many of them from the Navy, like my godson... Or my wife's family.

(beat)

We share a belief in the New World, Ben. We are not asking you for money. We are asking for your humanity.

He throws the CHAIN to the ground and opens the doors.

INT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - MOMENTS LATER

The warehouse is colossal-- walls disappear into the dark. A SINGLE LARGE LAMP-- two stories overhead-- illuminates a PALLET in the front of the warehouse.

On the pallet is a large GREY CYLINDER of ordinary looking METAL-- yes, uranium looks just like ordinary metal.

Omarov waves Ben forward and gestures at the CYLINDER. Ben raises the Geiger cautiously and approaches... no idea what to expect. And then it happens:

The Geiger BEEPS, BEEPS, BEEPS-- the meter jumping straight to RED.

Ben looks from the cylinder to the Geiger and back.

Long beat.

BEN

So, I guess it's not a wild goose chase...

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Do you know what your scientist-- Oppenheimer-- once said?

Ben doesn't answer-- still looking at the cylinder.

Captain Omarov gently takes his elbow-- guiding him back away from it... toward the nearest wall.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

(re: uranium)

Not a good idea to stand too close for too long. Radiation sickness. Cancer.

That snaps Ben out of it. He moves back a short distance.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Oppenheimer... He quoted the Bahgavad-Gita--

BEN

'Behold, I am become Death. The Destroyer of Worlds.'

Omarov nods-- impressed. *It's time to take a leap:*

CAPTAIN OMAROV

I have spent all my adult life preparing to fight the United States of America.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN OMAROV (CONT'D)

But now, I must trust it. Trust you.

(beat)

Oppenheimer knew what we all now know...
that to build such a weapon-- harness
the power of stars-- the sun itself...
that the atom bomb made gods of men.

(beat)

*It is not good to begin friendships with
a lie, so I hope you will forgive me.*

Ben looks at him-- suddenly worried-- glances at the door
and the men with AK-47s... is it a kidnapping?

BEN

What?

Oramov reaches for a SWITCH on the wall.

It's a heavy, electrical switch and he swings it up with
effort.

CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK... the sound echoes off the walls.

Ben whirls to see:

LIGHT after LIGHT come on... illuminating the entire
warehouse.

There isn't just one pallet of uranium...

THERE ARE DOZENS.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

It is not twenty kilos. And it is not
just my life in your hands, nor my
godson's, it is millions. Millions of
lives.

(beat)

There are 600 kilos of uranium here.

Enough for--

But Ben's mind is whirling faster than a calculator.

BEN

24 hydrogen bombs.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

You are now a nuclear superpower,
Benjamin Bowman.

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT - DAY

The airport consists of a single CONTROL TOWER and a small BRICK TERMINAL that looks like a storefront.

However, the RUNWAY is massive-- a tarmac that can handle the old Soviet fleets of Antanovs and Tupelovs.

One broken down ANTANOV-- *a communist beast of the sky, made to ferry tanks to distant battles*-- sits rotting, halfway out of one of several enormous HANGERS on the far end of the field.

In the face of such size, the little civilian terminal and control tower seem tiny... and Ben and Lomax smaller still... as they watch:

A REGIONAL AEROFLOT FLIGHT land, with stereotypical bumpiness on the tarmac, and taxi toward the terminal.

There is no security, no ticket counters-- just a small GROUP of civilians-- and off to the side, the two Americans... absentmindedly watching the plane.

LOMAX

It's bullshit.

BEN

Now, you think it's a scam?

(beat)

He's not asking for a dime.

LOMAX

He will.

BEN

I don't think so. He's not the type... he's...

LOMAX

Crazy?

BEN

I was going to say an idealist.

LOMAX

No wonder you get along so well.
Opposites attract.

Ben reaches into his SMALL BACKPACK and pulls out the GPS TRACKER.

BEN

Look, here's the satellite G-P-
whatever... you want to take it to D.C.?
Be my guest. I'm happy to stay here and
see Veta tonight.

LOMAX

We'll get the phones working.

BEN

You really think it's a good idea-- to
talk about this on an unsecure line...

(beat)

Captain Omarov says that in a few weeks--
winter coming-- the roads will be
impassible. That's all the time we have.

LOMAX

Or we call his bluff and wait til
spring, see if he's so anxious then.

BEN

I thought about it for almost four hours--
- blindfolded-- coming out of those
mountains, Lomax... the problem isn't if
it is bullshit, the problem is: what if
it's not bullshit?

Lomax considers-- staring at the Aeroflot plane as a few
PASSENGERS disembark and run away from the prop wash--
the pilots don't even bother to turn off the engines.

LOMAX

Yeah...

BEN

The only thing keeping that stuff safe
is the blind will of that crazy-- and
yes he's certifiable-- Kazak sub captain
and the anonymity of that secret town--

LOMAX

Also sounds like bullshit. A whole
fucking town with just a PO Box for a
name?

BEN

(exasperated)

Look, if you have any other ideas...

Lomax doesn't. The other passengers are boarding. Lomax
holds out his hand to shake. Ben grips it.

LOMAX
Any idea what you'll say to the boss?

BEN
The truth?

Lomax laughs out loud.

LOMAX
And what happens if that doesn't work?

BEN
(shrugs)
My roommate from Georgetown works at the
Pentagon...

Ben runs for the plane.

CUT TO:

EST./EXT. - TEHRAN - LATE AFTERNOON

CARD: **TEHRAN**

INT. PRISON, TEHRAN - LATE AFTERNOON

CAPTAIN AL-JAFARI (40) is sitting quietly in a dimly lit room. He is making notes in a small NOTEBOOK with a pencil, he finishes and looks up at:

A PRISONER-- *hanging unconscious and upside down by his ankles-- his back flayed and dripping blood on the floor.*

With the slightest nod from Al-Jafari, a SOLDIER standing nearby throws a BUCKET of ICE WATER on the prisoner.

The prisoner SCREAMS into consciousness-- *thrashing in unmitigated pain.*

Before Al-Jafari can continue his interrogation a fist POUNDS on the cell door and it opens.

A SOLDIER enters-- hands Al-Jafari a note and exits.

INT. REVOLUTIONARY GUARD HEADQUARTERS, TEHRAN - DAY

Al-Jafari is seated, this time in a well lit room-- as tea is being poured for him by:

His boss, GENERAL BABAK (60s). Babak hands Al-Jafari the cup and then sits behind his large desk.

He nods to a TV nearby and raises a VCR REMOTE and presses PLAY.

The tape plays clips from CNN and the just concluded Gulf War. Specifically, they are watching ***cruise missiles and laser guided bombs from America crash into Iraqi installations with deadly accuracy.***

Finally, Babak presses PAUSE-- on an image of a building exploding, captured by an American night vision system.

Al-Jafari stares at the screen and sips his tea... waiting for Babak to begin. Babak watches the younger man carefully. Then, in Farsi:

BABAK

We fought the Iraqis for eight years.

(beat)

The Americans destroyed them in days.

Al-Jafari sips his tea.

BABAK

They were undeterred by Saddam's chemical weapons. By his Scud missiles.

(beat)

What is to stop them coming here?

AL-JAFARI

General... the mighty nation of Persia and her Revolutionary Guard always stand ready to defend the faith.

BABAK

Platitudes will not help you in this room, Captain.

AL-JAFARI

What do you want me to do?

BABAK

You speak Russian?

Al-Jafari nods-- yes.

BABAK

The Soviets are gone. Their technology is not.

Babak hands him a FILE and begins to usher Al-Jafari to the door.

BABAK

*We are dispatching men to Poland,
Ukraine-- former communist states-- to
find whatever technology you can.*

(beat)

*Buy it. Steal it. Do whatever you must,
Captain. We will not fall like the
Iraqis.*

AL-JAFARI

Where am I going?

Babak opens the door-- briefing over, time to go to:

BABAK

The very new 'Republic of Kazakhstan'.

EST./EXT. U.S. CAPITOL - DAY

CARD: **CLASSIFIED SENATE BRIEFING, WASHINGTON D.C.**

INT. SENATE BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

ASHTON 'ASH' CARTER (30) *handsome despite the ruffled
suit of a classic policy wonk-- that's 'nerd' to anyone
outside D.C. He's senior staffer to and sits behind:*

UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM HAWKINS (50s)--
bureaucrat-- a creature of the Beltway... with the small
crew of lackeys to prove it... And his name on the
printed card in front of his microphone.

Hawkins is seated at a small TABLE in front of two rows
of senators. *These are the most powerful committees in
the United States and therefore the most powerful
senators.*

The first row-- floor level-- is FOREIGN RELATIONS...
chaired by:

SAM NUNN (Democrat of Georgia), don't let the Southern
drawl fool you, he's savvy and serious.

Behind him, slightly raised, is ARMED SERVICES...
formerly chaired by:

DICK LUGAR (Republican of Indiana), the only thing he
hates more than Democrats... is the particular one in
front of him from Georgia named... Sam Nunn.

The only other person in this room who matters is seated off to the side-- watching the proceedings behind owlsh glasses... *after the President, he's the most powerful man in Washington:*

GEORGE MITCHELL (Senate Majority Leader, Democrat of Maine) a man who knows weak spots and how to apply pressure. The best poker player in the room.

It may be Hawkins' briefing, but Mitchell is keenly watches the argument unfolding between Nunn and Lugar.

LUGAR

(to Hawkins)

Mister Secretary, you're suggesting that we continue to finance dozens of bomber bases-- did I miss a news bulletin on CNN? Isn't the Cold War over?

HAWKINS

Senator Lugar, we don't yet know the threats posed by--

LUGAR

Sir, we're not talking millions of taxpayer dollars-- we're talking billions--

NUNN

If the Republican senator of Indiana would let the Secretary finish, I think we'd find that he's been quite clear about the economic devastation that would befall the communities around these bases. Base closures means ancillary job loss throughout--

LUGAR

Senator Nunn, is it the position of the Democratic Party that we must subsidize a military that no longer has any clear opponent anywhere in the world just so the local bars can stay open?

NUNN

Is it the position of any Republican that we need less military spending? Has hell frozen over, Senator Lugar?

Chuckles throughout the chamber-- well played.

LUGAR

The safety of the American people will always be the first priority of the Republican Party, Senator Nunn. But I'm not voting for a dime of their hard earned money to be wasted.

(to Hawkins)

Secretary, you come back to us when you've got a list of base closures you'd like to recommend.

Hawkins swallows and smiles.

HAWKINS

Of course, Senator. It's always our top priority to make the Pentagon's spending transparent and accountable to the American people.

More chuckles. In the corner, George Mitchell grins, stands and goes.

As does everyone else.

Hawkins throws a sharp look back at Ash.

HAWKINS

Mister Carter, I need a meeting with the Secretary of Defense.

ASH

You think the Prince of Darkness is going to help you close bases?

HAWKINS

I think he's survived in the District of Columbia longer than I have.

INT. ASH CARTER'S OFFICE, PENTAGON - DAWN

It's a spacious office with a large desk, small conference table and two COUCHES.

Ash comes in and flips on some LIGHTS.

BEN (O.S.)

Ouch.

Ash spins-- startled.

ASH

What the hell--

He stares at his old Georgetown roommate-- crumpled up on the nearest COUCH-- still in the same clothes he left Almaty in... his head on his backpack.

ASH

Ben? Pentagon security isn't what it used to be...

Ash sets his briefcase on the conference table and sits in one of the chairs as Ben slowly sits up, rubbing his day old BEARD and eyes.

BEN

You're not as important as you think, Ash.

ASH

My boss reminds me of that every day.

BEN

I think the duty officer took pity on me--
- I also might've been delirious. It's unclear. But yeah... Pentagon security isn't what it used to be.

ASH

I thought you were in one of the '*stans*'--
- Turkmeni-stan... Tajiki-stan...

BEN

Kazakh-stan.

(beat)

But you-- still making the other Georgetown alums jealous of your career?

Long beat.

ASH

So-- you got on a plane, twenty hours...

BEN

Thirty.

ASH

Thirty hours... break into my office to talk about alumni...

BEN

I got a scrap of paper shoved in my hand--
- my mechanic gave it to me... it said
'U235, weapons grade, 20 kilos'.

That stops Ash cold-- 'uranium'.

ASH
You found twenty kilos of uranium?

BEN
Six hundred.

ASH
What?

BEN
It's not twenty-- he's got six hundred.

ASH
Who's 'he'-- your mechanic?

BEN
Omarov. Captain Omarov. Crazy sub
captain.

ASH
Sub captain?

BEN
Look, I did my job, I flew for thirty
hours straight, I walked out of Dulles,
I took a cab to Alexandria, I woke up my
boss-- the UnderSecretary for Eurasia--
in the middle of the night--

ASH
What'd he say?

BEN
That he's ordering a psych eval and if I
pass then he's firing me.

ASH
And if you don't?

BEN
(shrugs)
An asylum I guess?

Ash laughs-- it's cathartic-- Ben laughs. Feels good. Ash
considers his college roommate.

ASH
What can I do for you, Ben?

Ben shakes his head-- can read his friend's apprehension.

BEN
I'm sorry to show up unannounced with
unwelcome news.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

But there's a warehouse in the mountains of Kazakhstan with nothing but a padlock-- swear to God, it looks like from World War II-- and there's twenty-four hydrogen bombs worth of uranium inside. Is it really easy to make a bomb?

ASH

The hard part is the...

He doesn't say; he doesn't have to. Ben is resigned.

BEN

Yeah. Look I don't know where else to turn. I'm a trade relations officer, Ash. Should I just walk away from all this?

(beat)

You tell me...

Ash considers for a long beat.

ASH

Well, I think what we're talking about is 'Tiger Team'-- a cross-departmental, mission specific, specialized unit. One objective. One unit.

(beat)

State Department for foreign relations. Defense Department for special forces for security.

BEN

Okay...

ASH

(shrugs)

And maybe some Department of Energy guys to verify the stuff-- no offense to you, what'd you use? Geiger?

(off Ben's look)

Yeah. Probably need more proof than that. DOE guys'll also know how to pack it for transport.

