

Pressure Point

written by

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BLACK SCREEN.

Sound of a gunshot.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. COAST ROAD BY STEEP BANK - DAY

Car veers over the steep bank and into the water and starts sinking slowly.

INT. UNDERWATER, INSIDE OF CAR - DAY

Water fills the slowly sinking car from leaks through the door cracks.

Driver (ANDREY, 35), a stereotypical mafioso type, Slavic accent, not too smart-looking, groans loudly and curses while holding onto his leg. He wheezes, having had his chest rammed into the steering column. Water around his leg turns red fast.

ANDREY

Ssuka! Bliad'! Yob tvoyu mat'!

(Nasty Russian cursing)

The passenger - SASHA (13) - has a gun in his hand. He looks panicked. Realizing he's still holding the gun, he drops it to the floor as if to get it away from himself.

EXT. COAST ROAD BY STEEP BANK - DAY

JON WRIGHT (28) just witnessed the car in front of him go off the road into water. He stops his car with a tire screech.

Jon is slightly nerdy, but physically fit, good-looking, but not overtly so. Think "marriage material" as opposed to "fashion model". Jeans, checkered shirt with knit tie, and tweed jacket with suede elbow patches. i.e. - dressed like a typical college professor.

Jon jumps out of the car and on seeing the car submerging sprints down the bank, throwing off his coat and kicking off shoes.

Jon dives in and starts swimming.

INT./EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

VIEW FROM OUTSIDE OF CAR

Car is slowly continuing toward bottom.
Jon is seen breaking the surface and is swimming down.

VIEW FROM INSIDE OF CAR

Jon swims up to the passenger window.

VIEW FROM OUTSIDE OF CAR

Andrey is now unconscious. There is terrible fear on Sasha's face.

Jon signals to Sasha with his hands to slow down and relax (both palms held open toward Sasha, gesturing back and forth a bit as if to say: "Hold tight.")

Sasha nods.

Jon holds out a small DIVE KNIFE on his key chain with a glass breaker point on its handle. He presses it against passenger window.

Jon gestures to Sasha with other hand to take a deep breath.

Sasha obliges.

Jon gestures: "On the count of three"

Sasha unhook his seat belt.

Jon quickly counts to three on fingers and shatters window glass.

Water rushes into car.

Sasha struggles to continue to swallow air from the fast-shrinking air pocket, but can not move, pinned down by the rushing water.

JUMP CUT:

EXT. UNDERWATER, TRANSITIONING TO ABOVE WATER - DAY

VIEW OF RISING AIR BUBBLES, TRANSITIONING FROM UNDERWATER TO SOME HEIGHT ABOVE WATER LOOKING STRAIGHT DOWN.

A giant bubble of air rising from car and breaking up into smaller bubbles on way up until "boiling" out at the surface.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

The rush of water is over and Jon pulls Sasha out of the car. He cups his hand over Sasha's mouth and nose and swims up.

Half-way to surface Sasha starts to struggle and then convulse.

They break water surface and Jon uncups Sasha's mouth and nose. Sasha struggles desperately to get enough air.

Jon drags both of them out to the shore and drops down. Sasha's ears bleed from ruptured ear drums. Sasha drops on knees and starts to cough up and vomit water. Both of them lay there trying hard to catch their breath.

Jon finally forces himself to get up.

JON

Stay here.

BEGIN TITLE AND OPENING CREDITS SEQUENCE

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Water ballet scene with professional underwater dancers representing Jon and ATHENA (intro later).

A man and a woman freedive. Flowing street clothes. Faces obscured by camera angle, their flowing clothes, possibly dive masks. Her long hair flows freely.

They descend at an angle from different directions until meeting and pause a few feet apart, observing each other.

They descend further circling around each other. They dance in moves and postures showing both angst and excitement. They part and come back closer, pausing, cautiously approaching, until touching fingers on extended hands in a pose which hints at Michelangelo's recognizable Sistine Chapel ceiling God-man painting.

Finally, they unite swirling around each other as they rise.

FLIPPED UPSIDE DOWN VIEW

Perfectly clear water with wildly undulating surface. Choreography ends with the two dancing upside down, with their feet just below the surface. The inverted image creates the illusion that they are dancing while hovering just above the undulating water surface.

END OPENING CREDITS SEQUENCE

SMASH CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "9 MONTHS BEFORE THE CRASH"

EXT. SHORE - DAY

Group of students in freediving suits, including Jon, on a shore, get lesson on spearfishing. Some spearguns and other spearfishing equipment lay in background.

SPEARING INSTRUCTOR

You may have come here expecting to load your spearguns and go at it. But no self-respecting spearo would use SCUBA, even where it's legal. If your prey has no fair chance, you're not a hunter, you're just a killer. Before you can spear, you must first learn to hold your breath. We call it "freediving".

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

VOLODYMYR KOPATCHENKO (50) - Ukrainian accent, doesn't always speak correct English - is on the giant lawn of his mansion home, showing his son, Sasha, how to work a pistol. Volodymyr wears expensive, but casual clothes. Stiff bodyguards in black attires stand around.

VOLODYMYR

This is called the "safety". You unlock it like this. Now hold it like this, point and shoot.

Sasha awkwardly aims pistol at a target and fearlessly pulls trigger.

EXT. SHORE - CONTINIOUS

SPEARING INSTRUCTOR

An average person has enough oxygen in their blood to survive up to five whole minutes laying still under water.

(MORE)

SPEARING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

What kills you is not the lack of air, it's trying to breathe the water.

Group laughter. Instructor continues, serious.

SPEARING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

You must learn to suppress this impulse, even past the reflexive convulsions.

"Mi hu hagibor? Hakovesh et yez'ro."

GIRL SPEARFISHING STUDENT

What, what, what...?

SPEARING INSTRUCTOR

It's from the Talmud. "Who is the hero? He who conquers his own nature."

You must learn the signs of your own impending blackout and its causes. And the signs that your buddy has or is about to black out and how to save them.

Students look at their would-be partners, as if asking themselves: "Will I have to save this person?"

SPEARING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

The descent is a meditation. As you go down, you also go in.

There are pressure points in your body - cavities of trapped air. You must equalize the pressures from both sides or suffer great pain. And you must NEVER, EVER try to go on without a partner.

(Then, as an afterthought)

Or a good diving knife, for that matter. Never know when you'll tangle into some old fishing line.

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Still on the lawn, Sasha is busy messing with the pistol.

Volodymyr walks away to greet a professionally-dressed woman (ATHENA, 29) who just arrived. She is attractive with an intelligent face.

ATHENA

Mr. Kopatchenko, I apologize, but I'm afraid I'm going to need to ask to reschedule the showing.

VOLODYMYR

Reschedule? I am a busy man.

ATHENA

I am sorry. It's a family emergency. It's my sister. She's in a bit of trouble. And it's not with the kind of people who wait.

VOLODYMYR

And neither do I. We go now.

Athena looks worried, but doesn't argue. Volodymyr starts walking toward the house, and she follows. So do Volodymyr's bodyguards.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Now, tell me about this "trouble". Perhaps I can be of assistance.

EXT. SHORE, SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

Jon and the other students are toweling off at the beach after coming out of the water.

INT. JON'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jon takes a morning shower.
Jon gets dressed.

EXT. JON'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jon is pulling out of driveway in his car.
Elderly neighbor couple smile and wave hello.
Jon waves back and drives off.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Jon parks and walks from car to his office building.

As he walks he passes a landscaped area in the background with a whole garden of blooming sunflowers. The area is slightly further back, not too obvious.

INT. JON'S OFFICE - DAY

Jon walks in and sits down at his desk. Tosses keys on desk. Close-on to keys focuses on a 4-inch diving dagger with a glass-breaker handle tip.

Jon's colleague, BOB - somewhat older than Jon, goofy-looking - pops in the doorway after him.

BOB

Spearfishing? Really? Can't you just buy it at the market?

JON

That's not the point.

BOB

Well, what is the point, then? I mean, what does a bookworm like you know about extreme sports?

JON

That IS the point. Nothing. Which is why I want to learn. Did you know doing activities requiring widely different parts of your brain actually reduces your odds of dementia? And this ability is also one of the main marks of true genius, compared to just high intellect.

BOB

So now you're a genius?

JON

Hardly. I'll just settle for: "Not demented." You can't be an authentic writer unless you have experiences. If you only read, you'll only write about what has already been written.

BOB

(Looking doubtful)

Is it the chicks? It's the chicks, isn't it?

JON

(Chuckles)

The sport is like ninety percent guys. And the few women who do it are pretty much considered one of the crew.

(MORE)

JON (CONT'D)

When you can take a one-hundred-and-fifty-pound tuna, holding your breath, you pretty much earned equal respect. They're not "chicks". It's not a meat market, you know.

BOB

Right, it's a fish market. Hahaha!
(Laughing stupidly at his own joke)

Jon Gives him an: "You're an idiot" look.
Bob stops laughing on seeing Jon's expression and swallows.

BOB (CONT'D)

Well..., I got... class. Gotta go.

Bob disappears.

SMASH CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "9 HOURS BEFORE THE CRASH"

INT./EXT. JON'S HOUSE/COLLEGE CAMPUS - MORNING

BEGIN MORNING ROUTINE MONTAGE 1:

Jon is going through another morning routine.

Jon waves at neighbors as he drives off.

Jon is parking on campus and walking away from car past the sunflowers.

END MORNING ROUTINE MONTAGE 1

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Volodymyr addresses one of his goons.

VOLODYMYR

Kyryl, you take my son to school today. Make sure you see him to and from the school door.

KYRYL (24) - cropped hair, blank face, in all-black suit - nods and walks toward the kid and his nanny (INNA, 22, subdued demeanor, Ukrainian accent).

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Sasha, come here.

Sasha runs over.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Be good at school today, you hear?
Learn to be smart. So you don't end
up shoveling shit when you're
grown. You understand? You don't
want to have to shovel shit, do
you?

Sasha shakes his head.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

And remember what I taught you:
don't take shit from no one.
That big kid who will try to take
your lunch money, he ain't so big
as he looks. He'll think he's
tougher, and that's your edge.
Cause he's not expecting no smaller
kid to fight back.
You let him. You let him get real
close and just when he thinks he
got you, you kick him right in the
shin. Right about here.
He'll be in so much pain he can't
even come after you.
But you don't run. You stand close
and when he's trying to hop on one
leg you push him over.

INNA

Mr. Kopatchenko! Really... He's
just a boy.

VOLODYMYR

Don't listen to her. You go up to
him while he's down and you give
him a swift one right in the nuts.
Pretty soon he, and all his
friends, are begging you to take
their lunch money.

Inna scurries Sasha away. Kyryl follows them out to the car.

INT. COLLEGE LECTURE HALL - DAY

Jon is lecturing at front of class.

JON

I'm assuming you all completed your recent reading assignments? So, what, in your opinions, are some of the key points Dostoevsky is trying to make in *Crime and Punishment*?

STUDENT 1

That an individual cannot defy universal moral laws.

JON

Congratulations, you know how to quote a search engine. But this is not Reading Comprehension. This is a Critical Thinking class. What is YOUR take on it.

Suzy (20) - a student in the class, speaks up.

SUZY

What makes a person good or bad?

JON

Very good! Remember, he also addresses it in *Brothers Karamazov* through the character Smerdyakov. Remember him? So this is a theme old Fyodor is clearly very interested in. Please expand.

SUZY

Well, can a person be truly good or truly bad inside? Or is it only their actions which make them so? In *Crime and Punishment* Rodion believes himself to be a person of superior nature, which he uses to rationalize a murder and robbery of a corrupt pawn broker. In *Karamazovs*, Smerdyakov, on the other hand, wholeheartedly believes, like only a simple uneducated peasant can, in wrong and right acts, but only because God says so and will punish or reward him. When he realizes there may be no god, he assumes this means there are no wrongs or rights and murders his master for a measly sum.

(MORE)

SUZY (CONT'D)

In the end, both can't live with their actions. Which proves again that Dostoevsky firmly believes in universal morals.

JON

Excellent. Here's someone who's been doing the real homework. Extra credit. What is your name?

EXT. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Bell rings. Sasha and other students run out to the waiting cars. Sasha is met by his nanny, Inna, who is already waiting outside.

INT. COLLEGE LECTURE HALL - CONTINUOUS

JON

So, we are breaching here a bit into philosophy. But you can't help it when discussing great literature. Are people inherently good or bad or is it only their actions which make them so? The law is clear enough on the subject. If you know an act is considered bad and do it anyway, you are guilty. Period. But this is not a law lecture.

Student 1 raises their hand. Jon gestures them to go ahead.

STUDENT 1

I think there are people who are good at heart, but who do bad things. Maybe out of desperation or because they have no impulse control. And there are people who are truly evil - Sociopaths. Ones who have no conscience at all. Like Elie Wiesel said: "The opposite of good is not evil, but indifference"

JON

And Abraham Heschel before him. Interesting point.

(MORE)

JON (CONT'D)

So you say that a person can still be good when they choose to do bad things, if they have justification? Is weakness of character a justification?

STUDENT 1

(Defensively)

I didn't say that.

SUZY

And so how does one determine if they are truly good "inside"? Because they feel they are? Sociopaths are, by definition, narcissists. So isn't that exactly what they do? Tell themselves, like Rodion, that they are so inherently good, the rules don't apply to them?

STUDENT 2

Very good.

And what of the sociopath himself? True, they are monsters. But is it a monster's fault that they are a monster?

Who is worse, the one who is incapable of conscience in the first place or the one who convinces themselves they are good while doing bad things?

