

THE VIEWER

Written by
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Celestial Cinema

FADE IN:

EXT. A GARDEN -- NIGHT -- 1988

An English garden behind a government-issue house. 3:00 AM by the light -- that hour that belongs to no one.

In the middle of the wet lawn, in pajamas, sits a BOY. Four years old. Cross-legged. Spine straight as a plumb line -- a posture no four-year-old should know. Eyes open. Seeing nothing in front of him.

Somewhere else.

At the lit kitchen window: a WOMAN in a dressing gown. MARGARET DAMUS, 30s. She has clearly been standing there a long time. She does not go out to him. She does not call his name.

She watches her son the way you watch weather -- something vast, arriving, not yours to stop.

And on her face, fear and awe fight to a draw, and something else wins instead. A decision.

MARGARET (V.O.)
(barely a whisper)
There he is.

The boy's head turns -- toward the window, toward her -- eyes still full of the other place.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM -- NIGHT

Screens wall to wall. Satellite imagery of Ukraine's eastern corridor -- armor massing in gridded formations. A digital clock in the corner of the main display counts down:
71:58:22.

A DOZEN INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS around the table. Nobody is sitting back in their chair.

DIRECTOR ELENA CHEN, 60s, stands at the head. Behind her, a second screen: a stack of scanned transcripts, each stamped in red -- INCONCLUSIVE.

CHEN
Seven viewers. Four allied
programs.

(MORE)

CHEN (CONT'D)
Every remote session against
Kremlin targets comes back static.
They've found a way to jam us.

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR HOLT, 50s, silver hair, reading
glasses pushed up on his forehead. He taps a third screen --
a map of Central Asia. Three borders converging on a shaded
river basin.

HOLT
And this?

CHEN
The Amaryn Basin. Three nations,
one aquifer, all of them six weeks
from empty reservoirs. Moscow's
been arming the northern side for a
year. If that basin goes hot, they
have their pretext to move
everywhere else.

HOLT
So the war starts over water.

CHEN
The war starts wherever they can
call it a rescue.

Silence. Down the table, apart from the others -- KATHERINE
SHAW, 40s, dark suit, no notes in front of her. She watches
the people, not the screens.

HOLT
Options.

CHEN
Signals are dark. Human assets are
dark. The viewers are our only
reach inside that building, and the
viewers are blind.

HOLT
Then get me a viewer who isn't.

Nobody answers. Holt scans the table. Stops on Shaw.

HOLT (CONT'D)
Shaw. You ran the program.

SHAW
I ran part of it.

HOLT
You're not saying a name.

SHAW
Because you already know it.

Chen looks up sharply.

CHEN
He's out. Four years.

SHAW
He's the only viewer who ever
penetrated Kremlin-level shielding.
Nine Level-Five targets. No
detection. It's in the file.

HOLT
Where is he?

SHAW
Fiji.

A beat. Somebody almost laughs. Nobody does.

HOLT
Get him.

SHAW
He won't come.

HOLT
I didn't ask if he'd come
willingly.

Shaw holds Holt's stare a moment longer than she should.

SHAW
I'll go myself.

INT. THE KREMLIN -- INNER COUNCIL CHAMBER -- NIGHT

A long room. FOUR MEN around a table built for forty. Maps. A samovar nobody touches.

The SENIOR MAN, 70s, a face like a closed ledger, listens to a YOUNGER MAN brief from a single page. On the table between them: a map of the AMARYN BASIN, and a schedule with one date circled in red.

The senior man studies the circle. Then draws the page toward himself, takes out a pen, and beneath the circled date writes a single word in Cyrillic.

He caps the pen.

The four men rise. The meeting is over. It lasted four minutes, and everything after this is consequence.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAVARUA ISLAND, FIJI -- DAWN

Turquoise water, flat as glass. A white beach. Palm shadows reaching across the sand toward a single weathered chair.

In the chair: OSCAR DAMUS, 40s. Barefoot. Linen shirt open. Three-day beard. A bottle of Fiji Gold planted in the sand beside him, a hand-rolled cigarette burning down between two fingers.

He watches the horizon like it owes him money.

A FISHING BOAT works the near shore. Its captain, SEMI, 60s, thick forearms, calls across the water.

SEMI

Oscar! You eating today or just drinking?

OSCAR

Drinking is eating if you commit to it.

SEMI

My wife says you're getting skinny.

OSCAR

Tell Losa I'm meditating.

SEMI

You've been meditating since Tuesday.

OSCAR

It's a long meditation.

Semi shakes his head. Goes back to his nets.

Oscar pulls on the bottle. Then -- his eyes close. His spine straightens, one vertebra at a time, until the slouch is gone and something upright and precise is sitting in the drunk's chair.

His face empties. He is somewhere else.

Three seconds. Five.

His eyes open. He looks at the horizon -- north -- like he heard something coming from very far away. He picks up the bottle and drinks against it.

EXT. TAVARUA VILLAGE -- MORNING

A dirt lane between houses. Chickens. Cooking smoke. Oscar walks it barefoot, and the village flows around him like he grew here.

LOSA, 50s, Semi's wife, runs an outdoor kitchen the way a general runs a front. She hands Oscar a banana-leaf parcel without being asked.

LOSA
You look terrible.

OSCAR
Good morning, Losa.

LOSA
I mean it. You look like something
the reef gave back.

Oscar unwraps the parcel. Steam. Fish, cassava.

OSCAR
This smells incredible.

LOSA
Don't change the subject with my
cooking.

She studies him. He eats standing up, not meeting her eyes.