(beat)

And, yeah, I guess that should do it.

BEN

Well, my boss says I'm crazy. State's out. Ready to try your boss?

INT. WILLIAMS HAWKINS' OFFICE, PENTAGON - DAY

Hawkins stares across his large OAK DESK at Ash and a still disheveled Ben. Finally...

HAWKINS

Are you out of your fucking mind?

BEN

Seems to be the general consensus.

HAWKINS

I wasn't talking to you.

(pointing at Ash)

This office-- this whole building-- hell the U.S. Armed Services-- and the whole goddamn United States of America has spent the last seventy years fighting the Soviet Union.

(beat)

Even if I believed this horseshit, we're not going to clean up a mess that the commies made for themselves. Fuck them.

He stands and pounds the desk.

HAWKINS

And fuck you, Carter-- wasting my fucking time-- you go dicking around town with this State Department chucklehead and it'll be your career. Now get out of my fucking office.

Ben and Ash stand to go-- Ben whispers as they do:

BEN

I have a better idea... no more bosses.

INT. TREASURY BUILDING - DAY

Ben and Ash sit in front of a very prim UNDERSECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, NANCY WALLER (40s). She looks like an accountant... she is one... a government one-- which is even worse.

NANCY

Ben, even if I wanted to help-- which I don't-- there's no way.

BEN

Nancy, we can call it an investigation-- into the trade relations viability of the sovereign nation of Kazakhstan.

NANCY

You ran this up the flag pole at Foggy Bottom?

BEN

My boss threatened me with a psych eval.

NANCY

(to Ash)

Pentagon?

ASH

Similar reaction.

NANCY

Look, this is the Treasury, gentleman-- if one penny of taxpayer funds goes missing on corruption or fraud or even your personal M&M candies habit, then we'll spend the rest of our lives testifying before Congress.

Ben and Ash exchange a look. Fuck.

NANCY

And, by the way, speaking of Congress, there's no legal mechanism to do this. I checked. The United States of America cannot legally take anything out of Kazakhstan.

(cold)

Good afternoon.

Meeting over. The boys get up to leave.

ASH

Thanks, Nancy, say hello to Tom for us, will you?

BEN

(cheerful fist)

Sigma Phi foreva...

She rolls her eyes; they're out.

INT. TOWER RECORDS, LOGAN CIRCLE - AFTERNOON

Ben FLIPS through a long rack of CDs. Ash stands beside him holding two SONY DISCMANS-- still in their boxes.

BEN

I got Willie Nelson, U2, Beatles...

(beat)

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

But I can't go back without Gimme'
Shelter.

Ash gestures around-- pimply TEENS playing hookey and shopping in the RAP section, MOTHERS pushing strollers and looking around NEW AGE... all blissfully unaware...

ASH

You're just going to go back and what? Stick your head in the sand? Or snow-- they have snow in Kazakhstan? That uranium won't stay hidden forever-- I don't care if it is in a secret city.

BEN

Me? I went to my boss at State, yours at the Pentagon, the only person either of us knows at Treasury... you think we'll have better luck with some random staffer at the Department of Energy?

ASH

It's a different world now, our bosses don't realize it yet, but it is. The Cold War had rules. There aren't any rules anymore. And we're going to wake up one day soon and wish we didn't let a suitcase full of uranium get smuggled into the Tower Records in Logan Circle by a bunch of North Koreans or terrorists or whomever hates us at that particular moment. We're going to have severe proliferation problems if you let this six hundred kilos go...

Finally, Ben stops and turns on his old roommate:

BEN

What do you want from me, Ash?!

(beat)

Nancy said there's no law-- no way to do it even if we wanted to-- do you have an Act of Congress up your sleeve? Are you a senator?

INT. SENATOR SAM NUNN'S PERSONAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Ben and Ash sit in chairs in the quiet and stately office of the senior senator of Georgia.

BEN

Isn't this exactly what your boss told you not to do?

ASH

After we saw him this morning, he left for Nebraska to visit one of the bases we might be closing-- he'll never know.

BEN

(impressed)

No wonder you're such a good social climber-- cover that ass, buddy.

ASH

Fuck you.

Senator Nunn enters-- Ash and Ben stand up quickly. Respectful.

ASH

Thank you for seeing us on such short notice and so late at night, Senator Nunn, I'm sure you're eager to get home for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Nunn shakes their hands and then goes to sit in the big, comfy chair behind his desk.

NUNN

You said it was urgent, Mister Carter.

ASH

As chairman of Foreign Relations and one of the more strategic thinkers in the Senate--

NUNN

Son, I swear to-- did you keep me late so you could kiss my ass?

Ash shifts gears quickly.

ASH

Senator, this is Ben Bowman from State, He's found six hundred kilos of uranium in Kazakhstan and thinks it might be a good idea if we got it out before anyone was the wiser.

Nunn stares at them both for a long beat.

Finally, he gets up and takes a slow walk around his desk and sits on the corner of it-- right in front of Ben. They're nearly eyeball to eyeball.

Ben has no choice-- he stares back-- can't blink first.

NUNN

Son, you want the federal government of the United States of America to steal the most valuable property a sovereign foreign nation owns without them ever knowing...

(beat)

That ain't foreign policy, Mister Bowman, that's the goddamn heist of the century.

BEN

Well... one of their citizens, a sub captain, is offering it to me...

Nunn laughs out loud and slaps his knee. Then he whacks Ben on the back and goes over to find a particularly cloudy BOTTLE of liquor at his small bar.

NUNN

Of course he is. Must be one mental bastard.

(beat)

We don't have good bourbon in Georgia, gents, but we make a mean peach 'shine.

He's not asking-- Ben and Ash exchange a look.

ANDY

Of course, sir.

ASH

Thank you, Senator.

NUNN

State and Pentagon told you to go fuck yourselves?

BEN

And Treasury. We haven't tried Department of Energy yet, but assume it'll be the same.

NUNN

Son, if there's one thing I've learned in this town... you keep going 'til someone tells you to stop.

Nunn hands them both GLASSES.

NUNN

So what's your proof?

Ben takes a SIP-- coughs-- as it turns out: moonshine is strong.

BEN

(stammers)

Tastes like peaches.

ASH

He took a GPS tracker, we have the coordinates, we can verify it with CIA or DIA or NRO-- someone will tell us if it's real. There were always rumors that the Soviets had 'closed cities'... cities so secret no one ever knew where they were or what they were doing.

NUNN

He says he's a sub captain-- your contact?

BEN

We should be able to verify that too.

NUNN

Mister Carter and I can work on that here. You'll go to Oak Ridge directly-- forget the DOE here in River City.

(beat)

Go straight to Oak Ridge and ask for O'Malley. Sudeep O'Malley. Crazy half-Irish, half-Indian... grew up a surfer in San Diego before he moved to Georgia at seventeen... but a nuclear physicist without par-- designed the tips of the Tridents our subs carry. In the nuclear business, he's a cowboy-- surfer cowboy. If anyone will help, it'll be him. Tell him I sent you.

ASH

We have no authorization-- no legal standing-- no presidential directive-- what do we call this?

BEN

A fact finding mission for Senator Sam Nunn?

NUNN

(smiles)

At the very least it gets you a government jet back to Almaty.

(considers)

If you get caught we're all in for a world of hurt... maybe just tossed out on our asses-- maybe prison.

Ben takes that in-- downs his drink-- his eyes water.

BEN

I'm the guy they chose-- I guess I'm screwed either way... but, Senator, why are you willing?

NUNN

Because I grew up in a world where every morning ten thousand Soviet nuclear warheads were going to land on my head... on my constituents' heads... their children's heads... My grandchildren's heads.

(beat)

The world got a lot safer after the Wall fell. But a man I admire very much-- George Marshall figured it out after World War II-- it's not enough to win the war-- you gotta win the peace.

(winks)

Politicians are liars and cheats, Mister Bowman, but we all want to be statesmen. What say, just this once, we try to make the world a better place...

(beat)

Go to Oak Ridge.

Ben hands the glass back to Nunn and gets up without another word. Nunn looks at Ash as Ben closes the door.

NUNN

I met his father a few times on the Georgetown cocktail circuit. Most people thought he was just a peacenik, hippie who got burned in Vietnam-- but I always admired the way he wanted to save the world.

(beat)

There's no half measures in this game. We do this-- we either come out the other side heroes or villains. Your boy got the stones in him for that?

ASH

I guess we better hope so, Senator.

INT. NATIONAL SCIENCES LABORATORY, TENNESSEE - DAY

CARD: **OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE**

This is an enormous room with giant lab EQUIPMENT everywhere.

A few DOZEN SCIENTISTS mill about working on experiments. Everyone is dressed in RADIATION PROTECTIVE SUITS.

Ben sits on a small stool in a corner-- in a RADIATION SUIT-- talking to:

SUDEEP O'MALLEY (40s)-- he's got his protective HEAD GEAR hanging off his back and his HAIR is going every direction-- he is indeed a mad scientist.

Ben's words are half-garbled behind his headgear.

O'MALLEY

Kazakhstan?

BEN

What would we need to test it, contain it, transport it?

O'MALLEY

(shrugs)

Testing it is pretty easy-- carry that gear in a suitcase-- contain it? No idea til I see it. Transport it? Same answer.

BEN

(not hearing)

What's that?

O'MALLEY

(re: head gear)

You can just take that off-- not that much radiation in here.

Ben looks around-- baffled-- everyone else is wearing their's...

O'MALLEY

Ben, which one of us is the nuclear physicist?

Beat. Ben takes off the headgear.

O'MALLEY

We going to get overtime for this? I'm saving up for a jet ski.

BEN

It's almost Thanksgiving-- this is... kinda off book.

O'MALLEY

You want me to take my own vacation days? That's a terrible idea, dude. I don't even like Kazakhstan.

BEN

You been there?

O'MALLEY

No. But I'm sure I don't. Is it cold there? I'm more of a warm weather guy.

BEN

How do you know Senator Nunn?

O'MALLEY

Every member of Congress gets two recommendations per year to the U.S. military academies.

BEN

You went to West Point?

O'MALLEY

Annapolis.

(shrugs)

I didn't last very long. I think they thought I was eccentric.

(beat)

But I've always been grateful to Senator Nunn.

(beat)

Oh. I see what you're saying. I owe him? Okay. Fine. I'll go.

(beat)

We'll need at least two more scientists.

O'Malley gestures around.

O'MALLEY

But they all have families, dude.

BEN

No one else as crazy as us... 'dude'... lookin' to catch a wave?

O'MALLEY

(smiles, thinks)

I have a couple of interns-- good kids-- MIT and Berkeley.

(beat)

They spent last summer at Lawrence Livermore... they might be up for an adventure.

EXT. ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE, D.C. - NIGHT

Ben and Ash stand on the tarmac-- watching O'Malley and:

Two interns, ELIZA BAUMGARTEN (23) and FRED KAZAN (24) trying to manhandle several large STEEL BOXES-- the size of oversized suitcases-- onto an Air Force GULFSTREAM JET.

Senator Nunn approaches and shakes Ben's hand-- shouting over the jet engines.

NUNN

We'll get you authorized. Don't worry.
Just get the job done.

BEN

Yes, sir.

Nunn moves off to greet and shake hands with O'Malley. Ash gestures at the mad scientist and his interns.

ASH

Looks like you got your Tiger Team.

Ben snorts a ironic laugh and Ash lifts the small SILVER BRIEFCASE in his hand.

ASH

Parting gift.

Ben opens it. Inside-- encased in custom foam-- are two HANDSETS, Walkie-Talkie-esque.

BEN

I don't need another GPS.

ASH

These aren't GPS. But they do work with satellites.

(beat)

They're phones. Top secret. Satellite phones.

(beat)

Work anywhere in the world... even Kazakhstan.

BEN

Thanks.

He closes the briefcase.

ASH

Listen. I don't care what the Senator says. The odds are long, Ben. You're talking about taking the most powerful weapon the world has ever known out of another country-- people go to prison for that-- people get killed for that...

(beat)

You ready to die in Kazakhstan?

Ben gestures around the empty, dark runway.

BEN

You see someone else that wants the job, Ash?

(off Ash's look)

No. I'm not ready to die in Kazakhstan.

ASH

Cover your ass.

(beat)

Don't get shot.

BEN

Yeah.

Ben heads for the plane.

INT. OLEG KARIMOV'S CLUB - NIGHT

Al-Jafari sits at a table in the back of the dining area as Oleg approaches.

OLEG

I'm told you wanted to see the owner?

Al-Jafari waves Oleg into a seat.

AL-JAFARI

Mister Karimov-- Colonel Karimov-- I admire very much how you've managed to consolidate control over the local militia and the black market.

(beat)

You're a very powerful man. Second only to the President, as I'm informed-- a colleague of yours from the old days-- the Red days.

Oleg waits-- the two men sizing each other up. Then:

OLEG

What are you looking to buy, Mister Al-Jafari?

Al-Jafari smiles... a worthy player.

AL-JAFARI

If you know who I am, then you're well connected enough to know where my passport says that I'm from.

OLEG

My old bosses-- in the Soviet Army-- were friendly with yours. I don't see why we cannot also be friends.

AL-JAFARI

I'm so glad to hear it.

OLEG

Kazakhstan has many things to offer you, Mister Al-Jafari, come to the club tomorrow around noon and one of my men will bring you to my store.

(beat)

Enjoy the meal; it's on the house.

Oleg gets up and bows courteously; Al-Jafari nods his thanks, then pulls his NOTEBOOK from his jacket and makes some notes.

INT. LOMAX'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ortiz and Duarte are setting up COTS and SLEEPING BAGS-- having shoved Lomax's desk to the corner-- and showing O'Malley and Fred the room.

DUART

Bathroom is down the hall.

(points)

Use the crescent wrench to adjust the heat at the radiator there.

FRED

No thermostat?

Ortiz and Duarte smother laughs.

DUART

'Fraid not. Two speeds: on and off.

