

Flashpoint

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BERKELEY HILLS - DAWN

Dawn's misty tendrils dissolve across a quiet Berkeley Hills street, revealing panoramic views of the San Francisco Bay stretching to the horizon.

EXT. BERKELEY HILLS BUNGALOW - DAWN

A single warm light bleeds through a front window of a weathered 1920s bungalow, cutting through the pre-dawn shadows.

SUPER: BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

INT. BERKELEY HILLS BUNGALOW - DAWN

ANDREW CHEN, a slight Chinese man with graceful movements, smiles as his small dog waits patiently by the front door. He clips the leash to the dog's collar, the door clicking shut behind them with finality.

EXT. BERKELEY HILLS STREET - DAWN

Chen and his dog embark their morning ritual. Street lamps cast amber halos through the lingering mist, transforming the quiet street into a soft, dreamlike landscape.

A JOGGER approaches from behind. As Chen's dog marks a split rail fence, the Jogger raises a casual hand in greeting.

JOGGER

Morning.

CHEN

Morning.

The Jogger turns the corner and disappears. The dog finishes and Chen continues, turning at the same corner.

Emerging quietly from the dark mist, a VAN approaches slowly from behind. Chen doesn't hear it.

From the misty darkness, the Jogger emerges into a pool of streetlight - twenties, fit, Chinese. His smile is practiced, predatory.

The van accelerates and pulls up quickly beside Chen and his dog. The side door opens and TWO CHINESE MEN leap from the van and grab Chen before he knows what's happened.

The Jogger rips the leash from Chen's hand and all three men drag Chen inside. The door slides shut with force. The van engine revs and pulls away quickly, vanishing in the mist.

The small dog, leash lying on the ground, watches. Not knowing what to do, he sits. The street is empty -- silent.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAWN

A Gulfstream G650 sits on the tarmac as the sun is just starting to come up. A MAN stands by the plane with the door open, the stairway deployed.

The van from the abduction speeds onto the tarmac and up to the side of the jet. The door opens and the three men remove a large trunk, carry it to the plane and load it on.

The three men get back into the van and drive away. The jet door is closed and the engines fire up.

The jet taxis to the end of the runway. When the engines reach speed, the jet takes off and disappears into the rising sun.

EXT. HONG KONG - NIGHT

An aerial view of downtown Hong Kong with its high-rise buildings filling the scene, the towering skyscrapers illuminated.

SUPER: HONG KONG, CHINA

INT. GILLIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A high end apartment in one of the nicer buildings in downtown Hong Kong. The large window looks out over spectacular Victoria harbor.

The living room is empty but half-filled glasses of wine and a tray of food tell us it hasn't been empty long. The SOUND of fervent lovemaking is heard.

IN THE BEDROOM

A couple is having passionate sex. GILLIAN HALL (28, American), pretty and CHRISTOPHER BECKETT (50, British), handsome and very enthusiastic.

GILLIAN

Oh, my god!

They both finish and collapse in each other's arms, out of breath and sweating. Beckett wears a wedding ring. Gillian does not.

BECKETT

That was amazing.

GILLIAN

I need water.

She gets up and goes to the bathroom.

BECKETT

Everyone at your consulate gearing up for the trade talks next week?

GILLIAN (O.S.)

Oh, yeah. It's all anyone's talking about. How about you?

BECKETT

Same. The party should be good.

Gillian pops her head out of the bathroom

GILLIAN

You're throwing it.

Beckett laughs. Gillian pops back into the bathroom.

GILLIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What time is it?

Beckett looks at his watch.

BECKETT

Shit!

Gillian pops her head back out of the bathroom, drinking a glass of water.

GILLIAN

What?

BECKETT

I've got to go.

Beckett dresses quickly. Gillian stands in the bathroom doorway watching -- not annoyed but resigned.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Sorry.

GILLIAN

When does she get home?

BECKETT

Tomorrow morning.

GILLIAN

Where is she this time?

BECKETT

Tokyo.

GILLIAN

(slight sarcasm)

I like Tokyo.

Beckett goes to her.

BECKETT

Come on. I'm sorry.

Beckett gives her a quick kiss.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

(checks his watch)

Gotta run.

Beckett goes. We hear the front door open and close. Gillian takes another sip of water.

EXT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - DAY

A cement relic from the 1950s -- stark, cold, boringly municipal. The only color -- the large American flag fluttering in the breeze atop its standard.

SUPER: AMERICAN CONSULATE - HONG KONG

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - DAY

An elevator opens and Gillian exits. Her boss, ALLISON is waiting for her. Anxious.

GILLIAN

What's up?

ALLISON

Come on.

Gillian follows her to David Blair's office and they enter.

IN BLAIR'S OFFICE

DAVID BLAIR, Consul General, IAN WESLEY, CIA Hong Kong Station Chief and MAYA QUINN, CIA Operations Office, are waiting.

BLAIR

Gillian, I think you know everyone.
Ian Wesley, Cia Station Chief and
May Quinn, his Operatioons Officer.

GILLIAN

Yes.

BLAIR

Ian?

WESLEY

(to Gillian)

Have you heard of Andrew Chen?

GILLIAN

Professor at Berkeley. I took a class with him when I was there. Pro-democracy advocate for China and particularly Hong Kong and Taiwan. He did an interview last year with Peter Eastland.

WESLEY

Yes, he did. And Beijing wasn't happy about it. Chen was abducted near his home in Berkeley yesterday morning by three men. We suspect Chinese. Mid to late twenties.

ALLISON

How do you know?

WESLEY

Video tape. Doorbell security camera on one of the neighbor's houses. Handed over to the FBI by University Security. They gave it to us.

BLAIR

Do the Chinese know we have it?

WESLEY

Not likely.

ALLISON

Do you think he's still in the states?

Wesley trades looks with Maya.

MAYA

We're not sure. Chen went missing sometime between six and seven am on Tuesday morning. A private jet, large enough to make mainland China without refueling, took off from a corporate airport in Oakland at seven thirty. According to the manifest, there were no passengers.

BLAIR

Where was it headed?

MAYA
Tianjin, China.

That hangs in the air.

BLAIR
Does the Ambassador know?

WESLEY
He's being briefed as we speak.

BLAIR
What do you want us to do?

WESLEY
Nothing. You're being briefed because of the trade talks. We're expecting protesters but if this becomes public, we'll have a bigger problem on our hands.

BLAIR
I have a call with the British Consul General tomorrow. I think he should be made aware of the situation.

WESLEY
If Beckett's Security Services have anything, they'll have already shared it. Keep it simple. Just that Chen's been reported missing and we're aware of it.

MAYA
In the meantime, we'll see what we can find out about the flight to Tianjin.

GILLIAN
Why would they do it?

WESLEY
What?

GILLIAN
The Chinese. Why would they do this now with the world watching? The trade talks? Contingents from their leading trading partners all here to find solutions? It doesn't make any sense.

BLAIR

She's right. President Lee pushed for these talks to be held in Hong Kong for a reason. To show the world they're open to change. China needs trade just like every country. These were to be steps forward.

WESLEY

I wouldn't put China in the suddenly trustworthy category quite yet.

GILLIAN

Fine. But kidnapping and renditioning one of China's most recognized and popular educators on the eve of the summit goes against every logical argument. Professor Chen may be against China's stance on human rights but he's always called for dialogue and compromise. He's a realist.

WESLEY

What are you suggesting?

GILLIAN

I'm suggesting, this could have been done without Lee's knowledge.

WESLEY

That's a leap.
(dismissive)
What do you do again?

Gillian just stares at Wesley. Blair wants to take the temperature down.

BLAIR

You know... We're going to talk about this internally.

ALLISON

We are.

WESLEY

Right. We'll let you get back to it.

Wesley and Maya leave.

GILLIAN

Sorry.

ALLISON

Why?

BLAIR

Exactly. You're here because Allison wanted someone who was smart, knew what the hell she was talking about and not afraid to speak up. And I agreed with her. Don't ever apologize for that.

GILLIAN

Yes, sir.

BLAIR

Regardless of who's behind Chen's disappearance, the Chinese don't want this out. And neither do we. This could destroy the trade talks and make the protests in 2019 look like a play date. Which, if you're right, is probably the reason it was done.

INT. ACN (AMERICAN CABLE NEWS) OFFICES - DAY

PETER EASTLAND (40s) is at his desk. He's watching a video on his laptop of his interview with Professor Andrew Chen.

INSERT: ACN INTERVIEW

Eastland sits across from Professor Chen at a round table.

EASTLAND

Professor Chen, as an academic, living and working in the United States, has there been any backlash from the Chinese government on your activism and support of human rights reform?

CHEN

Of course.

EASTLAND

It's been publicized that China's Ministry of State Security has targeted Chinese dissidents overseas.

CHEN

The MSS oversees a shadow unit, the Political Security Protection Bureau. Their mandate is to repress critics of the CCP.

EASTLAND

Including Chinese citizens living abroad?

CHEN

Correct. Surveillance, threats against families, kidnapping.

EASTLAND

And you've personally experienced this?

CHEN

I've been threatened. My family in China has been threatened.

EASTLAND

Why don't you stop?

CHEN

Stop talking? I can't do that. I care about my country. I have hope that the world could change. That China could change.

He leans in for emphasis.

CHEN (CONT'D)

Our children are the most important resource on the planet. Not technology. Not oil. They deserve better. If I stop talking, then someone else will. And then -- someone else.

EASTLAND

Can you ever see a path forward for China that embraces the world as partners and not adversaries?

CHEN

At heart, I'm an optimist. I think there could be a time, if and when China normalizes relations with its neighbors and the world as a whole. There are actually forward thinking people in China's government, believe it or not. They are certainly in the minority. In the past, they've been silenced by intimidation -- or worse. It's my hope that eventually this could change.

Eastland stops the recording. He sits and stares at the screen.

EXT. BRITISH CONSULATE - DAY

A sprawling, meticulously designed complex that dwarfs the American Consulate, dominating an entire city block. A clear statement of British influence in the heart of Hong Kong.

SUPER: BRITISH CONSULATE - HONG KONG

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - DAY

Christopher Beckett walks with his Aide, ELLIOT SIMPSON, down the hallway of the executive offices.

SIMPSON

(reading from a tablet)
Senior staff briefing is at ten.
Main points on the meetings next week. You have a call scheduled with Ambassador Evans at one. Your American counterpart, David Blair, asked for some time tomorrow.

BECKETT

That's fine.

They arrive at the door to Beckett's office. A placard next to the door reads: Consul General Hong Kong-Macao - Christopher Beckett, CMG.

SIMPSON

And, your wife left a message to meet her for dinner. Eight o'clock.

They enter. Beckett sighs.

BECKETT

Right.

INT. ACN OFFICES - EXECUTIVE EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Peter Eastland is in the office of ACN's Asia-Pacific Executive Editor, MICHAEL STEVENS. Stevens is pouring coffee. Eastland paces.

The door opens and DAVID JIANG, Beijing Bureau Chief, enters carrying an overnight bag and briefcase.

JIANG

Sorry. Delay out of Beijing.

STEVENS

Not a problem.

Jiang drops his bags.

JIANG

Catch me up. Anything new from Berkeley?

EASTLAND

Zach Gibbons has a contact at the U.C. Berkeley campus security. He called Zach when this came down. He got friendly with him when we interviewed the Professor last year. He thought Zach would be interested. Security canvassed the neighborhood on the route Professor Chen usually took from his house.

JIANG

And?

EASTLAND

By sheer luck, a neighbor had a video doorbell and it recorded the morning of Chen's disappearance.

STEVENS

You're kidding.

EASTLAND

It was motion activated.

JIANG

Did Zach get a copy?

EASTLAND

He did.

STEVENS

Holy shit. Tell me you have it.

Eastland pulls out his laptop, puts it on the desk and fires it up. After a moment, the video starts.

INSERT: LAPTOP VIDEO

Video showing Chen walking on the sidewalk with his dog.

EASTLAND (O.S.)

Security turned it over to Berkeley PD and the FBI this morning.

The van pulling up. The two men jumping from the van and attacking Chen along with the jogger.

JIANG (O.S.)

Do they know we have a copy?

The men throwing him into the van.

EASTLAND (O.S.)

I don't know.

The van pulls away. The dog is left alone.

VIDEO ENDS. BACK TO SCENE.

JIANG

I need some coffee.

Stevens pours him a cup.

JIANG (CONT'D)

We need Zach to get statements from the Campus police and the Berkeley PD confirming he's missing. No need to say anything about the tape.

STEVENS

We can run with the fact that he's missing and we interviewed him about his political stance.

JIANG

Peter?

EASTLAND

If we re-run my interview with Chen, the implication will be that the Chinese were behind it.

JIANG

With the trade talks next week, this is not something the Chinese government wants out there. They'll deny everything.

EASTLAND

Of course they will.

STEVENS

Bad timing on their part, if it's true.

JIANG

(to Eastland)

Talk to your contact at the Consulate. They're probably getting all this as we speak.

EASTLAND

Right.

JIANG

Where are we with the protesters?

EASTLAND

I've made contact with two of the organizers from Hong Kong and two from overseas: An Australian student from Sydney and an American from Georgetown. They're all willing to go on camera and talk about why they're doing this.

JIANG

When are you taping?

STEVENS

Tomorrow.

JIANG

Good. Get that interview up as soon as it's ready. See what the consulate has to say. Based on that, we'll run the Chen story. We'll hold off for now with the tape.

STEVENS

That's still going to be fuel for the protesters. You think the government would shut it down?

EASTLAND

That's a bad look.

JIANG

Agreed. Were you able to set the interview with the Chinese Ambassador?

EASTLAND

Saturday. He flies in from D.C. Friday night.

JIANG

Ok.

Jiang sits on Stevens' desk and takes a long drink of his coffee.

JIANG (CONT'D)

Does anyone think Chen is still in the U.S.?

A long beat as Eastland and Stevens trade blank looks.

JIANG (CONT'D)

Wow. And it's only Wednesday.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - KITCHEN - DAY

Gillian is getting herself a coffee.

MAYA (O.S.)

Hey.

Gillian turns to see Maya standing behind her.

GILLIAN

Hi.

Maya pours herself a coffee as she continues.

MAYA

Peter Eastland's a friend of yours,
right?

GILLIAN

Yeah.

MAYA

He has a copy of the video.

GILLIAN

(surprised)

How?

MAYA

Doesn't matter. Has he reached out
to you?

GILLIAN

I haven't spoken to him in a couple
of weeks.

MAYA

You need to talk to him.

Gillian is thrown and not comfortable with this.

GILLIAN

I uh... That's not my job.

MAYA

I know. I wouldn't ask if it wasn't
important.

GILLIAN

He's just a friend. We talk about
restaurants we like.

MAYA

He also taught a class at Berkeley you took. And he was there the same time Chen was.

GILLIAN

So?

MAYA

They won't air anything unless it's been confirmed. And that means by the State Department.

GILLIAN

What do I say?

MAYA

Like Wesley said, keep it simple. Eastland knows what's going on which means his network knows what's going on. If you're careful, you can steer us clear of a major incident.

GILLIAN

You think I can stop a major network from running a story that's as big as this?

MAYA

No. But, you can try. Or at least mitigate some of the fallout. That was pretty ballsy of you in there. Not sure I buy it but it was a good assessment.

Maya hands her a cell phone.

MAYA (CONT'D)

This is the only phone you use with us now. It's encrypted. It can't be tracked. Understood?

GILLIAN

Yes.

MAYA

The only numbers you need are already programmed. Add nothing. Delete nothing. If someone not on the list calls or texts you, it'll be routed to this phone. It can't be traced and we'll have a record of it.

GILLIAN

Right.

MAYA

Text me when you know.

Gillian takes a big breath trying to comprehend all this.