LOSA (CONT'D)
People who are home don't sit on
the beach at three in the morning
staring at the dark.

OSCAR
I'm fine.

LOSA
You need a haircut.

She turns back to her fire. Conversation over. Verdict pending.

EXT. TAVARUA BEACH -- 3:00 AM (EARLIER THAT WEEK)

Black water. Starfield. Oscar sitting bolt upright in the sand -- not the drunk's slouch. The monks' posture. Eyes open, seeing nothing in front of him. Somewhere else.

His breath fogs faintly -- the night isn't cold.

He surfaces with a start, hand going to his chest, heart audible in the silence. He looks around -- the empty beach, the indifferent stars -- like a man checking whether he was followed.

Up the beach, in the treeline: LOSA. In a nightdress, unmoving, watching. She's been there a while.

They look at each other across the dark sand. Neither speaks. She doesn't ask.

She turns and goes back toward the houses. Oscar looks out at the black water.

Whatever is out there has started ringing his phone.

EXT. LAGOON -- NIGHT

Semi's boat at anchor inside the reef, a pressure lamp hissing at the bow. Semi and Oscar work handlines in a silence with years of practice in it.

Semi pulls a snapper over the rail, brains it with one economical motion, drops it in the box.

SEMI

Losa says you're leaving.

OSCAR

Losa hasn't said anything to me.

SEMI

She said it to me. That's how you'll find out.

Oscar almost smiles. Rebait. Casts.

SEMI (CONT'D)

Eleven years, I never asked what you did before.

OSCAR

No. You never did.

A long pause. The lamp hisses. Water slaps the hull.

SEMI
I'm not asking now, either.

OSCAR
I know.

SEMI
I'm saying -- whatever it was. It's coming here. Losa feels it. The dogs feel it. You sit on my beach at three in the morning like a man listening for a boat.

Oscar looks at the black horizon. North.

OSCAR
Not a boat.

EXT. TAVARUA BEACH -- AFTERNOON

A driftwood table. A battered chess board. Oscar across from THREE ISLAND KIDS. KID #1, ten, shoves his queen deep into enemy territory with total confidence.

OSCAR
What are you doing.

KID #1
Attacking.

OSCAR
You're offering your queen to someone who didn't ask for her.

KID #1
She's a sacrifice.

OSCAR
Who taught you that word.

KID #1
You did.

OSCAR
Castle first. Protect what you can't replace. Then we talk about sacrifice.

A sound. Distant. Mechanical. Wrong for this place.

Oscar's head comes up before the kids hear it.

TWO F/A-18s clear the treeline at low altitude and bank hard over the lagoon. The roar rips the afternoon open. Kids scatter. Market umbrellas go over. Islanders pour out of houses, pointing at the sky.

Oscar doesn't look up. He looks north, out at the water --
-- where TWO BLACK HAWKS come over the horizon, low and fast.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
(quiet)
Seventy-two hours.

He stands. Brushes the sand off. And walks down the beach to meet it.

EXT. TAVARUA BEACH -- CONTINUOUS

The Black Hawks flare and set down. Sand blasts sideways. EIGHT OPERATORS deploy, weapons slung, spreading into a loose perimeter they're too polite to call a perimeter.

The islanders bunch at a distance. Semi at the front. He looks at Oscar. Oscar looks back: an apology without words.

A TEAM LEADER approaches.

TEAM LEADER
Mr. Damus. We've been sent to --

OSCAR
Where is she.

TEAM LEADER
Sir?

OSCAR
Shaw. She wouldn't send this and not come.

From the second helicopter: KATHERINE SHAW steps down onto the sand. City shoes. She crosses to him and stops six feet short. Four years of silence stands in the gap.

SHAW
You look --

OSCAR
Don't.

SHAW

Seventy-two hours. Maybe less.
Moscow's jamming every viewer we
have, and when that clock hits zero
they move. You're the only one who
ever got through.

OSCAR

No.

SHAW

Oscar --

OSCAR

I said no. Find another way.

SHAW

There isn't one. That's why I'm
standing on your beach.

OSCAR

Then the world has a problem.

He turns to go.

SHAW

Your mother left you something.

He stops. The beach goes quiet under the rotor wash.

SHAW (CONT'D)

A sealed file in the deep archive,
under her handler number. Marked
for you. Nobody's opened it. I
found it eight months ago and I've
spent eight months deciding whether
bringing it here was mercy or
leverage.

Oscar doesn't turn around.

OSCAR

Which did you decide?

SHAW

I decided you'd want it either way.

She takes a SEALED ENVELOPE from her jacket. Yellowed. A CIA
routing code in the corner -- and one word in handwriting:
Oscar.

He turns. Looks at the envelope. Looks at her. Crosses the
distance and takes it.

OSCAR
Give me an hour.

EXT. TAVARUA BEACH, NORTH END -- LATER

Oscar alone, back against a palm. The envelope in both hands. He opens it like it might go off.

Pages. Handwritten. We don't see the words. We see his face -- and the boy underneath the beard, the one who lost his mother before he knew what losing was.

He reads one page. Stops himself. Folds the letter back into the envelope and presses it flat against his chest.

A long time. The tide comes in a foot.

Then he stands, and walks back down the beach, past Shaw, straight toward the helicopters. She follows.

INT. MILITARY TRANSPORT -- NIGHT

Cargo netting and red light. Oscar strapped in a jump seat, the envelope in his breast pocket. Shaw across from him.

SHAW
You read it.

OSCAR
First page.

SHAW
And?

OSCAR
And I'll read the rest when I can afford to.