STUDENT 3

What about the one who, like Smerdyakov, does good things, but only because of the promise of reward or punishment?

JON

Good example.

SUZY

Or what of the one who does good deeds, only so they can feel superior to those who fail to abide by their standards?

JON

True.
And let's not forget the one who
does bad things, but tells
themselves it's OK because they
feel guilty afterwards? Aren't they
the worst hypocrite of all?

STUDENT 1

So what is the answer?

JON

Ha! He wants an answer. Give us
answers, so we don't have to think.
If you want an answer, my friend,
you have already failed the class.
Sometimes the questions are far
more important than the answers.
And that is your home assignment
today. Write a thousand-word essay
on the subject we discussed today.

A group groan from the class.

INT. A BAR - DAY

Kyryl, his clothes unkempt, getting drunk with **two other men**
(40's) who look like a hoodlum. Kyryl already looks three
sheets to the wind.

There is a plate of dried fish between them - a typical
eastern European drink accompaniment. The fish look very
dead, mainly bone and skin.
All three take small bites of the fish and follow them by
shots of herb-infused vodka.

One of the other two men immediately gives Kyryl another
generous pour of the vodka with a smile.
The smile drops when Kyryl is not looking and the man
exchanges knowing looks with a Andrey who is by the door.
Andrey leaves, slightly wobbling.

The fake smile reappears on the second man's face.
He disgustingly bites a whole head off one of the fish. His
smile changes to a hint of something sinister.

EXT. JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Inna looks nervous, waiting on the curb with Sasha for their
ride. All other students and cars are already gone.

Car pulls up with Andrey behind the wheel.

ANDREY

Hey, there. Kyryl couldn't make it.
I'm here to pick you guys up.

INNA

I know nothing about it.

Andrey hurriedly gets out of car and comes around.

ANDREY

It's OK. Mr. Kopatchenko sent me.
Go ahead and get in the back seat
both of you.

INNA

I've never seen you around the
house before. I'm going to have to
make a call.

ANDREY

Shut up, ssuka!

Andrey pulls a gun out of his pocket and pistol-whips Inna
hard on side of her head. Inna exclaims in pain and falls to
ground.

Andrey grabs Sasha and shoves him in front seat of the car,
then jumps in and peels out.

INT./EXT. INTERCUT - DAY

Jon locks office and walks out of the building.

Andrey drives erratically and fast with Sasha next to him on
a coast road.

ANDREY

Stupid bitch!

Jon walks up to his car and gets in.

Andrey still drives erratically, but now also laughs to
himself out loud.

Sasha looks sideways at Andrey, noticing the other has let
his guard down, not expecting any resistance from a kid. Also
notices Andrey has a pistol handle sticking out of his right
pocket and doesn't have seatbelt on.

Sasha slowly pulls seat belt over his own chest and locks it
in.

Andrey notices Sasha put on seatbelt.

ANDREY (CONT'D)

What's the matter? You a pussy,
kid?

(MORE)

ANDREY (CONT'D)

Big old Volodymyr's kid's a little pussy! Haha.
Don't worry kid. You won't feel a thing. The whole thing'll be over soon. As soon and big old papa Volodymyr cedes us all of his territory. Haha!
Probably will be glad to get rid of a little pussy kid.

SMASH CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "9 MINUTES BEFORE THE CRASH"

EXT. INTERCUT - DAY

Jon drives his car, merges onto the coast highway.

Andrey's car comes up on a curve bending toward the shore over a steep bank.

When the car jerks to the left from the erratic driving, Sasha lets himself get thrown toward the Andrey.

ANDREY

Get off, you pussy little kid!

Andrey looks over and goes stone-faced when he realizes Sasha holds the gun he swiped out of his pocket and pointing it at the Andrey.

ANDREY (CONT'D)

What you think you're doing, you little shit? What you gonna do? You gonna shoot me with that? Little pussy kid gonna shoot me with that? Gimme that!

Andrey reaches for the gun.

Gun goes off, bullet hits Andrey's leg, making him lose control of the car.

SMASH CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "THE CRASH"

EXT. COAST ROAD BY STEEP BANK, CONTINUED - DAY

A car veers off steep bank into ocean water. It descends slowly below the surface.

Jon's car screeches to a stop.
Jon sprints to water, taking off his coat and kicking off shoes.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

(This is an abbreviated revisit of the crash scene for sequential context)

Car slowly continues toward bottom as Jon's body breaks through surface from the top.

Sasha in passenger seat, is trapped inside with a slowly shrinking pocket of air with terrible fear on his face.

Jon shatters window with the knife's glass-breaker point. Water rushes into car. Jon pulls Sasha out and starts upwards.

They break water surface. Sasha struggles desperately to get enough air.

Jon drags both of them to the shore and drops down. Sasha drops on knees and starts to cough up and vomit water. Both of them lay there trying hard to catch their breath.

Finally, Jon forces himself to get up.

JON

Stay here.

Jon walks off into the water and swims back out. He tries to dive down, but car is already too deep and had been airless too long for any chance of the driver to still be alive.

EXT. COAST ROAD BY STEEP BANK - DAY

Police cars and an ambulance. Sasha is being checked by the medics. John is still wet, wrapped in a blanket, finishes giving a statement to a cop.

COP

Well, thank you, Mr. Wright. That will be all. We'll contact the boy's parents. Are you OK to drive yourself?

JON
 Yes, I'm fine.
 May I speak with him?
 (Gesturing with his head
 towards Sasha)

Cop gestures him to go ahead.

Jon walks over to Sasha. Sasha is still visibly shaken.

JON (CONT'D)
 You ok?

PARAMEDIC
 He can't hear you well right now.

JON
 (Loudly)
 ARE YOU OK?

Sasha is still a bit confused, trying to make out what he said, but seems to get the gist of it and nods in the positive.

JON (CONT'D)
 My name is Jon!
 (Tapping his chest)
 JON!!

Jon grabs a notepad from the paramedics stuff and writes his name on it, showing it to Sasha.

Sasha meekly smiles.

PARAMEDIC
 His name is Sasha.

Jon smiles at Sasha and shakes his hand.

JON
 YOU DID GOOD!

Seeing that Sasha is still unsure, Jon gestures from his heart to Sasha's, then points at him and gives him a thumbs up.
 During the whole exchange the two have full eye contact.

Sasha is teary-eyed.
 Totally unexpectedly, he stands up and wraps himself around Jon.

Eventually the paramedic tears him away.

PARAMEDIC

Take it easy for now.

Jon walks away clearly very touched and nearly tear-eyed himself.

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Volodymyr is on his home's giant baluster veranda or by pool, furious, taking it out on his stone-faced goons standing around the house with firearms.

Volodymyr screams at top of lungs, sweat pouring from his bald head. Screaming at VASYL [mid-20's, cropped hair, blank face].

VOLODYMYR

It was my son! My fucking son! Do you understand that?!

Vasyl stays motionless and expressionless like a stone.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

I want them found, you understand?!
I want them fucking found and then
I want to gut them like fish!
Call our rat at the police. I want
the ID to that body they pulled
out! And then I want his name!
And then I will know all of their
fucking names. And then I'm going
to gut them like fish!
What the fuck are you still
standing here for?!

Vasyl spins on the spot and walks quickly away.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

(To goon 1)

And find that waste of space, piece
of shit, Kyril! And find out where
the hell he was instead of picking
up my son!
And if he has one drop of booze on
his breath - one fucking drop - cap
his ass and dump him in the ocean
at that same spot. You hear?!

EXT. STREET, LATER - DAY

Jon walks down street. Car pulls up and Vasyl and two other of Volodymyr's goons jump out and shove him in car and take off.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Present in room - Volodymyr, several of his bodyguards, several young women in skimpy bathing suits and high heels, lounging and walking around. Also Athena, fully dressed, this time in expensive, comfortable flowing clothes and sitting at the bar.

Jon is dragged in by the two goons followed behind by Vasyl. A chair is dragged into middle of room and Jon is force-sat on it.

Volodymyr stands with his back to Jon, addressing the bikini-clad women.

VOLODYMYR
Go get a tan. All of you!

All the bikini-clad women scurry outside. Athena doesn't budge.

Jon and Athena fix on each other's face for a moment, but say nothing.

Volodymyr turns around, holding a glass of whiskey.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)
Start talking. Who the fuck are you?

JON
My name's Jon Wright.

VOLODYMYR
I don't give a fuck about your name. Who are you?!

JON
I don't understand. I was about to ask you same thing. You kidnapped ME. If you don't even know who I am, why did you grab me?

VOLODYMYR
How the fuck did you get my son out of that car underwater? You were prepared! You were there, ready!
(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

You expect me to believe it was just a coincidence? You think I'm stupid? What the hell is your angle?

JON

Your son?...

(He just understood)

What coincidence? I don't even know you. I'd just call it luck. I was driving home from work when the car in front of me lost control and went off the road into the water.

Volodymyr laughs, looking at Vasyl for agreement.

VOLODYMYR

And you just happened to be already wearing diving gear behind the wheel of your car? How did you get down there so fast?!

JON

No gear. I just held my breath. I'm sorry I couldn't save your friend. There was not enough time. I tried.

VOLODYMYR

My friend? You mean the piece of scum who tried to take him? He's damn lucky he never got out of that car. Breathing some salt water was way better than what I would have prepared for him.

JON

(Looking shocked)

Taken? You mean he was kidnapped? I thought I heard a... I assumed it was just a blow-out. I'm glad no one else was hurt.

VOLODYMYR

Hmm... It cost me one of my men.

JON

They killed one of your men?

VOLODYMYR

Well..., he was killed. Enough of the bullshit.

(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

How did you get down there so fast
and get him out?

JON

I told you. I just held my breath.
I do freediving as a hobby. I'm not
even that good.
There are guys in my club who can
do five minutes. It was only about
forty feet.

VOLODYMYR

Club?! What club?

JON

Our local spearo club. Sorry,
spearfishing club.

Jon sees no reaction on anyone listening. Feels he need to elaborate.

JON (CONT'D)

We meet every third Thursday at a
local pub.
Some of the guys who've been doing
it long time can just sit there and
stalk a White Bass at 65 feet
below.

BEAT, as Jon contemplates a moment.

JON (CONT'D)

Also, the sudden crash, seeing that
kid trapped inside... I guess I
really had no time to think about
how long I could hold.

Volodymyr stands there for a minute breathing hard, trying to put himself together and thinking. Then calls over Vasyl and whispers something into his ear. Vasyl exists into a side room and reemerges a few seconds later trailed by Inna.

Volodymyr consults with Inna in hushed voices. Volodymyr nods for her to leave and she re-enters side room.

He chugs his whiskey glass and sticks his glass-holding hand out toward Vasyl with a chin-tilt. Vasyl refills the glass and hands it back. Volodymyr spends another moment gathering himself and reaching a decision. His bearing relaxes. He pulls up a chair in front of Jon. Vasyl lunges to do it for him, but Volodymyr waves him off.

Volodymyr walks to the bar and refill his glass plus an extra one. Then walks with both glasses and sits in front of Jon. He extends one glass to Jon.

VOLODYMYR
You like whiskey?

JON
Thanks. I'm not really in the mood right now.

VOLODYMYR
It's five hundred a bottle.

Jon makes a face which says: "Well, in that case... What the heck."
Tries the whiskey and makes another face that says: "Damn, that's good." Looks up at Volodymyr and does a small nod and lift the glass in a "cheers", but doesn't say anything.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)
Lucky for you, Inna says my son confirms your story.
In fact, he seems to think he was saved by some kind of superhero.

JON
Flattered. But I'm just a Jon.

VOLODYMYR
Perhaps we all got a little excited today. My son is the one subject I don't always tend to stay level-headed about. My son is very important to me.

Jon nods understandingly. Still says nothing, but lifts the glass again, this time higher, and then empties it.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)
(To Vasyl)
Take this gentleman back to his home. Or to anywhere he wishes to go, for that matter.

Vasyl gestures Jon to the door. As they start, Jon pauses and turns to Volodymyr.

JON
Could I see him?

Volodymyr is about to ask, but then realizes he's referring to Sasha.

Volodymyr eyes his men, then comes closer to Jon so they would not hear him.

VOLODYMYR

(Quietly)

He is recovering. He's... he's scared.

(Then, after a pause:)

But perhaps yes. Maybe that would be good.

Jon and Volodymyr walk into the room where Sasha and Inna are. Sasha is just sitting, looking pale, staring down, wrapped in a blanket, even though it's not cold. His ears are still bandaged.

He looks up. Seeing Jon he comes awake and straightens. A meek smile purses his lips and his eye come alive. They look at each other for a moment.

Sasha's gaze goes between his father and Jon as if to say: "this is the man".

JON

(Waving)

Hello, Sasha.

SASHA

(Much too loudly without his hearing)

HI!

(Waving back)

They stand there for a while looking at each other. Jon gives Sasha a "thumbs up".

Nothing else is said until they depart, but you can tell from the expression on Sasha's face that he's glad to see Jon with his father.

EXT. BUS STOP IN FRONT OF THE COLLEGE, RIGHT BY WHERE JON WAS KIDNAPPED BEFORE - LATER - DAY

Volodymyr's car pull up. Vasyl jumps out and opens back car door. Jon steps out.

VASYL

Are you sure this is where you wanted to go, sir? Our instructions are to take you anywhere you want. We could take you straight home.

JON
This will do, thanks.

Jon stands at bus stop as Vasyl drives away.
As soon as the car is out of sight, Jon turns around and
walks to his own car parked nearby.