Maya starts to leave but turns back.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Oh... and don't say anything to your
boyfriend about this.

Maya turns and walks away without waiting for a response.
Gillian is frozen as she realizes the ramifications of what
was just said.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Soft amber candlelight pools across white linen, casting
intimate shadows between tables.

In a secluded corner, LEE BECKETT (40s, Chinese), sits
elegantly - her crisp British accent and refined posture
betraying upper-class breeding.

Christopher Beckett weaves through the dining room, scanning
the space before approaching Lee's table.

BECKETT

Apologies for running late.

He brushes a quick kiss against her cheek, his movements
precise and controlled, as he settles into the seat across.

LEE

That's all right. I'm only on my
first.

BECKETT

How was your trip?

LEE

Productive.

The WAITER, Chinese, immaculately dressed and perfect English,
approaches with Beckett's Martini and places it on the table.

WAITER

Mr. Beckett, nice to see you, sir.

BECKETT

Thank you, John.

The Waiter disappears. Beckett eyes his drink.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

You think we come here too often?

LEE

No. It's good to be treated well.

Beckett sips his drink.

LEE (CONT'D)

Is everyone at the consulate excited for next week?

BECKETT

Anxious is a better description.

LEE

Why's that?

BECKETT

Student protesters. They've started landing in droves.

LEE

They're kids.

BECKETT

Kids that could cause a lot of damage. And, they could get hurt.

LEE

You have plenty of security. I'm sure it'll be fine. When does everyone arrive?

BECKETT

Most on Sunday, I think. It'll be a mash up at the hotels but we'll manage.

LEE

Caroline as well?

BECKETT

The Ambassador's coming in late from Beijing. Just in time for the party.

LEE

Good timing.

BECKETT

As ever.

LEE

Well, it'll be good to see her.

BECKETT
Any clients attending?

LING
I'll have to check with my office.

The Waiter brings the appetizers and places them on the table.

LEE
Oh, this looks lovely. Thank you,
John.

The Waiter scuttles off. Beckett eyes his plate.

BECKETT
I don't even get to order anymore.

Lee smiles slightly and begins eating.

CLOSE ON THE WAITER

He returns toward the kitchen passing a table with another couple, Chinese - A MAN AND WOMAN. He smiles acknowledging them. They return the look. No smiles.

The Woman turns her head to speak to her companion and we notice she's wearing a small ear piece.

EXT. HONG KONG STREET - NIGHT

Neon signs sizzle overhead, painting the bustling sidewalks in vibrant colors. Gillian weaves through late-night vendors and sleek cars. She approaches a discreet doorway beneath a softly glowing sign.

INT. WHISKY BAR - NIGHT

Jazz whispers through tobacco-stained air. Leather booths absorb murmured conversations in a dozen languages. Bartenders in crisp waistcoats polish glasses like sacred artifacts.

Gillian cuts across polished hardwood, her gaze locked on Eastland's corner table.

EASTLAND
(Rising, brief embrace)
Unexpected.

They sit. No pleasantries.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)
What's happening?

GILLIAN
(leaning in, low voice)
Professor Andrew Chen.

Eastland stiffens, his drink pausing mid-air before he sets it down.

EASTLAND
You know.

GILLIAN
Eastland, the entire fucking State
Department knows.

A SERVER approaches.

SERVER
Good evening. What can I get you?

EASTLAND
She'll have a Red Fist.

SERVER
Excellent choice.

The Server moves off. Gillian arches an eyebrow.

GILLIAN
A what?

EASTLAND
Whiskey sour, but better. Trust me.

GILLIAN
(skeptical, but lets
it go)
Fine.

EASTLAND
How much do they know? Off the record.

GILLIAN
More than you think.

Eastland exhales, his fingers tapping the rim of his glass.

EASTLAND
The tape?

The Server brings Gillian's drink and leaves.

Gillian takes a slow sip of her drink, intentionally ignoring the question.

GILLIAN
Mmm. This is good.

EASTLAND
Gillian?

GILLIAN
You can't put that out there.

EASTLAND
Why not?

GILLIAN
Because you're a responsible
journalist with a reputation for
being on the right side of things.

Eastland grunts, unimpressed.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)
Oh. And it's dangerous.

They stare at each other while they sip their drinks.

EASTLAND
You're worried about me?

GILLIAN
Among other things, yes. But it could
also derail the trade talks. And
that's not good for anyone.

EASTLAND
Do you know where he is?

Gillian leans back and takes a long pause.

GILLIAN
No.

EASTLAND
You were told to reach out to me,
weren't you?

GILLIAN
Asked... sort of.

EASTLAND
Stopping a story like this? That's a
big ask.

GILLIAN
What are you going to do?

EASTLAND

You know, I remember when I met you.

GILLIAN

I was reminded of that today.

EASTLAND

Really?

GILLIAN

You were the teacher everyone wanted. Award-winning journalist, who'd been all over the world, taking a six months sabbatical to teach. I mean, Jesus! Who wouldn't want to soak up that kind of knowledge?

EASTLAND

Careful. This could all go to my head.

GILLIAN

(serious)

Hey, I know why you were there.

(beat)

Do you still miss them?

EASTLAND

(somber)

Of course. Every day.

Eastland takes a long drink.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)

We're not running the story with the tape. Only that Chen is missing. We'll run the interview I did with him and follow up with confirmations.

GILLIAN

That should be enough to piss off the Chinese but it shouldn't affect the trade talks.

EASTLAND

Well, I have a reputation to protect, right?

GILLIAN

You're a good man, Eastland.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The Waiter exits the kitchen carrying a tray with dessert. Follow as he walks by the suspicious Chinese couple then arrives at Beckett's table. He begins to serve.

LEE

Oh, yum!

Beckett's cell phone BUZZES. He looks at it.

BECKETT

Sorry.

He gets up and goes to the front of the restaurant to an out of the way spot. Then clicks on the phone.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

What is it?

(listens)

You're joking.

(a beat)

Well, there's nothing we can do tonight. Send it to my phone. I'll look at it and we'll discuss it first thing in the morning.

He clicks off. Stands for a moment to take in what he just heard, then heads back to the table.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Sorry.

He takes his seat. Lee looks around.

LEE

Everything all right?

BECKETT

Yep.

He eats his dessert.

EXT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Soft light from ornate street lamps reflect off the polished glass doors, as Beckett and his wife step outside.

A sleek black sedan glides to the curb, its driver exiting to open the rear door. The couple slips in and the driver returns to his seat. The car merges into the stream of headlights and disappears down the bustling street.

INT. EASTLAND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A modest high-rise flat overlooking Hong Kong's neon-studded skyline. Sparse lighting leaves corners in shadow, while a mellow jazz tune drifts from small speakers.

Eastland stands on the narrow balcony, a tumbler of whiskey in his hand, city lights glinting off the glass. He's motionless, gazing into the distance with a pensive stare.

EXT. BEACH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Ten years younger, Eastland chases his bright-eyed DAUGHTER (6) along the shoreline. His WIFE (30) laughs as she joins in, the three of them radiating an easy, sun-soaked joy. Their laughter mingles with the surf in a memory of pure happiness.

INT. EASTLAND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

The jazz continues softly as Eastland remains at the balcony railing, lost in a grief that never quite fades.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - DAY

Gillian enters the lobby. Waiting is Maya Quinn. Gillian sees her and approaches.

MAYA
(serious)
You need to follow me.

Gillian follows Maya to the elevator. Inside, she scans her ID badge and presses L3.

GILLIAN
What's going on?

MAYA
Not here.

The elevator arrives at floor L3 and the doors open. They exit the elevator. Gillian follows Maya.

The floor is where the CIA personnel work. Separate from the rest of the State Department staff. Cold, windowless, stark.

They go down a hall of closed doors and reach door C1. Maya scans her ID pass and they enter.

INT. CIA CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Maya and Gillian enter the room. Already there are an ANALYST who sits at a computer, Ian Wesley and DUGAN MCKENZIE, British MI6 Station Chief. Wesley introduces Dugan.

WESLEY
(to Gillian)
This is Dugan McKenzie, MI6 Hong
Kong.

Dugan shakes her hand.

DUGAN
Hi.

WESLEY
(to Gillian)
Just so we're clear, none of what
you are about to hear or see is shared
outside this room. Understood?

GILLIAN
Okay.

WESLEY
(to the Analyst)
Andy.

The Analyst brings up a photograph of Christopher Beckett on
the large wall monitor.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
You're having an affair with the
British Consul General of Hong Kong.

Gillian is dumbstruck. More pictures come onto the monitor.
Surveillance photos of Gillian and Beckett in her apartment.

More pictures are put up sequentially getting more and more
intimate. The last few photos - Gillian and Beckett in bed
having sex in various positions.

MAYA
We're not doing this to embarrass
you.

GILLIAN
(looking at Wesley)
Really?

Wesley is stone-faced. A photo of Lee Beckett comes up on
the monitor.

WESLEY
Dugan?

Surveillance photos of Lee Beckett in various locations
continues through the scene.

DUGAN

We believe Lee Beckett is a Chinese spy. She was born in Beijing. Her parents were sent to London so they could raise her with a proper English upbringing, education, connections with the right sort of people -- and would allow her to meet and eventually marry someone of stature in government -- allowing her to spy on the British Commonwealth for the People's Republic of China.

(beat)

She works for a private wealth management firm based in London. Offices in Europe, the U.S. and Asia.

(beat)

The company's a front for the MSS. Travels to London frequently and always has stops to or from in New York and D.C. The company's clients include a dozen U.S. Senators and Congressmen as well as Members of Parliament.

GILLIAN

Why haven't you arrested her?

Her question is ignored.

WESLEY

MI6 shared this information with us when they found out you and the Consul General began sleeping together. Naturally, we wanted to know if there was anything going on that could compromise the U.S. mission. So, when we decided to bug your apartment, we found that we weren't the first ones there.

GILLIAN

The Chinese.

WESLEY

We just piggybacked onto their system and the rest, I'm sure, you can figure out for yourself.

GILLIAN

So, if the Chinese know about Christopher and me... then, so does his wife.

DUGAN
I would say that is an accurate
assessment, yes.

Silence in the room.

GILLIAN
I'm still waiting.

MAYA
For what?

GILLIAN
For you to tell me what you want.

Dugan looks to Wesley and Maya -- then back to Gillian.

DUGAN
We're concerned that Beckett's been
turned. And we'd like your help in
finding out if that's true.

Gillian looks around the room. All eyes are on her.

INT. GILLIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The hum of city lights filters through the large window,
casting a soft glow over the room.

Gillian sits on the couch, curled up with a glass of wine,
lost in thought. A KNOCK at the door pulls her back.

She walks to the door and opens it. Beckett stands there,
still in his suit, tie loosened.

BECKETT
Hi.

GILLIAN
(stepping aside)
I didn't think I'd see you tonight.

He enters, setting his briefcase on the table. Gillian is a
little tense as she knows the apartment is wired.

She pours a glass of wine and hands it to him. He takes it,
but his eyes stay on her.

BECKETT
You all right?

GILLIAN
Yeah.
(beat - covering)
What's going on?

Beckett goes to the couch and sits. Gillian leans against the counter. Waiting.

BECKETT
Do you ever think about leaving Hong Kong?

She slides in next to him on the couch.

GILLIAN
The Consulate?

BECKETT
The State Department.

GILLIAN
Why? Do you want to take me away?

Beckett laughs softly.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)
(then, seriously)
I love what I do.

Beckett sighs.

BECKETT
I know.

A beat. He watches her. He reaches for her hand, thumb brushing over her knuckles.

GILLIAN
What's going on? You seem sad.

BECKETT
(smiling)
Not sad. I just needed to see you.

Gillian snuggles closer.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
There's just never enough time, is there?

GILLIAN
No.

A long pause. Even knowing who's listening, and the truth Beckett may be hiding, she feels the comfort of his shoulder and the warmth of his presence.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)
Do you want to stay?

BECKETT

I can't.

He lingers for just a second longer, then gets up, and walks toward the door.

GILLIAN

Wait.

She goes to him, wrapping her arms around him, holding him as close as she can. She whispers so now one else can hear -- hopefully.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)

I love you.

He looks at her...

BECKETT

(quietly)

I know.

Turning, he takes his briefcase and lets himself out.

She watches the door close.

EXT. GO PARK SAI SHA, HONG KONG - DAY

A futuristic sports and recreational complex where sleek architecture merges with lush greenery.

Lee Beckett drifts among the many families enjoying their day, savoring an ice cream cone.

Nearby, a compact tri-wheeled electric utility vehicle glides from bin to bin. The driver, methodically collects clear plastic trash liners.

Lee pauses by a bin just ahead of the vehicle. She takes a final bite of her cone, tosses the remainder inside, then discreetly sets a SMALL RED ENVELOPE atop the other trash.

Without breaking stride, she continues on her way, blending back into the crowd.

Moments later, the utility vehicle arrives at the same bin. The driver lifts out the liner, ties it off, and places it in the back of the vehicle. Pulling out a black Sharpie, he marks an "X" on the plastic.

As the vehicle puttters away, the bright RED ENVELOPE remains clearly visible through the transparent bag.

EXT. CHINESE PRISON - NIGHT

A full moon lights an old, decayed building sitting in the middle of nowhere. It's surrounded by a large, chain fence topped with razor-wire. A few vehicles are parked at the entrance.

INT. CHINESE PRISON - NIGHT

Squalid, dark and bleak. FOOTSTEPS are heard approaching down a long corridor.

A GUARD appears and checks the small cutout in each cell door he passes.

CLOSER as we see him at the last cell. He looks inside.

GUARD'S POV

Showing Professor Chen, dressed in prison fatigues, sitting on a bare concrete floor -- huddled in a corner, a bowl of something resembling food sitting next to him. A RAT is eating from it.

A bucket sits in an opposite corner -- presumably used to relieve himself.

A blanket is laid out on the floor next to Chen -- his bed.

He lifts his head slowly and locks tired eyes with the Guard. After a moment, the Guard walks away.

IN THE CELL

The Guard's footsteps become more and more faint as he walks down the hallway until we hear nothing. Chen closes his eyes and slowly lowers his head.

EXT. HONG KONG DOCKS - WAREHOUSE - DAY

A sprawling industrial maze of stacked shipping containers and looming cranes. Amid the tangle of warehouses, one large building stands out, its rusted exterior hinting at years of heavy use. The muffled hum of machinery and distant shouts of dock workers echo across the yard.

INT. HONG KONG DOCKS - WAREHOUSE - DAY

Inside, the cavernous space has been transformed into makeshift quarters for protesters. Rows of temporary beds line the concrete floor, with backpacks, sleeping bags, and personal effects scattered around. A vibrant collage of protest posters in various languages covers the corrugated walls, some half-finished, others ready to be distributed.

Harsh warehouse light cuts across the open space. Eastland stands beside TOM HO (30s, Chinese-American), adjusting camera equipment with practiced precision.

Student protesters - BEN (18, Australian), HAO and JUN HIE (both Chinese, late teens) perch on weathered stools in a tight semi-circle.

JAMES (19, American) hovers at the edge, tension vibrating through his body. Eastland approaches, sensing his anxiety.

EASTLAND

Are you all right?

JAMES

Nervous, I guess.

EASTLAND

You don't have to do this.

JAMES

It's important though, right?

EASTLAND

Yeah. It's important. But if you don't want to do it, I completely understand.

JAMES

(steeling himself)

No. I'm okay. Let's go.

Eastland puts a reassuring hand on his shoulder and walks him to the stool.

EASTLAND

You're going to be fine. I promise.

James takes his seat. The other boys give him reassuring nods and smiles. Eastland turns to Tom.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)

You ready?

TOM HO

When you are.

The interview begins. We switch to the final, edited version of the interview which is being broadcast.