O'MALLEY

Don't worry, Fred, this will look great on your resume. Like a merit badge.

Lomax appears.

LOMAX

Yeah, you'll probably never be able to tell anyone you were ever here.

He tosses out packages of CHEETOS and HERSHEY BARS.

LOMAX

We'll get you a real meal tomorrow, fellas. But Happy Thanksgiving!

He and Wilkins and Duart exit.

ORTIZ

Try not to drop anything. Mice are a real pain in the ass.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - MOMENTS LATER

Eliza is getting settled into a makeshift COT in Sergeant Wilkins' room. The room is piled high with all the other scientific GEAR. Ben is at the door.

BEN

We've got like twenty offices in this place if you'd like your own room.

Sergeant Wilkins comes by.

SERGEANT WILKINS

Nope. Only other woman here. She stays with me. So does my Nine Millimeter Beretta.

BEN

(off Eliza's look)

Safety first.

INT. THE CAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Ben gathers with the Marines and Lomax.

LOMAX

What's the plan?

BEN

Sleep.

SERGEANT WILKINS

Last time I checked, sir, you've got eight Americans in potentially hostile territory trying to secretly secure 600 kilos of the most deadly stuff on earth.

BEN

Who said we're in hostile territory?

SERGEANT WILKINS

What. Is. The. Plan?

BEN

I'll make contact with the mechanic-- Lyosha-- first thing in the morning. Until then, everyone chill the fuck out. I'm going to my apartment.

(to Lomax)

Does she know I'm back?

LOMAX

I doubt anyone in town-- who wants to know-- could miss a US Air Force Gulfstream landing and taking off at the Almaty airport.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ben is SNORING-- still in his clothes-- on the bed when there's a LOUD KNOCK, KNOCK at his door.

He shakes awake and stumbles for the door... wiping drool from his cheek. He opens the door to find Veta.

BEN

I fell asleep.

VETA

Would you like me to leave?

BEN

Absolutely not. Let me wash up.

Ben opens the door and goes for the bathroom. She comes in and shuts the door. He waves at a nearby coffee table, on it are the brand new SONY DISCMANS and CDs.

BEN

I brought you a gift. I really think you'll like the Stones.

INT. BEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben turns on the bath and begins to peel off his clothes as the STEAM rises.

It's an elegant, Old World style bathroom-- claw footed tub, brass fixtures-- beautiful... in stark contrast to the rest of the country, but a perfect match to his apartment.

She follows him in-- holding one of the DISCMAN boxes-- reading the side of it.

VETA

You bought me a 'Compact Disc Player'? I thought you didn't want to make friends?

(beat)

Just another fling. Another station.
Another girl.

BEN

You're not just another girl.

VETA

Yes, I am.

They stare at each other for a long beat-- the complicated dance of two emotional porcupines trying to mate.

BEN

If you make friends, you might lose them.

VETA

So we're both avoiding risk.

She has him there-- his mind is also on 600 kilos of uranium.

BEN

I'm trying to.

He gets in the tub.

She looks at him -- naked, the hot water massaging his stiff, aching muscles.

VETA

You have hot water...

BEN

Just took a little negotiating.

She closes the bathroom door and takes off her clothes-- steam envelops her-- she basks in its warmth.

VETA

This must have been some really corrupt man's apartment to be so luxurious.

(beat)

I spent most of my life cold. And my father was in the Central Committee... at least we were not hungry.

BEN

That's the most you've ever told me about yourself.

VETA

You know I am a senior diplomat.

She climbs into the tub with him.

VETA

In Russia, you get that by being connected, not taking risks.

BEN

Am I still risky?

VETA

Yes.

They begin to kiss.

EXT. KAZAK MOUNTAINS - DAY

Ben, Yuri, Duart, O'Malley, and Fred are bundled in winter COATS-- and still freezing-- in the back of Evgeni's truck. Eliza sits up front with Evgeni.

A light SNOW is falling as Yuri teaches O'Malley and Fred dirty words in Russian and Kazak. O'Malley chortles at the last one.

O'MALLEY

Sphincter juice.

(beat)

What does that even mean?

Yuri shrugs.

YURI

I don't know. Kazaks are weird.

(beat)

(MORE)

YURI (CONT'D)

I want to be American. Do you know rock-n-roll?

Before they can respond, the truck stops. Ben stands and looks at the road ahead.

It's completely blocked by a ROCK SLIDE.

Ben hops down, as Evgeni rolls down his window.

BEN

How much farther?

EVGENI

My godfather's car is on the other side of the slide, waiting for us, but it will only hold the gear.

(beat)

It's a two mile walk... to the edge of the town.

O'MALLEY

Dude, what's going on?

Ben looks at the scientists-- more comfortable in air conditioned labs than remote mountain ranges.

BEN

We're walking.

They all look baffled.

EXT. SEMIPALATINSK-16 - DAY

Ben, Duarte, Evgeni and the scientists finally walk through the gates of the secret city.

Everyone is breathing hard-- and mesmerized by the ghost town in the middle of the most remote mountains in the world.

O'MALLEY

Unbelievable.

BEN

I wish.

(to Fred)

You okay? Look kinda blue.

Evgeni looks over Fred-- then leads him to a nearby boulder where Fred sits down-- his breath short.

DUART

Altitude sickness. Learned about it in Basic.

YURI

It will take some time to recover-- his body is not used to getting so little oxygen.

ELIZA

Well, things could be worse-- it could be that this is all works out and then we get cancer and die a slow and painful death instead of a quick, violent one.

She cackles and walks into the town.

BEN

(to O'Malley)

So she's the funny one? I thought I was the funny one.

O'MALLEY

(head shake)

No.

EXT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - DAY

Ben, O'Malley, Yuri and Eliza approach the warehouse.

The GUARDS-- AKs slung over their backs-- are unloading the scientific gear from the back of Captain Omarov's CAR.

Duart eyes the Guards and their AKs with suspicion-- his M-16 slides from his back to his front.

The Guards clock him-- straightening up. Everyone has itchy trigger fingers... old instincts die hard.

Tense beat.

BEN

(to Duart)

Let's everyone relax... okay?

(beat)

We're all friends until further notice.

Duart's eyes never leave the Kazaks.

CORPORAL DUART

You say so, sir.

Omarov is waiting by the open doors. He's holding the PADLOCK in his hands. O'Malley clocks the padlock and looks to Ben-- he shrugs.

BEN

Told you.

O'MALLEY

Dude...

INT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - DAY

Ben and Captain Omarov stand by the door-- talking-- and watching:

O'Malley and Eliza-- in protective SUITS-- unload lab equipment from their crates.

BEN

Your wife loved Pushkin?

(beat)

'I was not born to amuse the tsars.'

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Very good.

BEN

My mother was a lit professor-- I didn't watch TV til I was fifteen-- you can imagine how embarrassing it is to go to high school knowing nothing of MTV.

(off Omarov's
bafflement)

How do you speak English so well?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

'I want to understand you, so I study your obscure language.'

(wink)

But also, it is part of the submariner's training-- studying the enemy.

BEN

You're giving the enemy six hundred kilos of highly enriched hydrogen bomb fuel.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

I thought we were friends now.

Before Ben can reply: **SPARKS** fly.

O'Malley is quite literally using a HAMMER and CHISEL to break a piece of the URANIUM CYLINDER off (yes, this is real). Sparks blast out everywhere from his hammering:

BEN

O'Malley.
(screaming)
O'MALLEY!

O'Malley stops, looks up at him.

BEN

Uh, you can't set off an explosion with it sparking like that, right?

The wild haired scientist pushes up his protective headgear.

O'MALLEY

Who is the nuclear physicist here?

EXT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - EVENING

Snow is falling as the GUARDS huddle around a BARREL FIRE and smoke CIGARETTES.

Ben and Captain Omarov sit looking out at the abandoned, secret city. Yuri, Duart and Evgeni UNLOAD sleeping bags from the CAR-- clearly, they'll be spending the night.

BEN

What does your wife do now?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

She died.

BEN

I'm sorry.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

She gave her life to this place.

(beat)

She believed that-- as crazy as it was-- nuclear weapons would keep the peace.

(beat)

She wanted a better future for her people, her country... and to survive, they must survive the Soviets... she was a believer... even if she never lived to see a free Kazakhstan.

(beat)

(MORE)

CAPTAIN OMAROV (CONT'D)

There are people in this young country who are hungry, scared-- not too proud to take money for the secrets here. You understand what I mean?

BEN

Yes.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

But in this new world... weapons will not bring peace. They will make pariahs of nations and threaten the future of humanity. That is why I'm asking you to do this.

O'Malley emerges and walks to Ben.

O'MALLEY

Ninety percent pure. Weapons grade.

BEN

How many samples did you test?

O'MALLEY

Enough.

For the first time...

BEN

You look worried.

O'MALLEY

I do very serious work.

(beat)

Usually, I try not to think about it. I make jokes...

BEN

Just tell me.

O'MALLEY

Fred will feel better in the morning. But, Ben... even the three of us, working twenty-four hours a day-- even if we had the right materials to pack it in-- it would take months.

BEN

Damn it.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

I have people who can help.

O'MALLEY

They would need special training,
Captain-- know how to handle the
material, package it--

Omarov gestures to the empty town and streets.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Not everyone who worked here was
Russian, Dr. O'Malley-- some of them
were already home, in Kazakhstan.

BEN

Let's say he's got the personnel. What
else do you need?

O'MALLEY

Money.

BEN

For?

O'MALLEY

Special Container Barrels, lead or
chemical foam-- lots of it--

(beat)

And the road has to be cleared, we're
not going to get this stuff out in that
car.

BEN

I'll get you what you need.

O'MALLEY

How?

BEN

No idea.

(beat)

Time to phone home.

Ben turns and walks a short distance away-- pulling one
of the SAT PHONES from his parka pocket.

He extends the short ANTENNA-- looking up at the cloudy
night sky and the falling snow...

BEN

Better be a satellite up there
somewhere.

He dials.

INT. SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Senator Nunn and a half dozen STAFFERS are working a war room. There are MAPS pegged on the walls and piles of BRIEFING BOOKS-- all marked CLASSIFIED-- scattered around the table.

Senator Nunn is talking to George Mitchell, the Senate Majority Leader, inscrutable behind his thick glasses. Nunn points to a wall map-- a BLOWN UP SATELLITE IMAGE.

NUNN

The GPS data and NRO maps confirm he was at an enormous facility in the middle of the Kazak mountains-- a 'closed city'.

GEORGE MITCHELL

The United States government doesn't do diddly shit between Thanksgiving and Christmas... and it's December first... you want me to get five hundred and thirty-five politicians-- half drunk already on eggnog-- here so they can pass something they aren't even allowed to read-- a classified Act of Congress?

NUNN

Yes.

GEORGE MITCHELL

You don't have the votes, Sam. And I'm not calling a special session and pissing off every ranking member of both parties as a favor to you.

NUNN

I don't need you to call a whole vote, George... I just need you to call the committees-- Armed Services and Foreign Relations-- to order, we agree to a bill and the Congress will pass it.

GEORGE MITCHELL

No. I spoke to the Russian Ambassador, he says they've got command and control in place. I believe him. Sorry, Sam.

That's his final word. Mitchell exits as Ash enters.

ASH

(re: Mitchell)

How'd that go?

NUNN

Just the opening moves of the
legislative dance, son.

Ash nods towards a PHONE across the table--

ASH

We got Ben.

Nunn hits SPEAKER button.

NUNN

How you doin', Mister Bowman?

And we begin to INTERCUT:

EXT. SEMIPALATINSK-16 - NIGHT

BEN

Damn cold, Senator.

(beat)

Captain Omarov says the snows will come
in seven days-- I guess we'll have to
trust his forecast because I don't have
the Weather Channel here. We authorized
to move this stuff?

NUNN

Almost.

BEN

What does that mean exactly, sir?

NUNN

It means you go until someone tells you
to stop, Ben.

BEN

(great)

Yes, sir.

NUNN

Anything else?

BEN

Any idea where I can get chemical foam
in Kazakhstan...

Nunn and Ash exchange a glance, before Ash guesses:

ASH

You have an airport?

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT - DAY

Lomax has a WAD of American money in his hand. Ben stands beside him. On the other side of them is:

The AIRPORT MANAGER-- in front of a small GARAGE.

On one side is a TRACTOR with a TRAILER. On the back of the trailer is a **JET ENGINE** (yep, also true). Next to the tractor is a GIANT AIRPORT FIRE TRUCK.

AIRPORT MANAGER

You want to 'borrow' my fire truck?

BEN

It sprays fire retardant foam?

AIRPORT MANAGER

Of course.

(beat)

What do I do if a plane catches fire?

Lomax gestures around the empty airfield. The Airport Manager doesn't budge.

Finally, Lomax reaches into a BAG at his feet-- he pulls out a BOTTLE of JOHNNY WALKER BLUE. He holds out the bottle and the cash. The Airport Manager smiles.

EXT. FORMER SOVIET ARMY BASE - DAY

This base has been left to rot. The TANKS, APCs, MISSILE CARRIERS and other GEAR is slowly gathering cobwebs.

Al-Jafari and Oleg stand in front of two GIANT CRATES.

The fronts of the crates are ripped open. Inside the first is rack upon rack of NIGHT VISION GOGGLES. Inside the second is row upon row of SHOULDER FIRE ANTI-AIRCRAFT LAUNCHERS.

AL-JAFARI

I am very rarely surprised, Colonel.

OLEG

(rueful)

We have equipment-- but I have no money for fuel... nor to pay my men.

AL-JAFARI

I understand the pain it must cause your pride, sir.

OLEG

One cannot live in the past.

(beat)

We have a deal?

Al-Jafari raises his BRIEFCASE and clicks it OPEN--
inside are neat rows of STACKS and STACKS of 'superbills'--
- Ben Franklins-- American \$100s.

AL-JAFARI

A campaign donation for your President.

A bonus to our agreed fee. In a

democracy-- as I understand it--

campaigns are very expensive.

OLEG

I know he'll be grateful.

Oleg gestures at all the military tech nearby.