Engine drone. Shaw reaches into her jacket again. A small folded paper, worn soft at the creases.

SHAW
There's one more thing from the archive. Karim sent it through the diplomatic pouch three weeks before he died. It never got delivered. His daughter drew it.

Oscar goes completely still.

SHAW (CONT'D)
A yellow bird. He told her you
could fly anywhere without moving.

Oscar takes it. Doesn't unfold it. Puts it in his shirt
pocket, against the envelope. Two things over his heart.

OSCAR
You burned Karim.

SHAW
I know.

OSCAR
Say it like you know it.

SHAW
I moved a file with his identifier
in it. I assessed the risk as
acceptable. I was wrong, and a man
is dead because I made a
calculation I had no right to make.

OSCAR
He had a daughter. Eight years old.
Every debrief -- five minutes of
intelligence, ten minutes of what
she drew that week.

SHAW
I know.

OSCAR
When this is over, I want to know
where she is.

SHAW
Oscar --

OSCAR
That's not a request.

Shaw nods once.

Oscar closes his eyes. Breathes -- four counts in, four held,
four out. His hands settle in his lap, and go still.

And just for a flash, we're SOMEWHERE ELSE -- a burning
plain, two armies facing each other under a black sky --

His eyes snap open. He stares at the seat in front of him. He
didn't go looking for that.

It came looking for him.

SMASH CUT TO
BLACK.

TITLE: THE VIEWER

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR -- DAY

Polished floor, badge readers, the long walk. Oscar moves through the building that made him like a man counting exits. He's shaved. It doesn't help.

Shaw walks half a step behind -- escorted, both of them, by a SECURITY OFFICER. She's not leading. Oscar clocks that immediately.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- MEDICAL SUITE -- DAY

Fluorescent light on white paper. Oscar shirtless on an exam table, electrodes on his chest, four years of sun ending at his collar line. A PROGRAM PHYSICIAN, DR. LENZ, 50s, unhurried, reads the ECG strip as it feeds out.

LENZ

Resting rate fifty-one. Athlete's heart, or a monk's.

OSCAR

Same thing.

Lenz keeps reading the strip -- and slows.

LENZ

There's an artifact here. Every forty seconds or so. Like the signal drops for half a beat and comes back.

OSCAR

It's not an artifact.

Lenz looks up over his glasses.

LENZ

You've been evaluated for this?

OSCAR

I've been living with it. It started four years ago. It happens when I'm pulled.

LENZ

Pulled.

OSCAR

You have my file, Doctor. The real one. Don't make me say the words so you can watch my face while I do.

Lenz sets down the strip. A career man deciding how honest to be.

LENZ

I processed your father's intake. 1981. His baseline strip looked like yours does now.

Silence. The ECG ticks.

OSCAR

And his last one?

LENZ

(a beat)

I'll clear you for the assignment. I'm noting a cardiac watch on every session. If I call an extraction, it's not a suggestion.

OSCAR

Noted.

Oscar pulls his shirt on. At the door, Lenz's voice stops him:

LENZ

Mr. Damus. Whatever it is that bills you -- it's compounding.

OSCAR

(leaving)

Everything does.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

A long table. GENERAL MARCUS WADE, 60s, career military, a chest of ribbons he doesn't look at. And GENERAL PATRICIA OSEI, 50s, civilian-suited, precise, a single folder squared in front of her. She watches Oscar come in the way a scientist watches an anomaly: genuine interest, genuine suspicion, same expression.

Shaw takes a chair against the wall. Not at the table. Oscar reads the seating chart in one glance.

Wade slides a stack of transcripts across the table.

WADE
Every allied viewer, last six
months. Read one. Any one.

Oscar doesn't touch them.

WADE (CONT'D)
"A sense of cold intent." "A large
room, possibly underground." I have
forty thousand troops in a holding
pattern and three NATO allies
asking for a decision by oh-six-
hundred, and this is what your
program produces. Tell me which of
these I should have acted on.

OSCAR
None of them.

WADE
At last, consensus.

OSCAR
They're looking at the wrong thing.
They're trying to see the attack --
where, when, how many. You don't
need the attack. You need the
decision. The room where four men
convince each other it's already
been decided. That's a different
kind of seeing.

OSEI
And you can do that.

First time she's spoken. Low. Even.

OSCAR
I could.

OSEI
Based on what methodology?

OSCAR
Based on forty years of training
I'm not going to explain in a
briefing room.

OSEI
Then you understand my problem.
I've spent a career keeping this
agency tethered to evidence.

(MORE)

OSEI (CONT'D)

Every time intuition gets dressed up as data, people die and the autopsy is classified. You're asking a general to move armies on the word of a man whose file reads like a séance.

OSCAR

I'm not asking anyone anything. You flew the séance here.

He stands.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

This was a mistake.

He's halfway to the door when Wade opens his folder and lays ONE PHOTOGRAPH on the table. A city street. Ordinary. Crowded. Children in school uniforms crossing at a light.

WADE

Thirty-seven thousand civilians in the projected strike corridor. I don't believe in what you do, Mr. Damus. I want that on the record. But I believe in that number, and right now you are the only thing standing between that number and what it becomes.

Oscar looks at the photograph a long time.

OSCAR

(to Shaw, not Wade)

A room. Alone. No monitoring, no glass, no one taking notes on the other side of a wall. And whatever I find goes to the President directly. Not a committee.

WADE

That's not how this building --

OSCAR

That's how I work, or I'm on the next flight south.

Wade looks at Osei. Something passes between them -- the calculation of people who believe they can control the output.

Osei's look lasts one beat longer than Wade's. She isn't calculating control. She's opening a file.