EASTLAND

In 2019, what started as a vote for an extradition bill between Hong Kong, Taiwan and Beijing, quickly

(MORE)

EASTLAND (CONT'D)

turned into a massive protest with hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong citizens flooding the streets for weeks.

INSERT: ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OF 2019 HONG KONG PROTESTS

EASTLAND (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When the protests turned violent, Beijing took a firm rhetorical stance, saying the protests "showed signs of terrorism" and demanded an end to the violence, saying the "radical" protests had trampled the city's rule of law and that "stopping the violence and restoring order" was Hong Kong's most "urgent task."

END ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE. BACK TO SCENE.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)

Today, on the eve of trade talks with some of China's most important trading partners, more protests are planned. I'm speaking with four students who helped organize this international effort.

(to Jun Hie)

What's the purpose of this protest?
Why are you doing it?

SUPER: JUN HEI 19 - STUDENT HONG KONG UNIVERSITY

INT. HONG KONG - MSS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

In a windowless room, with tables of computers and TECHNICIANS monitoring incoming transmissions, we key in on one monitor with Eastland's interview as it continues. A young technician watches.

SUPER: MINISTRY OF STATE SECURITY, HONG KONG

CLOSE ON MONITOR

JUN HEI (V.O.)

We're protesting for democracy. Since 1989, the rest of the world has seen what's happened to Hong Kong and Taiwan. And we are coming together to raise awareness of the needs of the citizens here and the rights they should have for the future.

BACK TO SCENE.

At another console, separate from the others, a stern-looking MSS OFFICER has a laptop open.

HAO (V.O.)

We're not here for violence. We hope that with the participation of other young people from around the world, we can make a larger impact. We can affect positive change in our homeland.

He inserts a FLASH DRIVE and keys it up. An open SMALL RED ENVELOPE sits next to the laptop on the desk.

EASTLAND (V.O.)

What made you want to make the trip here and show your support?

The officer starts a video on the laptop which shows the beginning of Chen's abduction in Berkeley.

BEN (V.O.)

My parents and I lived here when I was young. They told me about what happened in eighty nine. I watched some of the old footage of the riots. I couldn't believe it. As I learned more about the lack of basic human rights, the inability to self-govern -- I had to come.

The view returns to the monitor playing the Eastland interview.

CLOSE ON MONITOR

EASTLAND (V.O.)

How do your parents feel about you being here?

BEN (V.O.)

They're supportive. I think they understand what's at stake. At least, I hope they do.

EASTLAND (V.O.)

James?

JAMES (V.O.)

I think young people can make changes happen in places where adults may have failed.

SUPER: JAMES 19 - STUDENT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm not saying we have all the answers. But, when parents see what their children are willing to fight for, whether they live in Australia, the U.S. or China, I would hope they can see their way clear to find a better way forward. A better world for us to grow up in.

HOLD on James looking directly into the camera.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - MAYA'S OFFICE - DAY

Maya enters with Gillian behind.

MAYA
Have a seat.

Gillian sits.

MAYA (CONT'D)
This is dangerous. I'm not going to bullshit you. In my opinion, you're the last person I want doing this.

GILLIAN
Then, why me?

MAYA
You've already opened the door. You're the only one who can walk through it.

GILLIAN
Do you think Christopher Beckett would actually betray his country?

MAYA
I'm trying to remain objective. Britain is one of our closest allies. I don't know if he betrayed his country or not. But now, it's my job to find out if he did. And using you, is the quickest way to accomplish that.

GILLIAN
You know -- we actually like each other. It's not just the sex.

MAYA
I don't care who you sleep with. Who you fuck. We're all adults. Shit like this happens.

GILLIAN

You may not believe it -- but I care about this man.

MAYA

What about your country?

GILLIAN

I'm an American. And, I'm doing the work that I do because of that.

Maya takes that in.

MAYA

Is this going to be a problem for you?

Gillian absorbs this -- all of it. Then...

GILLIAN

No.

MAYA

Good.

(beat)

I have a team watching him as well. You won't be alone out there. If something happens. Or if he makes a move that blows this up, we can move in. But he can't know that. And he can't know that you're involved. Because if he is who Dugan thinks he is -- and you fuck up...

GILLIAN

I get it.

MAYA

All right. Now, let's talk about how we can get you on the inside without getting you killed by the Chinese.

That hangs in the air as Gillian's eyes widen.

INT. TAXI - DAY (MOVING)

Gillian is riding in the taxi. Her conversation with Maya is playing in her head.

MAYA (V.O.)

You can't meet with him at your apartment and expect to get any information. Everyone's listening.

(MORE)

MAYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You'll have to find a new place to meet, he doesn't know about. Surprise him by picking him up after work in a taxi and drive to the location. Make it sound sexy, uninhibited, spur of the moment. Men love that shit. Women too, actually.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - DAY

In Beckett's office. A VIDEO CALL with David Blair has just begun.

BECKETT

David. How are you?

BLAIR

Getting ready for the onslaught.

BECKETT

Don't I know it. Everything set on your end, I trust?

BLAIR

Pretty good. Listen, I want to talk about this mess in Berkeley -- Professor Chen.

BECKETT

I know. My people briefed me. Any more word on his whereabouts?

BLAIR

Nothing, I'm afraid.

(beat)

Chris, can I ask you how much you've been made aware of?

BECKETT

If you're asking about the tape -- yes, I've seen it.

BLAIR

Good.

BECKETT

Better to have everything out, right? Any progress on the flight from Oakland?

BLAIR

Just that the registered owner of the jet is a shell company out of Manila. PST Holdings. Beyond that, we're not sure. The flight landed in Tianjin, refueled and then left for Manila.

BECKETT

Well, let's hope this stays quiet for another week.

Beckett's cell phone BUZZES. He looks at the text from Gillian: "*Free tonight?*"

BLAIR

It'll definitely hit the news but we're trying to keep any details beyond the fact that he's missing, out of it.

He responds: "*Yes.*"

BECKETT

Right. Anything else?

Gillian: "*Meet me in front of Clancy's after work. Surprise.*"

BLAIR

No.

BECKETT

See you Sunday then? I promise a good time will be had by all.

BLAIR

I'm sure of that.

They both click off the call.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - BLAIR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Pull back to show that Ian Wesley is sitting across from Blair in his office and has been listening the entire time.

BLAIR

What do you think?

WESLEY

I think that was a man who didn't want to say much.

BLAIR

No, he didn't.

WESLEY

Let me ask you something... Why would he do it?

BLAIR

I don't know. I've known Beckett for a long time. I'm having a hard time believing he's a traitor.

WESLEY

I get that. But, it happens all the time. Their side. Our side.

BLAIR

I suppose.

WESLEY

Sometimes people see the world differently. Or, more often than not, it's all they have left. Something just triggers it.

BLAIR

Well, you would know more about this stuff than I do. It's your job, right?

WESLEY

Yeah. It's my job.

Wesley checks his cell phone.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

Gotta go.

BLAIR

Right.

Wesley stands and lets himself out. Blair sits.

EXT. CLANCY'S PUB - NIGHT

Bright neon from nearby bars and shops reflects off the glossy pavement as a large SUV pulls to the curb.

Beckett steps out of the back seat. He glances around the lively street scene -- revelers spilling out of late-night spots, neon signs flickering overhead.

GILLIAN (O.S.)

Hey!

He turns. Across the road, Gillian stands beside a waiting taxi. Beckett motions for his driver to go. Beckett's face lights up as he moves toward her.

BECKETT

What's this?

GILLIAN

Get in.

He slips into the cab, eyeing her curiously. She does a quick scan of the street before sliding in after him.

INT. DARK SEDAN - NIGHT

Parked a few cars behind Gillian's taxi, two stern-faced MSS AGENTS watch through the windshield, engine idling. Their eyes track Gillian and Beckett in the taxi ahead.

EXT. DARK SEDAN - NIGHT

As Gillian's taxi merges into the flow of traffic, the MSS sedan begins to pull out -- only to be abruptly blocked by another taxi swerving in front. The MSS driver slams on the brakes, furious.

He leaps out, shouting in rapid-fire Chinese at the other driver, gesturing wildly to move aside.

The second driver in the taxi shouts back just as vehemently, shrugging as if powerless to help.

Inside the sedan, the second MSS agent bangs the dashboard in frustration, unable to pursue Gillian's taxi as it disappears into the city lights.

CLOSE ON CHINESE TAXI DRIVER

Who is now calm. He raises his wrist to his mouth, speaking into a concealed mic in perfect English.

FAKE TAXI DRIVER

We're good.

INT. MAYA'S CAR - NIGHT

Parked discreetly on the opposite side of the street, Maya listens through a pair of earbuds. A small grin crosses her face as she watches the commotion through the windshield.

MAYA

Nice work.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT (MOVING)

Back in Gillian's taxi, the city's colorful lights strobe across Beckett's face. He looks both amused and mystified.

BECKETT
This is the surprise?

GILLIAN
Not even close.

INT. COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

A high-end lounge in downtown Hong Kong. Dugan and Wesley sit at the end of the long bar -- away from the other patrons.

The BARTENDER approaches with their drinks.

DUGAN
Thanks, mate.

BARTENDER
Sir.

WESLEY
(re: Dugan's drink)
What is that?

DUGAN
Pimm's Cup.

WESLEY
Do you always drink that?

DUGAN
I do. Got hooked on them in London.
(re: the bartender)
Tommy here makes the best one in
Hong Kong. Right Tommy?

BARTENDER
Yes, sir.

The bartender moves away and they sip their drinks. They speak quietly.

WESLEY
So. Your man, Beckett. Is he dirty?

DUGAN
I wouldn't have believed it. But,
the pieces are starting to fit. I've
turned enough assets to know there're
too many reasons why someone would
do it. You have too, I expect.

WESLEY
Maybe he just got tired of the
bullshit.

DUGAN

What do you mean?

WESLEY

I don't know... Easy target for his wife. Watches her handle other people's money. Millions. And he's on a public servant's salary.

DUGAN

That's what he signed up for. We all did. Shouldn't be about money.

WESLEY

Doesn't mean he has to like it. Look at the trade talks. Do they really matter?

(beat)

They argue. The markets shift. And we all pretend we're the invisible hand shaping history.

DUGAN

That's pretty cynical.

WESLEY

Getting old, I guess.

DUGAN

Well... I think what we do is necessary. Some people understand that. Most don't.

(beat)

Hey. When you retire, you can write a book.

WESLEY

Ha! A book?

(drinks)

Maybe you're right. Just old and tired.

DUGAN

Mate, you need another drink.

Dugan waives for the bartender.

EXT. VICTORIA HARBOR - NIGHT

The harbor is alive with celebration. Boats outlined in glowing lanterns, torches flickering on decks, reflections dancing on the water's surface like living constellations.

ON A SLEEK MOTOR LAUNCH

Cutting through the still water, Gillian and Beckett stand at the railing, wind teasing their hair.

An ATTENDANT approaches, offering them champagne flutes.

GILLIAN
Surprised now?

Beckett lets out a genuine laugh, taking in the glittering panorama.

BECKETT
Very.

She nestles against him beneath his arm, the two silhouetted against the shimmering lights of the harbor as they continue their moonlit crossing.

EXT. HONG KONG DOCKS - NIGHT

Peter Eastland stands alone -- the Hong Kong skyline frames the scene. We pull back to see that he has his cameraman ready to broadcast. Eastland waits.

EXT. BEIJING - ZHONGNANJHAI COMPOUND - NIGHT

The Leadership center of the Chinese Communist Party.

SUPER: CENTRAL COMMITTEE HEADQUARTERS, BEIJING

INT. ZHAO XI'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NIGHT

A dimly lit, minimalist office in Beijing's Central Committee Headquarters. The office of ZHAO XI (60s) General Secretary, political bureau. An AIDE stands rigid at the door.

Zhao stands in the back of the room with tea. The television is on ACN.

ZHAO XI
(to his Aid in Mandarin-
Subtitled)
Turn it up.

The Aide does.

INSERT: ACN SPECIAL REPORT

Eastland stands in front of the warehouses on the wharf.

ACN ANCHOR (V.O.)
We have a special report from Peter
Eastland in Hong Kong.
(beat)
Peter?

EASTLAND (V.O.)

Thanks, Brian. While Hong Kong prepares to host an international trade summit beginning on Monday, one of China's most popular scholars as well as its sharpest critic on human rights abuses has gone missing. On Tuesday, Dr. Andrew Chen, professor of global economics and international trade at the University of California, Berkeley, was reported missing. After an investigation by local police and the FBI, Professor Chen's disappearance was confirmed. I had the chance to sit down with Dr. Chen last year to discuss his views on China today and what the future may hold.

INSERT: ACN CHEN INTERVIEW

EASTLAND (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Professor Chen, as an academic, living and working in the United States, has there been any backlash from the Chinese government on your activism and support of human rights reform?

BACK TO SCENE.

Zhao is unmoved. He slowly sips his tea. Stoic. Determined.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Blair and Allison watching the news feed. The ACN interview plays in the b/g.

ALLISON

What do you think?

BLAIR

The Chinese won't risk the trade talks over this.

ALLISON

What about the protesters?

BLAIR

Hard to say. Probably give them more resolve in what they're trying to accomplish.

ALLISON

Talking points?

BLAIR
Don't get drawn into something more
than what we know.

ALLISON
We'll draft something and have it
ready by morning.

BLAIR
Call the embassy in Beijing and get
their take.

ALLISON
Right.

BLAIR
Where's Gillian?

INT. WATERFRONT HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight filters through sheer curtains in the luxurious
suite. Beckett cradles Gillian, the city's distant lights
glimmering beyond the window.

With a playful smile, he produces a small wrapped box,
dangling it just out of her reach.

GILLIAN
What's this?

BECKETT
Don't open it.

GILLIAN
What?

BECKETT
Don't open it.

He's playing with her a bit.

GILLIAN
Bullshit. I'm opening it.

He takes it back.

BECKETT
No.

GILLIAN
Beckett. Give me back my present.

BECKETT
Only if you promise not to open it.

GILLIAN
(pouting)
Fine. When *can* I open it?

BECKETT
Hmm. Let's see... How about a week
from Sunday?

GILLIAN
Seriously?

BECKETT
I want your word.

GILLIAN
(exasperated)
Fine!

He gives it to her. She rolls it around in her hands --
scheming.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)
So... You liked *your* surprise?

BECKETT
I did.

GILLIAN
I couldn't wait till Sunday.

BECKETT
I know. It'd be nice if we could
just stay here.

GILLIAN
Not sure how that would go over.

Beckett understands and gives her a tender squeeze.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)
Can I ask you something?

BECKETT
Of course.

GILLIAN
Does your wife know about us?

Beckett is thrown by this. Then...

BECKETT
No.

GILLIAN
You don't think she suspects?

BECKETT
No. What's wrong?

GILLIAN
Nothing. I'm just, you know. I mean,
how's your marriage? Really?

Beckett maintains his composure.

BECKETT
I suppose after twenty-five years,
life gets a bit predictable.

GILLIAN
Not the jealous type, then?

BECKETT
Why are you doing this?

GILLIAN
I want to know more about the man
I'm sleeping with.

BECKETT
We do more than just sleep together.

GILLIAN
True. So?

BECKETT
(resigned)
Fine! What do you want to know?

GILLIAN
(thinking)
Okay... How did you meet?

BECKETT
Cambridge. I was doing my graduate
studies and she was third year. We
were introduced by my Mandarin
professor.

GILLIAN
So, love at first sight?

BECKETT
Jesus, no. Really wasn't like that
in those days.

GILLIAN
Wow. So you waited to have sex --
unlike us.

Beckett laughs.

BECKETT

Well... Yes, as a matter of fact. We waited at least three or four dates.

Gillian laughs.