OLEG

Surface-to-air systems. Radar guidance.

(beat)

Some of my men can help train yours...

for an additional fee.

Long beat as Al-Jafari considers carefully...

AL-JAFARI

There is one item that we hope will

secure us in a dangerous region where we

have many... the Israelis, Saudis,

Iraqis... intemperate neighbors.

OLEG

'One item'?

AL-JAFARI

(English)

The item.

Oleg considers.

OLEG

I will keep it in mind.

He waves for his men to begin boxing up the CRATES.

INT. SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The room has been cleared of all staffers-- except Ash,
who sits against the wall.

On one side of the conference table are three REPUBLICAN SENATORS on the other, three DEMOCRAT SENATORS.

At the head of the table is Sam Nunn of Georgia.

NUNN

Gentlemen... this is critical and timely intelligence-- despite Russian assurances to the contrary. Can I count on you? Or do we need to horse trade a little more? Who wants to talk about libraries in their home states? Or base closures?

(beat)

Yay votes to take this to our committee?

The DEMOCRATS all raise their hands-- affirmative. Not one REPUBLICAN budges.

NUNN

I take it the fine fellows of the party of opposition-- the Grand Old Party-- are still... undecided?

The greyest member of the Republicans stands to go-- buttoning his suit jacket-- the others follow.

REPUBLICAN SENATOR

Nunn, in a month it'll be an election year-- which our Republican President is going to take in a walk. And we might just capture the Senate or House. And you don't have anything we want. And my constituents voted for a strong national defense not 'foreign aid'...

(beat)

... And you're out of your goddamn mind.

He's out. Nunn sighs. The DEMOCRATS stand and go. Ash and Nunn share a look: fuck.

EXT. ALMATY - DAY

Ben runs-- like he's running out of time-- pushing. Sweat pours down his face.

He sprints past the gaggle of OLDER WOMEN, now ripping apart firewood from a different building.

He turns the corner at the Joe Stalin statue... the tractor and chain still haven't moved.

EXT. MAIN SQUARE, ALMATY - MOMENTS LATER

Ben blazes into the square-- feet pounding, heart pounding-- he makes straight for:

EXT. MECHANIC SHOP, ALMATY - MOMENTS LATER

Lomax sits on the hood of BEN'S BLUE LADA (still on blocks) and shields his eyes as:

Lyosha uses an acetylene TORCH to cut 50 GALLON DRUMS and another KAZAK 1 uses a WELDER to make LIDS.

Off to the side, Evgeni and KAZAK 2 load the finished CONTAINER DRUMS-- that will hold the uranium-- into the back of Evgeni's truck.

Ben runs up-- winded-- grabs his knees, catching his breath.

BEN

How... we... doing?

LOMAX

We need bigger trucks.

(beat)

And Corporal Duarte says we need a bulldozer to move the boulders on the road. You know where we can get one?

They exchange a look.

LOMAX

Yeah, well, you're going to have to ask him... I got the fire truck.

BEN

How much more do you have in the discretionary fund?

LOMAX

Let's just say the safe is almost empty. Ben-- we're going to need your friends in D.C. to pull this off... or we're going to spend our golden years in Leavenworth for fraud.

BEN

Senator Nunn won't let us down.

LOMAX

You ever met a politician?

BEN

What's eating you?

LOMAX

Look, I'm happy to be out on a limb, I've been on a lot of them, in a lot of places, over a lot of years...

(beat)

But I've never been out this far. I got to know that you know what the ever loving fuck you're doing.

BEN

I'm doing the best I can, Lomax.

LOMAX

Ben, diplomacy isn't sexy. It's not spies. It's not soldiers. Someone pulls a gun on you-- worse, someone shoots a gun-- that's bad in our line of work. And, look, I know you don't want to even be in our line of work-- you want to work for corporations-- take private jets-- fine. But right now... Right now we're in trouble.

(beat)

If this goes sideways... there will be guns... if this goes sideways, people will get shot. You know when wars start? When diplomacy fails.

(beat)

Our job is to stop wars. And you may think that nobody gives a shit about Kazakhstan... but trust me when I tell you are wrong-- nobody gave a shit about an Archduke in Serbia either-- til he got shot. And then World War I started.

That lands on Ben.

LOMAX

Sometimes history turns on a single act. Sometimes the future turns on a single idea.

(beat)

Remember what I'm saying to you right now: someone pulls a gun on you, shoots you-- that's when the war starts.

For the first time-- maybe in his life-- Ben answers...

BEN

I won't let you down.

INT. OLEG KARIMOV'S CLUB - NIGHT

Ben enters-- still in his torn sweatshirt from the jog-- sees Veta having lunch with some COLLEAGUES.

BEN

Have you seen Oleg?

She's surprised-- gets up and moves away with him.

VETA

You've been perspiring... Without me.

BEN

(absently)

I was jogging.

VETA

You want to tell me what you're up to--
I haven't seen you in almost two weeks.

He deflects:

BEN

I just need Oleg. I'll see you later...
tomorrow night or the night after. Okay?

She nods-- clearly they need to work on their trust-- both of them... *and you have to start somewhere...* so:

VETA

The night after.

(beat)

You come to my apartment. I can't
promise it will be turkey and gravy--
I'm not a very good cook-- but I'll try
to cook you a nice dinner since you
missed Thanksgiving at home.

BEN

You've been studying American holidays?

VETA

It sounds like mythology to me, pilgrims
and natives... and pie... But I like the
idea of two peoples cooperating. How
else do you build trust?

That lands.

BEN

Your apartment?

She's visibly nervous-- but nods.

BEN

Okay. You're on.

He kisses her goodbye, then goes to the dining area and spots:

Oleg and Al-Jafari... Ben clocks the Persian... but approaches anyway-- what choice does he have...

ON OLEG:

OLEG

Ben Bowman!

Oleg stands and greets him with a traditional kiss on each cheek. Then turns and introduces him to:

OLEG

This is my new friend...

AL-JAFARI

Kemal-- I run a construction firm in Istanbul.

BEN

Nice to meet you, Mister Kemal. Excuse us a moment.

He steers Oleg a few feet away.

BEN

I apologize for being brisk, Oleg... but I need some trucks. Three. Big ones. Army trucks. And the fuel for them.

(beat)

And a bulldozer... On the back of one of the trucks.

Oleg eyes Ben carefully.

BEN

I have six thousand dollars to spend-- hard currency-- American greenbacks-- just on the rental fee-- the trucks will still be yours afterwards...

Oleg nods.

OLEG

I'll see you tomorrow at dawn at the Karachova base-- you know the place-- southwest of here?

BEN

And I need a coat. Your hometown is freezing my balls off.

Oleg watches him go... then looks to Al-Jafari-- considering.

EXT. ROOF, AMERICAN CONSULATE - NIGHT

Ben stands on the roof-- shivering-- pacing in the cold night. He's talking on the Sat Phone.

And we INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ash, Nunn and the STAFFERS listen-- rapt.

ASH

Iranian? You're sure?

BEN

I may be a dumb American, but I'm not that dumb. I grew up in half a dozen places when my father was on station, Ash.

(beat)

The guy wasn't from Istanbul.

NUNN

Anything else?

BEN

I don't know how much longer I can keep this quiet-- it's a small town, guys.

He looks up-- SNOW is falling in the capital.

BEN

And winter has finally landed in Almaty.

Ash and Nunn exchange a glance... bad to worse.

NUNN

Keep going, Ben...

BEN

(yeah)

... 'til someone tells you to stop.'

He hangs up.

INT. SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM

Ash gestures to the Staffers.

ASH
Give us the room, folks, thank you.

After they're gone:

ASH
Any other ideas, Senator?

Nunn is rubbing his temples.

NUNN
I do my best thinking in the shower.

ASH
Sorry?

NUNN
You know-- you can't do anything else--
just shampoo and steam-- your mind
wanders. That's when lightning strikes.
(beat)
I need a shower.

He gets up and heads for the door. Ash just looks-- agog--
after him. And just as Nunn gets to the door... it hits
him.

NUNN
You know why we won the space race?

ASH
Sputnik.
(beat)
Scared the shit out of us. We had to
win.

NUNN
You know who's really good at scaring
the shit out of the American people?

ASH
Republicans?

NUNN
The Iranians are sniffing around
Almaty... that's a helluva place to go
in winter.
(beat)
Who else is spending their time in
former Warsaw Pact countries?

(MORE)

NUNN (CONT'D)

Brand new nations without border
controls-- without working governments--
the wild west-- where anything goes?

Ash is catching on.

ASH

I'll call some friends at CIA and NSA.

NUNN

We need to scare the shit out of these
senators. And we need to find one of
their own to do it. You have a favorite
Republican on Armed Services?

Ash almost smiles.

ASH

Oh, yes, sir...

INT. SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

RICHARD LUGAR of Indiana sits across the conference table
from his political enemy, Sam Nunn. Neither blinking.

Ash sits between them.

Dick Lugar is a bit of an odd duck-- even by U.S. Senate
terms-- but don't mistake behavior for intelligence, he's
almost always the smartest guy in any room... even this
one.

ASH

Senator Lugar--

LUGAR

'Dick'-- I save the pomp and
circumstance for when I need it.

ASH

Right-- Dick-- sir, um, well, so that
you understand the situation...

LUGAR

I understand that you talked to my
colleagues without me.

NUNN

Ego, Dick.

LUGAR

Go fuck yourself, Sam.

(beat)

(MORE)

LUGAR (CONT'D)

Those men owe me favors, not you. What makes you think they'd help you with this crazy 'fact finding mission'? You know you'll get tossed out of the Senate...

(to Ash)

And you're definitely going to lose your job, Mister Carter.

Ash holds up a single sheet of PAPER-- slides to Lugar.

ASH

Sir, I typed this myself-- the coordinated intelligence of several agencies.

(beat)

In addition to Iranians in Kazakhstan, the Pakistanis are trying to lure Russian weapons scientists in Moscow.

(beat)

Hell, Qaddafi has-- and I mean this literally-- two Libyans arrested in Ukraine had five million dollars in a suitcase-- and when asked, they just balls-out admitted they were there to buy nuclear weapons.

NUNN

The world is safer without the Soviet Union, Dick.

(beat)

But it's not going to be for long if we let the Iranians smuggle 24 hydrogen bombs out of Almaty.

(beat)

I'm a left wing, liberal, pinko socialist. But I've got grandkids.

LUGAR

And I suppose I'm a right wing, conservative fascist...

(beat)

But I've got grandkids...

Lugar looks at the piece of paper in his hand. Then looks up and considers the other two men at the table.

LUGAR

And this is some scary shit.

Nunn and Ash hide their smiles.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Snow is falling as Duart drives a BULLDOZER straight at the rock slide.

BOULDERS *as big as motorcycles topple*-- CRASHING over the side of the road and making a terrible WHISTLE as they disappear off the cliff.

Evgeni and other Kazaks help push smaller boulders over the cliff-- side-by-side with Ortiz and Lomax.

Behind Ben and Omarov are two LARGE MILITARY TRUCKS and the AIRPORT FIRE TRUCK-- waiting for the road to clear.

Ben is huddled over a makeshift FIRE-- he's heating a POT of COFFEE. He pours some into steel MUGS and brings it to Captain Omarov.

BEN

Here's to old enemies and new friends.

Just then another TRUCK appears and Yuri climbs out.

BEN

Yuri! I already saved your butt once, that's enough. You're going back to Almaty.

YURI

Almaty is boring. You really think I show up for the Cheetos? I learned a new word from Lomax... 'stubborn.' Do you know it?

(re: bulldozer)

May I ride?

Ben stares at him for a long beat-- damn it.

BEN

(capitulates)

Ask Corporal Duart.

Yuri smiles and sprints to the bulldozer and flags Duart-- who stops the dozer and waves him up to the cab. Yuri sits on the sidebar as Duart puts the dozer back in gear... aiming for another BOULDER.

Ben is wearing an enormous WHITE PARKA. Omarov clocks it.

BEN

(re: coat)

Oleg. Said it's Siberian border guard gear-- his idea of a joke probably.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

If we pull this off, what will you do?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

You mean for work? I do not know. There are no jobs in this country anymore.

BEN

Captain-- all due respect-- there aren't enough Ibex in these mountains to feed all of your people.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

You would rather I sell my country and my soul like Oleg Karimov? No. I cannot.

(beat)

We all have someone we're trying to live up to... Me? My wife. You?

(beat)

Father?

That lands. Ben swallows the bitter coffee instead of answering. Finally:

BEN

You can't eat pride, Captain-- you can only swallow it.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Everything is easy when the 'supermarket' is filled to bursting with... 'Cheetos'. What would you do if you had nothing like me, Ben? Would you sell the uranium to the 'highest bidder'? Mortgage peace so you could have more bread?

(beat)

I just got 'liberty'. It cost me thirty years in the Soviet Navy. It cost my wife her life to cancers developed here and uncured by a failing medical system.

(beat)

The price of liberty is sometimes you have to be willing to die for it.

BEN

Why'd you choose me?

CAPTAIN OMAROV

You showed bravery and camaraderie with my people at the dacha.

(beat)

(MORE)

CAPTAIN OMAROV (CONT'D)

You proved resourceful in getting a nice apartment and dealing with Colonel Karimov.

(beat)

And you showed sacrifice trying to save the boy in the square that day.

BEN

Was really just trying to save my Discman.

Captain Omarov looks at him quizzically.

BEN

Nevermind.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Put yourself in harms way for another human being-- it's noble-- even if it's for a Russian.

BEN

He's a Kazak.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

No. He's Russian. I do not mean to offend you, but it is more subtle than a Persian and Turkman, Ben. Your little friend is definitely Russian.

Ben stares at Yuri on the bulldozer. *What the hell is going on...*

EXT. ALMATY SQUARE - DAY

A gentle SNOW is falling in the square as Evgeni and two Kazaks load CONTAINER DRUMS into the back of one of the large MILITARY TRUCKS.

Lyosha and his MECHANIC continue working with the TORCHES and WELDERS-- no time to rest.