WADE
Agreed.

OSCAR
Get me a chair.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- VIEWING ROOM 7 -- NIGHT

Institutional beige. Fluorescent tube overhead. A chair placed dead center by someone who read about remote viewing in a binder. One-way glass along the north wall, obvious as a confession.

Oscar closes the door. Looks straight at the glass.

OSCAR
I can feel you breathing in there.
All of you. Session starts when
that room is empty.

Beat.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
I'll wait.

He straddles the chair backwards, arms folded across the backrest. Stone patience.

Behind the glass -- a door opens and closes. Footsteps recede.

Then he goes to work.

The fluorescent tube -- twisted out of its fixture, set against the wall. Half the room falls into shadow.

The chair -- dragged to the northeast corner, angled eleven degrees off the room's axis.

Shoes off, side by side at the wall. Bare feet on carpet. Jacket folded once, placed under the chair.

He sits on the floor. Cross-legged. Spine stacking straight -- not posture, architecture.

Hands on knees, palms down. He breathes. In, four counts. Hold, four. Out, four -- an exhalation that empties more than lungs.

Seven times.

On the seventh, his hands turn over. Palms up. Fingers loose. The body of a man who has stopped holding on.

He rises, takes the chair, same verticality. Eyes close.

He goes.

INT. THE KREMLIN -- INNER COUNCIL CHAMBER -- CONTINUOUS

We're inside with him.

The shielding first -- FELT, not seen: a pressure in the walls, a hum under hearing, scattering the world like a prism. It wants him to aim. He doesn't aim.

He listens.

And in the gap between frequencies, he slips through --

-- into a long room. FOUR MEN around a table. Documents, maps, a samovar nobody has touched. The gravity of men who have already decided and are performing deliberation for the record.

Oscar drifts the length of the table. He can't hear words. He hears INTENT -- and under the intent, fear, and under the fear, an old wound wearing a uniform.

On the table: a map of the AMARYN BASIN. Three borders. One river system. Red pen circling the northern pumping stations.

One of the four men taps a date on a schedule. And Oscar feels it land like a stone in his chest:

Eighteen hours. Not seventy-two. The window moved.

And the trigger isn't tanks. It's water. When the basin's southern intake shuts down, Moscow moves -- a rescue, on camera, invited by thirst.

Oscar starts to withdraw --

-- and something PULLS.

Not the Kremlin. Older. A hook set somewhere below history. He knows better than to follow it.

He follows it.

INT. STONE HALL -- MEDIEVAL EUROPE -- NIGHT -- 1315

Cold with no machine behind it. Torchlight on wet stone. Rushes on the floor. The smell of tallow and, under everything, hunger.

A long table. Men in furs. A KING at the head, holding his posture like borrowed armor. A map weighted with candlesticks: a single green valley in a world of failed harvests.

To the King's left, a MONK, 30s, wind-burned, standing very still -- a man watching his argument die in real time.

The CHIEF ADVISOR paces, speaking. Oscar can't hear the words. He hears the intent, and it arrives like subtitles burned on the soul:

If we open the gates, they take everything. There is nothing left for our own children. We cannot survive their survival.

The Monk answers. Quiet. Two sentences. The intent: the valley can feed both. Hunger shared is hunger halved. Gates opened are gates that stay open.

The King looks from one man to the other. And Oscar -- invisible at the foot of the table -- watches the exact moment fear wins. No thunder. A tired man making the only decision he thinks he can defend. A small nod to the Advisor.

The Monk goes still, the way men go still at gravesides.

And then the pull does something it has never done -- it holds him there and shows him the AFTER:

The same hall. One winter later. The torches fewer. The furs mangier. The Advisor's chair empty. Men counting sacks of grain against a ledger, and the ledger losing. Guards on the granary now -- guarding it from their own.

Outside the walls, the valley road: quiet. The torches long gone, and everything they carried.

The King at the head of the table, thinner, staring at the map of a valley that no longer answers to him from inside walls that have begun to eat their own.

The sealed gate, sealing.

And through the high window, distant on the valley road: TORCHES. Hundreds. The hungry, coming to the gates that will not open.

Oscar surfaces --

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- CONTINUOUS

-- with a jolt. Eyes open. Breath ragged, then mastered: four counts, four, four.

He reaches under the chair, into the folded jacket. Not the government notepad on the table -- his OWN notebook. Small, black, salt-stained. He writes fast:

INSERT -- THE NOTEBOOK

"Window: 18 hrs, not 72. Trigger = Amaryn intake shutdown. They are not preventing the shutdown. They are waiting for it."

He stops. Turns the page. Writes slower:

"Second site. Medieval, ~1315. Famine valley. Same room. Same decision. Same face fear makes when it wins. Not metaphor. The same moment, seven hundred years apart. Something pulled me there. What is pulling me."

He closes the notebook. Buttons it into the jacket pocket.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR OUTSIDE ROOM 7 --
CONTINUOUS

Shaw waiting. Oscar comes out still pale.

OSCAR

Eighteen hours. The window moved.
And the trigger is the Amaryn Basin
-- the southern intake shuts down
and Moscow walks in as the fire
brigade. Get me Wade.

SHAW

The intake doesn't shut down.
There's a stabilization program --

OSCAR

Katherine. They have the shutdown
ON THEIR SCHEDULE. In that room it
isn't a risk, it's a calendar
entry. Someone is going to hand
them their pretext, and they
already know the hour.

Shaw stares at him. Somewhere behind her eyes, a door she does not want to open.

SHAW

I'll get Wade.