EXT. SHORE, LATER PART OF DAY - DAY

Jon's finishes putting on freediving gear. Runs of into the
water (no speargun).

INT./EXT. JON'S HOUSE/COLLEGE CAMPUS - MORNING

BEGIN MORNING ROUTINE MONTAGE 2:

Jon is going through another morning routine.

Jon waves at neighbors as he drives off.

Jon is parking on campus and walking away from car past the
sunflowers.

END MORNING ROUTINE MONTAGE 2

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Jon sits at a cafe on campus working on his laptop. Vasyl and
another of Volodymyr's goons walk up to his table.

VASYL
Mr. Wright.
Mr. Kopatchenko would like to
invite you to his home.

JON
You mean this time I have a choice?

Vasyl makes a non-committal face. But he clearly doesn't
really think it's a good idea.

VASYL
Mr. Kopatchenko gave clear
instructions to treat you with
utmost courtesy. He invites you to
his home as his guest. You'll be
driven there and back at any time
of your choosing.
(Clearly hating to say it)
(MORE)

VASYL (CONT'D)

Mr. Kopatchenko also instructed to tell you that if you wish, he'll come to you.

Jon closes his laptop.

JON

Let me guess, instructions to "take me anywhere I want" afterwards?

VASYL

Yes, sir.

JON

In that case, We need to make a stop at my car. I need to grab something from my trunk.

(Smiles)

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Out by the pool. Same bikini-clad, high-heeled women lounging around. Volodymyr sits by a table under an umbrella, bottle of the expensive whiskey on it. Jon is brought in.

VOLODYMYR

Mr. Wright! It's good to see you again. I'm afraid we didn't start off, as you say here, on the right foot, last time. I am hoping to fix that.

Volodymyr pours him a glass of the whiskey and walks it to him.

Jon accepts glass without any enthusiasm, doesn't drink.

JON

How can I be of help, Mr. Kopatchenko?

VOLODYMYR

Please. My friends call me Volodymyr.

JON

Is that what we are, then, now? Friends?

VOLODYMYR

I'm offering to be.

JON

Do I get to say: "no"?

Volodymyr frowns.

VOLODYMYR

I know our last meeting I probably didn't seem like a very nice man. And I am not. But I am a powerful man. A good man to have as a friend.

JON

That's hardly an improvement.

VOLODYMYR

That wasn't a threat.

JON

What was it then?

VOLODYMYR

On offer.

JON

What exactly is the offer, then? What exactly would I have to do in return for this "friendship"?

VOLODYMYR

Nothing. You have already done it. You saved my son. I owe you.

JON

It's what any person would have done. You don't owe me anything.

Volodymyr chuckles to Vasyl.

VOLODYMYR

"Any person"? I doubt it. Not any person would pull out a thirteen-year-old kid out of a sinking car twelve meters under the surface, holding his breath.

JON

I told you - it's not even impressive if you practice.

VOLODYMYR

And I'm telling you - I personally know men who would have stood by smoking a cigarette if they already had their dive gear on. I do business with some of them.

(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)
 Hell, I employ them.
 (Head gesture toward his
 men)

JON
 Speaking of business, what is
 yours?

VOLODYMYR
 I do what is necessary to take care
 of my own. That's my business.

JON
 I see.

VOLODYMYR
 So that's what it is, then? You
 think I'm beneath you, Mr.
 Professor?
 Oh, yes, I had you checked. Can you
 blame me after what you saw the
 other day?

Athena enters scene dressed similar to before.
 She is clearly surprised to see Jon there again.
 Jon can't help but react to her too.
 Both immediately try to hide it, but fool no one.
 Volodymyr notices it too, and knowingly smiles.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)
 So, Mr. Wright who writes, is that
 what it is then?

Jon rolls his eye. He's heard the obvious pun a thousand
 times.

JON
 If there is one thing I learned
 from reading all that literature,
 it's not to judge until I've heard
 the whole story.
 I am, however, a little cautious
 with what I get myself into. I kind
 of like my life the way it is -
 mostly uneventful.

VOLODYMYR
 Do you? What do you make as a
 teacher? I hear they get paid shit.

JON
 I'm doing fine. I have no mortgage.
 I inherited the house I grew up in
 from my parents.

(MORE)

JON (CONT'D)

I'm third generation. I also
publish occasional articles.

VOLODYMYR

Really? On what?

JON

On writing.

Volodymyr chuckles.

VOLODYMYR

Reminds me of the clown in my
village school back in Kamyanka.
He'd go around offering everyone to
teach them how to make a hundred
Hryvnia if they only gave him ten.

JON

(Smiles)

Yeah. It's kind of like that.
Except I'm more like a farmer. I
plant seeds of knowledge which I
hope will spread and grow to give
fruit of new ideas.
What is it you mostly grow back in
Ukraine?

VOLODYMYR

Wheat.
And more wheat.
And sunflowers.

JON

Well, you could eat the sunflower
seeds or you can replant them.
I replant them.
It may sound like a waste to grow
them just to replant them, but a
good farmer knows you get more than
before.
I grow sunflowers.

VOLODYMYR

Hmm... Well, but don't you want to
live it up a bit sometimes?
See anything you like?
(Gestures to the bikini-
clad women)

JON

Thanks. Not what I'm looking for?

VOLODYMYR

You prefer boys? We got those too.

JON

I'm attracted to women, if that's what you mean. This just isn't what I'm looking for in a meaningful relationship.

VOLODYMYR

Who said anything about a meaningful relationship? I'm talking about getting your dick wet.

JON

Thanks. If I want to get wet, I've got the whole ocean. Why settle for just my dick?

VOLODYMYR

Hahaha! You're funny man. But I hear she's a fickle mistress, this ocean, no?

JON

We're just dating.

VOLODYMYR

But if you like her, I got a great yacht I don't mind parting with for a song.

JON

Thanks. I don't think I'm quite ready for the big fish.

VOLODYMYR

Well, then. You don't want money, or pussy, or boats. So what can I get you? What do you want? Want someone gone or never give you trouble again? Say the name.

JON

Why must there be something?

VOLODYMYR

Because I owe you! And where I'm from, you pay your debts and you return your favors.

JON

Sounds noble. But you shouldn't be bothered.

Volodymyr thinks.

VOLODYMYR

You want a story? I'll give you a damn story.

Volodymyr's story:

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

My wife, Olenka, we knew each other since we were kids. From back in the old village.

INT. SCHOOL CLASS WITH SOVIET-ERA STYLE SCHOOL DESKS - DAY

FPV from a student's perspective of the back of a female student (Volodymyr's future wife, OLENKA) seated in front of him. She's 9 years old, and has a long single blond braid hanging down.

The boy's hand reaches forward and yanks on it. The girl partially turns around in some pain and much annoyance. She is pretty.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)

In third grade I used to pull on her braid.

Volodymyr and his future wife are now 11 years old. Her braid is now wrapped around her head in traditional Ukrainian style. Young Volodymyr looks at it dreamily and with desire.

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

In fifth grade I worshiped it.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

VOLODYMYR

We wanted children. Many children. But for many years we could not conceive. Then, like a miracle, Sasha was born. She did not approve of what I do. Did not matter that I did it all for her and our son. She was a gentle soul. I'm a monster. And I'd be a monster for her for as long as it takes!

(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

The amazing thing is she still loved me. She did not judge. But she could not bear to watch. She went back to our home village to be with her old mother. That's when they got her. If she'd been with me, I could have protected her. I thought she'd be safer away from me. But they followed her.

Volodymyr leans on back of chair fighting both sadness and anger.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

They killed her. They killed her like a dog to get to me.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

We see an image of a simple neglected graveyard with Russian orthodox crosses, some of them already falling over. A single Ukrainian granny stands by a grave, head down.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Volodymyr walks away to the bar and leans on it for a second, his back to everyone.

VOLODYMYR

You are third generation in your home?
I was sixth!
My great-great-great grandfather was a wealthy merchant. Owned his own ship, you know?
When he retired, he settled in old Ukraine. It was good in those days.

EXT. UKRAINIAN VILLAGE - DAY

A two-story wooden home in middle of a street. Villagers walk around, some stopping to greet each other and talk. A satisfied-looking man in traditional Ukrainian shirt steps out of the house. Passers-by wave hello to him and he gladly waves back.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)

He built our family home. It was the biggest home in town.

(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Stood right in the middle of the
 main street. Our original last name
 - Popereka - translates something
 like "the acrosser", meaning: "one
 who the stands right the middle of
 the street". Haha!

INT. VOLODYMYR'S FAMILY HOME - DAY

Soldiers in Russian Revolution era uniforms and typical Che-
 Ka (KGB and FSB's predecessor) leather jackets ransack a home
 and direct the residents around. Residents clutch some of
 their belongings.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)
 First came the communists with
 their redistribution. Most of the
 family money was already gone by
 then already, so they only took
 away my great-uncle.
 At least they let us stay in our
 home. So long as we shared it with
 five other alcoholic families.

EXT. UKRAINIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Thin, weak people walk around. Some seat aimlessly by their
 homes, having given up.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)
 Then came the Holodomor - the great
 starvation die-out.
 Stalin knew we were strong-willed
 people who didn't like to be told
 how to live. So he starved us, to
 break our will.

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S OLD FAMILY HOUSE, BARN - DAY

Volodymyr's GREAT-GRANDMOTHER(30) is doing some laundry in a
 tub. His GREAT-GRANDFATHER(35) runs in, panicked, followed by
 few children.

(All village dialog in Ukrainian, with subtitles)

GREAT-GRANDFATHER
*The CheKists are here! They are
 confiscating grain from everyone.
 They at the other end of the
 street. Just started.*

EXT. UKRAINIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Che-Ka agents and soldiers are seen down the street bursting into homes and coming out with bags of grain. A man is dragged out and shot. His wife wailing.

INT./EXT. VOLODYMYR'S OLD FAMILY HOUSE, BARN - CONTINUOUS

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Quickly! Load all the grain on the cart! Everyone!

GREAT-GRANDFATHER

Are you mad? They will shoot us both.

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

*And if we don't, we'll starve. All of us.
Now load!*

All, including children, hurriedly throw the bags of grain on the cart.

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

No. Leave one for them to find.

She hops onto the cart and whips the horse, which gallops out the back gate and into a forest.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)

My great-grandmother saved us. Not for her, we would not be having this conversation.

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - NIGHT

Great-grandmother is quietly leading the loaded horse cart back from the forest.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

VOLODYMYR

Millions starved! Hundreds of thousands more died in forced relocations. The children and the old people went first.

BEAT

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Then came the Germans. They told us they'd free us from the Communists. Back then some of us were still naive enough to believe it. Can't blame them. Who would have believed someone could be worse?

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

(Budget-dependent, optional visual scene:)

Beautiful, tall, golden wheat swaying in the breeze. A World-War II German tank, accompanied by German foot soldiers, slowly rolls into the shot from left side of screen (hinting at coming from the west). Focus on the tank tracks crushing the wheat stalks.

EXT. UKRAINIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Street empty. A single frail person sitting on sidewalk. As we listen to Volodymyr's story, the man keels over and just falls on his side, remaining there motionless, dying.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)

But the Germans were worse. Not just general bread shortage. Whole cities starved by design, all food confiscated.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Volodymyr, drinks from his glass for a moment.

VOLODYMYR

So then we fought against the Germans. My grandfather fought the whole war. Right before the end, in a fierce mincemeat firefight he bit off a mole on his lip. It turned into cancer that killed him.

JON

Killed him? Lip cancer?

VOLODYMYR

What do you think? This was America? You think he could get surgery?

(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

The Germans were running by then, but you think anyone gave a shit about saving some little Captain? Hell, we had to change our last name just to hide that he was an officer. Stalin's people didn't give a damn if he was against the Fascists? Some of the villagers helped them first. They'd have arrested him and his family just in case.

BEAT

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Then came nineteen-ninety-one and the fall of the Soviet Union. Finally we were free. Or so we thought. Then in February, twenty-two the Russian came back. To "free" us again. This time from ourselves. Haha. So very nice of them.

EXT. SUNFLOWER FIELD - DAY

(Budget-dependent, optional visual scene:)

Beautiful, tall sunflowers.

A 2022 Ukraine-Russia war era Russian tank, accompanied by Russian foot soldiers, slowly rolls into the shot from right side of screen (hinting at coming from the east). Focus on the tank tracks crushing the sunflower stalks.

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

View of the home in the middle of the old village.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

A male child sleeps peacefully in his bed.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)

We had nothing left, but at least our home still stood. Right there in the middle of what was left of the main street. Maybe that's why they picked it out this time around. Just 'cause it stood out. Made easy target.

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S FAMILY HOME - DAWN

A bomb crashes through the roof of the house. No explosion.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)
 The bomb fell through the roof, but
 it was a dud. It crushed my
 youngest nephew in his bed.
 Everyone who survived, fled.
 Only few grannies stayed behind.

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S FAMILY HOME - DAY

The house now shows major roof damage.
 Soldiers in modern-day Russian uniforms are unloading
 ammunition boxes and carrying them into the house.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)
 Then the Russian troops rolled in.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

VOLODYMYR
 They tell the Russian soldiers kept
 asking where the Nazis were.
 Haha. Did you hear about that? If
 there were any Nazis in our village
 they would have found them hanging
 from the nearest tree.
 My grandfather is turning over in
 his grave.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S FAMILY HOME - DAY

A group of Russian soldiers eat rations around a small
 campfire in the middle of a room. Smoke is rising through the
 hole in the roof.
 Boxes of ammunition are stacked behind them. The soldiers
 don't look happy.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)
 A group of them settled in what was
 left of our home, thinking no one
 will suspect them to stay in a
 ruin.