GILLIAN

Such a gentleman.

INT. MAYA'S CAR - NIGHT

She's parked on a street by the hotel. She wears earbuds and monitors the hotel room with audio. We hear what she hears.

GILLIAN (V.O.)

She'll be with you on Sunday?

BECKETT (V.O.)

You knew that.

GILLIAN (V.O.)

I did... I do.

BECKETT (V.O.)

You'll be fine. You've been around her before. You've always been perfect.

GILLIAN (V.O.)

Hardly.

INT. WATERFRONT HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (BACK TO SCENE)

BECKETT

She'll have clients there. She'll be busy with them, no doubt. Not much time for me.

GILLIAN

I didn't realize she had clients in politics.

BECKETT

Quite a few. Some friends of mine at school originally.

GILLIAN

Really? She handles all their investments?

BECKETT

I don't know about all but probably quite a few. She's very good. She does all ours. I'm crap with money.

GILLIAN
Americans too?

BECKETT
I suppose so. You really are curious.
Can we not talk about her anymore
tonight?

GILLIAN
Of course.

Gillian turns to him and climbs on top playfully.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)
What'd you have in mind?

INT. MAYA'S CAR - NIGHT

Maya still listening. Rolling her eyes.

EXT. HONG KONG DOCKS - NIGHT

The moon bathes the harbor in a silver glow, illuminating rows of warehouses and the quiet ripple of the bay beyond.

INT. HONG KONG DOCKS - WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Inside, music plays from tinny speakers, providing a makeshift soundtrack for the protesters. Rows of cots stretch between towering shelves, occupied by sleeping, talking, and dancing youths.

Eastland and Tom Ho navigate the narrow aisle, Tom snapping candid shots of the lively scene -- friends huddled over signs, reading by phone light, sharing jokes in a dozen accents.

At the far end, Eastland notices a few young men hauling boxes through a side door. He slows, curious, while Tom continues capturing photos.

EXT. HONG KONG DOCKS - WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Stepping outside, Eastland slips under a metal staircase along the warehouse wall, partially hidden in the shadows.

Beyond, two men siphon gasoline into bottles, sealing them with fabric fuses -- classic Molotov cocktails. Another man carefully packs them into crates, passing each box to someone waiting in a covered truck.

Suddenly, Tom appears behind Eastland, speaking in a hushed whisper.

TOM HO

What's up?

Eastland glances over his shoulder. Then, Tom sees the operation in progress.

TOM HO (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

EASTLAND

Can you get this?

TOM HO

Absolutely. This is fucking news, man. It's what we do.

Tom pulls out his camera, capturing stills of the men preparing Molotov cocktails.

TOM HO (CONT'D)

They don't look like students to me.

EASTLAND

Make sure you get the driver.

Tom does and we see the photos. He stands by the cab of the truck, smoking -- Chinese, mid-30s, military-look, dressed in fatigues.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)

Finished?

TOM HO

Yeah.

EASTLAND

Can you get me these on a flash drive?

TOM HO

I can give it to you now.

Tom pulls a flash drive out of his pocket, inserts it into his camera. After a moment, he pulls it out and hands it to Eastland. He hangs on to it briefly as Eastland tries to take it.

EASTLAND

What?

TOM HO

This whole thing could go sideways really fast.

EASTLAND

I know.

Tom lets go of the flash drive. Eastland puts it in his pocket.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - BLAIR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

David Blair is working when the door suddenly opens and Allison leans in.

ALLISON
You need to see this.

Blair, sensing something important, gets up and goes.

ON THE MAIN CONSULATE FLOOR

Consulate personnel are standing and watching the monitors which are showing an ACN broadcast. Blair and Allison join.

CLOSE ON THE MONITOR

ACN ANCHOR (V.O.)
A striking moment at the United Nations today following the news of the disappearance of Dr. Andrew Chen.

The feed switches to a recording earlier in the day at the United Nations.

INT. UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

The vast chamber is filled with diplomats, ambassadors, and world leaders. Behind the podium, TWO LARGE MONITORS display a series of photographs of Dr. Chen.

At the podium, the United Kingdom UN Representative, DAME ELIZABETH HAMMOND, adjusts her microphone, her face grim.

DAME HAMMOND
(steady, measured)
Dr. Chen devoted his life to the belief that the world could be better. That human rights are not a privilege, but a universal truth. His disappearance is not just an attack on one man, but on the ideals he represented.

In the audience, murmurs grow louder. The Delegate from China shifts in his chair -- uncomfortable.

DAME HAMMOND (CONT'D)
He addressed the world last year in this very chamber.

She turns to the screens which begin a video from his speech at the United Nations to which she referred.

ON THE VIDEO MONITOR BEHIND THE PODIUM

Dr. Chen addresses the General Assembly.

CHEN (V.O.)

I've devoted my life to furthering the cause of human rights. Not only for my countrymen. But for all those who seek a more just, a more balanced world. There are those who see this as weakness. That strength lies in intimidation. That the powerful few should control the lives of the many. That the voices of those who cry out for justice should be silenced. I disagree with that -- with all my heart.

The video HOLDS on Chen.

ON DAME HAMMOND

DAME HAMMOND

There are forces in the world who *do* seek to silence those who challenge them. But we must ask ourselves...

(beat)

If we do nothing, if we simply stand and watch, what does that make us?

Silence falls across the room. The weight of the moment is undeniable.

BACK TO THE SCENE.

Blair, Allison and the entire floor of personnel stand transfixed. The moment for them, also undeniable.

BLAIR

(quietly, to himself)

Wow.

INT. ZHAO XI'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NIGHT

Zhao Xi sits alone behind a sleek black desk, his fingers lightly resting on a folder marked with the Chinese state seal.

A faint KNOCK at the door. A high-ranking MINISTRY OFFICIAL enters, careful, measured.

In Mandarin, SUBTITLED:

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

(low, uncertain)

The UN condemnation is spreading.
Several ambassadors are calling for
further action. Some within the Party
are -- uneasy.

Zhao does not look up. He opens the folder, flipping through
classified documents at his own pace. Then...

ZHAO XI

Uneasy?

Zhao looks up.

ZHAO XI (CONT'D)

This is to be expected. The West
thrives on outrage. It is the currency
of weaker nations.

The Official shifts slightly. Zhao leans back, folding his
hands.

ZHAO XI (CONT'D)

And what will they do? Issue
statements? Convene committees? Demand
accountability?

(beat)

By the time their outrage is processed
through bureaucracy, their people
will have moved on. Their media will
find something else to chase. And
we...

He closes the folder gently.

ZHAO XI (CONT'D)

We will remain.

The Official lowers his head.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

Yes, General Secretary.

Zhao Xi pours himself a cup of tea. The Official quietly
exits.

SUBTITLES END.

Zhao Xi takes a slow sip of his tea. Outside the window,
Beijing's skyline looms in the distance.

EXT. HONG KONG - CENTRAL GOVERNMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

An aerial view of the immense complex.

SUPER: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT COMPLEX, HONG KONG

INT. HONG KONG - CENTRAL GOVERNMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

GENERAL XIN, dressed in military fatigues, oversees the operation. He barks at one of the Technicians to put something up on the feed from the Warehouse docks.

We can see the monitor he's looking at. Xin moves to the screen. He looks at his watch.

In Cantonese, SUBTITLED:

GENERAL XIN
Rewind to twenty one hundred hours.

The tape rewinds rapidly then stops.

GENERAL XIN (CONT'D)
There! Zoom in.

The tech does. We can see the men loading the Molotov cocktails into the truck.

Xin goes to the screen. He looks to the side of the frame. Tilts his head in curiosity then points to the side of the frame.

GENERAL XIN (CONT'D)
Go here.

He does. Now, we can see Eastland and Tom under the stairs taking photos of the truck.

Xin takes out his cell phone -- punches in a number.

GENERAL XIN (CONT'D)
(into the cell phone)
We have a problem.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. CLANCY'S PUB - NIGHT

A lively district in downtown Hong Kong, where neon lights shimmer against the slick pavement, reflections swirling in the shallow puddles from a light rain which has started. Umbrellas bob through the crowd, weaving between late-night revelers, street vendors, and commuters.

Through the glowing haze, Clancy's Pub stands out -- its warm, golden interior spilling onto the damp sidewalk through fogged windows. The faint thrum of conversation and laughter leaks from inside, blending with the occasional honk of a passing taxi.

INT. CLANCY'S PUB - NIGHT

The pub is packed, a favorite refuge for journalists, foreign correspondents, and ex-pats looking to unwind.

In a corner booth, Tom Ho sits with THREE FRIENDS, their table cluttered with half-empty beer bottles and scattered napkins.

Tom checks his watch, tapping his fingers absently against his glass. His eyes scan the room.

TOM HO
All right, boys. Early day.

A collective groan from his mates.

ALL
Ahhh.

Tom lays money down on the table and puts on his backpack.

TOM HO
See you in the trenches.

The group raise their glasses.

FRIEND #1
Stay safe out there!

Tom moves toward the door, his pace steady. As he passes the bar, his eyes briefly flicker to a hard-looking Chinese man, BING, nursing a drink. Bing's athletic build and sharp gaze betray his calm demeanor. Tom doesn't linger, pushing the door open and stepping into the night.

EXT. CLANCY'S PUB - NIGHT

The rain continues to drizzle, the streetlights casting a hazy glow over the bustling sidewalk. Tom pulls his jacket tighter, glancing around as he steps onto the wet pavement. He starts walking, blending into the lively crowd.

Moments later, Bing emerges from the pub, his movements unhurried but deliberate. He surveys the street before falling into step behind Tom, maintaining a steady distance.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Tom walks down the vibrant street, where vendors call out from their stalls, neon signs reflect off puddles, and couples huddle under umbrellas.

Behind him, Bing moves through the crowd like a predator, his focus never leaving Tom.

Up ahead, a van glides by and turns sharply into an alleyway. Its brake lights briefly cut through the gloom before disappearing into the shadows.

As Tom approaches the alley, the crowd thins. He glances toward the dimly lit side street but barely has time to react before Bing shoves him hard from behind.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Tom stumbles forward into the alley, and before he can regain his footing, the van's side doors slide open. THREE CHINESE MEN, each as hardened as Bing, leap out. They grab Tom, dragging him deeper into the alley where they're obscured from the street.

The alley erupts in brutal violence. Fists and boots rain down on Tom, each impact echoing against stone walls. His backpack becomes a focal point of their assault. Tom's groans of pain echo against the stone walls.

CRACK -- the unmistakable sound of his arm breaking as they finally wrest the bag free. Tom collapses to the ground, clutching his side, gasping for air.

Bing stands over Tom, his expression cold and calculated. He raises a hand, signaling the men to stop. They obey instantly, stepping back to give him space.

Bing crouches beside Tom, his movements eerily calm. From his belt sheath, he draws a tactical military knife, its blade catching the faint alley light.

Tom, writhing in agony, tries to crawl away, but Bing pins him down with a knee to the chest. Tom freezes as the knife hovers over him.

BING
(quiet, measured)
Shhhh.

Tom's eyes widen in terror. Bing plunges the knife into Tom's shoulder.

Tom lets out a muffled scream, his cries cut off as Bing clamps a hand over his mouth. Bing leans closer, his face only inches away, his voice low and deliberate.

BING (CONT'D)
(broken English)
No - more - pictures.

Without hesitation, Bing drives the knife into Tom's other shoulder, twisting the blade as Tom's muffled screams fill the alley.

Bing watches impassively, then lands a brutal punch to Tom's face, knocking him unconscious.

Bing wipes the blade clean on Tom's shirt before sheathing it with precision. He gives the others a sharp nod, and they pile into the van, slamming the doors shut.

The van reverses out of the alley, its tail lights cutting through the rain before disappearing into the night.

Under the dim alleyway lights, Tom's limp body remains, rain falling steadily, washing blood into crimson rivulets between the ancient cobblestones. The sound of the city continues just beyond the alley, indifferent to the violence left behind.

INT. CHINESE PRISON - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

A sterile cement room. A lone stainless steel table sits in the middle with a chair on each side.

The door opens and the GUARD brings in Chen, shackled and handcuffed. Chen is tired but resilient. The Guard places him in a chair, then moves to the side of the room.

The door opens and General Xin enters. He slowly circles Chen at first, then stands behind him.

In Mandarin, SUBTITLED:

GENERAL XIN
You think you're a hero?

Chen stares straight ahead. Xin goes to the chair opposite Chen and sits.

GENERAL XIN (CONT'D)
You're no hero.

Xin takes out his cell phone, sets up a video and turns to show Chen.

INSERT: CELL PHONE VIDEO

Showing the Protesters congregating in downtown Hong Kong. The signs are clearly evident with slogans of freedom and anti-government slogans. The video zooms in on signs with Chen's picture and the words, "Where is Chen?"

BACK TO SCENE.

Chen looks at the video with no emotion.

GENERAL XIN (CONT'D)

These children... You've convinced them that our way of life is repugnant -- unfair. They think you're some kind of savior.

(beat)

You're a criminal. China is first -- now and always. We will make the world beg our forgiveness. These politicians come here thinking they can dictate to us? They are nothing. They take their orders from bloated, self-aggrandizing, charlatans. China supplies the world with technology, intellect and discipline.

Chen waits. Then, looks directly at General Xin...

CHEN

China's economy has stalled. Our debt has increased to levels unseen. Unemployment, trade deficits... this is all fact. But the most egregious failure is from people like you. Officials stuck forever in another time. You will never succeed in dominating the world with your arrogance.

General Xin stands and viciously strikes Chen across his face knocking him to the floor. He stands defiantly over him. He leans down close to Chen's ear. Calmly superior.

GENERAL XIN

Your family... You will never see them again. Do you understand? Never.
(standing - to the
Guard)
Take him back.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. MICHAEL STEVENS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Stevens is asleep. Next to his bed, his CELL PHONE BUZZES. He groggily picks it up.

STEVENS

Stevens.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

The doors open and Eastland enters. Frantic. He sees Stevens standing in the hallway and goes to him.

STEVENS
He's just out of surgery.

EASTLAND
What happened?

STEVENS
Mugged, apparently.

An ER DOCTOR approaches. He speaks somewhat broken English.

ER DOCTOR
Mr. Stevens?

STEVENS
Yes.

ER DOCTOR
Your friend is alive. He was beaten badly. His jaw and arm were broken. He sustained knife wounds in each shoulder. His blood loss was substantial but we have replaced this with transfusion.

STEVENS
Is he conscious?

ER DOCTOR
No. He is sedated and will be for some time.

EASTLAND
He had a backpack.

ER DOCTOR
No backpack. Only passport and wallet.
(to Stevens)
He had your business card inside.
That's how we were able to contact you. Now, I must get back.

The Doctor goes.

EASTLAND
They got his backpack, which means they have his cameras.

STEVENS
His cameras?

EASTLAND
Never goes anywhere without them.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Dawn's first pale light bleeds across the horizon. Gillian steps onto the empty sidewalk, paying the taxi driver. The vehicle melts into the early morning shadows.

Her encrypted cell phone VIBRATES. A text from Eastland cuts through the quiet: "*Need your help.*"

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Gillian enters the room. Harsh morning sunlight slices through aluminum blinds, casting striped shadows across occupied hospital beds. Eastland slumps, exhausted, beside Tom's bandaged, unconscious form.

Gillian's hand settles gently on Eastland's shoulder.

GILLIAN

Eastland?

He startles awake, eyes heavy with sleepless worry.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)

Have you been here all night?

EASTLAND

He hasn't woken up.

GILLIAN

What happened?

EASTLAND

He was jumped in an alley outside of Clancy's. From what I can gather, he'd been there with some friends.

GILLIAN

Eastland, I'm so sorry.

Eastland rises, raw emotion etching his features.