She goes. Oscar watches her walk away -- and notices, at the end of the corridor, OSEI. Standing. Watching him. She holds his look for exactly two seconds, then turns and is gone.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CRISIS CELL -- NIGHT

The Amaryn wall. Wade, Shaw, staff officers. Oscar's Kremlin report in the center of the table. Osei stands over it, unmoved.

OSEI

You want to move fleets on this. I want a control.

WADE

We don't have time for --

OSEI

We have ninety minutes for this, or we have a constitutional problem when the Committee asks why we repositioned the Seventh Fleet on a psychic's say-so. One sealed target. Standard protocol. He's read the manual -- he wrote half of it.

She sets a SEALED ENVELOPE on the table. Grey. A wax-stamped courier seal.

OSEI (CONT'D)

Prepared by my office an hour ago. Nobody in this building knows the contents but me.

Everyone looks at Oscar. He looks at the envelope. Then at Osei -- and something almost like amusement crosses his face.

OSCAR

You want a performance.

OSEI

I want evidence. You should be flattered. It's the only currency I take.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- NIGHT

The half-dark room. Oscar in the chair. Beyond the glass -- lit this time, by his permission, just this once -- Wade, Shaw, Osei. The sealed envelope lies on the ledge on THEIR side of the glass.

Oscar's eyes are closed. Long silence. Wade shifts his weight. Osei doesn't.

Then Oscar speaks, eyes still closed, voice level, unhurried:

OSCAR

A coastline. Northern. Cold water --
there's a lighthouse, red and
white, horizontal bands. The light
rotates but the lamp is dead.
Decommissioned.

In the observation room, nobody moves.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

There's writing on the rocks below
it. Painted. Two names and a date.
The date is wrong -- it's in the
future.

Osei's face doesn't change. Her hand does -- it closes.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

A wedding date.

Silence.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

(opening his eyes; to the
glass)
Your daughter, and a man you
haven't decided to like yet. They
painted it on the rocks at Split
Point last month. That's the
photograph in the envelope,
General. You didn't get it from
your office. You got it from your
phone.

In the observation room, Wade turns to look at Osei.

Very slowly, she opens the envelope. Draws out a PHOTOGRAPH.
We see it over her shoulder: a lighthouse, red and white
bands. Painted rocks. Two names. A date.

Wade exhales, half a laugh, no humor in it.

WADE

General?

OSEI

(quietly, eyes on the
photo)
The protocol requires two
independent confirmations.

WADE

Patricia.

A long beat. She slides the photograph back into the envelope, straightens it, aligns its edges with the ledge.

OSEI
Reposition your fleet.

She walks out. Through the glass, Oscar watches her go -- and there's no triumph in his face at all. Something closer to regret.

OSCAR
(to Shaw, through the
glass)
Tell her I'm sorry about the lamp.
It shouldn't be dead. It's a good
lighthouse.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- ROOFTOP ACCESS -- NIGHT

Gravel roof, cooling units, the Virginia dark beyond the fence line. Shaw finds Oscar at the parapet with a government coffee he isn't drinking.

SHAW
You could have picked a target that
didn't cost her something.

OSCAR
No. I couldn't. That's what none of
you ever understood -- I don't
pick. I'm handed. The envelope was
her daughter because her daughter
is what she was holding when she
sealed it.

Shaw joins him at the parapet. A silence with history in it.

SHAW
Four years.

OSCAR
Katherine.

SHAW
I'm not going to apologize again.
You didn't come back for an
apology.

OSCAR
No.

SHAW

Then tell me what you did on that beach for four years. Because I read the surveillance summaries -- yes, we watched, of course we watched -- and every analyst wrote the same word. Nothing. He does nothing. And I sat in Langley reading that word and I knew it was a lie.

Oscar turns the coffee cup a quarter turn on the parapet. A confession deciding whether to happen.

OSCAR

The first year, I drank. The second year, I drank and taught chess. The third year --

A beat.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

The pull started the third year. Little tugs, at the edge of sleep. Rooms I never aimed at. I'd wake up on the sand at three in the morning with my heart doing something new, and Losa would find me and not ask.

SHAW

And you never wondered why it started?

OSCAR

I knew why.

He looks at her for the first time in the scene.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Karim died. And whatever's on the other side of the work started billing me.

Shaw absorbs that -- takes the hit without moving, the way trained people do.

SHAW

If I could trade --

OSCAR

You can't. Neither can I. That's what the notebook's for.

He picks up the coffee. Doesn't drink it. Below, the building hums with the crisis, floor after lit floor.

SHAW
(finally)
The envelope. Was the lamp really dead? In the lighthouse?

OSCAR
(a beat; almost a smile)
Somebody should fix it.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- OPERATIONS FLOOR -- NIGHT

Controlled frenzy. Wade at the center, phone at his ear, Oscar's report in his hand.

WADE
(into phone)
Because the window is eighteen hours, that's why. Reposition the carrier group and get me the Secretary.

He hangs up. Looks at Oscar across the floor -- a long, unreadable look. A believer's look from a man who'd swear he isn't one.

WADE (CONT'D)
If you're wrong, you've moved half the Pacific fleet on a hallucination.

OSCAR
If I'm wrong, you'll have eighteen quiet hours to court-martial me.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- OSEI'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME

Small office, immaculate. One lamp. Osei at her desk with the Room 7 session log on one screen and the room's ENVIRONMENTAL SENSOR DATA on the other.

She scrolls. Temperature curve. Air pressure. A gap.

Session logged: 47 minutes. Sensor activity: 50.

Three unaccounted minutes.