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S FAMILY HOME - DAY

FPV VIEW FROM DRONE DESCENDING AND ENTERING HOME THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE ROOF.

VIEW OF EXTERIOR OF THE FAMILY HOME

We see a small explosion inside home, followed by a series of much larger chain-reaction explosions completely demolishing the building.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)
The Ukrainian drones found them
anyway.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DUSK

Same graveyard as before.
A sudden bomb drops, turning the whole graveyard into a crater.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

VOLODYMYR
Now there is nothing left. Not even
her grave. Just a pile of wood and
meat. A pile of wood and meat and
dirt. That is all.
Not even her braid!
They didn't even leave her braid!!

Volodymyr turns around to hide from his men that he fights back tears. Athena walks seemingly casually by, but "offhandedly" passes him a full drink.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)
Now do you understand?!
Sasha is all I got left. He's all I
got left of her!

Volodymyr gathers himself, drained by the retelling and the memories.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)
Where I'm from, you live or die by
paying your debts! You understand?
Do you understand?

JON
Really, I'm good. And you owe me
nothing. Want to pay your debt? Be
a good father to Sasha.

VOLODYMYR

You doubt I am a good father?

JON

I doubt you have anything I want.

VOLODYMYR

Don't be so sure. Sometimes you don't know you needed something until you need it.

JON

I tell you what - that day comes, You'll you'll be the first to know.

Volodymyr nods thoughtfully.

JON (CONT'D)

He's a hell of a kid. I saw him there, trapped in the car, underwater. He didn't panic. He was scared. He was scared as hell. But he still did the right thing when I signaled him. That's the only reason he lived. It wasn't just me. I couldn't have done it if he froze.

Volodymyr straightens his stooping back and takes a deep breath, clearly showing great pride, his eyes showing a hint of getting moist.

JON (CONT'D)

And I realize now what that sound was I heard right before car lost control. It wasn't a blowout. It was a gunshot. He didn't just surrender and let himself be taken. He waited for his chance and he fought back, didn't he?

VOLODYMYR

He takes after his father. I teach him not to take shit. From anyone.

JON

Well, let's hope that's a seed that will grow into a sunflower and not a thorn bush.

Volodymyr shoots him a look.

Both men are quite for a while as Volodymyr downs another drink. Athena is observing.

VOLODYMYR

I will be in your debt until you
give me a chance to repay it.
Until then, will you at least drink
with me as my guest, like two equal
men having a drink together?
Will you at least give me that?

Jon looks sideways at the garden area by Volodymyr's pool. He focuses on a single sorry-looking sunflower in the middle of it. It is wilted, but not yet dead.

Jon's thoughts go to:

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

BEGIN FLASHBACK

SUZY

What makes a person good or bad?

Skip forward...

STUDENT 1

So what is the answer?

JON

Ha! He wants an answer. Give us
answers, so we don't have to think.

END FLASHBACK

L-CUT TO:

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jon is still sitting with the glass in his hand; only a moment has passed.

JON

Yeah.
Yeah, I'll have a drink with you.

Jon raises his glass. They drink together.

While Jon is busy taking another sip, Volodymyr looks sideways at Athena, smiling to himself. He's clearly scheming something.

EXT. OUTSIDE VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Jon gets into Volodymyr's car. Vasyl holds door for him.
Vasyl quickly gets in and drives off.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - CONTINUOUS

VOLODYMYR

Inna!

Inna walks in from side room.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Bring Sasha over! I want to talk to
him.

INNA

(In Ukrainian)

Yes, sir.

(1st word in Ukrainian)

Sir, may I speak to you?

VOLODYMYR

What is it?

Inna walks up close to Volodymyr and talks to him quietly.
Volodymyr is a bit surprised.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Why?!

Inna speak to him quietly a bit more.
Volodymyr is slightly crestfallen and clearly disappointed.
But he nods and pats Inna on the arm.

Volodymyr says something into one of his men's ear. The man
walks away and returns handing Volodymyr a brick of bills.
Volodymyr puts them in Inna's hand and holds it, talking.
He pats her arm again and Inna slightly bows, almost
curtsying, and walks away back into side room.

Volodymyr is thinking to himself. After a moment he has an
idea and grins.

He walks over to Athena, who has been sitting at the bar this
whole time. He speaks quietly to Athena, too far from camera
to hear.

Athena's face is filled with a coy smile. She gives Volodymyr
a "don't you worry" look, clearly very self-satisfied.

After a moment Inna comes back out with Sasha. The bandage
son his ears are no much smaller.
Volodymyr's face lights up and completely softens upon seeing
his son.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Sasha, come here. I want to talk to you.

Both sit down.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

What did I teach you about settling your debts?

SASHA

(Still just a bit loudly)
You should always settle your debts.

VOLODYMYR

(Smiles)
Very good.
Do you remember the man who helped you out at the beach?

Sasha lights up.

SASHA

His name's Jon!

VOLODYMYR

That's right. Jon. I want you to go and thank him proper. You need to do it in person.
Will you do that?

SASHA

Yes!
(Clearly excited)

VOLODYMYR

Good boy. Vasyl and Athena will take you when you're ready.

EXT. BY SHORE - DAY

Volodymyr's car is parked by a beach. Jon stands behind its open trunk, dressed in a freediving suit, pulling out his fins, mask, and snorkel out of a bag in the trunk. Vasyl stands next to him, clearly not very happy, and sweating in his black suit in the baking sun.

JON

Wait here. I won't be more than a couple of hours.

Jon runs off toward water.

INT. JON'S HOUSE - EVENING

Another day.

Jon makes dinner.

Doorbell rings and Jon lifts his brows in surprise.

Jon opens the door and is completely shocked to see Athena standing there, this time looking extremely elegant, dressed in a well-fit designer suit.

Jon's mouth is open in surprise as he searches for what to say.

Athena smiles, then steps aside to reveal Sasha hiding behind her, somewhat unsure, but smiling.

JON

(Clearly happy to see
Sasha)

Well, hello. Glad to see you are
better. I hope you can hear me now.

SASHA

It's still a little hard, but I'm
getting better.

JON

(To Athena)

How did you know where I live?

Athena gives him a look which says: "You got to be kidding".

ATHENA

I brought Sasha to you. He wanted
to thank you in person for what you
did. It seems you got yourself a
fan.

JON

(To Athena)

So you do his father's errands?

ATHENA

I'm just a friend. I'm doing a
favor. The nanny quit today.
Apparently getting smacked by
kidnappers was not part of her job
description.

JON

Hard to find good help these days.
Well, come on in.

Sasha walks past him, no longer shy, now fully grinning.

ATHENA

I'll let you two talk. I'll wait
in the car. Just call when you're
ready.

Athena puts down a business card. She turns and walks away slowly, clearly aware she's still being watched. Jon watches her walk away until she's all the way at the gate. Then snaps out of it and closes the door.

Sasha is in Jon's living room, looking around at all his things.

JON

So, glad you're getting over it.

SASHA

The ears are better.

His demeanor, though, shows it's not all.

JON

But...?

Sasha makes a face, like he's not sure what to say.

BEAT

SASHA

I have scary dreams.

Jon sighs understandingly.

JON

That man can't hurt you anymore.

SASHA

I'm not scared of the man.

BEAT

SASHA (CONT'D)

I have bad dreams about being
trapped there, under water.

BEAT

SASHA (CONT'D)

A lady from the police station
wanted to talk to me about it. But
my dad doesn't believe in that.

BEAT

SASHA (CONT'D)

How did you do that?

JON

What?

SASHA

How did you hold your breath so long?

JON

Well, it just takes some training.

SASHA

Can anyone do it?

JON

I suppose. With practice. And self-control. And keeping your cool.

SASHA

Can you teach me?

JON

I suppose I could do the basics.

SASHA

I want to be like you. I never want to be trapped again.

JON

I understand.
If you are serious, you will need to take a real class. I'm not a teacher.
I hear they have junior classes. So long as you're at least twelve.

SASHA

(Proudly)

I'm thirteen!

JON

That should do it, then.

SASHA

Why aren't you a teacher?

JON

I am, actually. Just not that kind.

SASHA

What do you teach?

JON
Literature and writing.

SASHA
In grade school?

JON
A college, actually.

SASHA
Why don't they already know how to write?

JON
(Laughing)
Just because someone knows all the letters doesn't mean they know how to write anything worth reading.

SASHA
Do you write?

JON
Sometimes.

SASHA
You're Mr. Wright who likes to write?

JON
(Smiling)
That's right.

SASHA
Is that like the Count who likes to count?

JON
(Smiles again.)
Exactly. Minus the cape.

SASHA
(Thoughtfully)
Aquaman doesn't wear a cape.

Jon is somewhat embarrassed by the implied comparison.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I like to read.

JON
Oh, yeah? Like what?

SASHA

I read Treasure Island yesterday!

JON

In one day?

SASHA

(A bit shyly)

Two, actually. I couldn't stop. I had to hide from aunt Inna behind the curtains so she wouldn't bother me.

JON

Haha. I know the feeling. A good book can really suck you in.

SASHA

Have you read that one?

JON

I'm sorry for any kid who hasn't.

SASHA

What do you like to read?

JON

Many things. One of my favorites is someone from your father's old neck of the woods - a fellow by name of Fyodor Dostoevsky. I teach a class on him, as a matter of fact.

SASHA

What did he write about?

JON

Oh, nothing a kid would be interested in. Human nature and divine order.

SASHA

Do you have any of his stuff?

JON

(Surprised)

Lots.

SASHA

Can I see?

JON

Sure. Here's a bunch.

Jon walks to bookshelf. Sasha eagerly follows.

SASHA
Can I read some of it?

JON
You're serious, aren't you?

Sasha nods.

JON (CONT'D)
OK. If you are. Here's one that's not too bad to start with. It's not too long. It's called The Double.

SASHA
What's it about?

JON
A very stupid person.

SASHA
Sounds funny.

JON
I suppose, in some sense. It's also a bit morbid. But it's a bit more complicated than that. You can just hold on to it until you're ready to get through it.

SASHA
My father says to always pay back your debts.

JON
Alright then. Let's just say that you can bring it back and exchange it for another one when you're done.

SASHA
I'd like that!

JON
I think auntie Athena might be getting a bit worried about you. We better go out there.

They walk to the door.

JON (CONT'D)

If you're really serious about that dive class, you'll need to ask your dad for the money. It's a bit expensive for a kid. Plus you'll need some equipment - a special kind of mask plus a snorkel. Even a special kind of wetsuit if you want to do it when the water is colder.

SASHA

What about the knife? Like the one you used on that window?

JON

Yes. I diving knife is a very good idea.

SASHA

Do you always carry yours?

JON

Yes.

SASHA

What for?

JON

Just in case.

SASHA

Have you ever had to use it before?

JON

No.

SASHA

Then why do you carry it?

JON

Sometimes you don't know you needed something until you need it.

SASHA

My dad always says that.
My dad will pay for it.

JON

You should ask first.

SASHA

Don't worry.
(Smiling)
He always pays for it.

Sasha and Jon walk outside to the curb.
 Vasyl sees them and jumps out in panic, rushing to them to
 escort Sasha real close to himself.
 Athena gets out more slowly and gracefully.

ATHENA
 (Not angry, but making
 full eye contact)
 Was I not sufficiently clear? I
 said: "Call me."

JON
 I, ah... thought...

Jon stops as he realizes he's not sure if that's what she
 means.
 Athena gracefully turns and is already walking away with a
 gait which leaves him glued again.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Volodymyr, standing, again with drink in his hand, speaking
 to Athena who just walked in and ushered Sasha into his room.

VOLODYMYR
 How did it go?

ATHENA
 Well, of course. How else did you
 expect it to go? You doubt me?

Volodymyr looks her up and down. Replies with a smile.

VOLODYMYR
 Not really. What happened?

ATHENA
 Nothing. I dropped the bait. I'm
 sure he took it.
 You can't just jump in and go after
 them, you know. You'll just scare
 all the fish.
 Got to make them think it's their
 idea. Let them come to you.
 By the way, Sasha has something
 he's real eager to talk to you
 about.

Volodymyr breaks out in smile and calls to Sasha's room:

VOLODYMYR
 Sasha! Come here. What did you want
 to talk to your old man about?

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

It's next day. Jon walks on campus again. His phone rings.

JON

Hello?

VOLODYMYR

What have you done with my son? He came home chattering about wanting to learn to breathe underwater.

JON

Umm... Well, that's... Well, not exactly. It's how to hold your breath, actually. I told him he had to ask your permission. It'll cost...

Volodymyr cuts him off.

VOLODYMYR

I don't give a damn what it cost. Is it dangerous?

JON

If done foolishly - very. But so is crossing the street. That's where the training comes in. It's not just how to do it longer. It's how to do it safer.

VOLODYMYR

I will pay for it.

JON

I'd be glad to text you the info.

VOLODYMYR

He said he also wants knife.

JON

That's a good idea. Doesn't have to be big. It's for putting the fish quickly out of their misery. And also for safety.

VOLODYMYR

Make sure he gets two.

JON

I'll add a couple recommendations to the list.

VOLODYMYR

He also jabbered something about using your library.

JON

Oh. I just lent him a book. I promised he can borrow a different one when he's finished. I wouldn't hold my breath. It's not exactly teen fiction. I doubt he'll actually end up wanting to read it.

VOLODYMYR

He's been buried in it for last three hours.

JON

Oh...

VOLODYMYR

You were supposed to be accepting my favors, not doing more. I was hoping to even the score, not pile it on.