EASTLAND

This is my fault.

GILLIAN

What are you talking about? What do you mean?

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the flash drive.

EASTLAND

I need you to take this.

GILLIAN

What is it?

EASTLAND

(indicating Tom)

The same people who did this are planning to turn these protests into something a lot worse. Just look at it and show it to someone who can stop it.

She takes the flash drive, eyes it and puts it in her pocket.

GILLIAN

What are you going to do?

EASTLAND

My job.

Eastland and Gillian look at each other with an understanding of what each must do.

INT. TAXI - DAY (MOVING)

Gillian is riding in the back. She has her cell phone out and is texting Maya. *"Need to meet someplace secure."*

INT. ACN BUILDING - STUDIO - DAY

A crew is setting up for an interview while Eastland, Stevens and David Jiang stand on the side going over the notes for the interview with the Chinese Ambassador to the U.S.

JIANG

(reading notes, then looks up)

You really want to go into this?

EASTLAND

I do.

JIANG

I'm not sure.

EASTLAND

You want to cover it up?

JIANG

That's not what I said. It's just a tough call.

EASTLAND

For who?

JIANG
 (frustration -
 resignation)
 Fine.

STEVENS
 You'll need to prep him. I know you're
 on good terms but you can't blind
 side him with this.

Eastland takes a long contemplative moment to assess.

JIANG
 What about the tape?

EASTLAND
 I want to run it.

JIANG
 Of course you do.
 (beat)
 Well, you'll definitely need to show
 him that or least tell him about it.

STEVENS
 Use the control room. We'll keep
 everybody out till you're finished.

A door opens to the studio and several BODYGUARD TYPES enter
 along with KAI FONG (50) Chinese Ambassador to the U.S.

He sees Eastland and walks ahead of his bodyguards to greet
 him. They know each other well and Kai smiles at seeing him.
 His English is very good.

AMBASSADOR KAI
 Peter!

They shake hands.

EASTLAND
 Ambassador. So good to see you.

AMBASSADOR KAI
 Too long.

EASTLAND
 Indeed. Thank you for agreeing to do
 this.

AMBASSADOR KAI
 My pleasure. So, what do we do?

EASTLAND

I'd like to go over the interview
with you first, if that's all right.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Of course.

Eastland motions toward the Control Room.

EASTLAND

Let's go in there. Some privacy.

Kai smiles and follows Eastland toward the Control Room door.
The bodyguards follow but when they get to the door, he turns
to them.

AMBASSADOR KAI

(in Mandarin)

Alone please.

The bodyguards stop. Eastland opens the door for Kai and
they enter. Eastland closes the door.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - MAYA'S OFFICE - DAY

Maya and Gillian are alone in Maya's office. Gillian opens
her laptop and inserts the flash drive.

After a moment, she brings up the photos taken by Tom Ho.
Gillian scrolls through them as Maya looks over her shoulder.

MAYA

You were right. We definitely have a
problem.

Gillian stops on the last photo of the Chinese driver dressed
in fatigues.

GILLIAN

Those aren't students.

MAYA

Definitely not.

GILLIAN

What are you going to do?

Maya takes a moment to think. Then...

MAYA

I need to show this to Wesley.

GILLIAN

Right.

INT. ACN BUILDING - STUDIO - DAY

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

Eastland is playing the video tape of Professor Chen's abduction on one of the control room's small monitors. Kai watches closely and says nothing. Eastland watches him and not the tape.

When it finishes, Eastland brings up the photos Tom Ho took of the Chinese men making Molotov cocktails. He flips through them. Again, Kai says nothing. Eastland stops on the last photo of the driver. He turns to Kai who leans back in the chair to assess what he has just seen.

AMBASSADOR KAI

How long have we been friends, Peter?

EASTLAND

Ten years.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Just before you lost your family.

EASTLAND

I remember.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Your family was taken from you. Your heart was broken. Your spirit too.

Kai leans in toward Peter.

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)

I need you to understand something. And this is off the record. I have to do what my government tells me to do. That's my job. You, more than anyone, knows that. There are times when I've had to express views of my government that were -- unpopular in the West. I take that responsibility. Some of their less than honorable tactics push reasonable people away -- and serve no one. However, what you've shown me here -- this is not my government. I've been assured by the president that these trade talks are vital to China. It's no secret that our economy is suffering. Much like yours and many of the countries participating in these talks. We need to find a better way forward. This...

(MORE)

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)
 (indicating the video
 and photos)
 This harms everything we are trying
 to achieve.

EASTLAND
 Who would do this? What reason would
 they have?

Kai takes a long pause as he considers his answer.

AMBASSADOR KAI
 I can't answer that.

EASTLAND
 You can't or you won't?

Kai smiles at his friend.

AMBASSADOR KAI
 Andrew Chen is a friend. He is loved
 by so many. But by none more so than
 his family. And his family needs him
 back. His country needs him back. He
 understands the risks he takes. But
 he is not an enemy of China. He loves
 this place -- as do I. And I admire
 him more than you know.

(beat)
 I'll do your interview. And, I'll
 answer your questions. If you feel
 you have to show these, I won't stop
 you. But, if you choose not to, and
 let me deal with it, I promise you,
 we will find who did this. We'll
 find who hurt your friend. And the
 trade talks can continue. And we can
 try to find common ground in the
 world.

Eastland takes a deep, studied breath -- taking this all in.

IN THE STUDIO

The Control Room door opens. Peter and Kai exit. The
 bodyguards are there.

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)
 We haven't had dinner together in a
 long time. We should.

EASTLAND
 I'd like that.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - WESLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Wesley is at his desk going through the flash drive of pictures at the docks. Maya and Gillian stand.

WESLEY

Where did you get these?

GILLIAN

Peter Eastland. He and his
photographer.

WESLEY

What were they doing there?

GILLIAN

Their job.

WESLEY

What the fuck does that mean?

MAYA

Ian!

GILLIAN

They're journalists. That's what
they do.

Gillian goes to his computer screen and points. Her frustration grows exponentially.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)

Those are Molotov cocktails. And
those are not students.

WESLEY

No shit.

GILLIAN

His photographer is in the hospital
because of these pictures. He could
have died.

WESLEY

And how do you know that?

GILLIAN

They took his backpack and nothing
else. It had all his cameras in it.

Wesley considers this.

WESLEY

You're supposed to be working on your boyfriend. He's your target. Is he a spy or isn't he?

GILLIAN

I don't know!

WESLEY

Well, find the fuck out!
(re: the pictures)
I'll take care of this.

Gillian, angry, leaves the room.

MAYA

What the hell was that?

WESLEY

(indignant)
She's your responsibility. Make sure she does her job.

MAYA

This isn't her job.

WESLEY

It is now.

Wesley goes back to studying the photos.

MAYA

You're such an asshole.

WESLEY

(not looking up)
I know.

She leaves, closing the door a little too forcefully.

EXT. HONG KONG AIRPORT - NIGHT

A government jet sits on the tarmac, floodlights reflecting off its polished fuselage. Two black SUVs idle nearby, engines rumbling softly in the humid night air. The illuminated skyline of Hong Kong shimmers in the distance.

From the open cabin door, Zhao Xi appears at the top of the stairway and descends with calm precision, his gaze fixed on the three CHINESE OFFICERS in fatigues waiting below. Their posture stiffens at his approach. They snap crisp salutes, eyes averted, betraying both deference and nerves.

Without another glance, Zhao Xi strides toward the SUV. Waiting for him is General Xin, in military fatigues.

They have a brief exchange.

A DRIVER promptly opens the door. Zhao Xi and General Xin slip into the dark interior. The officers rush to the second SUV, piling in with urgent efficiency. Both vehicles roar away from the aircraft, headlights cutting across the runway as they speed off.

EXT. HONG KONG PARK - NIGHT

Running along the warehouse district, STUDENT PROTESTERS prepare. They help each other with balaclavas and tinted goggles, pulling on gloves and checking gas masks in jittery anticipation. Soft murmurs and the rustle of flags create a low buzz, punctuated by the hum of cell phones capturing the scene.

The protesters hold bold signs and banners in multiple languages, each one demanding freedom, condemning oppression and of course, depictions of Professor Chen - political prisoner -- and their calls to find him.

EXT. HONG KONG STREET - NIGHT

Neon signs and towering LED billboards cast shifting patterns of color across the street illuminating barricades stretched across intersections, erected to slow any advance by the protesters.

Ranks of CHINESE POLICE AND SOLDIERS stand in rigid formation. Their riot helmets and body armor gleam under the harsh lights, and the barrels of their rifles reflect neon glints -- their sheer numbers forming an ominous wall of authority that heightens the tension in the air.

CLOSE ON EASTLAND

Standing on a temporary, balustrade-encircled terrace, overlooking the armed soldiers. His CAMERAMAN begins to film as Eastland reports.

EASTLAND

On the eve of international trade
talks here in Hong Kong, tensions
are high.

INT. BECKETT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Beckett is getting dressed for the opening night event. Lee is in the bathroom doing her makeup.

EASTLAND (V.O.)

Student protesters have come here from all over the world to show support for the fight against human rights abuses in China.

As he ties his bow tie, Beckett sees Lee through the bathroom door. She is soberly going through her routine which he's seen a hundred times.

EASTLAND (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Over my shoulder, hundreds of police and soldiers, armed with rifles stand ready.

She puts on the finishing touches and notices Beckett in the mirror watching her. She smiles and looks back at her image in the mirror.

EASTLAND (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Their orders, according to the Hong Kong Chief Executive, to facilitate a peaceful protest. Their ammunition -- rubber bullets. Their weapons only used as a last resort.

INT. GILLIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gillian is getting ready for the event -- elegant dress, new shoes, jewelry. This is a Gillian we haven't seen. She looks amazing.

EASTLAND (V.O.)

The government in Beijing, echo those directives.

As she works on her makeup, she eyes the gift from Beckett sitting on her night stand -- still wrapped. She smiles sadly.

EASTLAND (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The memories of the violent clashes in 2019, still firmly etched in the minds of both citizens and officials. Not far from here, at the British Consulate, representatives from China's closest trading partners arrive for an opening celebration.

EXT. BRITISH CONSULATE - NIGHT

The Consulate is lit up like a Christmas Tree with a line of limousines coming and going. Trade Talk attendees and their guests arrive for the opening party.

EASTLAND (V.O.)
 Politicians from the United States,
 Britain, Japan, Australia, Canada
 and many other countries -- all here
 to identify the growing trade
 imbalance that exists and find
 reasonable solutions.

CLOSER on the entrance showing the faces of the arriving
 politicians. All smiles and handshakes.

EASTLAND (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Some have said, this is impossible.
 A note of hope from British Ambassador
 to China, Caroline Evans, earlier
 today...

CLOSE ON AMBASSADOR CAROLINE EVANS

British Ambassador to China, as she arrives in her limousine.
 She's greeted by several attendees including Christopher
 Beckett and Lee Beckett.

AMBASSADOR EVANS (V.O.)
 The days ahead will be long but
 hopefully productive. The world needs
 us to put aside our egos and find
 answers. This is not the time for
 posturing.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MAIN BALLROOM - NIGHT

A glittering chandelier casts golden light over the grand
 ballroom, where a string quartet plays softly against the
 murmur of international diplomacy in motion.

Delegates from across the globe mingle with ease, their polite
 smiles masking a room thick with intrigue -- a surplus of
 exotic languages heard throughout the room.

At the bar, Gillian, Maya, and Dugan survey the room.

DUGAN
 (low, to Gillian)
 You ready?

GILLIAN
 I think so.

MAYA
 You'll do fine.

Dugan discreetly produces what looks like a small gray wafer,
 almost weightless, with a barely visible transparent dot at
 its center. He slips it into Gillian's palm.

DUGAN

When you're ready, just peel it off and brush it onto her clothes. It'll cling like static -- completely invisible unless you know where to look.

MAYA

What about Beckett?

DUGAN

Tagged him earlier. Transmission's crystal clear. Picks up everything within a meter or two.

Gillian studies the wafer. A slight hesitation. She takes a slow breath -- then moves. Dugan watches her go.

DUGAN (CONT'D)

I like her. She may be all right.

Maya's eyes track Gillian as she threads her way through the crowd toward Blair and Allison.

CLOSE ON AMBASSADOR EVANS

Standing at the head of the room, exuding effortless charm. She's mid-conversation with Christopher Beckett and his wife, Lee, their body language relaxed, their smiles polished.

A new presence enters -- GREGORY WILLIAMS, U.S. Ambassador to China, with his wife, THERESA.

AMBASSADOR EVANS

Greg! So good to see you. Thanks for coming.

She offers a warm hug -- a diplomatic embrace.

AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS

Caroline, you look amazing. As always.

Evans smiles warmly, taking Theresa's hand.

AMBASSADOR EVANS

You're the one who looks amazing. My god.

A hug, measured but warm.

THERESA

This is quite an affair.

AMBASSADOR EVANS

Have to keep up appearances. It's a British thing.

(beat, turning)

You know Chris Beckett...

AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS

Of course. Good to see you.

They shake hands.

AMBASSADOR EVANS

And his lovely wife, Lee.

AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS

I don't believe we've met. A pleasure.

LEE

Ambassador.

ACROSS THE ROOM - Blair and Allison approach.

Gillian follows, careful, deliberate. She brushes lightly against Lee's dress -- a casual gesture, smoothing a fold, depositing the listening wafer.

A breathless moment. Lee doesn't react. No awareness.

Beckett's eyes flick to Gillian. Just for a second. A glance too fleeting to read.

Lee turns, smiling. Gillian eases into place beside Allison, mask intact.

AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS

David.

BLAIR

Ambassador.

(to Theresa, a polite nod)

Ma'am.

AMBASSADOR EVANS

Good to see you, David.

BLAIR

Not sure if you know my Chief of Staff, Allison Tygard.

Studying Allison, then extending a hand

AMBASSADOR EVANS

It's been a while, hasn't it? Nice to see you again.

They shake hands.

BLAIR
And this is my assistant Chief of
Staff, Gillian Hall.

Gillian steps forward.

GILLIAN
It's an honor, ma'am.

A beat.

AMBASSADOR EVANS
Well... You, I've heard of.

A moment's hesitation. Gillian stiffens. Then, Evans smiles.

AMBASSADOR EVANS (CONT'D)
Apparently, you're the rising star
in Blair's Consulate.

A breath of relief. A cautious smile from Gillian.

BLAIR
That's an understatement.

Lee watches Gillian. Beckett lets the ghost of a smirk cross his lips.

ON THE BALLROOM ENTRANCE as the double doors sweep open.

American SENATOR LINDSEY SCOTT strides in with his entourage in tow, scanning the room.

SENATOR SCOTT
Have you ever seen more pretentious
bullshit?

Scott doesn't expect an answer.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

A narrow, dimly lit stairwell. The walls are thick, soundproof -- designed to keep secrets in. Dugan and Maya descend quickly.

MAYA
Is the elevator broken?

DUGAN
Funny.

A heavy door at the bottom. Dugan swipes his pass. A red light turns green, and the lock clicks open.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A sterile, secured corridor -- reinforced walls and surveillance cameras.

Dugan leads Maya toward a reinforced door. Another swipe. Another click. They enter.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - NIGHT

Sleek digital nerve center. Monitors pulse with live surveillance feeds. Operators glide between stations like digital sentinels. Maya's eyes widen, absorbing the technological marvel.

MAYA

Wow.

DUGAN

Understated, don't you think?

He leads her through the controlled chaos, arriving at a key station.

JAMIE, a sharp-eyed young analyst, probably ex-military, scans his monitors with quiet efficiency. Dugan leans in.

DUGAN (CONT'D)

Jamie.

JAMIE

Sir.

Dugan tilts his head toward the screens.

DUGAN

Got 'em all?