NEARBY:

Colonel Oleg Karimov and Captain Al-Jafari. Al-Jafari scribbles in his NOTEBOOK and then places it back in his pocket.

AL-JAFARI

A Geiger counter.

(beat)

And now container drums.

(MORE)

AL-JAFARI (CONT'D)

(beat)

Where are the trucks are going?

OLEG

I have not wished to let them know that we have discovered them.

AL-JAFARI

Some men do not have the stomach to do what is necessary in this line of work.

OLEG

(offended)

You are a guest here, Captain. My grace extends as far as you are able to cover the tab.

AL-JAFARI

(won't take the bait)

What do you know of the mountain region?

OLEG

Only rumors. There were always rumors in the old country.

AL-JAFARI

Of secret military bases?

OLEG

Of cities with no names.

Al-Jafari looks hard at Oleg.

AL-JAFARI

I have two colleagues who will be coming to Almaty tomorrow. They will be bringing money. Lots of hard currency.

(beat)

More-- much more-- than our current deal is worth.

OLEG

What can I help you with, Captain?

AL-JAFARI

Information.

(beat)

I think the Americans have found what I am looking for-- the thing that will make my country invincible.

OLEG

Such a thing would be very expensive indeed.

AL-JAFARI

It is not treasure that buys such things, Colonel.

He stares at Lyosha.

AL-JAFARI

It is blood.

Oleg follows Al-Jafari's predatory gaze... towards the Kazak Lyosha-- Oleg's countryman. Oleg is nervous.

INT. VETA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Veta-- in an APRON, flour dusting her face and DISCMAN HEADSET on her ears-- opens the door to find:

Ben holding Yuri by the collar. Her face falls.

She pulls off the earphones and reaches out for Yuri-- pulls him in, hugging him tight. *She whispers something in his ear and then pushes him into the apartment.* She steps out into the hall and closes the door behind her.

BEN

You lied to me.

VETA

(defiant)

Why do you think I invited you to dinner... I have a son not a daughter.

BEN

That's not what I'm--

(beat)

You've been spying on me. With your own son? Thirteen years old?

(beat)

Were you fucking me for information too?

She explodes towards him-- SLAPS him-- hard.

There is a long tense beat between them.

She can barely speak between gritted, angry teeth.

VETA

(simmering)

Don't ever speak to me that way again.

He massages his jaw and cheek.

BEN

So much for cooperation-- trust--
between peoples.

VETA

I wanted my son to know some real
Americans... He loves everything about
America... Cheetos and rock-n-roll.

(beat)

I didn't know that he would be working
for a man...

She stops... choosing her words carefully-- *precision is
the enemy of the obfuscation of our deepest feelings.*

VETA

...the man I would become 'attracted
to'...

(beat)

And I didn't know you'd be taking him to
a closed city. You don't have children.
You don't know that I can't sleep at
night-- worrying about him.

BEN

You could have told him not to show up
at the consulate.

VETA

Have you ever tried to talk to a
thirteen year old?

(beat)

You saved his life. He worships you.

BEN

Lock him in his room.

VETA

Is that really how you would raise him,
Ben? Is that how they do it in America?

Hurt. And no healing. Another long beat.

She opens the door to her apartment.

VETA

Wait here.

He stands in the hall.

She returns with a large MANILA ENVELOPE-- there are RED
STAMPS all over it-- all in Russian-- hands it to him.

He opens it-- there are MAPS, SATELLITE IMAGES, and FILES. Ben glances through them. His turn: face falls-- whatever it is... it's not good.

BEN

You don't take risks-- why now?

VETA

When I was a girl, my mother used to pray for peace. During communist times. One did not pray. There was no God. Only the Party. It was so strange-- so dangerous-- I remember it, always.

(beat)

And then I became a parent... and my husband went to Afghanistan. And then I was alone. A parent alone. Now I understand my mother.

(beat)

On my knees-- while my son sleeps-- I pray for peace. Every day. Every night. I pray for a world where no one wants to kill him.

(beat)

For fifty years, Mutually Assured Destruction meant your country against mine-- but now...

(beat)

Now I think it means us together-- against those who would seek to destroy us. Destroy peace.

He takes this in-- *her raw pain and openness*-- then stuffs the papers back in the envelope.

BEN

I'm sorry... about dinner. I'm sorry.

She burns-- just nods 'go'-- and he does without another word.

INT. SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

There are the same three DEMOCRATS and the same three REPUBLICANS.

But this time they're facing Nunn and Lugar.

Ash is at one of the gigantic MAPS on the wall-- of the former Soviet Union-- points to RED PINS on the map as he is placing BLUE PINS.

ASH

Senators, the red pins represent the closed cities we knew about before the fall of the Wall. Five.

(beat)

The blue pins are the ones Ben Bowman has confirmed through his Russian source.

Ash steps back so everyone can see. *This is what Ben saw when Veta gave him the packet: It's not good...*

ASH

There are now at least eleven. Many in former Soviet republics.

(beat)

Ukraine, Belarus...

LUGAR

You all know me. I've always prided myself on being able to work across the aisle... a man of compromise... and integrity.

The Republicans CHUCKLE.

LUGAR

But this is some scary shit.

REPUBLICAN SENATOR

What exactly do you want, Dick?

LUGAR

Our friend over there, the honorable gentleman of Georgia has a 'fact finding mission' in Kazakhstan... I suggest we make it a proper operation and get it done.

REPUBLICAN SENATOR

And what do we need in order to do that?

LUGAR

An Act of Congress.

There are MURMURS and LAUGHS around the table.

REPUBLICAN SENATOR

It's nearly Christmas, Dick.

NUNN

All we really need is our two committees.

(MORE)

NUNN (CONT'D)

It'll force George Mitchell to gavel them to order-- and the rest of the members will vote straight up or down-- the key is our committees.

DEMOCRAT SENATOR

What are you calling this Act of Congress? 'The Nunn-Lugar Amendment'?

More LAUGHTER.

ASH

'The Cooperative Threat Reduction Act'.

That stops everyone.

REPUBLICAN SENATOR

Goddamn.

ASH

I know. I'm good.

NUNN

Do we have your votes? Show of hands.

But before they can show hands-- a young STAFFER bursts into the room. All eyes turn to her. She doesn't say a word-- just crosses the room and gives a sheet of PAPER to Ash. He speed reads it in a second.

ASH

The Russian government has formally denounced Senator Nunn's 'fact finding' mission in Kazakhstan.

Long beat.

NUNN

Well. Shit.

INT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - NIGHT

Ben helps a KAZAK UNCLE (one of the men from the Omarov's party at the dacha) load a full CONTAINER DRUM onto a TRUCK. Evgeni and Ortiz secure it with the others.

In the warehouse, O'Malley, Fred and Eliza work side-by-side with KAZAK MOTHERS and UNCLES... people who used to work in this secret, closed city... Omarov's people.

They've got the AIRPORT FIRE TRUCK backed up to the doors and-- as O'Malley points-- Eliza lets loose and fills a DRUM with FOAM. Fred approaches Ben.

FRED
Just like MacGyver, right?

BEN
Will it actually keep us all from
glowing in the dark?

FRED
(shrugs)
I have no idea. I'm just an intern.

Off Ben's face:

FRED
I'm just kidding.

Fred chuckles, going back to work. Ben calls after him.

BEN
I thought Eliza was the funny one.

Ben wipes his brow and watches as a young KAZAK guard, AK
on his back, breaks some bread with the Marine, Ortiz.

DUART
It ain't exactly Christmas dinner.

Ben turns to see the young Corporal watching the same
scene.

BEN
I'll get us home for Christmas,
Corporal.

DUART
It's alright-- they're good people, sir.
They barely have bread. And they still
share.

He goes back to work, as Ben's POCKET RINGS. Ben pulls
out his SAT PHONE and we INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ash, Nunn and Lugar on speaker.

BEN
You get me authorized with the...

ASH
The Cooperative Threat Reduction Act.

NUNN

Not why we're calling, Ben.

Beat.

BEN

What happened?

NUNN

The Russians. Their ambassador marched up Pennsylvania Avenue to the big white house across from Lafayette Square.

LUGAR

He told the National Security Advisor that Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia had a fact finding mission in Kazakhstan.

ASH

They are a proud people, Ben-- remember what happened when they tried to put missiles in Cuba? Our backyard. Well, this is theirs.

BEN

But we're trying to take the damn stuff out.

NUNN

They don't know that or they don't care.

BEN

Is someone saying 'stop'?

Nunn and Lugar and Ash look at each other.

NUNN

Not yet... but the Russians--

BEN

Get. Me. Authorized.

Ben hangs up.

Captain Omarov approaches.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

What is it?

BEN

I need to get to town.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

It's dark-- it will be dangerous.

He clocks Ben's face. Okay.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

We'll take my car.

(to Evgeni)

*Evgeni? I could use your young eyes on
the icy road.*

They head for Omarov's Lada beater.

INT. ASH CARTER'S OFFICE, PENTAGON - AFTERNOON

Ash is organizing files at his desk as his ASSISTANT hands him some EGGNOG.

The rest of the STAFF is hosting a small CHRISTMAS PARTY in his office-- there are even a few REINDEER SWEATERS and SANTA NECKTIES. In the background, O'Holy Night... which is shattered when:

Ash's boss, HAWKINS, bursts in-- beet red and boiling-- and carrying a classified FILE. The room goes dead quiet.

HAWKINS

In my hands is a preemptive order for three C-141 Starlifters to take off from Incirlik Air Force Base in Turkey.

(beat)

What the motherfuck is Operation Jade Star?!

ASH

It's a potential-- not active-- operation in support of an official Senatorial Fact Finding Mission.

Hawkins steams.

HAWKINS

A fact finding mission that the National fucking Security Advisor called me to ask about? A bullshit goose chase that I specifically told you to stay out of?

Ash opens his mouth to rebut.

HAWKINS

You're suspended, Mister Carter-- pending investigation and process to dismissal. Pack your desk.

He exits.

INT. VETA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Ben POUNDS on the door. Yuri opens it-- Veta's DISCMAN earphones on.

BEN
(to himself)
That better be the Stones.

YURI
(pulling off
earphones)
What?

BEN
Your mother here?

YURI
She's still at the embassy.

Ben checks his watch.

BEN
Go get her and take her to the airport;
I'll meet you there.
(beat)
I need to pick something up.

YURI
She won't like this--

BEN
You can't always get what you want,
Yuri.

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT - DAY

Heavy SNOW is falling from DARK CLOUDS. Ben stands anxiously nearby as an AEROFLOT PROP JET is boarding a couple of PASSENGERS.

A Russian Embassy LADA pulls up behind Ben and Veta and Yuri get out. Yuri waits by the car as Veta crosses-- angry-- to Ben. Before she can argue, he hands her a TICKET and the ENVELOPE back.

BEN
Your ticket. Your file. Safely returned.

VETA
And where the hell am I going?

BEN

The Foreign Ministry in Moscow.

VETA

I'm a Deputy for Foreign Relations,
Ben... Not the ambassador.

BEN

You're well connected enough to get
these classified documents, so I'm
guessing you're connected enough to get
someone there to listen to you.

Beat. She won't deny it.

BEN

You trusted me. I'm trusting you.

He pulls a SAT PHONE out of his pocket.

BEN

This is a special phone. A top secret
piece of American hardware. It will work
anywhere on Earth. There is only one
number in it. You just press "1" here.
Hold it down.

He pulls his own SAT PHONE from another pocket.

BEN

And you'll get me.

He nods to Yuri.

BEN

He's a brave kid. Smart. Funny.

(beat)

And you don't want to work in the West--
in D.C. because it's good for your
career-- you want to work there because
you want to give him something you never
had.

Her jaw tightens.

BEN

This idea... 'cooperative threat
reduction'... It deserves to be heard.
It has merit. And it'll work if someone
from the inside tells them it can.

(beat)

When your mother prayed for peace,
Veta...

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

she was praying for you-- just like you pray for Yuri. You can make peace for him.

VETA

'Cooperative. Threat. Reduction.'

Behind her the last PASSENGER clammers aboard and the Aeroflot flight begins to crank its ENGINES. She turns to look.

BEN

Taking risks in the Soviet Union was dangerous. But I can tell you for certain-- not taking risks in a democracy-- is equally dangerous. We reward ambition. We reward merit.

She kisses Yuri and heads for the plane, shouting back:

VETA

Take my son home. Tell his grandmother to keep him there.

(beat)

Lock him up if you have to.

INT. CAPTAIN OMAROV'S CAR - DAY

Captain Omarov drives towards the dacha-- it is surrounded by MILITIA VEHICLES, including two APCs.

Evgeni looks concerned.

EVGENI

Turn around.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Too late-- they've seen us.

EXT. OMAROV DACHA - DAY

Captain Omarov parks and Evgeni get out.

They head into the dacha-- past drunk, staring MILITIAMEN--
- *wolves in uniforms.*

CAPTAIN OMAROV

(to Evgeni)

Courage, godson. Remember your Navy training. We tell them nothing.

Evgeni swallows hard.

INT. OMAROV DACHA - MOMENTS LATER

Captain Omarov and Evgeni enter the large dining room-- where Ben was once drunk and singing-- to find Al-Jafari calmly seated at the table.

His NOTEBOOK is out and ready-- he reads from it.

AL-JAFARI

*Captain Sergei Omarov. Submarine captain
in the Soviet Navy. Widower. I'm afraid
that's all he was willing to tell me.*

And then they SEE it: the 'he' Al-Jafari is talking about is: Lyosha.

His bloody, mangled body is lying on the floor-- he is wheezing through broken ribs and a punctured lung-- blood still running on the floor.

Then Captain Omarov notices Oleg leaning-- smoking, uncomfortable-- against the wall. Oleg won't make eye contact.

OLEG

(to Al-Jafari)

I will be outside with my men.

Oleg leaves the wall and passes by Captain Omarov and Evgeni-- leaving them alone with Al-Jafari.

AL-JAFARI

And I'll be inside with mine.