JON

I don't mind. He's a bright kid.

VOLODYMYR

(Very serious)

Do you want this?

JON

Like I said, I don't mind. Most of the students I have just care about their transcript. To tell the truth, it's a pleasure to find a truly curious mind and help it blossom. That's why I became a teacher in the first place. Remember - growing sunflowers.

VOLODYMYR

You have my permission.

Volodymyr hangs up without a goodbye.

EXT. SHORE - DAY

Jon is in his freediving suit, getting out of the water, speargun in hand, carrying a mid-size fish.

There is a big dive knife attached to his calf and a smaller one to the belt on the other side.

INT. JON'S HOUSE - EVENING

The fish is cooking. Jon opens a bottle of wine. Doorbell rings again. Again - the raised eyebrows. Jon opens door. Athena is there again, in a different, but equally elegant outfit.

JON

This is becoming a regular thing.

ATHENA

(Smiles)

I've brought Sasha again.

Sasha runs up toward the door.

SASHA

Uncle Jon!
I finished your book!

JON

Wow. That was pretty fast.
What did you think?

SASHA

I loved it.

Sasha runs into inside the house without waiting for invitation. This time Athena follows inside. Jon holds up a wine glass to Athena.

JON

Care for some?

Athena looks at the bottle, raises her eyebrows, impressed with the choice. Takes glass from Jon and hold it up to be filled.

SASHA

(Rambling excitedly)

You were right! It is funny. The man is so silly. He imagines things in his head, but he thinks they are real. He thinks everyone is against him, but it's all in his head. And he tries to impress everyone pretending like he's rich. But no one else is impressed.

JON

Yes, that's part of it.

SASHA

Can I read more? You said I could read more if I finished it.

JON

You can. But first, tell me, what part of the story did you like the best?

Sasha looks up and thinks a moment.

SASHA

I really like how he writes. I like how he could get me to know what the man is seeing even before he tells you. It's like he can make me be inside that man's head. Like the part when he's just walking down the street late one night. It's cold and dark. And he sees another man, also with his collar up and wrapped in his coat, walking the other way. He's scared of the man, even though he doesn't know him. And he tries to act like he's not scared, because he's so scared. And then the other man just walks past him and he almost falls on his knees. And the book doesn't even tell you yet why, but you just know. You already know. Because it's like he put you inside his head. You just know, totally for sure, that he just saw himself walking the other way. Even though that's totally not ever going to happen in real life. I had chills when I read that. How does he do that?

JON

That's the million dollar question, isn't it? Being a literary genius probably helps. But I think the starting point is empathy.

SASHA

What's "empathy"?

JON

It's being able to feel what someone else feels. Or understand how they think. It's being able to see that even a villain is the hero in their own story.

SASHA

Like sympathy?

JON

Sympathy can imply feeling sorry for them. Empathy is without judgement. They say being able to get into other people's heads is one of the marks of any great writer.

ATHENA

(Quietly)

Or a manipulative sociopath.

Jon gives her a questioning look.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

Is there any more of that in that bottle?

Jon pours her another glass.

SASHA

Mr. Edwards doesn't want to talk about this stuff. He says it's not part of my curriculum. He's boring.

JON

Is that your English class teacher?

SASHA

It's my everything teacher.

JON

What do you mean?

SASHA

He's the tutor my dad hired. Dad says I can't go to school right now. He says I need his security guys with me all the time from now on. But the headmaster won't allow it.

JON

Oh. That's a bummer.

SASHA

Not really. I didn't like it there anyway.

JON

You don't like studying?

Sasha thinks.

SASHA

I like learning. I just don't like the studying. Not in school. They move too slow. It's boring.

JON

Yeah, but don't you like to play with the other kids?

SASHA

Not really. They tease me because my nanny is always waiting for me. And give me weird looks when I'm getting picked up by one of dad's guys. I don't mind. They're boring too, anyway. They're all like little kids. All they want to talk about is kid stuff.

JON

What about girls. Weren't there any you liked?

SASHA

There was one. Stacy Bergson.

JON

Did you ask her out?

SASHA

I brought her a poem. I translated it myself for her. She didn't even understand it. She just said it was weird. She's dumb.

John laughs.

JON

What was the poem?

SASHA

It's called *Winter's Evening*. It's one of my favorites from when I was small.
It's by Pushkin. Do you know him?

JON

Oh, yes. You can't study Russian literature without hearing about Pushkin. They say he's unparalleled. Though I regret I don't have the language skills to really appreciate him like you can. I'd be curious to read your translation.

SASHA

You want to? I have it on my phone.

Sasha pulls it up on his phone and hands it to Jon.

JON

(Reading the beginning)
Storm with darkness the sky covers,
Whirlwinds twisting snow;
Thus, like an animal, it will howl,
Thus will cry, like a child,
Thus on the rotten roof
Suddenly with hay will rustle,
Thus, like a late traveler,
On our window it will knock.

SASHA

(Apologetically,
disappointed)
It's not the same when it doesn't rhyme.

Jon is impressed.

JON

Wow, and there's the rest of it.
You translated this yourself?

SASHA

In the end. There's a part. I had to use a dictionary. I didn't know the English word for "tit".

Athena, in the middle of a sip, spits out her wine over herself, for once losing her perfect composure.

Jon suppresses a laugh.

JON
Ah, yes. The bird.

LATER

Sasha is absorbed in a book. Athena sits on the arm of his chair, looking at him lovingly, unaware of her own expression. A wine glass is still in one hand, with the other she gently strokes Sasha's hair.
Jon is observing.
Jon walks up to refill her glass and Athena lifts her gaze to him.

ATHENA
Tell me, Mr. Wright, why do you
live alone?

JON
When I was still in school, I took
philosophy as an elective. On the
final exam, the teacher put only
one question. In fact, one word:
"Why?".
People wrote long essays on it. I
turned it in immediately and walked
out. I was the only one in class
who got a perfect "A".

ATHENA
What did you write?

JON
"Why not?"

ATHENA
(Laughs)
I think they call that the
anthropic principle?

Jon looks impressed.

JON
Not quite. But close.

ATHENA
Very witty. But it sounds like
you're avoiding the question.

JON
Am I? I mean - why anything?
I am content. I love what I do and
my freedom. I enjoy company, but I
don't really feel like I'm lacking
anything.

ATHENA

But haven't you ever wanted more?

JON

Now you're starting to sound like
Volodymyr.

LATER

All three walk toward the door. Both Jon and Athena are now laughing, clearly a bit tipsy. Sasha grins and this time clutches three books to his chest.

SASHA

Can I come to your class sometimes?

JON

Well, technically, you only have to be registered to get a grade. Anyone can listen to a lecture, so long as there's room in the classroom.

SASHA

Is there room in yours?

JON

Usually. They give me a big lecture hall. There are plenty of seats in the back.

SASHA

Can I come, then? I promise I'll be totally quiet and not bother anyone.

JON

Actually, you're allowed to ask question like anyone else. If they are good and to the point, everyone can learn from them.

ATHENA

Thank you, Mr. Wright.

JON

I think we could switch to "Jon" after the third glass. That's the rule.

Athena looks Jon in the eyes.

ATHENA
(More warmly)
Thank you then, Jon.

BEAT

ATHENA (CONT'D)
You have a nice place. It feels
like a... like a home.

Then, after glancing at the front yard:

ATHENA (CONT'D)
The front could use some color,
though.

JON
I confess my gardening skills are
more metaphorical than actual. I
don't have much of a green thumb.
I inherited those rose bushes from
my mom. They live on, but I've
never been able to get them to
bloom.

ATHENA
Maybe you just have to give it some
time.

Athena pauses a moment, looking at Jon, as if contemplating something, before walking off toward the car. This time, about half-way to the gate, she turns around to look back and doesn't hide satisfaction that he is still looking.

EXT. SHORE - DAY

Jon and Sasha finish gearing up and turning to head into the ocean.
Athena sits by the beach watching them.

LATER

The sun is setting down over the water. There's a red-gold glow.
Jon and Sasha come out of the water.
Athena is still watching them, but now there is a look of pure peace on her face, not seen before.

INT. JON'S HOUSE - EVENING

Athena shows up at Jon's door again. She clutches few of his loaned books (not same ones as before).

Jon is no longer surprised. He looks behind her, expecting to see Sasha. But there's no one there. Athena also looks behind herself, as if you ask: "Looking for something?"

ATHENA
Disappointed?

JON
I wouldn't say that. I doubt a man has ever been disappointed to see you.

Athena shoves the books at him, but she's pleased.

ATHENA
I'm returning the last books. Sasha has his lessons. May I come in?

Jon is taken off-guard.

JON
Of course. Please do.

Athena comes in. Both stand there for a moment awkwardly.

ATHENA
Well, aren't you going to offer me some of that wonderful Gewürztraminer?

JON
Ehm. Yes. Of course. May I pour you a glass?

Another moment of awkward silence as both twirl their glasses.

JON (CONT'D)
So, now you're doing book delivery for Volodymyr?
That's a lot of favors. What does he have on you, anyway?

ATHENA
I found him his house. And a couple other ones. Also for some of his colleagues. Sometimes the paperwork can be, um, "creative". It's been very lucrative.

JON
And that's why you also do his errands?

ATHENA

He also helped me out. My sister.
She was in some trouble. He took
care of it.

JON

I see. So this is how you pay back?

ATHENA

Who said he asked?

JON

Just for Sasha, then?

ATHENA

Yes. In part. I care for that boy.
He has no mother. He needs an adult
female figure. This is a labor of
love.

JON

Yet here you are without him.
Sounds like just an errand, to me.

ATHENA

(Laughs)

You know. You could never work for
him.

JON

Why's that?

ATHENA

You're too slow on the uptake.
And you sure as heck can't follow
instructions.

JON

(Confused)

What do you mean?

Athena downs her glass of liquid courage.

ATHENA

Didn't I tell you to call me?

Athena sets down her glass, and as Jon tries to catch up,
walks over and kisses him.

At first Jon neither resists, nor participates, having not
expected this. After a moment he holds her on the sides of
her arms, then slowly slides his hands to hold her neck and
pulls her closer, absorbed.

INT. JON'S BEDROOM, LATER - NIGHT

Jon and Athena in bed, cuddling. She's twirling on his chest.

ATHENA

So..., you always wait for the woman to make the move? I don't typically have to wait that long.

JON

I didn't really know anything about you. I still don't.

ATHENA

What do you need to know? Here I am.

JON

What am I getting involved in?

ATHENA

Nothing. If you don't keep asking questions.

JON

That's not very reassuring.

ATHENA

There are things I can not tell you. Not now. I understand if you'd rather we weren't together?

JON

Let's make a deal. I won't bluff if you don't.

ATHENA

What do you mean?

JON

I won't keep pretending I would,

ATHENA

"Would" what?

JON

I won't keep pretending I would rather not be with you. And you won't pretend you don't already know that.

Athena smiles.

ATHENA

Deal.

EXT. JON'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jon walks Athena out to the car. As they approach the street, a tire screech is heard from another car. Jon impulsively grabs Athena to protect her.

It's a false alarm. They look at each other. Jon looks slightly embarrassed. Athena smiles, very pleased, and puts her hand on his shoulder affectionately.

As Jon walks back through the yard, something colorful catches his attention. He moves closer to look.

A single bright pink rose has bloomed on one of the old bushes.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Jon is lecturing.

JON

We were discussing *Crime and Punishment*. I see most of you have turned in your essays. Anyone care to say something about it?

He's momentarily distracted as the door in back of classroom opens and in walk in Volodymyr, followed by two of his personal security.

Jon's a bit surprised, but then is completely caught off-guard when they are also followed by Athena.

The group takes position in back of class.

Jon is especially distracted by Athena. Both focus on each other.

After moment Jon snaps back and continues with class.

JON (CONT'D)

Anyone care to comment about the main character?

A couple hands rise lazily. Suzy's hand rises more surely.

JON (CONT'D)

Yes.

(Pointing at Suzy)

SUZY

I think title IS the main point. It's that you never really get away with a crime.

(MORE)

SUZY (CONT'D)

That if you are not someone who is completely dead inside, then the crime is also the punishment. Because of what you pay with your soul. He thought he was justified to do it, but in the end the burden outweighs the benefit.

One small hand rises reluctantly all the way in back of class.

JON

(To the raised hand in back)

Yes, in the back.

The person raising the hand stands up. It's Sasha (previously hidden behind other attendees). His ears no longer have bandages.

Focus on Volodymyr, who smiles proudly to see Sasha speak up.

SASHA

But in that sense the punishment is also the salvation. That's why he tries to confess. To endure the punishment is to free himself from the burden.

Suzy turns around to see who is speaking.

JON

(Looking a bit surprised)

Yes. Very good.

Focus on Volodymyr again. He is no longer smiles, instead now looking a bit gloomy and deep in thought.

Later:

Class has ended. Jon gathers his things. Sasha is still in back. Suzy is excitedly talking to him.

Volodymyr and his entourage come down to the lecture pod.

VOLODYMYR

I wanted to come see for myself what is it you are teaching Sasha.

JON

And? What do you think?

VOLODYMYR

I'm afraid those things are a bit over my head. I finished grade school.

(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

I did well, but then life happened.
But Sasha seems to be catching
right on.

JON

He doesn't read books. He inhales
them.
I think you should consider some
accelerated education for him. The
school has a prodigy program. I
know the administrator. I'd be glad
to make a recommendation.

VOLODYMYR

(Very happy)

So the sunflower has bloomed? You
are a very good farmer.