She sits back. Three minutes is nothing.

She opens a new file and types a header: DAMUS, O. --
UNAUTHORIZED ACTIVITY REVIEW.

Three minutes is everything, if you know what to look for.

And then she does something she doesn't log. She opens a
second file -- her own, decades of it, thousands of hours:
MERIDIAN PROTOCOL -- RESOURCE CONTAINMENT, AMARYN BASIN.
Architect of record: P. OSEI.

She looks at the two files side by side, on one screen. The
viewer. The water.

She closes both.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CRISIS CELL -- DAY

A windowless room converted overnight: cots, coffee, the
Amaryn map covering one wall. The countdown clock rebuilt:
14:22:07.

Wade briefs a cluster of OFFICERS. Shaw at the map. Oscar
apart, watching the room work.

WADE

The Kremlin thinks the southern
intake fails on schedule. So our
job is simple -- the intake doesn't
fail. Shaw. Who controls the
stabilization program?

Shaw doesn't answer for one beat too long.

SHAW

It's compartmented.

WADE

Un-compartment it.

SHAW

It's called Meridian. Resource
containment, all three Amaryn
states. We manage the aquifer data
and the allocation schedule through
cutouts. The program decides who
pumps, when, and how much.

Oscar turns from the wall, slowly.

OSCAR
We control the water.

SHAW
We prevent a war.

OSCAR
Who wrote the allocation schedule?

The door opens. OSEI. Perfect timing, which is to say -- she was listening.

OSEI
I did.

She crosses to the map, calm as arithmetic.

OSEI (CONT'D)
Twelve years ago three armies were dug in around that basin. Meridian stood them down without a shot. Every quarter since, my schedule has decided who drinks. You may call that arrogance. The alternative had a body count.

OSCAR
And the southern intake?

OSEI
Scheduled for maintenance shutdown in eleven hours. Routine. Planned for a year.

Silence. Wade looks from Osei to Oscar.

OSCAR
They know your schedule, General. It's on the table in Moscow with a red circle around it. Your maintenance window is their invasion window.

OSEI
Or a man who's been drunk on a beach for four years walked into a shielded room in his mind and read a calendar. You want me to halt a twelve-year protocol on that.

OSCAR
I want you to ask yourself how they got your schedule.

That lands. Osei doesn't show it, except that she stops moving.

WADE

Delay the shutdown. That's an order I can defend. Osei -- keep the water flowing. Damus -- get back in the chair. I need to know if the window moves when we move.

Everyone breaks. Shaw catches Oscar at the door, low:

SHAW

You couldn't have known Meridian was hers.

OSCAR

I didn't.

A beat.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Now I do.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- NIGHT

The ritual, faster this time -- tube out, chair angled, shoes off, breath. Palms turn.

He goes.

INT. THE KREMLIN -- COUNCIL CHAMBER -- CONTINUOUS

The four men again. New energy -- irritation. A FIFTH MAN now, younger, reporting. Oscar reads the room in a single pass:

They know the shutdown was delayed. And it hasn't changed anything. The window slides; it doesn't close. They can wait. Thirst is on their side.

He begins to withdraw --

-- and the PULL again. Stronger. Set deeper.

He shouldn't.

He does.

EXT. HIGH DESERT -- BRONZE AGE -- DAY -- 3000 BC

Sun like a hammer. A dry riverbed, cracked into hexagons. Two crowds of people facing each other across it -- TWO TRIBES, spears and staffs, goats dying on their feet behind them.

Between the crowds, on the riverbed itself: TWO CHIEFS. And a BOY, eight, standing at the elbow of the southern chief -- his son -- holding a clay water jar with both arms like it's a sibling.

Under everything, Oscar FEELS it before he sees it: water. A spring, underground, directly beneath the dead river. Enough for both. Barely, but enough.

The northern chief speaks. Intent, like a blade shown but not drawn: We found it. It is under our bank. Come near it and die.

The southern chief looks at his people. At the goats. At his son with the jar.

And Oscar watches the moment arrive -- the same moment, the same room without walls, the same fork:

The southern chief could offer the digging. Two tribes, one well, twice the arms to dig it.

Fear gets there first.

The southern chief raises his staff and points at the northern bank -- a claim, a challenge --

-- and the boy's jar slips and SHATTERS on the riverbed, and both crowds take it for a signal, and the two front lines start to move --

-- and the pull holds him for the after:

The riverbed at dusk. Figures scattered on the cracked clay, not moving. Vultures negotiating.

And in the center of the riverbed, where the fighting churned the surface -- a dark stain spreading up through the cracks. Water. The spring, opened by the violence, rising into ground nobody is left to hold.

A single figure walks the riverbed among the fallen: the BOY, alive, dragging the base of his shattered jar. He reaches the seep, kneels, and drinks from his cupped hands -- from the exact center of the thing both tribes died claiming.

He looks up, water running down his chin, at the empty banks on both sides.

There was always enough. There was never enough time.

Oscar doesn't stay for the rest. He knows the rest. Everyone knows the rest.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- CONTINUOUS

He surfaces hard, hand pressed to his sternum. Steadies.

The notebook.

INSERT -- THE NOTEBOOK

"3000 BC. Two tribes, one hidden spring -- enough for both. Fear reached the fork first. A boy holding a jar. Karim's daughter holds a crayon. Same child. Same jar. Every time."

He sits with the pen against the page. Then adds:

"The pull is not random. It is showing me the same decision, older and older. It is building an argument. For whom."

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CRISIS CELL -- DAY

Clock: 09:41:33. Shaw pins photos to the Amaryn map -- pumping stations, canal gates.