And as he goes, two more IRANIAN REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS-- dressed in civilian clothes and coats-- come into the room. They're holding PISTOLS.

CAPTAIN OMAROV

Have you read Pushkin?

(beat)

"I was not born to amuse the tsars."

Al-Jafari smiles-- he points to Evgeni with his pencil.

AL-JAFARI

*Your godfather won't save you. He won't
save himself. I've known enough hard men
to know who will bend; who will break.*

He nods to one of his SOLDIERS...

Who raises his PISTOL AND:

SHOOTS CAPTAIN OMAROV IN THE HEAD.

The honorable Kazak falls dead-- his blood and brain splattered over Evgeni's face.

TEARS well in Evgeni's eyes. Al-Jafari, looks down at his notebook, then back at Evgeni-- switches back to Russian.

AL-JAFARI

Now, let's find out how far you will bend... 'Evgeni'.

EXT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - NIGHT

HEAVY SNOW IS FALLING.

Ben and a KAZAK GUARD carry a CONTAINER DRUM to the waiting truck and hand it up to ORTIZ and DUART.

As they secure the drum, Ben walks back into the warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - MOMENTS LATER

Ben stares-- momentarily awed-- and we SEE:

It's mostly empty.

There are only THREE PALLETS left-- and the team is already working on the necessary CONTAINER DRUMS.

O'Malley is shaking hands with a female KAZAK SCIENTIST, then he moves to join Ben.

O'MALLEY

They're marvelous. Smart. Resourceful. Dedicated.

(beat)

I'm glad I took my Thanksgiving vacation here with you, Ben.

BEN

I think you're probably out of vacation days by now, O'Malley. They'll dock your pay.

O'MALLEY

There goes my jet ski.

BEN

Dude... Sorry.

O'Malley chuckles.

And then they HEAR DESPERATE CAR HONKING from outside.

Everyone inside the warehouse TENSES.

BEN

Keep working!

He races out the door.

EXT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - NIGHT

Ben races outside-- running past the trucks-- to find:

Ortiz and Duart shouldering their M-16s and the KAZAK GUARDS doing the same with their AK-47s.

Everyone is on edge as in the distance they see:

A BEAT-UP KAZAK TAXI approaching-- lights flashing, horn honking-- driving straight at the warehouse.

One of the KAZAK'S FIRES his AK into the air.

Everyone turns with surprise-- even the Marines.

The TAXI SCREECHES to a stop fifty yards out.

BEN

Hold your fire!

(shouting)

Everyone chill the hell out!

He moves forward-- slowly-- blinking in the taxi HEADLIGHTS. Ortiz and Duart-- ready to fire-- follow a few paces behind.

As Ben gets close to the car-- the TAXI cuts its headlights and shuts off its engines.

Suddenly, dark-- a MAN gets out of the driver's side.

CORPORAL DUART

FREEZE!

Then there's a BLAST OF LIGHT from the beams of the MILITARY TRUCK behind them-- one of the Kazaks has turned on its headlights.

And standing at the taxi, white as a sheet is:

BEN

Lomax?!

Ben jogs the last few feet to the taxi.

Out of the passenger side steps an armed Sergeant Wilkins... and Yuri. Ben closes to within a few feet.

BEN

(to Yuri)

Your mother is going to kill me.

(to Lomax)

What the hell are you all doing here?!

No one speaks for a second. Then:

LOMAX

They dumped him on our front door.

He gestures to the backseat...

Ben comes around to the back and Lomax opens the rear door. In the back is a HEAVY BLANKET... and Lomax pulls it back to reveal:

THE CORPSE OF CAPTAIN OMAROV.

Ben hits his knees-- *lost*.

EXT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - DAWN

The snow has lifted momentarily and there is a brilliant SHAFT OF SUNLIGHT peeking through the dark, blizzard clouds on the horizon.

Captain Omarov's body-- covered again-- sits on the doorstep of the warehouse. The Kazaks-- loyalists, friends of his wife, friends of his-- stand around the body, comforting one another.

Ben and Lomax sit on the back of one of the military TRUCKS as O'Malley approaches.

O'MALLEY

One container left to load.

Ben nods-- thanks. O'Malley goes back into the warehouse.

BEN

(absently)

I told his mother I'd keep him safe.

Off Lomax's look, Ben nods toward Yuri-- standing huddled around a fire with the Marines.

LOMAX

I didn't know what to do. He showed up like he does every day. We couldn't just leave him in town after Omarov was killed.

BEN

(re: Omarov)

They left his body on the front door? As what? A message?

LOMAX

I don't know.

BEN

How'd you find us?

Lomax pulls a SMALL DEVICE from his coat pocket-- yellow and black... the GPS TRACKER.

LOMAX

She was right-- Sergeant Wilkins-- they should put them in cars. Turn by turn-- every inch of the way here.

(beat)

I had to steal the cab-- the cupboard is bare, Ben-- Uncle Sam's safe is spent.

(beat)

We're way beyond the red line now.

Ben watches as the Kazak's all lay hands on Captain Omarov's body-- a traditional movement of mourning... For a moment Ben considers this...

And then a terrifying thought occurs to him.

BEN

Where is Evgeni?

LOMAX

Isn't he here?

BEN

He came with us to town-- Captain Omarov wanted his eyes on the mountain road...

LOMAX

Understandable, it's slippery as the ninth circle of hell-- black ice everywhere.

And then an even worse thought occurs to Ben.

BEN

It wasn't a message.

LOMAX

What?

BEN

Evgeni didn't talk.

(beat)

No one knows where this place is. Dozens of roads in those mountains. Dozens of chances to take a wrong turn. Get lost.

(beat)

The only way to find this place is if you know where it is. It's completely secure. Secret. A closed city.

(shouting)

Sergeant Wilkins!

The Marines move with haste at the alarm in his voice.

LOMAX

What the hell are you talking about?!

BEN

(frustrated)

It's not enough to want to do good, Lomax... you also have to do well.

SERGEANT WILKINS

What?

BEN

You were followed.

(beat)

Omarov was bait-- a trap to get you to lead them here.

The Marines tense-- RIFLES go back to shoulders automatically. Ortiz and Duarte immediately fan out-- scanning the bare daylight and the town.

Ben climbs off the truck and heads for the taxi.

BEN

I'm going to check the gate.

CORPORAL DUART

Bowman!

Duarte holds up his SECONDARY SIDEARM-- **A Colt 45.**

DUART
My Daddy's from Vietnam-- bring it back.

LOMAX
(to Ben)
Remember what I told you about when
diplomacy fails...

Ben considers for a second.

He waves off Duart. Instead grabs his PUFFY WHITE PARKA.

EXT. SEMIPALATINSK-16 - DAWN

Ben-- in his white parka-- crawls over the SNOW... he's
almost invisible from a distance.

He CRESTS a small rise a hundred yards from the FENCE
LINE and his heart falls:

AT THE GATE:

Kazak MILITA with Omarov's loyalist GUARDS on their KNEES--
- guns at their heads.

PARKED across the entrance are two APCs.

They're blocking the exit. No one is going in or out.

Sitting on top of one of the APCs, as calm as ever, is Al-
Jafari.

EXT. WAREHOUSE, SEMIPALATINSK-16 - MORNING

Ben is briefing everyone-- Yuri is translating for the
Kazaks.

BEN
A dozen of them, heavily armed. Two APCs
blocking our exit. We're not going
anywhere.

LOMAX
Why haven't they come in here and blown
all our brains out?

BEN
We have what? A little bread and water?
They can afford to wait til we starve or
freeze.

Ben turns and walks.

SERGEANT WILKINS

Where are you going?

BEN

Need to make a phone call.

He pulls out his SAT PHONE and we INTERCUT:

INT. SENATE CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Nunn, Lugar and Ash are seated around the table-- exhausted.

Arrayed around them are the STAFFERS-- some sleeping in chairs. The THREE DEMOCRATS and three REPUBLICANS are asleep on the floor-- suit jackets as pillows.

The SPEAKER PHONE RINGS.

Everyone snaps AWAKE. Ash races for the button and:

ASH

Ben?

BEN

Things aren't good here.

Nunn, Lugar and Ash exchange a look.

NUNN

(quietly)

Tell him.

ASH

I've been suspended, Ben.

LUGAR

The Secretary of State ordered Sam to recall his fact finding mission.

NUNN

I'm sorry, son, but-- someone said stop.

Ben doesn't respond-- *he's staring at the Kazaks-- huddled around a makeshift fire... sitting with their fallen leader's body.*

ASH

Did you hear us, Ben?

BEN

Captain Omarov's dead.

NUNN

What?

BEN

They killed him... and the local militia
has us surrounded.

Nunn and Lugar and Ash exchange a look-- *bad to worse to
disaster*-- around them STAFFERS hang their heads.

ASH

I'm sorry, Ben... but...

NUNN

I think it's time to come home, son.

Ben sees a MOTHER break off her last piece of bread to
share with YURI and an UNCLE.

Ben just watches these people-- people he's come to
admire and for the first time in his life-- right here,
right now-- Ben Bowman decides to try and save the world.

BEN

I can't do that.

ASH

What?

BEN

I can't leave them.

(beat)

They've fought for this... Died for it.

LUGAR

Mister Bowman, this is bigger than you.

He gestures at the MAP and SATELLITE PHOTOS.

LUGAR

There are a dozen of these places spread
out across at least six countries--
including Russia itself-- not to mention
the missile silos, submarines...
bombers. We can't secure them all.

But Ben is barely listening.

NUNN

Ben... I need you to focus. Leave the
uranium. Can you safely extract yourself
and Lomax and the Marines?

BEN

(reeling)

The Marines... the Marines... you going to send us a helicopter?

ASH

What?

BEN

To the consulate rooftop?

(beat)

So I can watch my friends reaching up-- desperate not to be left behind?

Nunn and Lugar and Ash are really worried now.

ASH

Ben... we're not sure what you're talking about, but--

BEN

They never asked for a dime...

And then... **the lightning bolt...**

BEN

Sometimes history turns on a single act.
Sometimes the future turns on a single idea.

(beat)

They never asked for a dime...

(beat)

What if we paid them?

NUNN

We won't outbid the Arabs or Persians or North Koreans, we're not black market arms dealers-- no matter what you've heard about CIA slush funds, Ben--

BEN

No.

He gestures at the Kazaks-- scientists, guards, workers-- all of them.

BEN

'Missile silos, submarines, bombers'... For fifty years the Soviets paid them to build them.

(beat)

So what if we paid them to dismantle them. A jobs program. Call it foreign aid. Call it whatever.

ASH

It'll cost millions-- hundreds of millions.

Nunn and Ash look at Lugar. He doesn't budge.

LUGAR

Ben-- my heart goes out to you, to the Kazak scientists who have helped you-- us-- it truly does-- but there's only one thing worse than asking a Republican for money...

(beat)

And that's asking him for a lot of it.

(beat)

You're talking billions of dollars.

(beat)

And I'm not speaking for my colleagues right now. I'm speaking for myself. There's no way that's going to happen. Period.

Nunn and Ash hang their heads.

Ben sees O'Malley, Fred, and Eliza emerge from the warehouse with... *one last CONTAINER DRUM.*

It's done.

Ben stares-- mind racing-- at O'Malley for a long beat... then: he smiles-- motions O'Malley over to the phone.

BEN

Senator Lugar... Republican of Indiana.

(beat)

Home of I-P-L. Indianapolis Power and Light.

(beat)

I'm a trade officer, Senator-- and on my last posting I was trying to get the government of Malawi interested in Westinghouse. In General Electric. In the power generation capabilities of American manufacturers. Gas turbines. Hydro dams and coal plants... and...

(beat)

Nuclear power generation.

(beat)

Just like the Indianapolis Power and Light company plant in Marble Hill.

LUGAR

That's not operational.

BEN

Yet. But the one in Baxley, Georgia is. The other one in Waynesboro, Georgia is too. Isn't that right, Senator Nunn?

NUNN

Yes...

Ben nods to O'Malley.

BEN

Doctor O'Malley, is it easy to turn weapons grade, highly enriched uranium into fuel for civilian power reactors?

O'MALLEY

Yes.

LUGAR

Kid that smells like some swords into plowshares horseshit you're selling-- you're telling me you can make nuclear weapons turn on my light bulbs?

Ben smiles and cues O'Malley:

O'MALLEY

Senator... which one of us is a nuclear physicist?

A couple of the DEMOCRAT and REPUBLICAN SENATORS actually laugh out loud.

BEN

And how much would you estimate that fuel to be worth, Dr. O'Malley?

O'MALLEY

At current prices? *Millions of dollars-- hundreds of millions... Maybe billions.*

BEN

Senator Lugar-- the people of Kazakhstan have six hundred kilos of highly enriched reactor fuel to sell you... in exchange for your Cooperative Threat Reduction Program employing them to secure and dismantle the weapons of mass destruction associated with the Cold War and Soviet Union.

All eyes in the U.S. Capitol conference room turn to Senator Dick Lugar of Indiana... waiting...

LUGAR

You want to do this in Kazakhstan?

BEN

I want to do it everywhere.

Lugar smiles, so does Nunn.

NUNN

Atta boy.

ASH

We've got work to do, Ben. You going to be able to get out of a closed city?

Above Ben, the sunlight disappears as BLIZZARD STORM CLOUDS GATHER.

BEN

I need those C-141s to take off from Incirlik. Right now.

ASH

I'm suspended, Ben...

BEN

You didn't get into public service for the fame and fortune, Ash...

Ash hesitates-- *this is his career ending.*

ASH

I'll get them there.

(beat)

Don't get shot.

Ash hangs up.

O'MALLEY

Did he say 'don't get shot'? Dude...

Ben ignores him-- shouts:

BEN

Corporal Duart! Is it true you took the governor of the engine of an A-1 Abrahms Main Battle Tank?

CORPORAL DUART

Yes, sir.

BEN

So how long is it going to take you to get the one off of that bulldozer?