JON

It's easy when you start with a
strong seed.

VOLODYMYR

I would be in your debt if you do
that. Even more. I can cover any
cost, of course.
Will it help if his father makes a
generous donation to the school?

JON

Even if it did, you'd be doing him
a great disfavor.
It does no good to simply put
someone in a good program unless
they can handle it. He must prove
his ability himself or he'll drown.
He's have enough struggle fitting
in with the older kids, as is.

Volodymyr looks up at Suzy talking with Sasha.

VOLODYMYR

He seems to be doing fine.

Volodymyr and his entourage leave to go. Athena is at the
back and turns around to look at Jon as she exists. Their
eyes lock again.

EXT. SHORE, NOT LONG BEFORE SUNSET - DAY

Sasha, Jon, and Athena, this time all three dressed in
freediving gear. Sasha and Jon also carrying spearguns and
have dive knives on them. Athena does not.

All three look very happy as they run toward the water.

EXT. UNDERWATER, BRIGHT DAY - DAY

Three bodies - Athena, Jon, and Sasha - break through water surface. Athena's hair flowing freely. They swim around underwater.

Athena and Jon stand at bottom on a rock. Sasha not in frame. Jon holds Athena's hand. Athena starts to convulse. Jon leans over, puts his lips on hers, and gives her air.

Athena and Jon break water surface. Athena gulps air as they tread water. It's unclear if she's breathless from lack of air or from excitement. But even as she struggles to breathe there's a huge happy grin on her face. She wraps her hands around Jon.

EXT. SHORE, - SUNNY DAY

All three are toweling off, faces glowing. Athena has that peaceful look on her face again, even more noticeably. In fact, ever since her first visit to Jon, she has been gradually changing from the cool, graceful, composed figure to a warmer, more pleasant, relaxed person, becoming even more beautiful in the process.

Athena and Jon look at each other and kiss. Sasha turns away, a bit embarrassed, pretending not to see, but a little smile creeps on his face. He's secretly happy to see them together.

INT. JON'S HOME - NIGHT

A couple of weeks later.

Jon and Athena are in bed together. It's clear from their demeanor it's now a regular thing.

JON

Would Volodymyr be upset if he found out?

ATHENA

You still think he owns me?
Why? You afraid?

JON

If I was, it'd still be worth it.

Athena smiles happily.

ATHENA

Good answer.

JON

I didn't get that writing degree
for nothing.

Athena looks up at him for a long moment, seeming to contemplate saying something, but instead they kiss again deeply.

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Volodymyr is relaxing by the pool, eyeing the bikini girls with pleasure. Athena is lounging by the bar, as usual, back in her designer poolside clothes. Vasyl walks up to Volodymyr.

VASYL

(1st word in Ukrainian)

Sir. We heard back from our inside man. They got an ID on the dead guy.

VOLODYMYR

And? You gonna tell me or just stand there?

VASYL

He worked for Semion.

VOLODYMYR

Are you sure?!

VASYL

Positive, sir. Kyryl also told us, while he could still talk, that he was drinking with two of Semion's men when he missed the pickup. And they were unusually generous with paying for the drinks.

VOLODYMYR

Those bastards! I go way back with those guys. We came up together. And now the fucker is after my share of the pie!? And through my son?! He tried to touch my son?!

Volodymyr tries to get a hold of himself.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Gather all the men. Everyone. Get out the big guns. We gonna hit them with everything we got. There will not be a single one of those son of a bitches left. And then I'm going to gut that betraying son of bitch Semion. I'm gonna gut him like a fucking fish!

VASYL

Yes, sir.

Vasyl takes off in a trot.

Athena, looking very concerned, sneaks out of the house in a hurry and rushes off somewhere.

VOLODYMYR

Where's Athena? I want her to take Sasha away somewhere. Maybe to that professor's house. Where did she go?

EXT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Athena is outside, talking eagerly to someone on a phone, covering it with her hand.

INT. JON'S HOUSE - DAY

Knock on door. Jon opens, smiling. His face changes when he realizes it's not Athena, but Volodymyr, with two of his bodyguards.

JON

Volodymyr.

VOLODYMYR

Jon! When were you going to invite me over? I thought we were friends. I got too impatient waiting. Decided to drop by.

JON

Um. Come one in. Please. I'm afraid I don't have any of that fine whiskey to offer you.

Volodymyr comes in. The bodyguards take positions outside the door.

VOLODYMYR

Don't worry about it. I'm staying sober today. I need to stay clear-headed to take care of some business.

Awkward silence moment.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

I thought it was about time I saw where my son and..., where my son has been hanging out. The two of you have gotten quite close, haven't you?

Again, awkward silence moment.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

I mean you and Sasha.

JON

(Awkwardly)

Of course. Who else would you mean?

VOLODYMYR

Of course. Who else? Haha.

Looks around a bit.

Then, as if just making conversation:

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Tell me. Why did you accept my invitation after that first meeting of ours?

JON

Curiosity, I suppose.

VOLODYMYR

Lucky you are not a cat. I hear it can kill them. And you don't have nine lives.

Jon weakly smiles at the pun.

JON

And you didn't strike me as someone who would have just given up. No point stalling it. And to be frank, I wanted to see how Sasha is doing.

VOLODYMYR

And you were not afraid?

JON
Who said I wasn't afraid?

VOLODYMYR
You didn't seem scared.

EXT. SHORE - DAY

BEGIN FLASHBACK

SPEARING INSTRUCTOR
Adrenaline burns oxygen.
Excitation and panic are your
enemies.
You must learn how to relax, let
go. Slow down your mind and you
will slow down your heart.
Just BE.

END FLASHBACK

L-CUT TO:

INT. JON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

JON
Would it have helped if I did? Look
scared, I mean.

VOLODYMYR
No. Groveling is what I would have
expected from someone guilty.
I have no respect for cowards.

JON
Not knowing fear is not courage.
Courage is knowing fear and not
being stopped by it.

VOLODYMYR
So you were bluffing?

JON
Let's just say I wasn't going to
give you the satisfaction.

Volodymyr laughs.

VOLODYMYR
Maybe this is why I liked you from
the start.

(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

You don't want a fight. But you have balls.

JON

Since we're being honest, tell me, please. Was wanting to thank me really the only reason you invited me back to your home that time?

Volodymyr grins. He got him.

VOLODYMYR

No. Not entirely.
I saw how Sasha reacted when he saw you.
I can not let anyone see him scared. In my world scared is weak. And weak is dead.
But me and you know he is.
And I saw him be less when you walked in.
I wish I had been there myself to save him. But I wasn't. You were.

Long beat, as Volodymyr pretends to be looking around the Jon's living room.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

You know funny thing about my line of business - there are not many people you can trust. Not with something really precious. Not something you can count on them for to really put their soul into. You know what I mean?

JON

I can guess.

Volodymyr stops his pacing and looking around the room. He turns and focuses on Jon.

VOLODYMYR

I want to ask you something. I want to ask you to do something for me.

Jon rolls his eye as if to say: "Here it comes. I knew it".

JON

And what might that be?

VOLODYMYR

If something happens to me... If
anything ever happened to me...
I want you to take care of Sasha.

Jon's is clearly shocked. This is not what he was expecting
to hear.

JON

Me? Why me?

VOLODYMYR

Because you're the only one I can
trust.

JON

What about Athena? He seems fond of
her too. And vice versa. He has
known her longer.

VOLODYMYR

Yes. But not like you. And you are
the only one who never wanted
anything from me. I even tried to
offer it, and you didn't want it.
There is nothing you're after.

JON

I thought there wasn't. Lately I've
been realizing there may have been
something I needed, but didn't know
it.

VOLODYMYR

Promise me you would take care of
Sasha.

Jon thinks seriously.

JON

I promise.

The two men look each other in the eye and Volodymyr shakes
Jon's hand. He seems satisfied and relieved.

VOLODYMYR

Oh, and don't worry about the money
part. It'll be covered.

JON

I'd do it even if it wasn't.

BEAT

JON (CONT'D)

If you don't mind my asking, since we're getting to know each other. You know what I do and why I do it. What about you? Do you like what you do?

VOLODYMYR

There are men who'd tongue I'd have cut out just for asking that question.

JON

Yet, apparently I still have mine.

Volodymyr smiles at his bravery.

VOLODYMYR

One time, before everything, a small circus came through our nearby town. I and my friend Vanya sneaked from school, jumped a train and rode it into town to sneak into that circus. We were about six or seven, I think.

The circus was junk. But it also included something like a travelling zoo, if you can call it that - a few miserable-looking animals in small, dirty cages.

EXT. DINGY TRAVELING CIRCUS/ZOO - GLOOMY DAY

A young Volodymyr and a friend of same age stand in front of shipping containers which sit on wet dirt. It is drizzling. The container in front of them contains a very depressed-looking elephant. The nearby containers have other, much more common animals.

VOLODYMYR (V.O.)

It was the first time I saw an elephant. Huge, noble creature, standing in a container box, barely bigger than itself.

It could not move to the left or right, or up. It could only stick its trunk out.

Except it didn't. I just hung it limply. You could see the sadness in its eyes. It has completely surrendered.

I still remember it clearly. It really made an impression on me.

(MORE)

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

And I remember deciding that I was never going to be surrendered like that. I was going to be a big, great, living elephant. I would blow my trunk and I would flap my giant ears freely, no matter what box they put me in. I would not surrender.

INT. BACK TO PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

VOLODYMYR

My friend Vanya, though, he saw something else. He thought that circus was the most exciting thing he'd ever seen or would ever see. So he got hired on as a helping hand.

JON

You mean he literally ran away with the circus?

VOLODYMYR

"Ran away" what? His family was more than glad to give him permission. One less mouth to feed. They were proud. They thought he found a career. And he promised to visit. And he did. Next year the circus came back to town. So, of course, I snuck out again. Not to see the crappy circus, but to see my friend Vanya. And what do you know? Turns out he's working with the elephant. It's his job to clean out that box from all that elephant dung, so it only smell bad if you get close. And because elephants shit whenever they want and it scares the small children, his job is also to give enemas to the elephants before they open every morning. I guess a small hand come extra useful for this. So there he is in rubber boots and apron, covered with wet elephant shit, sticking hoses up an elephant's ass before breakfast. So I ask him: "Vanya, why you do this?"

(MORE)

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

And he answers: "What do you mean?
It's my job."
So I says to him: "It's a shit job.
There are other jobs out there. Why
don't you just quit?"
And Vanya look me straight in the
eye and he say: "What do you mean?
And leave show business?!"

Volodymyr laugh out loud at his own joke.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Hahaha! Relax. It a joke. It's just
old joke.
(Face goes deadpan again)
I mean, I never actually saw Vanya
again. The rest really happened.

BEAT

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

You see, I can also make story.

JON

Beautiful imagery. There's always
room for another literary genius in
the potty humor genre.
I see. So your point is you do what
you do because you're better than
Vanya?

VOLODYMYR

No! You ask if I enjoy it. I tell
you sometimes in life you have
shovel shit if you're to be
included in the circus.
I shovel this shit so Sasha will
never have to.
He's takes after her. This is not
for him.

JON

So you believe you just never had a
choice?

VOLODYMYR

Did I?
Does the wolf in the forest have a
choice but to hunger for the sheep?
Can the wolf be a vegetarian?

JON

Mi hu hagibor? Hakovesh et yez'ro.

VOLODYMYR

What?

JON

Never mind.

VOLODYMYR

Maybe this was always my fate.
Do you know that even the name I
was born with - Volodymyr - means
"world ruler"?

JON

I do. From old Slavic Volodimer'.
As I recall it, though, it can also
be read as "peaceful ruler", can it
not?

(Beat)

You always have a choice.

VOLODYMYR

You speak Old Russ?!

JON

Not really. But my thesis was on
the Russian classics. It's why I
teach it.

VOLODYMYR

"Seesis"? What is that? Some kind
of Greek sausage?

JON

Hmm, no. It means what you do your
doctorate dissertation on.

VOLODYMYR

I was joking.

JON

Oh. You know what it is?

VOLODYMYR

I've heard of it.

INT. VOLODYMYR'S CURRENT-DAY HOME - DAY

Volodymyr is surrounded by more of his men than usual. They
are all armed and are checking their weapons. None of the
usual women, including Athena, are there.

VOLODYMYR

Listen up!
 We are going to hit them at his
 home.
 We don't think they know that we
 know, so they are not expecting us.
 We are going to go in fast and
 hard. They won't know what hit
 them.
 We are going to get all of them.
 Gonna clean the place up.
 And I want that scum Semion for
 myself, you hear?! I want to gut
 him like a fish myself!

EXT. SEMION'S MANSION - DAY

Volodymyr, Vasyl, and the rest of their men sneak,
 surrounding Semion's mansion house, all of them armed.

Vasyl and two more men go up to front door. The two stand to
 the sides and Vasyl kicks in the door.
 A man inside in full riot gear immediately shoots a non-
 lethal shotgun projectile (A.K.A. bean-bag) at Vasyl,
 knocking him on his back.

Instantly, there is commotion of cars, screeching wheels, and
 sirens as they are surrounded by F.B.I. SWAT teams seemingly
 out of nowhere.
 Volodymyr's men are completely caught off-guard. One raises
 his gun and is immediately taken down by a sniper.
 Some get knocked down and cuffed by agents while the rest
 scatter.

EXT. BACK YARDS OF PRIVATE HOMES - DAY

Parkour-style chase scene 1:
 One of Volodymyr's men, chased by an F.B.I. agent, runs and
 vaults like a cat over tall fence without even slowing down,
 only to be met on the other side by two more agents with
 their guns already drawn.