Jamie doesn't answer. He just types a sequence of commands.

Three screens bloom to life. The entire ballroom appears -- multiple camera angles, pinpoint surveillance.

Jamie hands Dugan a pair of headphones. Dugan slips them on, adjusting the frequency.

Jamie hands a second pair to Maya.

MAYA

Thanks.

JAMIE

Ma'am.

Maya settles the headset, instantly immersed in the party's digital landscape -- as are we.

Her gaze locks onto a fragmented video feed. Amid the surveillance grid, one conversation crystallizes.

Senator Scott stands with Ambassador Evans and Chris Beckett.

MAYA
(leaning in)
Can we isolate that?

Jamie types swiftly. One monitor expands -- now a full, crisp feed of the conversation. Dugan adjusts his headset, listening. A beat.

DUGAN
(intrigued)
Hmm.

They listen.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MAIN BALLROOM - NIGHT

Senator Scott stands with Ambassador Evans and Chris Beckett. He's in mid-spiel, his voice a touch too loud, a touch too assured.

SENATOR SCOTT
Do you have any idea of the power we
wield in the world?
(beat)
Nothing gets done without our help.
And more importantly, without our
money.

His drink sloshes slightly as he gestures. Evans and Beckett exchange a glance.

AMBASSADOR EVANS
Senator, these trade talks are of
vital importance. Supply chains across
the globe have never recovered from
the pandemic. I'm sure all the
delegates here are grateful to the
United States for participating and
offering a voice of reason. As for
Britain, we'll do everything it takes
to accomplish that goal.

SENATOR SCOTT
With all due respect, Ambassador --
Britain is nothing without the United
States. Never has been.

A moment. Then, Beckett answers first. Smooth, unfazed.

BECKETT

Well. One could argue history,
Senator.

(beat)

The United States wouldn't even exist
without Britain.

Amusement in Evans' eyes. Scott bristles. She steps in --
calm, collected, precise.

AMBASSADOR EVANS

Senator, with all the problems needing
to be solved -- the world has enough
bullies, don't you think?

Silence. Scott's face a study in barely concealed irritation.

AMBASSADOR EVANS (CONT'D)

Excuse us.

They turn, pivoting away.

Scott is left standing alone. The room flows around him.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - NIGHT

Maya and Dugan watch, entertained.

DUGAN

Gotta love Evans.

They exchange a look. Then, Maya refocuses.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MAIN BALLROOM - NIGHT

Gillian stands at the bar, her back to the main floor. A
figure of poise -- confidence -- comfortable now in her new
roll. Her fingers lightly tracing the rim of her glass as
she surveys the room in the mirror behind the bar.

A presence moves in behind her. Beckett leans in.

BECKETT

(a whisper, just for
her)

You look stunning.

A slow beat. Gillian doesn't turn immediately. A hint of a
smile -- the mask perfectly in place. Then, she pivots,
meeting his gaze with quiet confidence.

GILLIAN

Good evening. Can I buy you a drink?

BECKETT

I think I'm buying everyone's drinks tonight. But, if you insist.

She turns to the BARTENDER.

GILLIAN

The gentleman will have an exceptionally dry martini -- with an olive.

The Bartender nods.

BARTENDER

Yes, ma'am.

Beckett watches her. A hint of amusement. She sips her drink.

GILLIAN

I thought you'd be with your wife.

BECKETT

Clients.

GILLIAN

Really?

The bartender returns, placing the martini in front of Beckett.

BARTENDER

Sir.

Beckett takes the glass, lifts it slightly.

BECKETT

Thank you.

The bartender walks away. Gillian turns to the main floor. Beckett does the same, now shoulder to shoulder with her.

They drink in silence. A smile. A secret shared.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - NIGHT

Maya and Dugan sit before a wall of monitors, their faces illuminated by the flickering surveillance feeds.

Live footage of the ballroom plays before them.

Maya, still listening in through her headset, narrows her eyes.

MAYA

Where's Beckett's wife?

Dugan taps the console, signaling Jamie, the technician.

DUGAN

Find her.

Jamie's fingers dance over the keyboard. A digital overlay flashes across the wide shot of the ballroom.

A TECHNICAL OUTLINE highlights a figure moving near the diplomatic circle -- Lee Beckett.

JAMIE

Sir.

Dugan leans in.

DUGAN

Let's see what she's doing.

Jamie isolates her feed. The screen sharpens, zooming in on Lee Beckett, deep in conversation with Chinese Ambassador Kai. His personal Aide stands beside him.

MAYA

That's interesting.

Dugan remains stone-faced, his eyes fixed on the screen.

On an adjacent monitor, another figure moves through the crowd -- Gillian. She's approaching Lee and Ambassador Kai.

DUGAN

Now, that's interesting.

(beat)

I believe she's beginning to feel comfortable in her new role.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MAIN BALLROOM - NIGHT

Lee Beckett stands with Ambassador Kai, speaking in hushed, measured Mandarin.

Gillian approaches from behind. Confident. Controlled.

Kai, ever the gentleman, notices her first.

AMBASSADOR KAI

(warm, but measured)

Good evening.

Lee turns at the sound of his voice. She sees Gillian. A flicker of surprise -- quickly masked.

In Mandarin, SUBTITLED:

GILLIAN

Good evening, Ambassador.

Kai, mildly impressed, but doesn't show it. Lee, however, remains carefully neutral.

AMBASSADOR KAI

I don't believe we've met.

GILLIAN

Gillian Hall. I work at the American Consulate. I'm a friend of Peter Eastland.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Ah, Peter. We've known each other for some time.

GILLIAN

I saw his interview with you. You were quite eloquent.

AMBASSADOR KAI

You flatter me. Do you know Mrs. Beckett?

A pause. A fraction of a second too long. Then, Gillian turns to Lee, smiling.

GILLIAN

I do.

Lee returns the smile. But it's tight. Controlled.

LEE

Yes. We've met. Several times.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Her husband is the Consul General.

GILLIAN

I'm aware. I understand he's very good at his job.

Lee's mask remains intact.

LEE

Would you excuse me, Ambassador?

Kai inclines his head.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Of course.

Lee turns. Walks away. She doesn't look back. Gillian watches as Lee heads toward a side door.

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)

And what do you do, Ms. Hall?

Gillian turns back. She smiles.

GILLIAN

Assistant Chief of Staff to the Consul
General.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - NIGHT

Maya and Dugan watch and listen. Maya turns to Dugan, slightly incredulous.

MAYA

Did you tag Gillian?

Dugan doesn't look away from the screen.

DUGAN

Of course.

A flicker of a smirk from Maya but her attention is back on the monitor.

ON THE MONITOR Lee Beckett is still highlighted and moving through the ballroom, cutting toward a side door.

The surveillance feed lingers on the ballroom. Lee Beckett is gone. The door clicks shut behind her. Maya leans forward.

MAYA

Where's she going?

Dugan doesn't answer immediately.

DUGAN

Jamie?

Jamie presses a finger to his headset, listening. The room is silent except for the low hum of live surveillance feeds.

JAMIE

I've got audio. No video.

Maya turns to Dugan.

MAYA

What is it?

Dugan's eyes flick between screens. No visual feed. Just darkness.

DUGAN
A hallway for the caterers, I think.

JAMIE
She's making a call.

DUGAN
(relief)
We have her phone.

Jamie adjusts his settings. Then, he shakes his head.

JAMIE
It's not her phone.

DUGAN
Shit.

MAYA
Bring up the audio.

Jamie presses a key. A second later, the room fills with sound. A crisp, muted voice ON SPEAKER -- Lee Beckett.

LEE (V.O.)
(low, controlled)
I passed on the tape.

A pause. A barely audible murmur from the other end. A MAN'S VOICE -- but indistinct.

LEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They're extremely pleased.

A quiet clinking sound in the background -- a glass? Silverware? Then, Lee's tone drops lower. Firmer.

LEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Tomorrow. Yes, it's confirmed.

Another beat. A faint rustling -- movement on the other end of the call.

LEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
No contact until it's done.

A pause.

LEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Right.

CLICK. The call ends.

MAYA

What the fuck was that?

Dugan immediately scans the ballroom monitors. Finds Beckett -- standing among the delegates. Laughing. Talking. Present.

DUGAN

She wasn't talking to her husband.

Maya leans in, studying the wide shot of the room. Everyone in their places. Everyone where they're supposed to be.

EXT. MSS COMPOUND - NIGHT

A black SUV glides through the steel-reinforced gates, the headlights cutting through the thick night air.

Inside the compound, armed guards patrol the perimeter, their faces stern, their movements disciplined.

The SUV rolls to a stop. Doors unlock with a mechanical click.

From the backseat, General Xin steps out first. Then, Zhao Xi emerges. He doesn't hurry. He doesn't need to.

A few meters away, a large covered transport truck sits in the dim glow of an overhead security light.

Zhao Xi walks toward it, unhurried.

A soldier stands nearby -- tense, waiting. He watches as Zhao reaches for the tarp, gripping the edge. With a sharp flick of his wrist, he lifts the tarp.

INSIDE THE TRUCK

Rows of unmarked crates. Stacked, secured, ready. Filled with bottles that glint under the faint light. Molotov cocktails. Dozens. Glass and gasoline. Fire and chaos.

BACK TO SCENE.

Zhao Xi drops the tarp back into place. His expression does not change. Satisfied, he turns. His gaze shifts to General Xin. Xin nods once, firmly.

Together, they move toward the compound entrance. A lone soldier stands at the reinforced door. His uniform perfect. His stance rigid. As they approach, he snaps to attention.

He salutes. His eyes stay locked forward, not daring to meet Zhao's directly. The soldier swipes his key card. A loud, mechanical thunk. The door unlocks. It swings open. Zhao Xi and General Xin step inside. The door closes behind them.

INT. MSS COMPOUND - NIGHT

Zhao Xi and General Xin step into the cavernous storage facility. Dim overhead lights hum softly, casting long shadows across rows of crates, racks of weapons, and locked storage.

At the center of the room, a single table. Four men stand around it. Loose-fitting street clothes disguise their discipline, but their stance, their stillness, their controlled breathing gives them away.

One of them, Bing, stands out. The brute force who hunted and beat Tom Ho without hesitation.

Bing holds a cup of coffee, sipping slowly. He turns as Zhao and Xin approach. He doesn't flinch. His men remain still.

Zhao's gaze sweeps the room first. Then settles on Bing.

In Mandarin, SUBTITLED:

ZHAO XI
Is everything in place?

BING
Of course.

ZHAO XI
And the ammunition?

BING
Taken care of.

Zhao looks to Xin.

ZHAO XI
How many men?

GENERAL XIN
Five.

ZHAO XI
And the targets?

GENERAL XIN
Identified.

Zhao turns back to Bing. Zhao studies him. Then, his eyes move to the others. One by one. They hold his gaze without flinching.

Satisfied, Zhao turns. Xin follows.

The door closes behind them. A cold metallic clank echoes through the space.

Bing watches the door for a beat. He turns to his men who share the same emotionless stare.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MAIN BALLROOM - NIGHT

Chris Beckett stands chatting with Ambassador Evans. Elliot Simpson, Beckett's aide, approaches briskly.

BECKETT
(to Evans)
Pardon me.

AMBASSADOR EVANS
Of course.

Beckett walks a few steps away with Simpson.

SIMPSON
(low, discreet)
Sir, your wife asked me to let you know she'll be home later.
(beat, carefully chosen words)
She has clients to entertain.

BECKETT
Of course. Thank you, Simpson.

Simpson inclines his head and disappears into the crowd. Beckett turns back to Evans, smiling.

AMBASSADOR EVANS
Everything all right?

BECKETT
Of course.

EXT. BRITISH CONSULATE - NIGHT

The elegant British Consulate gleams under the glow of city lights.

The diplomatic elite file out in clusters, sliding into waiting limousines that whisk them away into the Hong Kong night.

Lee Beckett exits the consulate, her gaze scanning the procession of black cars. Not for her limousine. For something else.

Her eyes find it -- A black SUV. Engine idling. A driver, stone-faced, stands beside it.

Lee moves with graceful ease through the departing crowd, her posture composed, movements fluid.

A glance -- left, right. Then, the SUV door swings open.

Lee steps inside. The driver shuts the door behind her.

INT. BLACK SUV - NIGHT

Inside, the cabin is dark, silent. Across from Lee, Zhao Xi sits, unmoving. Waiting.

In Mandarin, SUBTITLED:

ZHAO XI
(to driver)
Go.

The vehicle glides away from the curb, slipping into the city's neon-lit veins -- swallowed by the pulse of Hong Kong.

Zhao sits, quietly. The silence stretches, a test of patience. Then, he finally turns to Lee.

ZHAO XI (CONT'D)
I take it you have everything in
hand?

LEE
Yes.

ZHAO XI
And your asset?

LEE
He understands what to do.

He turns forward. Satisfied.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. BLACK SUV - NIGHT

The SUV disappears into the labyrinth of Hong Kong's streets.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - NIGHT

The glow of surveillance monitors flickers across Maya and Dugan's faces.

MAYA
Can you play that back?

Jamie, already working, cues up the replay. On the monitor, the moment repeats.

Lee Beckett steps into the night. The SUV door swings open.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Freeze that.

Jamie pauses the frame. The image locks in place. The black SUV. The open door. Shadows obscure the inside.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Let's see who's sitting inside.

Jamie's hands move instinctively over the keyboard. The monitor zooms in. At first, just darkness. A faint shape. A silhouette barely visible.

Jamie adjusts the contrast. Enhances the frame. Slowly, the shadows recede. A face emerges. The angular profile of a man. Not fully lit, but discernible. Zhao Xi.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Any idea?

Dugan leans in, looks, then looks to Maya.

DUGAN

Unfortunately, yes.

HOLD on frozen image of Zhao on the monitor.

EXT. HONG KONG CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

An AERIAL VIEW - A modern architectural masterpiece, the Hong Kong Convention Center sits proudly over Victoria Harbor, its glass facade gleaming under the city's starlit skyline.

EXT. VICTORIA HARBOR PROMENADE - NIGHT

The lights of Hong Kong shimmer on the water's surface.

Peter Eastland stands at the edge of the promenade, hands in his pockets.

A presence approaches from behind.

GILLIAN (O.S.)

Eastland.

EASTLAND

(turning)

Thanks for meeting me.

GILLIAN

Of course.

(beat)

Why are we here?

Eastland's eyes flick to the roadway behind them.

A black town car approaches. Slows. Stops. The driver steps out, moves to the rear door, and opens it.

Ambassador Kai emerges. Impeccably dressed, deliberate in movement. He sees Eastland and Gillian and walks toward them. Kia nods. His eyes shift to Gillian.

AMBASSADOR KAI

We meet again.

Gillian keeps her poise. Eastland didn't expect this.

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)

(to Eastland)

We had a pleasant chat earlier this evening. Nothing earth-shattering.

GILLIAN

Nice seeing you again, sir.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Peter tells me you're someone I can trust.

A glance between Gillian and Eastland.

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)

Your photographer, Tom Ho, was attacked. The men responsible were not part of some random street gang. They were former Chinese Special Forces. They take orders from General Xin Ko Dao. A ranking officer in the Ministry of State Security. He also ordered the kidnapping of Dr. Chen.

EASTLAND

And none of this was sanctioned by Beijing?

AMBASSADOR KAI

No. At least, not officially.

GILLIAN

And this was all to disrupt the trade talks?

AMBASSADOR KAI

Partly.

GILLIAN

Who is Xin -- to the Party?

AMBASSADOR KAI

He's been a thorn in Beijing's side for years. An isolationist. A nationalist. His position has afforded him a platform with which to influence a number of politicians with aligning views. Beijing has been reluctant to act because of it.

EASTLAND

He couldn't have been doing this alone.