EXT. SEMIPALATINSK-16 - MORNING

Oleg, Al-Jafari, and a DOZEN MILITIAMEN wait-- smoking and drinking-- around the APCs.

Suddenly, they're roused by the HIGH WHINE of ENGINES coming their way. Everyone tenses and then moves to position.

Oleg and Al-Jafari stand on top of one of the APCs. Oleg raises BINOCULARS to SEE:

Coming straight at them is one of Ben's MILITARY TRUCKS-- it's rear loaded with CONTAINER DRUMS.

A Kazak is behind the wheel-- and Ben and Sergeant Wilkins stand on the back-- looking over the top of the cab-- looking straight at the roadblock ahead.

ON BEN:

SERGEANT WILKINS

This better work...

BEN

If you have a better idea, Sergeant...

ON AL-JAFARI:

AL-JAFARI

What are they doing?

OLEG

I don't know...

ON BEN:

Behind them is the SECOND MILITARY TRUCK, also loaded with CONTAINER BARRELS. A convoy of uranium... and a game of chicken...

ON OLEG:

OLEG

He's not slowing down.

AL-JAFARI

I can make out a second vehicle behind... It's a convoy... one hundred meters and closing...

OLEG

(to his men)

*Steady! Hold your fire-- til we've
secured the nuclear material.*

KAZAK MILITIAMAN

They're going to ram us!

OLEG

*Those trucks are two tons-- they won't
budge these APCs-- twelve tons. Stand
fast!*

ON BEN:

BEN

Sixty yards... Fifty... now!

Sergeant Wilkins SLAMS the BUTT OF HER RIFLE into the cab
roof.

And the DRIVER wheels to the RIGHT... hard over.

The TRUCK CAREENS-- ALMOST ON TWO WHEELS-- TO THE RIGHT.

Ben and Sergeant Wilkins hold on for dear life.

ON AL-JAFARI:

AL-JAFARI

Thirty meters... what are they doing...

The men all watch as:

The first truck in the convoy-- Ben's-- swerves to the
right-- WHEELS SCREECHING AND SKIDDING in the snow and
ice. Behind the first truck:

THE SECOND TRUCK VEERS LEFT. Behind the second truck:

THE THIRD TRUCK VEERS RIGHT-- following Ben-- the convoy
is splitting up to:

**REVEAL THE BULLDOZER BARRELING THROUGH FROM THE BACK OF
THE COLUMN.**

*US Marine Corps Corporal Duart of Arkansas at the wheel
giving a REBEL YELL at the top of his lungs.*

ON OLEG:

OLEG

MOVE!!!!

But it's too late.

As the MILITIA MEN scatter and Oleg and Al-Jafari leap off the APCs:

The DOZER BLASTS into the MIDDLE OF THE APCs-- crashing through the twenty four ton roadblock-- *and tearing a whole straight through.*

The road is open.

The convoy of TRUCKS-- quickly reassembled-- barrels through and past the dumbstruck Militiamen.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The TRUCKS careen around a bend in the road-- sheer drops of thousands of feet off the side-- their DRIVERS manhandling on BLACK ICE.

The first truck-- BRAKES to a HALT.

The rest of the convoy pulls up short.

ON THE THIRD TRUCK:

Ortiz and the Kazak Guards shoulder weapons-- ready to guard the rear. Close behind them:

Corporal Duart and his manic DOZER wrench to a stop-- *Duart slamming the dozer sideways in the middle of the road.*

ON DUART-- he uses the butt of his Daddy's COLT to slam the KEY-- breaking it off in the ignition.

Then he leaps from the DOZER just as Militiamen hurdle down the road toward him.

AK-47s drawn and:

FIRE!

Duart makes a break for it as BULLETS SLAM into the dozer's steel hide.

Duart is running and screaming:

DUART

Go! Go! Go!

The trucks start moving.

Ortiz REACHES out an arm AND HE AND THE KAZAKS PULL DUART ONBOARD THE LAST TRUCK.

Duart looks back and ribs Ortiz-- pointing at the Militiamen as they reach the Dozer.

CORPORAL DUART

Now that is a roadblock.

INT. GEORGE MITCHELL'S HOME, GEORGETOWN - EVENING

Ash enters the Senate Majority Leader's home to find a HOLIDAY PARTY in full swing. *Unlike the plastic cups and reindeer sweaters in his office-- this is first class:*

Crystal punch bowls, black tie Waiters, a Christmas Tree in every room.

With a draft of the Act under his arm, Ash winds his way through the party to find:

Nunn and Lugar huddled by an EASTERN WHITE PINE decked in BLUE and WHITE TRIMMINGS.

NUNN

I hear he brings all the trees down from Maine himself-- in a pickup.

LUGAR

(impressed)

Great photo op.

(to Ash)

We ready, Mister Carter?

ASH

(holds up Act)

As we'll ever be... Dick.

LUGAR

Yeah. I think we should use 'Senator' now.

NUNN

Senator... let's go find out what the Sage of Scarborough has to say.

INT. GEORGE MITCHELL'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

George Mitchell is seated at his kitchen NOOK-- glasses pushed up on his head-- his eyes an inch from the page.

His fingers traces over every word as fast as a typist could type them.

When he's done. He slides his glasses down and looks up.

GEORGE MITCHELL

We've fought the Soviets for my entire life...

(beat)

And, now, you two idiots-- if one of you said the sky was blue, the other would fight him tooth and nail to get a vote for red-- want to get together and pay the Sovs to dismantle their own arsenal?

ASH

Senator Mitchell--

Mitchell silences the young wonk with a single, raised FINGER-- which he then points at Nunn and Lugar-- like a headmaster.

GEORGE MITCHELL

Richard. Samuel. I want you to think long and hard about this.

(beat)

I gavel your committees right now and, in three hours, five hundred and thirty-five men and women from fifty states will be called into Congress in the middle of the night-- many of whom already left for vacations from Montana to Hawaii...

(beat)

... and they'll come back here to either vote on a classified, historic Act of Congress...

(beat)

Or find themselves a new majority leader.

NUNN

We have the votes in committee, George.

LUGAR

It'll pass.

George Mitchell of the great state of Maine considers them... and his political future.

GEORGE MITCHELL

It'd better.

(to Ash)

Hand me the phone, Mister Carter.

EXT. ALMATY - LATE AFTERNOON

As BEN'S THREE TRUCK CONVOY ROARS into the city:

DARK GREY-- almost black-- CLOUDS hang over the capital city and its airport. A blizzard is about to begin.

The largest military transport aircraft in the world is the United States Air Force C-141 STARLIFTER. Its ENGINES are powerful enough to blow over tractor trailer trucks and its WINGSPAN casts a SHADOW you get lost in.

Every head in Almaty looks up at the SOUND OF THUNDER-- windows RATTLING-- PEDESTRIANS running for cover...

OVERHEAD: A FLIGHT OF THREE STARLIFTERS emerge out of the clouds and drift down-- in staggered formation-- towards:

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

The STARLIFTERS-- like mammoth, grey BIRDS OF PREY-- descend on the airport. The SNOW covering the tarmac SWIRLS into a TORNADO as the STARLIFTERS come in for a landing. The awesome power of the American military-- unquestioned.

EXT. ALMATY SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Ben is on the SAT PHONE and we INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GEORGE MITCHELL'S OFFICE, U.S. SENATE - NIGHT

BEN

Where are we?

ASH

The vote is happening now.

ON BEN: The DRIVER takes a turn too sharp and loses control as he races over one of the canal BRIDGES.

The TRUCK skitters on BLACK ICE-- just as SNOW starts to fall-- Ben loses his footing.

Ben goes flying-- saved only by Sergeant Wilkins' quick hand on his belt.

The driver and truck recovers-- landing on the other side of the canal.

But as Ben looks back-- his SAT PHONE SOARS--

Straight into the CANAL.

ASH

Ben? Ben?!

He looks at Nunn and Lugar.

NUNN

God speed.

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

As the three planes taxi toward the end of the runway:

BEN'S CONVOY bursts around the terminal-- racing for the planes.

The Starlifters park and their rear RAMPS come down before they stop.

Off the ramps come a small TEAM of AMERICAN AIR FORCE PERSONNEL and two FORKLIFTS-- professional and fast.

Ben's trucks SCREECH to a halt-- fifty feet from the planes-- TIRES sliding in the snow.

Ben leaps down and races to:

The ranking officer-- walking off the lead Starlifter-- she's pulling off her helmet as Ben approaches:

BEN

Ben Bowman. U.S State Department.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM

Abigail Chisholm, U.S Air Force.

(re: snow)

We barely got in-- there's a blizzard from here to the Turkmenistan border...

I really hope you have more than a partridge in a pear tree for us...

Ben turns and points behind him where O'Malley and every available hand are already disconnecting the CABLES around the CONTAINER DRUMS.

BEN

Three scientists, two diplomats, three Marines.

(beat)

And six hundred kilos of highly enriched uranium.

Captain Chisholm doesn't know if that's a joke or not-- but she doesn't have time to worry about it right now.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM
Chief Master Sergeant Adam Heath!

SERGEANT HEATH moves quickly to his officer.

SERGEANT HEATH
Captain.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM
Get those drums onboard and--

BEN
And we might have company.

Captain Chisholm and Sergeant Heath exchange a look.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM
Master Sergeant, break the record for combat rigging. Right. Now.

SERGEANT HEATH
Yes, ma'am.

He waves his team toward the trucks. HEAVY SNOW is now FALLING. Captain Chisholm looks up at it, then to Ben.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM
Where's the runway de-icing equipment, 'Ben Bowman, US State Department'?

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT HANGER - LATER

Ben, Lomax, Captain Chisholm and the Airport Manager stand in front of the GARAGE. There's an empty spot where a FIRE ENGINE used to be. And on the other side is the TRACTOR and trailer... with a JET ENGINE on the back.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM
Looks like someone ripped an engine out of an old MiG-27...

BEN
Welcome to Kazakhstan, Captain.

The Airport Manager points at the empty spot.

AIRPORT MANAGER
You didn't bring back my fire engine.

LOMAX

I'm really sorry about that... but trust me when I say it's perfectly safe.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM

Ben... blizzard.

BEN

(to Manager)

Sir... what's it going to take to fire up that jet engine there and clear this runway?

INT. GEORGE MITCHELL'S OFFICE, U.S. SENATE - NIGHT

George sits behind his opulent DESK. Nunn and Lugar are nearby. Pins and needles. A young PAGE enters-- looks around the room-- intimidated.

GEORGE MITCHELL

Well?

PAGE

I came straight from the Senate Floor, Senator, as requested--

LUGAR

The vote, kid-- the count!

(beat)

For God's sake, pretend you're in social studies.

PAGE

(deep breathe)

On the Resolution of Ratification of Senate Amendment 1439 to House Resolution 3807...

(beat)

86 Yea votes.

NUNN

Landslide.

GEORGE MITCHELL

You boys better get to the White House.

EXT. NORTH ENTRANCE, 1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVE - DAY

The famous white columns and porticos are swirled in wide RED RIBBONS-- *making giant candy-canes of the great structures. In every window: a CANDLE. On every door: a WREATH.*

Ash, Nunn, and Lugar walk quickly up to the doors that are guarded by TWO DRESS MARINES.

They SNAP to attention and open the doors as the men approach. Sam Nunn has a PACKET under his arm-- an ACT OF CONGRESS-- in a blue cover with the Presidential Seal embossed on it.

ASH

We just have to get past the Prince of Darkness-- that's our nickname for him across the Potomac at DOD...

NUNN

Who are you talking about?

Lugar throws his arm around his old enemy and new friend.

LUGAR

You're a sweet man, Sam.

(beat)

He means our former congressional colleague, the honorable representative of Wyoming and our current Secretary of Defense... Richard Bruce Cheney.

(beat)

He just won the Gulf War for the President... and he'll be the only voice in that little oval room that matters.

ASH

I'm sure he'll... it'll be fine.

LUGAR

It'll be a Christmas miracle.

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT - LATER

The Airport Manager-- now in Ben's PUFFY WHITE PARKA-- is driving the TRACTOR towards the end of the runway.

Ben, Lomax and Captain Chisholm are walking behind when:

SERGEANT WILKINS

Ben!!

They all turn to see:

AT THE AIRPORT ENTRANCE: **MILITIAMEN in APCs speeding into the airport and straight at them.**

ON BEN:

BEN

MOVE!

Ben, Lomax and Chisholm sprint for the Starlifters.

ON STARLIFTERS:

Sergeant Wilkins is deploying the Marines and Kazaks.

SERGEANT WILKINS

Perimeter! Fifty yards!

SERGEANT HEATH

Sidearms!

The Air Force team PULL PISTOLS from HOLSTERS on their jumpsuits... and join the Marines... spacing out in a perimeter.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM

We're not going to win a firefight against heavy weapons and armored personnel carriers, Ben.

BEN

O'Malley! Where are we?

O'Malley-- pointing to the trucks and forklifts-- there are only a half DOZEN CONTAINER DRUMS LEFT.

O'MALLEY

Almost there.

BEN

Sergeant Heath-- you and the scientists-- get this stuff secured and strap in. We'll be taking off momentarily.

No one looks confident.

BEN

Let's go!

ON AL-JAFARI: he leaps down from an APC and marches-- followed by his SOLDIERS, Oleg, and the Militiamen straight toward:

WILKINS' PERIMETER: M-16s meet AK-47s-- barrel to barrel-- eyeball-to-eyeball.

Yuri is side-by-side with Duart-- holding the COLT 45.

There is a narrow band of 'no man's land'-- a single yard of snow between factions.

And across from Yuri is a deadly looking MILITIAMAN with his AK-47 sighted on the kid's head.

LOMAX

Remember what I said about when
diplomacy ends...

Ben holds up his hand-- he walks up alone-- toward the place where diplomats belong... between the guns.

He steps in between Yuri and the MILITIAMAN-- putting his body in front of Veta's son.

BEN

(to Yuri)

Your mother is going to kill me.

He gently lowers his hand and places it on Yuri's gun. With the smallest, quietest move he slowly lowers the Colt-- *Yuri letting him point it towards the snow.*

Everyone takes a breath.