EXT. DEAD-END ALLEY BETWEEN TALL BUILDINGS - DAY

Parkour-style chase scene 2:
 Another of Volodymyr's men runs at similar speed into a
 narrow dead end alley.
 Without slowing down, he uses his momentum to rebound upwards
 off the walls of the two adjacent buildings and grabs onto a
 metal fire escape ladder several feet up, only to see the
 ladder slide down from his weight.

A cop jumps up, grabs him by the pant as he comes down, and cuffs his leg to the metal ladder. Then steps back and casually lights a cigarette.

EXT. CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR PLAYGROUND - DAY

A World Chase Tag (WCT) style chase scene:
 Third one of his men is chased by an agent through a playground. The goon tries to evade using the playground equipment. The pursuer keeps right up.
 The cop jumps on a merry-go-around, trying to get across it. The goon spins it making the cop move away instead of toward him and the pursuer flies off and falls.
 The goon runs out of playground and bounds right over a police car which just blocked his path, only to immediately slam into another F.B.I. S.U.V. which just pulled up from the other direction. He smacks into it and falls on the ground and is cuffed.

EXT. SEMION'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Sound of circling police helicopters above. Whop-whop-whop. And the barely understandable sound of the helicopter's repeating PA system:

HELICOPTER PA (O.S.)
 FBbhbh abhgents are currently
 lookbhbh bhr several fugitbhbhbh.
 White males ibh bhbhlack clothing.
 Subjects considbhbhrmed and
 dangerous. If bhbh, do not
 approach. Call 911 immebhbtey.

Volodymyr is too self-composed to run. He stands still, surrounded by F.B.I. agents with pointing guns. He's angry, but he slowly raises his hands.

INT. JON'S HOUSE - EVENING

Door rings. It's Athena, alone.

JON
 (Happy to see her)
 Hey! Was just thinking about you.

Athena, looking gloom. Walks in.

JON (CONT'D)
 What's the matter?

Athena turns her head away.

ATHENA

Turn on the TV.

Concerned, Jon grabs remote and turns on TV.
Some sit-com is on.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

Turn to the news.

Jon changes channels. It's Semion's mansion, surrounded by F.B.I. agents and cars, car lights still flashing, and police tape.

NEWSCASTER

According to our sources, this major bust was a culmination of months of undercover work by the F.B.I., penetrating deep into what they describe as a major criminal gang. The agency was finally forced to make its move as the members moved to eliminate a rival gang in an act of settling scores. Dozens of arrests were made, including this man - Volodymyr Kopatchenko, who the agency says is the alleged leader.

Volodymyr's mug shot on screen.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

F.B.I. calls it a "major blow to local organized crime", while criticizing voices already express concern about other gangs coming in to fill the void.

JON

(Shocked)

Volodymyr has been arrested!
Are you in danger? Are they coming after you?

Athena looks like she doesn't know what to say, then looks at the TV again and gestures to it to Jon.

Jon looks up. It's a view of the outside of Semion's mansion again. Agents in F.B.I. jackets are milling around. The camera zooms in on the agents. A female agent in the middle turns around. It's Athena.

Jon turns around to look at Athena, mouth open, trying to find words.

JON (CONT'D)
 You...? You... You're F.B.I.?
 YOU are the "months of undercover
 work". You're the agent.

Athena looks down. Nods her head.
 Jon sits down, trying to process.

JON (CONT'D)
 Was any of it even real? Is that
 even your name?

ATHENA
 (Quietly)
 REBECCA. It's Rebecca.

JON
 (Mouths)
 Rebecca.
 Do you even have a sister?

ATHENA/REBECCA
 I did.
 She was my older, big sis. I adored
 her. She was my hero.
 Until she turned fifteen.
 She met an older boy. Swooned for
 him. He was bad news.
 He got her hooked on meth.
 Suddenly, she wasn't my older
 sister anymore. Suddenly she was
 some other, strange, scary person I
 didn't even recognize.
 And that was just the start.

Jon sits listening without a word.

ATHENA/REBECCA (CONT'D)
 We wouldn't see her for days. Then
 she disappeared altogether.
 The police later told us she did
 prostitution. Turns out the guy was
 much older than he looked and was
 part of an organized group.
 They did this to a lot of girls.
 Lured them in, got them hooked,
 then prostituted them out.
 They found her body. It was
 determined a suicide.

Jon is speechless for a while.

JON
 Who did Volodymyr help?

ATHENA/REBECCA

It was another agent. It was a way to gain his trust. To make him think I owed him a favor. Being his real estate agent also let us know about his finances and money laundering and all his properties. We've been gathering information for almost a year. But now we had no choice but to make a move.

JON

You used your sister's death?!

ATHENA/REBECCA

Used it? No. The story - yes, I used the story. They teach us to make it as real as you can. But I did it for her. For her memory. The day they brought back her body was the day I decided this is what I wanted to do.

BEAT

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Her name was Athena.

JON

So this is revenge, then? Did he work for Volodymyr? Was that it?

REBECCA

No. Volodymyr has a rule against using children. The guy was offed in prison when I was still in high school for ratting out the rest of the gang. This is just a promise I made her.

BEAT

REBECCA (CONT'D)

We all have our debts to pay.

JON

Was any of it real at all? Was any of it real?!

REBECCA

I didn't mean it to be. But yes, in the end some of it was real. You. And Sasha also. That was real.

Jon has a sudden flash of realization.

JON

You coming here. The seduction. All of it. He told you to do it, didn't it? It was his dumb-ass idea of paying me back. Wasn't it?

Rebecca turns her head away in shame, giving away the answer.

REBECCA

I didn't have to say yes. I didn't have to do everything the ordered. He respected that I couldn't be ordered around. It's how I separated myself from all his bimbos. How do you think I got him to treat me differently? To let me into his circle? I didn't have to say yes.

JON

Then why did you?!

REBECCA

Because I wanted to! Because after months of living a lie I needed to feel something real too! And because I liked you. How content you seemed. And how Sasha was changing around you. I'm sorry. I didn't expect to get sucked in. And I didn't expect you would be. You seemed so incorruptible. Like you wanted nothing. I thought there'd be no harm. I didn't expect to get caught in my own net. I wanted to tell you, but couldn't. It would have put you at risk too.

JON

How can I trust you? How can I believe anything you say now?

REBECCA

Because I have nothing more to gain by deceiving you. Because I am here.

JON

Not enough. Did you really think you'd just say: "sorry" and I'd just pretend it never happened?

REBECCA

No, I didn't.

JON

Then why are you here?

REBECCA

Because I owed it to you. To look you in the face and confess. To take my punishment - to see you look at me in resentment and have to live with it. I make no excuses. Even knowing the cost I'd do it again. It's easy to forget those who are not in front of your face. To only think about those you know. But not for me. I have seen the files. I know the damage he was causing. I don't hate him. In fact, almost the opposite. That's why it was so easy to pretend. But he had to be stopped. As much as I hate myself right now, I could not live with myself if I did nothing. I am not here to beg forgiveness. I am here to pay the price. To see that look on your face and know I deserve it. And you deserve to see me admit it.

There are now tears in her eyes.

JON

Where is Sasha?

REBECCA

He's safe. They have him.

JON

What will happen to him now?

REBECCA

(Looking unhappy)
He'll be processed through the system.

JON

What does that that mean? He has no other family.

Rebecca looks flat-out depressed now.

REBECCA

It means bureaucracy. It means being bounced between foster homes until he's eighteen.

Jon's is visibly angry.

JON

Please leave.

Rebecca bows down her head. Takes in a deep breath. Turns and leaves without another word, head still bowed.

EXT. SHORE, SUNSET - DAY

Jon sitting, looking at the ocean. Other spearfishermen come out of the water with some catch, but this time he's in his regular clothes. He is not going in.

INT. JON'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jon sits in his living room, head down, lights off, holding a glass of wine in his hand, but not drinking. He gets up, picks up the open bottle of Rebecca's favorite Gewürztraminer, looks at the label, and pours it down the drain.

INT. F.B.I. WITNESS ROOM - DAY

Sasha sits, head bowed in a victims' room in F.B.I. building. Rebecca comes in. Sasha lifts his head and sees her.

SASHA

Aunt Athena!

REBECCA

Hello, Sasha! How are you doing?

SASHA

Aunt Athena, what is going on?
Where's my dad?

REBECCA

(sadly)

He's fine. Sasha, there are some things I have to tell you.

Rebecca sits down with Sasha.

INT. F.B.I. BUILDING OFFICE - DAY

Rebecca stands in front of her unlikable-looking F.B.I. BOSS (50's, not in shape) seated behind a desk.

F.B.I. BOSS

Special Agent Stevens. I've got to say, we are really all impressed with the outstanding job you've pulled off here. Over a dozen solid arrests - racketeering, smuggling, money laundering. It's all there. And you threw in Conspiracy to Commit Assault with Deadly Weapons for good measure too. Haha! Too bad we don't have enough to get him on murder of that guy of his we found floating in the ocean. But heck, who cares about some lowlife, right? Sure would have looked good in the file, though. Let me tell you, you're looking real good right now. There's talk of a promotion to Supervisory Agent. You'd be doing what I'm doing. No more of that dangerous stuff. More pay, less work. It's a sweet gig. Take my word for it. And to tell you on the down-low, the department owes you right now. You can probably dictate the terms. Get all you can, while you can. Know what I mean?

REBECCA

The boy.

F.B.I. BOSS

What? What boy?

REBECCA

Volodymyr's boy. The son.

F.B.I. BOSS

Oh, yeah. What about him?

REBECCA

What'll happen to him now?

F.B.I. BOSS

Oh, don't worry about it. It's for Social Services.

REBECCA

(Slightly angrily)

But what will happen to him?

F.B.I. BOSS

Oh, you know. The usual. They'll send him to foster home until he's a legal adult.

REBECCA

I want to take legal custody.

F.B.I. BOSS

What?!

REBECCA

I want legal custody. I want to take care of the boy.

F.B.I. BOSS

Oh, come on, Rebecca. You've done this a bit too long. You're in too deep. Relax. You got earned time off. Take it. Go somewhere and unwind. Have a few drinks on the beach. I hear Belize is real nice.

REBECCA

I want to take care of the boy.

F.B.I. BOSS

Well, if you really want to bother, you'll have to go through the courts. We've got nothing to do with it.

REBECCA

Yes, but that'll take months. You know people in the system. You could put in words. You said the department owes me.

F.B.I. Boss's demeanor clearly shows he's too lazy to deal with this.

F.B.I. BOSS

Come on, Rebecca. Think about it. Do you really think any judge would even give you custody? You're the one who put his dad in prison. No Social Services worker will vouch for it. The kid will hate you when he finds out. Come on. You owe them nothing. Why do you care anyway?

REBECCA

He's a child.

F.B.I. BOSS

He's a bad guy's kid. We're the good guys.

REBECCA

Thanks for reminding me.

Rebecca walks out angrily.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Jon walks on campus past same area as before. The sunflowers now look neglected, like they have not been watered too long.

Sound off. Jon is giving a lecture, but there is no enthusiasm in him. Students raise hands, but he doesn't even notice, just continues to write something on the board. Suzy, who had her hand up as usual, puts it down and looks disappointed.

INT. JON'S OFFICE - DAY

Bob stands at the door again, cluelessly enthusiastic.

BOB

Hey, how's it going?

Jon glances up, but doesn't say anything.

BOB (CONT'D)

What's up with you? How come you're looking so glum these days?

JON

(Reluctantly)

I, eh, just got out of a relationship.

BOB
 Ah! Well, don't sweat it. You know
 what they say? There's plenty of
 fish in the sea. She's just
 another...

Jon cuts him off with an angrily:

JON
 She's not just another...!

Jon stops himself.
 Bob sees the angry look on Jon's face and doesn't continue.

BOB
 I, eh... I gotta go. I got a..., a
 class...

Jon sits there a bit confused at his own reaction. He doesn't
 return to what he was doing. He looks into space for a couple
 moments. Then has an urgent realization.
 He grabs his phone, fumbles for a card in his wallet, and
 starts dialing hurriedly.
 He's impatient as the phone rings.

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE
 Hello?

JON
 (Surprised)
 Um..., may I speak with..., is this
 Athena's phone? I mean Rebecca's.
 Officer Rebecca, umm, I don't even
 know her last name.

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE
 How can I help you?

JON
 I need to speak with Rebecca.
 May I speak with her directly,
 please? It is important.

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE
 Who is speaking?

JON
 My name is Jon Wright. She knows
 me. It's important.

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE
 Jon Wright. Please hold on.

There's a delay as agent checks some information.

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE (CONT'D)

Yes, Mr. Wright. I see your name in the file.
I'm sorry. Special Agent Stevens has been placed in Witness Protection Program. She can not be reached directly.

JON

Withn..., what...? Witness Protection?
What do you mean: "Witness Protection"? But she's an F.B.I. officer, isn't she?

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE

The title is "Agent". I'm sorry. I can take a message and pass it on up the chain. But I can't promise anything. Someone else will make the decision. I just answer the phone.

JON

Um. Yes. Just tell her I called. Please let her Jon Wright called. That's all. It's important.

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE

Very well, Mr. Wright. I'll send it up the chain.

JON

Thank you.

Jon hangs up. He sits, looking a little stunned.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Jon is lecturing. Still completely unenthusiastic, not even looking at the class.

JON

You were assigned to read Chekhov's *The Chameleon*. Can anyone tell me why is it called "The Chameleon"?

A thin hand rises in the back. Jon perks up, until he realizes that it is some unfamiliar student.