Oscar drops his official transcript on the table in front of Wade.

OSCAR

The delay bought nothing. They'll wait us out. Thirst is their artillery -- it fires without orders. As long as the basin runs dry on a schedule, any schedule, they win.

WADE

Then what closes the window?

OSCAR

Open the water.

Beat. Officers looking up around the room.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Publish the aquifer data. All of it, to all three nations at once. The reserves, the flow models, the allocation math.

(MORE)

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Right now three governments are being starved blind by a spreadsheet in Langley. Put everyone at the same table with the same numbers and there is no rescue to perform. The pretext dies of daylight.

WADE

You're describing the unilateral exposure of a twelve-year covert program.

OSCAR

I'm describing the only move Moscow hasn't already gamed.

WADE

(a long beat)

That's above me. That's above Osei. Draft it as an option paper -- and God help the room I have to read it in.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- SHAW'S OFFICE -- LATER

Shaw at the keyboard. Oscar pacing the small office like it's a cell, dictating.

OSCAR

"Simultaneous release of the complete Amaryn hydrological dataset to all three riparian governments and their publics --"

SHAW

(typing; translating)

"-- a phased transparency initiative regarding regional water data."

OSCAR

That's not what I said.

SHAW

It's what they can read. You want the substance to survive, you dress it in language that doesn't frighten the horses. Every true sentence in this building wears a costume, Oscar. You of all people should recognize the pattern.

That lands sideways -- he stops pacing.

OSCAR
(resuming; slower)
Say this part straight. No costume.

Shaw's hands wait over the keys.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
"The scarcity is manufactured. The data proves it. Any policy that manages the secret instead of ending it is not preventing the conflict -- it is scheduling it."

Shaw looks at the sentence a moment. Types it, word for word.

SHAW
That's the sentence they'll fire us for.

OSCAR
It's the sentence they'll remember.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- OSEI'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Osei with the Room 7 sensor data again. Session logged: 61 minutes. Sensor record: 74.

Thirteen unaccounted minutes.

On her desk now: a printed folder, edges soft with age. She opens it. A personnel photo, 1980s -- MARGARET DAMUS, 40s, dark-eyed, half-smiling like she knows the photographer's secret.

Osei picks up her phone.

OSEI
(into phone)
I need everything on Margaret Damus. Active and deep archive. Yes -- the mother. Pull it all.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- NIGHT -- SESSION THREE

Official target first: Oscar, in the chair, walks the Kremlin room one more time -- routine now, a man checking a gauge.

Then he does something new.

He turns, in the non-space, toward the pull -- and ASKS for it.

INT. LECTURE HALL -- 1908 -- NIGHT

Gaslight and chalk dust. A hall two-thirds empty. At the lectern: DR. EMIL VOGT, 50s, wire spectacles, chalk in hand, a blackboard dense with equations -- and one simple diagram: energy from a source no one owns.

Scattered in the seats: a few STUDENTS, a JOURNALIST -- and three MEN IN GOOD COATS who did not come for the science.

Vogt lectures. Intent, under the words: It works. I have proven it works. And they have offered me a fortune to say it doesn't.

One of the good coats checks his watch -- not impatience. A schedule.

Vogt sees it. Oscar sees him see it.

And Vogt -- knowing exactly what the watch means -- turns to the blackboard and writes the final equation anyway. Underlines it twice. Turns back to the hall.

Intent, clear as a bell: Now it exists in more heads than mine. Do what you came to do.

Oscar drifts along the row of good coats -- and feels, under their patience, the same room again: a resource, a gate, fear holding the latch.

The pull holds. The after:

The same street, that night. Vogt's laboratory burning -- efficiently, professionally, a fire with a schedule. Vogt across the street in his shirtsleeves, spectacles orange with the flames, a FIREMAN holding him back without much conviction.

And beside Vogt: a STUDENT, 20s, coat clutched shut over something square. A journal. The equations, walking away into the dark in a young man's coat.

Vogt sees the coat. The student sees him see. Neither acknowledges it -- there are men in good coats watching the fire too.

Vogt turns back to the flames, and his face, in the orange light, is not despair.

It's arithmetic. One journal out is one more than zero.

The gaslights gutter --

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- CONTINUOUS

Oscar surfaces. Sits a long time before he writes.

INSERT -- THE NOTEBOOK

"1908. He knew they were in the room and he published anyway. Chose the truth over his own survival. I don't know if I can do that. I think I have to find out before this is over."

Behind him -- unnoticed -- the door to the OBSERVATION ROOM, dark beyond the glass. And in the dark, a shape. Standing. Watching.

Osei.

She has broken his one rule, silently, to see it for herself. Her face through the glass: not contempt.

Recognition. Which is worse.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Oscar hasn't left. Still in the chair. The room darker -- he's killed the second tube. On the table, his notebook lies open mid-entry, pen across it, abandoned.

Because the pull came before he even braced for it. It's not waiting for invitations anymore.

EXT. THE TIGRIS RIVER -- BAGHDAD -- DUSK -- 1258

A city burning to the waterline. Smoke pillars where minarets stood. And the river itself running WRONG -- black, sheened, moving thick.

Oscar drifts low over the water. It isn't oil.

It's INK.

The river is full of books. Thousands. Tens of thousands -- the House of Wisdom, shelf by shelf, flung from the banks by SOLDIERS working in relays, methodical as harvest. Mathematics dissolving. Medicine dissolving. Five hundred years of translation bleeding black into the current.