Gillian's cell phone BUZZES. She takes it out to look at the screen.

AMBASSADOR KAI

No. Xin doesn't have the reach to coordinate all of this. If he's moving this aggressively, it means he has support from someone higher up.

Gillian and Eastland exchange looks.

EASTLAND

Any idea of who it might be?

AMBASSADOR KAI

Not yet.

Gillian lifts her phone, the surveillance photo of Zhao Xi stark against the screen's pale glow.

GILLIAN

Could this be the man?

Kai gives a studied look. Then, he looks up to Gillian and Eastland.

AMBASSADOR EVANS

That -- is Zhao Xi.

Eastland recognizes the name.

EASTLAND

The General Secretary.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Yes. The highest ranking member of the Central Committee. The most hard-line politician whose word is absolute. If this is his doing, rest assured his followers will execute without question.

Eastland and Gillian absorb this.

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)
He's also untouchable. No one would
dare cross him.

Kai's gaze drifts toward the harbor. Neon reflections shimmer
across dark water like fractured promises.

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)
I've always enjoyed this view. It's
amazing what people can do when
they're given a chance.

Kai takes a long pause to take in the view. Then...

AMBASSADOR KAI (CONT'D)
Hong Kong deserves to thrive. It did
under the British.
(beat)
I hope it still can.

The three of them stand in silence, looking out. Hong Kong
glows before them.

EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - DAY

A sea of protesters flood the streets, their voices a
thunderous roar. "*WHERE IS CHEN?*" banners slice through the
crowd like razor-sharp demands.

Riot police form impenetrable lines, shields locked. Military
units lurk at the edges - a silent, menacing warning.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - CIA SUBSTATION - DAY

The intelligence hub pulses with electric tension. Monitors
flicker with live protest feeds - a digital nervous system
tracking every movement.

ON A MONITOR

Peter Eastland reports live from the front lines. Behind
him, the Hong Kong police tighten their formations. A military
truck rumbles through an intersection.

EASTLAND (V.O.)
Tensions are mounting here in central
Hong Kong as protesters gather ahead
of today's highly anticipated trade
talks. The disappearance of Dr. Andrew
Chen has energized these young
protesters. He is the hope for their
cause.

(MORE)

EASTLAND (V.O.) (CONT'D)

While organizers insist this will be a peaceful demonstration, until his whereabouts are known, the threat of violence remains a possibility. Security forces, both police and military, are fully mobilized, preparing for any escalation.

IN THE SUBSTATION

The room is buzzing. Analysts trade information, track social media disinformation, and scan encrypted traffic.

Maya stands center stage, arms crossed, tracking the city's pulse. Across the room, movement catches her eye.

Ian Wesley stands in his glass-walled office, phone pressed to his ear. His back rigid, gaze fixed on the window - anywhere but the screens.

His conversation is animated. Though we don't hear his words, his face is tight. Then, a moment. He glances over his shoulder. Subtle. Quick. Then turns back to the window.

Maya's expression shifts. Something is off.

IN WESLEY'S OFFICE

Wesley remains on the call. Listening. A KNOCK on the door. He turns. Maya stands at the threshold.

Wesley recovers quickly, raising a hand to Maya in acknowledgment. Then, he clicks off the call. The cell phone disappears into his pocket.

WESLEY

Hey.

MAYA

You all right?

WESLEY

Of course.

He moves to his desk, grabbing a folder.

MAYA

You want me to check on security at the conference?

WESLEY

No, I've got it.

Moving quickly, he snaps up his jacket, gesturing toward the news feeds.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

Keep an eye on all this. Call me if something happens. I'll coordinate with our delegates.

And just like that, he's out the door. Maya watches him cross the room, exiting the main hub.

She glances at Wesley's desk. The edge of a cell phone under some papers. She moves the papers to reveal Wesley's phone.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - DAY

The same news feeds run on the walls, showing different angles of the chaos brewing outside.

Dugan stands watching. Jamie approaches, laptop in hand.

DUGAN

What's up?

JAMIE

Can we talk in private?

DUGAN

Sure.

They move inside.

IN DUGAN'S OFFICE

Jamie places the laptop on a small conference table and fires it up.

JAMIE

Something about the phone exchange last night with Beckett's wife got me thinking. So, I uh -- hacked her client portfolio.

DUGAN

(impressed)
Really?

JAMIE

Yeah. Look at this.

Jamie pulls up a list of clients, their portfolios laid out in crisp numbers.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Each client is listed by an account number. When you click on the number, it comes back with the client's name, contact information, investments, strategy notes, and total holdings.

Demonstrating, he clicks a random number.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Here's Lindsey Scott. Republican Senator from Oklahoma.

DUGAN

Oh, this should be good.

Jamie clicks into Scott's details. Dugan moves closer to see.

DUGAN (CONT'D)

He's doing well.

Then, Jamie exits Scott's info, clicks another account. But this time, no name. No contact info. Just a portfolio balance. \$5,560,000.

DUGAN (CONT'D)

There's no name.

JAMIE

Exactly.

DUGAN

Who does it belong to?

JAMIE

I don't know. But check this out.

He points to the screen.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Deposits. Two cash transfers in the last fifteen days. Both for \$500,000. The most recent? Three days ago.

DUGAN

Can you track the source?

JAMIE

Already on it.

He keys in a few more commands. A result pops up.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Wire transfers. From PST Holdings,
Limited. Manila.

DUGAN

The Philippines.
(beat - thinking)
PST Holdings owns the jet used to
rendition Chen back to China.

Dugan grabs his phone -- punches in a number.

DUGAN (CONT'D)

Where are you?
(listens)
I'm sending you something.

He nods to Jamie. Jamie grins, proud.

INT. AMERICAN CONSULATE - CIA SUBSTATION - DAY

The intelligence hub is in overdrive. Maya stands near her
desk, phone pressed to her ear.

As she listens, she lowers the phone slightly, checking the
encrypted message Dugan just sent. Her eyes scan the text.

She lifts the phone back up.

MAYA

Meet me at the Trade Center.

She ends the call.

EXT. HONG KONG CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

A tense scene outside the towering glass-and-steel structure.
Protesters swell at the entrance, their voices a rolling
tide of anger and defiance. Handmade signs wave violently
above the crowd.

Police and security forces stand firm, keeping the crowd
behind reinforced barriers. The energy is volatile. A powder
keg waiting for a spark.

INT. HONG KONG CONVENTION CENTER - OBSERVATION FLOOR - DAY

Maya stands near a railing, overlooking the delegates' hall
below.

Dugan appears at the top of the stairs, spots Maya and goes
to her.

DUGAN

What did you make of the information
I sent you?

MAYA

Someone's making a lot of money to
help the Chinese.

DUGAN

Money like that could make almost
anyone help the Chinese.

MAYA

Or disrupt a trade conference.

Maya looks out over the Trade Conference floor.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I have an idea of who it might be.

(beat)

I hope I'm wrong.

Dugan's brow lifts slightly.

DUGAN

You're gonna keep me guessing?

MAYA

We're going to need your best analyst.

DUGAN

Done.

EXT. HONG KONG ALLEY - DAY

A secluded loading dock behind a row of industrial buildings.
Bing and his team gear up behind a large covered truck. The
same one we saw loaded with crates of Molotov cocktails.

Nearby, five soldiers in tactical gear stand in formation.
Bing hands out new ammunition clips.

Each man removes the standard-issue clips from their rifles,
replacing them with these.

In Mandarin, SUBTITLED:

BING

Keep these with you.

(beat, deliberate)

When you're finished, swap back to
the originals. Understood?

The soldiers nod in unison.

SOLDIERS

Understood.

BING

And don't leave the shell casings.
No evidence. No trail.

They nod again, understanding.

BING (CONT'D)

Questions?

SOLDIERS

No, sir.

Bing watches them. Studies them. Then, satisfied...

BING

Get back to your units.

The soldiers disperse, disappearing into the city. Bing and his men watch them go. He turns to his crew.

BING (CONT'D)

Get the truck in position.

END SUBTITLES.

One of his men hops into the driver's seat. Engine rumbles to life. And he's on the move.

INT. HONG KONG - MSS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A cold, clinical war room. Technicians sit at various monitoring stations, tracking incoming transmissions.

At the center of it all, General Xin stands, eyes locked on a monitor.

ON THE MONITOR

A live CCTV feed of a Chinese Troll Farm. Banks of computers. Hackers glued to their screens.

Xin removes his phone and punches in a number.

Across the world, a phone vibrates. A YOUNG HACKER steps into view on the CCTV screen. He answers.

CLOSE ON THE MONITOR

In Mandarin, SUBTITLED:

YOUNG HACKER (V.O.)

Yes, General?

GENERAL XIN
Are you ready?

YOUNG HACKER (V.O.)
We are.

Xin checks his watch.

GENERAL XIN
Thirty minutes. Exactly.

YOUNG HACKER (V.O.)
Yes, sir.

Xin ends the call. Then, without hesitation, dials another number.

GENERAL XIN
Thirty minutes.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. HONG KONG ALLEY - DAY

Bing stands with his team, phone in hand. The truck is gone. He listens. Then pockets the phone.

BING
(in Mandarin - to his
men)
Let's go.

EXT. HONG KONG CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Chaos brews. Maya and Dugan push through the throng of protesters. Dugan and Maya affix their earpieces. Dugan makes a call.

DUGAN
Jamie. You have her?

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - DAY

Jamie sits at his multi-monitor station wearing a headset with mic. Surveillance feeds cycle. Facial recognition software speeds through the crowd at a dizzying pace. Finally, he gets a hit.

One monitor highlights the target. Lee Beckett, moving through the crowd.

JAMIE
Got her. She's walking south-
southwest.

(MORE)

JAMIE (CONT'D)
(beat, tracking further)
Should be passing in front of The
Grand Hyatt in twenty seconds.

EXT. HONG KONG CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Dugan registers the location. Turns to Maya.

DUGAN
Come on.

They break into a run. We follow them, weaving through the crowd. The Grand Hyatt looms ahead.

INT. TROLL FARM - DAY

A darkened room, illuminated by the glow of a dozen monitors. Hackers sit hunched over keyboards, eyes locked onto cascading lines of code.

The Young Hacker, the leader, checks his watch. A beat. Then, he lets out a LOUD WHISTLE. A sharp wave of his arm.

All at once, fingers fly over keyboards. The hack goes live.

ON A MONITOR - REAL-TIME ATTACK

The original doorbell footage of Dr. Chen's abduction is uploaded. A flood of messages deploys. Video files stream to social media. News alerts ping across encrypted channels.

The city's digital infrastructure shifts. A countdown clock on the main server: 00:00:10 It starts the count down...

The clock reaches 00:00:01

Then, the video explodes across Hong Kong.

INT. HONG KONG CONVENTION CENTER - DELEGATES' HALL - DAY

The trade talks are in session. Diplomats and officials listen, some with headphones for translation.

Then, phones start buzzing. At first, just a few. Then, dozens.

Delegates glance down, screens lighting up with the video.

ON A SCREEN - THE ABDUCTION VIDEO

Showing Chen walking on the sidewalk with his dog.

The van pulling up. The two men jumping from the van and attacking Chen along with the jogger.

The men throwing him into the van. The van pulls away. The dog is left alone.

BACK TO DELEGATES' HALL

Gasps. A collective shift in the atmosphere.

CLOSE ON AMBASSADOR KAI

As his Aide leans in, whispering. A ripple of unease spreads through the room.

WIDER as the SECURITY CHIEF steps onto the stage. His tone is clipped, urgent.

SECURITY CHIEF
Ladies and gentlemen, please exit
the auditorium immediately. Follow
your designated security teams. Move
quickly but calmly.

Delegates rise. Kai grabs his Aide's arm.

AMBASSADOR KAI
We're leaving. Now.

They move.

EXT. HONG KONG CONVENTION CENTER - PROTEST GROUND - DAY

The protesters are restless. Then, phones buzz. Screens light up with the same video. A moment of shock. Confusion. Then, anger. The reaction is instant. Yells turn to shouts. Arguments. Screaming. A shove. Then another.

A police officer reaches for his baton. Someone throws a bottle. Chaos.

EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - DAY

Maya and Dugan are caught up in the maelstrom. The protests are unraveling into a riot. They scan the people in search of Lee Beckett. Then, Jamie's voice in their earpieces.

JAMIE (V.O.)
(urgent)
I've lost her.

MAYA
Say again?

JAMIE (V.O.)
Lee Beckett's gone.

DUGAN
Jamie! Find her!

EXT. HONG KONG - PROTEST GROUND - DAY

A large truck pulls up behind the crowd. The back doors swing open. Bing's men move with precision. They begin unloading crates -- the Molotov cocktails.

Bing grabs the first bottle. Lights the fuse. Throws it.

The glass shatters. Flames explode against riot shields.

Another Molotov soars. A fireball engulfs a police barricade.

One of Bing's men yells at the protesters in front of him -- urging them on. He holds a Molotov cocktail -- the fuse lit.

BING'S MAN
Come on!

A protester, with a look of fright -- then defiance, takes the Molotov cocktail and throws it high in the air toward the police line.

A beat of hesitation -- then frenzy. Swept up in the energy, protesters begin grabbing the bottles and begin launching them. Bing's men hand them out as quickly as they can.

The protest is now fully out of control.

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - DAY

Jamie frantically works his system. Cameras switch rapidly. Then, a figure appears. A highlight box tracks movement.

JAMIE
Got her.

EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - DAY

Dugan and Maya move fast.

JAMIE (V.O.)
She's fifty meters northwest of your position -- past the barricades.

They push through the chaos. Fire. Smoke. Screams.

EXT. HONG KONG PROTEST GROUND - DAY

Gillian pushes through the madness. She spots Eastland. He sees her. Moves toward her. Lifts his phone and shows her.

EASTLAND

This is spreading across the internet.

Gillian's eyes harden. She knows what that means.

Molotov cocktails arc through the air. Explosions of fire and glass.

Police and military struggle to contain the chaos.

Soldiers begin firing their weapons with rubber bullets.

Protesters fall but are unharmed.

Other soldiers fire tear gas grenades into the protesters.

The smoke begins to consume the area.

In the middle of it all, Bing watches. Cold. Calculated. He speaks into his comms, low and firm.

BING

Go.

ON GENERAL XIN'S SOLDIERS

One of Xin's elite men, wearing an earpiece, presses it tighter into his ear to hear over the deafening anarchy.

He acknowledges the order. Then, to his unit.

SOLDIER

(in Mandarin)

Move.

The soldiers move. They weave through the choking smoke and scattering bodies, rifles at the ready.

ON EASTLAND AND GILLIAN

The haze thickens, making every movement uncertain, disorienting.

Eastland pushes forward. Determined.

Gillian struggles to keep pace -- coughing, shielding her eyes.

GILLIAN

Where are we going!?

EASTLAND

Just follow me!

They push through, barely able to see a few feet ahead.

EASTLAND'S POV - THROUGH THE SMOKE

The four student leaders from his interview: Ben, James, Hao, Jun Hie. They are spread out, desperately trying to calm the crowd. Urging people back. Trying to hold the line. Their voices are drowned out by the chaos.

Eastland and Gillian close in -- twenty meters away.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)
(shouting)
James!

CLOSE ON JAMES

As he whips around -- eyes wide, filled with fear.

Ben and the others turn next. For a split second -- recognition. Then, terror.

AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE ERUPTS. A surgical burst of rapid fire.

The sound tears through the air.

The four boys are ripped apart where they stand.

Bodies slam onto asphalt -- blood erupts, splattering crimson across gray concrete.

Screams ripple through the crowd. Protesters recoil, frozen. A heartbeat of stunned silence. Then, pure panic explodes.