STUDENT 3

Because the police officer is completely inauthentic.

(MORE)

STUDENT 3 (CONT'D)

He changes who he is based on circumstance, depending on whom he wants to gain favor with, without any regard for the truth or the other people. He's like a chameleon.

Jon is completely taken back, he stands staring for a moment, shocked, looking like he's about to cry. The swallows hard.

JON

Yes, thank you.

The student goes on, but Jon is not hearing anything anymore. We only hear sad background music.

EXT. JON'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Music is still playing. Jon drives up to his house and parks. He walks to the door.

A police car, lights flashing, is seen parked behind another car across the street from Jon's house. An officer talks the driver sitting in the car.

Jon closes the door, goes inside, and freezes. So does the music.

Rebecca sits on the couch, nervously waiting.

REBECCA

Hello Jon.

JON

Athen..., I mean... What are you doing here?

REBECCA

I got the message. You called.

JON

They said you were in Witness Protection? What is going on? How did you get in here?

Rebecca looks down.

REBECCA

Yes. Volodymyr has put out a contract on me. We found out from one of our sources in the detention center.

They're watching your house. I'm sorry I had to sneak in like this, but that was the only way.

JON

Wha...?! A contract? But you're a federal agent. He's gone insane.

REBECCA

I'm afraid he doesn't care anymore. He figures he has nothing left to lose. He's furious I fooled him. Nothing is more dangerous than a man who has nothing to lose.

JON

This is not a god-damn time to be quoting Sun Tzu!
Do you not realize the risk you're in, being here?!

REBECCA

I do. But the risk if I didn't respond was greater.

Jon tries to take it all in. Rebecca continues.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Don't worry. He's very low on manpower right now. Most of them have been arrested. And they don't really expect me to come see you. Remember - Volodymyr still thinks me seducing you was his idea.

But seeing the angry, pained look Jon shoots her, Rebecca lowers her eyes and wishes she didn't bring that up. Then changes subject.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

It's just some totally green flunky who wasn't even high enough on the totem pole to be at the raid. He's sitting in his car out front right now. The local cops are helping by distracting him with questioning. I came in the back. They're instructed to keep him busy with a fake "identity check" until I'm gone. But we don't have a lot of time.
I have to go. I don't know when we'll be able to see each other again. Maybe never. I'll be in hiding until it's safe. They're giving me a new identity.
What did you want to tell me?

JON

(Mainly to himself)
Gone. In hiding. New identity.
It doesn't matter now. It's too
late. It'll make no difference.

REBECCA

I thought I'd tell you. I tried to
ask for Sasha's custody. I don't
want the boy to suffer for what his
dad did.

JON

You mean you don't want to feel
guilty for being part of it?

REBECCA

Yes. That too. But mostly just
because I care about him. I've
grown fond of that boy.
Thing about living another identity
for so long, is you can't help part
of it becoming real. Caring about
some people...

Rebecca looks up at him longingly as she says this.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Now, there is zero chance I'd get
custody being in Witness
Protection.
I'm sorry.

Rebecca sits another moment, looking sad.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

I have to go.
Goodbye, Jon.

Rebecca walks to back door.
Jon is thinking frantically.
Just as Rebecca opens the back door, he calls out to her:

JON

Rebecca! Wait!

Jon bolts toward Rebecca and holds her by the shoulder.

JON (CONT'D)

Wait. I have an idea. I think.

Rebecca looks at Jon questioningly, but with hope.
Jon's eyes are darting nervously. He's thinking fast.

JON (CONT'D)

I think I have an idea.
I think I know his pressure point.
But I need to know you are onboard.
And I need you to pull some favors.

INT. FEDERAL DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Jon is being led through the facility. Hallways. Metal doors opening and closing. Jon gets seated in a prisoner visitation cubicle in front of a clear plastic window. After moment a prisoner is brought in on the other side. He gets seated across from Jon. It's Volodymyr. Volodymyr smiles, glad to see it's Jon.

VOLODYMYR

Well, if it's not Mr. Professor. So good to see you.

JON

How are you?

VOLODYMYR

How am I? Same as always. They think they can get me to surrender just because they put me in a box. I'm going to own the box. I'm going to be the king of the damn box!

BEAT

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

So, did you come to gloat? To tell me you were right the whole time?

JON

No. I've come in to call in your debt.

VOLODYMYR

(Smile drops)

I see. Last chance and all that? I'd figured you'd come for it sooner or later. Alright, shoot. What can I do you for?

(Smiles again)

JON

Athena.

VOLODYMYR

Oh. Her. Don't worry. That's already being taken care of. The bitch will get what's coming. She won't be breaking anyone else heart anytime soon.

JON

I know. I want you to call off the hit.

VOLODYMYR

What?! Fool!
Damn it. Haven't you figured it out yet? I sent her.
Come to think of it, it's me you should hate. Not her.
I sent her. I thought I was doing you a favor. Trying to pay back.

JON

I know.

VOLODYMYR

And you still want to save her? You sentimental idiot!
She got you convinced, doesn't she? She's good, you know. Damn, she's good. Had me spun around her finger too. Don't you see what she'd doing? She's playing you like a sad cello. She's using you to try to save her ass.

JON

I don't think so. I believe her.

VOLODYMYR

Why?!

JON

Because she came to me before they knew about the hit.

Volodymyr, looks away. He has no good response for that.

JON (CONT'D)

And what about Sasha?

VOLODYMYR

(Angrily)
Don't you bring up my son?!

JON

What about him? What's going to happen to him now?

Volodymyr, turns away completely, trying hide his face.

VOLODYMYR

He'll have no needs.

JON

He'll always have needs.

VOLODYMYR

Ha! You think because they froze my accounts? You think I didn't plan for this?

JON

I wasn't taking about money. He's in the system. He's going to be bounced around from government-subsidized foster home to foster home. He'll have no one. Is that what you wanted for him?

Volodymyr squeezes his eyes and his fist in anger, trying to not cry out.

VOLODYMYR

You promised! You promised to take care of him.

JON

And I am trying to. If I can get him out of the system. Not easy for a single person on a teacher's salary and no parenting experience. But how well do you think that will go when he knows his father killed the partner of the man who is raising him, the woman he loved? The same woman who Sasha adores himself? The closest thing he has to a mother figure. Or did you really believe he won't find out one day one way or another?

VOLODYMYR

How dare you use him against me?

JON

I am not. I am using you for him. I have a proposition for you.

(MORE)

JON (CONT'D)

You want him to grow up mentally healthy and happy, and successful? He needs a family. A family who cares about him and who he knows and trusts. Or do you think one of your bullies is going to do it? Imagine how well that will work out. I'm offering you a deal: Sasha's life for hers.

Volodymyr's eye shoot out like fire with anger and fear.

JON (CONT'D)

Call it off and let us raise him together. She has connections. An F.B.I. agent with an outstanding record and a stable college professor. Should be no problem. She can pull some strings to make it go fast. They owe her. And I already spoke to the special admission department about that prodigy program. They are interested. With a some intensive study we can get him ready. I think right now he'll need the distraction.

VOLODYMYR

You want the bitch who put me in here to raise my son?!

JON

She didn't put you in here. You did. She was just better than you at her game. Would you respect anyone less? Would you trust anyone less with your son?

EXT. SHORE - DAY

BEGIN FLASHBACK

SPEARING INSTRUCTOR

You must equalize the pressures from both sides or suffer great pain.

END FLASHBACK

L-CUT TO:

INT. DETENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Volodymyr chuckles bitterly, but starts thinking. Then, after an extended time in thought, replies.

VOLODYMYR

And how well do you think it'll go when he finds out who put me in this box? Or did you think he won't find THAT out?

JON

He won't have to. We are going to tell him, if he hasn't already figured it out. He's smart. She came to check on him in Social Services. How well it'll go? That'll depend on you and what you tell him. He adores you. And he listens to what you teach him. It'll all depend on what you teach him. Do that and we're even on your debt to me for saving his life.

VOLODYMYR

Hmmm. You have a funny idea of "even".

As Jon is saying the following words, the sound becomes progressively muffled, like speaking underwater or when one's ears become plugged from change in pressure.

JON

Would you rather he took his chances in the system? Or do you think one of your warm and fuzzy associates will give him a good environment? How many friends you think he'll have, always followed by bodyguards? With you out of the way and him living with us, he won't be in harm's way. This is his chance for a normal life.

Volodymyr thinks a long time. There is a muffled hum. There is a sudden sucking sound, like the ears popping, and the sound instantly becomes clear and normal again. He has made a decision.

VOLODYMYR

You have to promise me one thing.

JON

What's that?

VOLODYMYR

That you will never let him come here. Never let him see me like this. Don't let him see my shame. Let him grow up like you.

JON

No deal.

VOLODYMYR

What?!

JON

I can raise him, but I can't be his father. Only you can be that. He needs his father too. If you cooperate with the feds, you may even get out one day to play with your grand kids.

VOLODYMYR

Cooperate? You mean: "snitch"? Volodymyr isn't a rat.

JON

Fine. Then you can have Semion and his bullies have the last laugh. He's already making moves to take your territory. He had F.B.I. do his dirty work for him. You can let him. Or you can have the F.B.I. do your dirty work for you too. Just a thought.

Volodymyr thinks about it, but says nothing at first. Then continues.

VOLODYMYR

Well, that's all nice to talk about, but I don't know if or when they will even let me see him. I mean Sasha. Maybe never.

JON

You can do it right now. He's here with me. He's waiting in the other room. Told you she could pull some favors.

VOLODYMYR

He's here?!
See me now? Like this? In a box?
Through a glass?

JON

Athena's boss spoke to the warden.
They are making special exception
for a child at her request. They
are aware of her involvement in
your arrest. So the request coming
from her carries a lot of weight.

VOLODYMYR

Hmm... More god-damn favors, is it?

Volodymyr, thinks a moment again.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

OK. OK. Let's do this.

INT. DETENTION CENTER FAMILY MEETING ROOM - DAY

Large room with steel tables and benches bolted down to the
floor. Volodymyr is seated, stooping. Jon stands in room
corner with a guard.
Sasha is brought in.
Volodymyr immediately stands up and lights up.

VOLODYMYR

Sashenka!

SASHA

Papa!

Sasha runs over and hugs him. The guard makes move to object,
but Jon holds him back.

SKIP FORWARD

Still in family meeting room. Jon and the guard are still
standing, looking a little tired.
Sasha stands in front of his seated dad. Both heads are bowed
and Volodymyr has his hand on the side of Sasha's neck,
holding him closer, heads together. He speaks solemnly. Sasha
solemnly listens and nods.
Finally Volodymyr raises his head and beckons Jon with a
look.
Jon walks over.

VOLODYMYR

Sasha. I want you to go with uncle Jon, OK. Do you remember aunt Athena?

Sasha nods.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Uncle Jon and aunt Athena are going to take care for you for a while. Though she may want you to call her something else now. You can trust them. They are my friends. You are going to live with them for a while. Would you like that?

Sasha lights up and nods vigorously.

VOLODYMYR (CONT'D)

Good.
Your father has to pay some debts.

INT. JUST OUTSIDE A COURTROOM - DAY

Jon and Rebecca, professionally dressed. Sasha sits close by.

REBECCA

Are you sure about this? Is this what you want?

JON

Yes.

REBECCA

I thought you said you needed nothing.

JON

Sometimes you don't know you needed something until you need it.

INT. INSIDE COURTROOM, LATER - DAY

Jon and Rebecca in front of a judge with Sasha.

JUDGE

Special Agent Stevens and Mr. Wright. I have reviewed the file and I've got to say, you seem like very good prospects for taking care of this child.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

But the circumstance are highly unusual, to say the least. In fact, I'd be highly suspicious of your motives, Agent Stevens, if it wasn't for this signed document from the sole surviving parent requesting that his custody be given to the two of you. He actually specifies you by name. My concern is; however, what happens if..., when... the child...

JON

He knows, your honor.

JUDGE

He knows?!

JON

Yes, sir. He knows everything.

JUDGE

And he's OK with it?!

JON

Perhaps it's better to ask him.

JUDGE

(To Sasha)

Alexander Kopatchenko

JON

He prefers "Sasha".

JUDGE

OK. Sasha. Do you want to live with these two people standing here?

SASHA

(Gladly)

Yes, sir.

JUDGE

Why?

SASHA

Because they are my fiends. And because my father told me to trust them. I always believe my father.

The judge leans back.

JUDGE

Well, then, who am I to stand in
your way?
Petition for Custody approved!

Judge strikes gavel.

EXT. SHORE, SAME PLACE WHERE CAR WENT OFF THE BANK - SUNNY
DAY

Jon, Sasha, and Rebecca standing dressed in their dive suits
(no guns or knives).

Jon looks to the left and right at Sasha and at Rebecca.

JON

Ready?

REBECCA

Ready.

SASHA

Ready.

Rebecca and Sasha take Jon's hands and all three jump in the
water together.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

UNDERWATER SHOT POINTING UP AT THE SURFACE

Surface is broken from above by three figures holding hands -
man, woman, and boy.

CLOSING CREDITS

Stinger (part way through credits):

INT. PRISON - DAY

A prisoner pushes a squeaky mail cart down a cell block.

MAIL PRISONER

Hey, Kapatch! You got mail.

Volodymyr opens the envelope. It's a photo of Sasha on a boat
in dive gear, a speargun next to him, holding a giant fish
with both hands for the camera.

Volodymyr puts the photo up on a wall next to a whole bunch of other pictures of his son, both solo ones and with Rebecca and Jon.

END