Ben takes a step away-- into the no man's land-- toward:

Al-Jafari, as he opens his NOTEBOOK.

AL-JAFARI

Benjamin Bowman. United States
Department of State. You have six
hundred kilos of weapons grade uranium
in your possession.

(beat)

Give it to me please.

Ben doesn't move-- doesn't speak. Duarte and Ortiz move FINGERS TO TRIGGERS. Oleg pulls his PISTOL from its holster.

BEN

(to Oleg)

You're a son of a bitch.

OLEG

I'm taking care of my men.

This is going to go south in seconds.

Al-Jafari calmly raises his hand and nods to one of his SOLDIERS... Who goes to the nearest APC and pulls from the back hatch:

EVGENI-- a bloody mess-- but alive. *His hands are tied in front of him and his left eye is bruised shut.*

The Iranian Soldier walks Evgeni up to Al-Jafari and then puts a gun to his head. Ben looks to Oleg.

AL-JAFARI

(re: the gun to
Evgeni)

That's the same gun that killed his
godfather...

(checks notebook)

Captain Omarov.

(beat)

Do you want to die in the cold, Ben
Bowman? I'm happy to splatter his brains
on you, the same way I did his on
Evgeni.

BEN

The price of liberty is that sometimes
you have to die for it.

Ben looks down at the notebook.

AL-JAFARI

(shrugs)

I like to pay attention to the details.

(beat)

I understand you're a trade liaison
officer. Do we have a deal?

Ben looks up at the HEAVY SNOW-- the wind is picking up--
he should be shaking in the cold without his coat-- *but
the adrenaline is pumping and his heart is pounding.*

And with that Ben walks across the no man's land and
EVERYONE'S WEAPON COMES UP-- READY TO FIRE.

But Ben just walks calmly on-- right up to Evgeni--
pushing him gently back and putting his own head right up
against the Iranian soldier's PISTOL.

*The Kazak MILITIAMEN look baffled-- for that matter, so
do the Americans. If the wind wasn't howling, you could
hear a pin drop.*

Oleg and Al-Jafari exchange a glance... if an American
gets shot-- they're both going to have to answer for it.
Will they risk it? Al-Jafari focuses in on Ben.

AL-JAFARI

Twelve months ago this man was in the Soviet Navy-- ready to launch an intercontinental ballistic missile at you-- destroy you in a nuclear holocaust... now you want to take a bullet for him?

He's eyeball-to-eyeball with Ben.

AL-JAFARI

I've known many men with martyr complexes, Ben, and I'd be happy to help you reach Paradise.

BEN

Sometimes history turns on a single act.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

This is the OVAL OFFICE-- intimidating even to those who are used to it. The locus of power for the entire world.

Ash, Nunn, and Lugar-- on one side, on one couch...

On the other-- *directly across the chestnut coffee table--* are William Hawkins, JAMES BAKER, Secretary of State, and NICHOLAS F. BRADY, Secretary of the Treasury.

Seated in chairs in front of the RESOLUTE DESK are:

COLIN POWELL, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and

DICK CHENEY, Secretary of Defense

And between them is the leader of the free world:

George H.W. Bush, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

The prosecution is midstream:

HAWKINS

In direct violation of my orders--

SECRETARY BAKER

Proper diplomatic channels--

SECRETARY BRADY

And with the fraudulent dispersal of federal funds...

Beat.

HAWKINS

Mister President, these men have sought to contravene fifty years of sovereign US foreign policy.

There's a long beat, then:

PRESIDENT H.W. BUSH

I assume you have a rebuttal?

Ash looks to Nunn and Lugar, who in turn nod to him.

ASH

Sir, you fought in World War II?

PRESIDENT H.W. BUSH

I did.

ASH

You agreed with George Marshall's Plan? To spend American dollars to rebuild Europe as a bulwark against Communism?

(beat)

You would agree that it's not enough to win the war... you have to win the peace...

PRESIDENT H.W. BUSH

I would, Mister Carter.

(beat)

But I'd like to hear it from your co-conspirators. Senators?

LUGAR

You and I are Republicans, Mister President, this plan will work-- and if it turns on light bulbs via civilian reactors-- well, it won't cost the American taxpayer a dime-- and we'll all sleep better at night.

NUNN

I know it's the province of the GOP to scare the shit out of people.

(chuckles)

But if we don't do this, sir... then in six to twelve months, every despot, dictator, terrorist and mob boss in the known world is going to be fighting us, our allies, and peace and liberty in every corner of the globe with Soviet made missiles, subs, fighter jets...

(beat)

And nuclear weapons.

Long beat.

And then, as promised, the President's head turns left...

To Dick Cheney. Nunn, Lugar and Ash hold their breath.

PRESIDENT H.W. BUSH

What do you think, Dick?

The so called Prince of Darkness looks them over with his trademark ruthless, discerning scowl-- impervious to criticism-- forever unflinching and uncowed.

Finally...

SECRETARY CHENEY

I think it sounds like liberal, hippie, peacenik clap trap.

(beat)

But it also might just be the deal of the century. The Cold War cost trillions. Even if this does cost us money... it's pennies on the dollar-- you can't put the genie back in the bottle, Mister President-- nuclear weapons are here to stay... But this program-- 'Cooperative Threat Reduction'-- - Nice title-- this program is decisive, courageous and forward looking. Hard to imagine it came out of Congress.

His eyes turn to the Secretaries of State and Treasury.

SECRETARY CHENEY

And if everyone else is too chickenshit to run it out of their fiefdoms then you can run it out of mine.

(eyes on Ash)

The way I hear it, Mister Carter is likely to be out of a job soon-- perhaps we can find him another one at the Cooperative Threat Reduction Center.

PRESIDENT H.W. BUSH

(to Nunn and Lugar)

Well, Senators, you've made history establishing a military edict to reduce threats... not fight them.

(beat)

It's 'cooperative'... that means our new friends in Moscow, Kiev... and Almaty will go for it?

NUNN

Mister President, Yeltsin is eager for your confirmation of the legislation... but right now-- if you'll kindly review page 63 of the...

(glance to Lugar)

'Nunn-Lugar Amendment'... I think you'll find that the amount we're estimating is enough to convince the new President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan to cooperate.

ASH

And with your permission... We'd love to give him a call, sir. Right. Now.

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT - BACK TO SCENE

Ben has a gun to his head.

But before Al-Jafari can give the order, there is:

HONKING and the screeching of TIRES.

All eyes turn to the airport entrance where...

HALF A DOZEN BLACK SOVIET LADAS scream onto the tarmac.

They still have RED STARS on their doors, but at each corner of their hoods are the small *blue, red and white* *FLAGS of mother Russia*... these are now the official cars of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION embassy.

OLEG

(russian)

What the hell is this?!

LOMAX

(english)

What the hell is this?!

No one in the standoff moves an inch-- and Al-Jafari never takes his eyes off of Ben, who smiles.

Finally, Ben looks to Lomax.

BEN

Here's to old enemies... and new friends.

The Russian CARS fan out around the APCs and slam to a stop.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION EMBASSY GUARDS pile out of the cars-- a dozen-- followed by a dozen RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS, including:

ELIZAVETA 'VETA' IVANOV.

VETA-- in the classic LONG COAT and traditional Ushanka FUR HAT, the very picture of Russian beauty-- walks calmly toward them.

All eyes follow her through the snow... She stops a few feet from Ben-- and the gun to his head.

Long beat.

She clocks her son-- Colt in his hand, but pointed at the ground-- then looks to Ben.

VETA

I thought I told you to lock him up?

BEN

Have you ever tried to talk to a thirteen year old?

She pulls a SAT PHONE from her coat pocket and holds it out to Oleg.

VETA

Colonel Karimov, I have the President of Kazakhstan on the phone for you.

Eyes swivel to Oleg.

He takes the crazy looking phone and listens.

Finally:

OLEG

Three hundred and eleven million U.S. Dollars...

(listening)

Yes, I see, thank you, Mister President.

He hangs up and then turns to his men and speaks quickly in Kazak:

OLEG

Lower your weapons and return to the capital.

There's a long beat.

OLEG

Move!

And just like that, an idea becomes an act and the future and history change-- MILITIAMEN snap to-- scattering to the APCs.

And then for the first time, Al-Jafari loses his cool.

AL-JAFARI

(to Oleg)

So... we get outbid by America and you turn on your friends, Colonel?!

OLEG

It's not the money, Captain... It's jobs. They're giving us our dignity back.

Oleg follows his men and boards the closest APC... As he passes Evgeni:

EVGENI

You'll answer for Captain Omarov.

OLEG

I know.

SERGEANT WILKINS

Marines.

SERGEANT WILKINS, ORTIZ, and DUART close the distance fast-- straight at the Iranians-- they're followed closely by the Air Force... and Omarov's Kazaks.

And the Russian Embassy guards have swung their AKs to the ready.

The Iranians are surrounded.

But there's still a gun to Ben Bowman's head.

BEN

Mister Kemal.

AL-JAFARI

Captain. Captain Al-Jafari of the Revolutionary Guards of Iran. I'm here to protect my country the same as you.

(beat)

You have the one thing that will make us invincible... even from you.

BEN

Weapons don't make you invincible, Captain.

(nods to Veta)

Ask our former Soviet friends... every system can collapse.

(beat)

But having good friends doesn't hurt.

He gestures around in the swirling snow-- to every weapon sighted on them right now.

BEN

Are you ready to trade-- friends for enemies? Kazakhstan? Russia?

(beat)

The United States of America?

(beat)

Diplomacy fails and wars start...

Captain Al-Jafari. And nothing makes you invincible from war.

Al-Jafari considers for a long beat.

And then Al-Jafari CLOSES HIS NOTEBOOK.

The Iranian Soldier LOWERS his PISTOL.

And Al-Jafari walks away-- in nearly blinding snow... *disappearing past the Russian Embassy cars and into the blizzard.*

The other Iranians follow him.

Ben and Veta stare at one another... but before a word comes from either of them, there's one from:

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM

Ben... Blizzard. It's time to go.

EXT. ALMATY AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

The Airport Manager has the de-icing JET ENGINE on full blast. Snow EVAPORATES hundreds of yards down the tarmac.

Ben stands next to a STARLIFTER as Lomax helps O'Malley scramble aboard through the hatch above.

Veta is holding Yuri tight as they both look at Ben.

She pulls out the SAT PHONE. He takes it.

BEN

How will I contact you?

VETA

As it turns out, I have a new job in Washington, D.C.

(beat)

'Russian Federation Liaison to the Cooperative Threat Reduction Center'.

Lomax motions Yuri away-- they embrace-- big bear hugs.

LOMAX

I'll have the Cheetos and rock-n-roll
waiting for you, kid.

Veta smiles at Ben. As the ENGINES THUNDER she leans in,
shouting to be heard.

VETA

I think I might like the Beatles.

BEN

So did my Dad. I'll learn to live with
it.

(beat)

You're not just any other girl.

They close quickly for a passionate...

KISS.

INT. STARLIFTER - MOMENTS LATER

Ben steps in the cargo hold.

Lomax is just strapping in. Beside him are the crew:

O'Malley, Fred, Eliza, Sergeant Wilkins, Corporal Duarte
and Ortiz. Everyone safe and sound. All smiles.

Ben clocks the cargo-- row after row of CONTAINER DRUMS.
He grins. They did it.

The PLANE shakes... they're taking off.

EXT. STARLIFTER FLIGHT - EVENING

The Starlifters PUNCH THROUGH the BLIZZARD CLOUDS to a
breathtaking sunset.

INT. COCKPIT, CHISHOLM'S STARLIFTER - CONTINUOUS

Ben steps into the cockpit to find Captain Chisholm.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM

Congratulations, Mister Bowman-- a first
for this pilot and I think any American
Air Force pilot-- we're crossing into
Russian airspace...

BEN

Brave new world.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM

And you're onboard the longest flight in U.S. military history-- twenty hours-- straight to Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

BEN

It's a beautiful sunset.

CAPTAIN CHISHOLM

That's actually the sun rise... we'll be chasing the day all the way west...

(off his look)

The military is a strange business.

Suddenly, there's a RINGING in the cockpit. The CREW looks around-- *flabbergasted*.

Ben pulls the SAT PHONE from his pocket.

BEN

So is diplomacy. Sorry. That's me.

And we INTERCUT:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ash, Nunn, and Lugar are seated in the Roosevelt Room on a SPEAKER PHONE-- through the french doors a CHILDREN'S CHOIR is singing.

ASH

How would you feel about coming to work at the Pentagon... there's a brand new Center there...

BEN

... for Cooperative Threat Reduction?

Smiles all around.

LUGAR

Merry Christmas, Mister Bowman.

BEN

Thank you, sir.

Sam Nunn leans in... one last thing:

NUNN

Ben, I never told you: I met your
father...

ON BEN:

NUNN (O.S.)

... a lot of guys dream of saving the
world, son... but you actually did it.

It washes over Ben-- *his father's legacy*-- he smiles.

BEN

Thank you, Senator... I'll see you
gentlemen back in D.C.

He hangs up and looks out at the sunrise-- and the dawn
of a new and safer world.

FADE TO BLACK AND
THEN:

END CREDIT CARDS:

Thanks to the Nunn-Lugar Amendment and the Cooperative Threat Reduction Center, there have been:

- 128 bombers dismantled
- 33 nuclear submarines decommissioned
- 49 biological weapons facilities converted
- 2300 missiles destroyed
- 7619 nuclear warheads deactivated
- 2936 tons of Russian chemical weapons destroyed
- 260 tons of fissile nuclear material secured
- 58,000 former weapons scientists employed

Former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan... and even American allies, such as Australia and South Korea, are now free of weapons grade nuclear material, as well as the infrastructure to make it.

This has been made possible through the continued bipartisan work of Republicans and Democrats in Congress and by the cooperation of the Russian Government.

Since the Nunn-Lugar program began, there has not been a single incident of nuclear proliferation anywhere in the world.