CLOSE ON EASTLAND AND GILLIAN

They freeze. Breath caught in their throats. The world narrows to four lifeless bodies. Blood pooling. Final moments suspended in brutal clarity.

Eastland -- lungs seize. Then, a raw, guttural scream rips from his chest.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)
Nooo!

He lunges for them.

WIDE ON THE CROWD

Hysteria erupts. Protesters scatter like startled birds, movements frantic and directionless.

No one knows where the next bullets will strike. Some collapse to their knees, hands shielding heads. Others flee blindly.

General Xin's Soldiers vanish -- absorbed into the panicked human tide. No hesitation. No remorse.

Eastland reaches the boys. Drops to his knees. Their faces frozen in horror. Their bodies still. Lifeless. Their blood pools beneath them.

Gillian stands behind him, shaken, unable to move. She stares at the scene, her own mind catching up to the reality.

EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - DAY

The chaos continues. Smoke drifts through the streets, sirens wail in the distance. The tension is thick, suffocating.

Through it all, Dugan and Maya push forward. Eyes scanning, movements quick but careful. Then, Jamie's voice in their earpieces.

JAMIE (O.S.)

Hold up.

Dugan and Maya freeze. Dugan presses a hand to his earpiece, focusing through the noise.

DUGAN

What?

INT. BRITISH CONSULATE - MI6 STATION - DAY

Jamie hunches over his console. Multiple live feeds cycle across his monitors. His fingers fly over the controls, toggling between surveillance angles. One feed locks in.

JAMIE

She's stopped.

(beat)

She's like fifteen meters in front
of you.

Jamie toggles between the thermal signatures. From Lee Beckett to Dugan and Maya. They're close.

If not for the swarming protesters, Lee would see them.

EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - DAY

Dugan's eyes cut through the mass of people.

DUGAN

I don't see her.

JAMIE (V.O.)

A black SUV is approaching her.

Dugan snaps his gaze left.

The Black SUV moving deliberately. Engine idling low. Crawling through the throng. Dugan locks onto it.

DUGAN

Got it.

Maya tracks the crowd. Then, she sees something else. A flash of movement in the sea of bodies. Her stomach drops.

MAYA

Shit.

Dugan whirls toward her.

DUGAN

What?

CLOSE ON WESLEY

Moving -- making his way toward the SUV.

Wesley's eyes catch Lee Beckett. Their exchange is brief.

Dugan and Maya inch forward, blending into the wall of protesters -- moving with the shifting bodies.

The Black SUV rolls to a stop. The back door swings open.

Lee Beckett and Wesley slide inside. The door shuts. The SUV eases away.

WIDE FROM ABOVE

The SUV maneuvers through the crowd.

Dugan and Maya stand helpless -- trapped in the throng of people, powerless to stop it.

EXT. HONG KONG PROTEST GROUND - DAY (LATER)

The scene has changed. Silence where there was once shouting. The smoke still lingers. The bodies of the four student protesters are being loaded into EMT vans.

The crowd watches in heavy disbelief. Some cry. Others stand stiff, silent.

Eastland and Gillian remain at the perimeter.

Then, Gillian's phone BUZZES. She checks it. A text. She exhales sharply.

GILLIAN

We need to go.

Eastland, still looking at the bodies.

EASTLAND

I know.

A beat. Then, he forces himself to move.

Gillian leads as they move through the crowd. Eastland follows, lagging slightly. He turns. One last look at the scene behind him.

Then, he keeps moving. But something moves with him.

A shadowy figure weaving effortlessly behind Eastland. Silent. Predatory. Stalking.

CLOSE ON A BELT SHEATH

A hand slowly withdraws a tactical military knife.

The KNIFE BLADE is held low -- against a man's leg. The blade glinting in the sun.

The pace quickens. A flicker of movement -- lightning fast.

Eastland doesn't see it. Doesn't feel it. Until it's too late.

The blade slices cleanly across Eastland's inner thigh. The femoral artery -- severed.

Eastland's eyes widen. Confusion. A breath. Then, his legs give out. He cries out in pain as he collapses.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)

Aghh!

Gillian whirls at the sound. Sees Eastland go down.

Then, Bing moves past her. His expression -- blank.

Their eyes meet. A deadly stare. No words. Just ice. Then, he's gone.

Gillian drops to her knees beside Eastland. His hand clamps onto his thigh. Blood rushing, spilling, pooling beneath him.

Gillian presses down -- hard -- trying to stop the bleeding.

GILLIAN

Come on, Eastland! Goddamnit!

His breathing is ragged. His skin going pale. His heart pounding slower.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)

You can't do this!

But the truth is already sinking in. Her hands are covered in his blood. And she can't stop it. Tears streak down her face. Helpless.

Her body goes nearly limp. She's exhausted. Defeated. Knowing this is the end.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

No...

THE CAMERA PULLS UP AND AWAY

Gillian -- Eastland's body -- Protesters scrambling away.

The higher we go, the smaller and smaller the scene becomes.

INT. WESLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A dimly lit, modern space. Minimalist. Cold. A glass of whiskey sits on the counter, untouched. Wesley sits on a stool with his laptop open.

ON THE SCREEN

His portfolio account with Lee Beckett. No name attached but after entering his password, accesses it.

He keys in the request to transfer all of the funds.
\$5,560,000.

Then, he enters a code followed by an account number for an offshore bank to have the funds transferred to. He hits enter.

An ERROR MESSAGE pops up. *TRANSFER NOT AUTHORIZED.*

He tries it again. Same error message. Frustrated, he tries a third time. And a fourth. All with the same response.

WESLEY

Fuck!

INT. GILLIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gillian stands on her balcony, looking out at Victoria Harbor as the sun sets. Her cell phone BUZZES. She looks at the caller ID -- Beckett.

GILLIAN
Where are you?

INTERCUT - CELL PHONE CONVERSATION

INT. LONDON HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Beckett, on his phone, stands by the window, looking out at the London skyline.

BECKETT
London. I've been recalled.

Gillian closes her eyes.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
I expected it, actually.
(beat)
I'm so sorry about your friend. Are you all right?

GILLIAN
Not really.
(beat)
I could lie, but you'd know it.

BECKETT
I would.

GILLIAN
I'm not cut out for this. It's not what I wanted.

BECKETT
I know.
(a beat, then...)
I knew there'd never be enough time for us.
(beat)
I'm sorry.

Gillian says nothing. Her expression -- profound sadness.

EXT. HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Two black SUVs roll to a stop outside the terminal.

Plain-clothes FEDERAL AGENTS pile out of the first SUV.

Dugan and Maya step out of the second.

CHINESE AGENTS stand at the entrance to the terminal. They nod to the Americans and let them go inside.

INT. HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Inside, Wesley moves quickly, passport in hand.

He walks toward the security check point.

U.S. OFFICIALS step into his path.

FEDERAL AGENT

Ian Wesley, you're under arrest.

Wesley glances to his left, then right -- searching for an out. There isn't one.

WESLEY

You're making a mistake.

Maya steps forward, her voice cold. Dugan behind her.

MAYA

No, we're not.

The cuffs tighten. Wesley exhales, knowing it's over.

Dugan and Maya watch as he's led away.

EXT. LONDON - HEATHROW AIRPORT - NIGHT

A Cathay Pacific jet taxis to a waiting gate.

INT. LONDON - HEATHROW AIRPORT - NIGHT

Passengers disembark the flight. Among them -- Lee Beckett.

She steps into the terminal, adjusting her coat.

Then, MI5 AGENTS appear. Their faces hard, impassive.

Lee stops cold. The lead Agent holds up his badge.

MI5 AGENT

Lee Beckett?

She nods.

MI5 AGENT (CONT'D)

You'll need to come with us.

A beat. Then, resigned, she's taken into custody.

INT. CHINESE PRISON - NIGHT

Dimly lit corridors. Armed guards. Then, an explosion of movement.

A CHINESE STRIKE TEAM breaches the facility. The GUARDS lift their weapons -- then freeze. A silent moment of defiance.

The Guards lower their weapons.

The SOUND of a metallic cell door unlocking. (PRE-LAP)

INT. CHINESE PRISON - CHEN'S CELL - NIGHT

Chen sits on his blanket. Exhausted. Gaunt. But alive.

The metal cell door opens.

Chen looks up at his rescuers. Confused.

The COMMANDER of the armed unit steps forward.

COMMANDER

Dr. Chen?

Chen nods.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Come with us, please.

Dr. Chen blinks. Disoriented. Then, understands and smiles weakly. His nightmare is over.

The Commander helps him up. Another soldier covers him in a blanket and they walk him out of the cell.

INT. MSS HEADQUARTERS - GENERAL XIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

General Xin sits at his desk. Calm. Working.

The door bursts open. Armed Chinese soldiers flood in.

Xin stands quickly. Defiant. He stares straight ahead, without emotion, as they handcuff him and escort him out.

EXT. MSS COMPOUND - NIGHT

Darkness cloaks the compound. The perimeter fence looms, razor wire glinting under the dim glow of security lights.

ON THE STREET

Shadows move. A team of CHINESE SPECIAL FORCES SOLDIERS advance with silent precision. Their boots barely make a sound on the damp pavement.

The TEAM LEADER signals -- two fingers up, then a fist. Hold.

A moment of absolute stillness. Then -- action.

One soldier kneels at the gate, affixing a charge to the heavy iron lock.

A quick beep. BOOM.

The controlled explosion barely registers beyond the compound walls. The gate swings open. They move in.

A lone MSS SOLDIER steps into the light, rifle raising instinctively. His finger tightens on the trigger.

PHFFT. A silenced shot rips through the air.

His body stiffens. Then, crumples.

The team moves past him without hesitation.

Another soldier plants a second charge on the main door.

BOOM. The door bursts open. The team surges forward.

INT. MSS COMPOUND - NIGHT

The Special Forces unit sweeps inside. Weapons raised. Eyes sharp. Movements crisp.

Bing and his men, in the back of the space, hear the breach and instantly grab their weapons and move to the center of the floor. His men spread out.

Then, GUNFIRE - Fast. Precise. Merciless.

The first two of Bing's men drop instantly.

A third fires. He gets off a single round before he's cut down.

Bing moves fast, ducking behind cover.

PHFFT. A round slices through his temple. He collapses before he ever gets his shot off.

Bodies still. Blood spreading.

The Special Forces team lowers their weapons.

A silent signal from the team leader -- move out -- and they vanish into the shadows.

INT. ZHAO XI'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Zhao works quietly at his desk.

A knock on the door and his Aide enters carrying a tray with afternoon tea. He goes to a small table and sets it down.

Zhao nods and waves him out. He goes to the table and pours his tea. Very methodical and practiced.

He returns to his desk. Sits. He sips his tea. Then, more.

A moment of satisfaction. Then, a subtle flicker of discomfort. A breath. His hand shakes. His throat tightens.

He reaches for his phone -- but his fingers miss. He gasps. Then collapses. His tea cup shatters on the floor. Silence.

INT. CLANCY'S PUB - NIGHT

The warm glow of dim lights. A band plays in the corner, their music subdued, almost wistful. Tonight, Clancy's isn't just a bar. It's a place to remember a friend. A framed photo of Eastland sits on the bar. A quiet tribute.

ON GILLIAN AND MAYA

They sit at a table, their beers half-finished. The conversation is slow, unhurried.

GILLIAN

You never told me where you're from.

MAYA

You never asked.

GILLIAN

That's fair.

MAYA

Chicago.

GILLIAN

I like Chicago.

MAYA

Yeah. Me too. My folks are still there.

GILLIAN

Do you get to see them much?

A slight hesitation. A shrug.

MAYA

Not really.

A beat. The space between words fills with something unspoken.

GILLIAN

Can I ask you about Wesley?

MAYA

Depends.

GILLIAN

What was he doing?

Maya weighs her answer.

MAYA

Ian Wesley has been selling secrets to the Chinese for years. Beckett's wife was his handler. She convinced him to help disrupt the trade talks. This was going to be his big payoff so he could get out.

GILLIAN

All of this for the money?

MAYA

Well, it was a lot of money. And Wesley needed it. He'd gotten into some serious financial trouble. In hindsight, he was an easy mark.

Gillian leans back, sips her beer and absorbing it all.

GILLIAN

How do you do this?

MAYA

Do what?

GILLIAN

Be a spy.

MAYA

Oh, you know, long hours, moral ambiguity, occasional betrayal. Keeps life interesting.

Gillian laughs.

GILLIAN

Seriously.

MAYA

I don't know. I started out being a corporate lawyer.

(grimaces)

So boring.

GILLIAN

A lawyer turned spy? That's a career leap.

(beat)

What made you think I could do it?

MAYA

A gut feeling, maybe. I read your background. I thought you wanted to make a difference.

GILLIAN

Is that why you do it?

MAYA

Yeah. I think so.

A moment.

GILLIAN

I love what I do.

(beat)

Not the spying part.

MAYA

I don't know... You were pretty good at it.

GILLIAN

Pffft.

They laugh together, a sound of relief. A sign of healing.

MAYA

Tell me about Eastland. Berkeley, right?

GILLIAN

Yeah. His wife and daughter were killed in a car accident. Teaching at Berkeley was him checking out for a while. Trying to make sense of it.

MAYA

Jesus.

GILLIAN

He told me something once, and I haven't forgotten it... 'The world will never accept *everything* good people try to do. But if you stop trying to influence people to do the right thing, nothing will get done. And then... we're all fucked.'

(MORE)

GILLIAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'm going to miss him.

A moment of contemplation between the two, then... Gillian, who faces the entrance, sees a familiar face and smiles.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)

I invited a friend.

Maya turns and sees Ambassador Kai walking toward the table. He's dressed in casual clothes -- completely different from the polished diplomat we've come to know. Relaxed. Real.

Gillian rises. Kai greets her with a warm embrace.

GILLIAN (CONT'D)

I'm glad you could come.

Kai pulls back, smiling.

AMBASSADOR KAI

A beautiful young woman asks an old diplomat out for drinks? How could I refuse?

They sit. Gillian gestures to Maya.

GILLIAN

This is Maya.

(beat)

She's my friend.

Maya blinks, caught off guard by the word. She extends her hand to Kai.

MAYA

Ambassador. It's a pleasure to meet you.

Kai takes it.

AMBASSADOR KAI

Maya... I like that name.

The women smile. A moment of unspoken understanding.

A SERVER approaches.

SERVER

What can I get you, sir?

AMBASSADOR KAI

An ale, please.

The Server nods, disappears.

MAYA

Didn't peg you for a beer guy.

Kai leans back, amused.

AMBASSADOR KAI

I can appreciate a good beer.

Maya grins. And just like that, the weight of the past few weeks starts to lift. The music picks up -- subtle at first, then fuller, warmer.

The Server returns with Kai's beer. He takes a long drink. The three of them settle in. Talking. Laughing.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK from their table to the soft glow of Clancy's. The conversation fading into the hum of the room.

EXT. HONG KONG - NIGHT

The skyline burns with twilight. The last rays of the setting sun bleed into the horizon, casting the towering skyscrapers in a mix of deep orange and fading blue.

Lights flicker to life, one by one, across the city. Neon signs glow in the distance, pulsing like a heartbeat against the glass and steel of the metropolis.

Victoria Harbor shimmers, reflecting the city's brilliance in gentle waves.

INT. GILLIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Moonlight bleeds through gauzy curtains, casting silver shadows across Gillian's bedroom. She sits cross-legged on rumpled sheets, Beckett's small package cradled in her trembling hands.

Her fingers pause, hesitate, then methodically tear away the wrapping paper. A vintage watch gleams beneath her touch - delicate, precise, weighted with unspoken history. She removes a note from the box. It reads, "*Never enough time*"

She slips the watch onto her wrist. Smiles. Leans back. A quiet exhale. Not sentiment. Not grief. Just acceptance.

FADE OUT.