On the far bank, refugees wade the shallows -- and Oscar sees an OLD SCHOLAR, robe soaked to the chest, catching books out of the water one at a time and throwing them to a CHAIN OF CHILDREN on the bank, who run them into the dark.

A soldier on the bank sees the scholar too. Raises his bow. And a SECOND SOLDIER -- younger -- puts a hand on the bow and pushes it down.

The two soldiers look at each other. The younger one shrugs: they're only books. Not worth an arrow.

The lie in it is visible even to him. He knows exactly what they're worth. That's why he pushed the bow down.

The scholar keeps throwing. The children keep running. The river keeps bleeding.

Oscar hovers between the soldiers and the chain of children, and writes it into himself:

Even here. Even at the bottom. The pattern breaks in single pairs of hands.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- CONTINUOUS

Oscar surfaces -- rougher this time. Nosebleed, thin, one line. He blots it with his wrist, notices the blood without alarm. A cost curve, and he can read graphs.

INSERT -- THE NOTEBOOK

"Baghdad, 1258. Resource = knowledge. They killed the river of it. And a man in the water and some children on a bank saved what they could carry, and a soldier lowered a bow. The pattern is older than water and bigger than grain. And so is the crack in it."

He looks at his own handwriting a beat. Adds:

"The sessions are pulling harder. Whatever wants this argument finished is spending me to finish it."

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- WADE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Wade at his desk in shirtsleeves, service ribbons on the jacket over the chair. Oscar in the doorway -- summoned. Wade waves him in, pours two glasses of something brown, slides one across. Oscar doesn't touch it.

WADE
Sit down. That's the only order
I'll give tonight.

Oscar sits.

WADE (CONT'D)
Five thousand years. That's the
claim in your abbreviated little
transcripts -- the same war, over
and over.

OSCAR
It's not a claim.

WADE
Fine. Then answer a soldier's
question.

He turns his glass a quarter-turn. A man who has rehearsed
this in his head and hates that he has.

WADE (CONT'D)
Deterrence. The wall, the garrison,
the second-strike fleet. Every gate
I have ever guarded, on the theory
that strength keeps the peace. In
all your five thousand years --
does it ever work?

OSCAR
Yes.

Wade looks up, surprised at the honesty.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
It works the way a tourniquet
works. It stops the bleeding, and
it costs the limb, and it was never
medicine. Every sealed gate I've
stood at bought years -- sometimes
decades. And the price compounded
quietly the whole time, and came
due all at once, and the men who
built the gate were never the ones
who paid.

Wade absorbs it. Drinks.

WADE
My whole career is the tourniquet.

OSCAR

Your whole career is why there's still a patient. Don't confuse my argument with contempt, General. The monk needs the wall to argue inside of. I've seen what the road looks like when nobody guards anything -- I saw a river full of books.

A long silence. Wade turns the glass again.

WADE

My granddaughter asked me at Christmas what I did in the government. I said: I keep the doors locked. She asked: then how do the people we like get in?

He looks up.

WADE (CONT'D)

I've been thinking about it for six months.

OSCAR

(standing; at the door)
She's how it breaks, you know. Not documents. Not programs. Somebody's granddaughter, asking the question one generation earlier than expected.

CUT TO:

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- OSEI'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

The Margaret Damus files cover the desk. Osei has been reading for hours -- jacket off, tea gone cold, a legal pad of notes in a small ruthless hand.

She turns a page and stops.

A bound document, 1987. Cover page: THE SCARCITY REFLEX -- A FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN CONFLICT ANALYSIS. M. DAMUS. Stamped: CLASSIFIED -- DIRECTOR EYES ONLY -- BY ORDER D. HARMON.

She reads the abstract. Reads it again. Looks up at nothing.

Then, quietly, to the empty office:

OSEI

Oh, Margaret.

She reaches for the phone. Stops. Her hand hovers --

-- and instead of Wade's line, she pulls the Meridian folder to the center of the desk, opens it to the allocation schedule, and lays it side by side with the 1987 abstract.

Whatever she sees between the two pages, she closes both folders very carefully, like closing doors on sleeping children.

Then she picks up the phone.

OSEI (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Get me Wade.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CAFETERIA -- 4:00 AM

Fluorescent hum, empty tables, one urn of ancient coffee. Oscar alone with a tray he isn't eating. Osei comes in, draws a coffee, and sits down across from him. Uninvited. Deliberate.

OSEI
I watched your session tonight.
Through the glass.

OSCAR
I know.

OSEI
Of course you do.

She sets her cup down, squares it to the table edge.

OSEI (CONT'D)
I've spent my career cleaning up
after intuition, Mr. Damus.
Brilliant men with feelings about
the enemy. Analysts who knew in
their gut. Their gut got sources
rolled up in six countries. So
understand -- when I say I believe
you can do what you do, that is not
surrender. That's what makes you
dangerous. A fraud, I could manage.

OSCAR
And an instrument you can't
calibrate --

OSEI
-- is a weapon pointed at random.
Yes.

Oscar pushes the tray aside. Leans in. Two chess players finding the real board.

OSCAR
Ask me what you came down here to ask.

A beat. She almost declines. Then:

OSEI
The sessions you're hiding. The thirteen minutes, the twenty minutes. Wherever it is you go when the target's done -- what do you see?

OSCAR
The same room. Over and over, for five thousand years. A resource. A gate. A tired man in charge, and a voice at his ear saying seal it, and a voice across the table saying open it -- and fear winning. I've watched it win in four different millennia, General. It's not history. It's one decision, wearing costumes.

OSEI
And in this costume drama, I'm the voice saying seal it.

OSCAR
You tell me. You're the one who came down here at four in the morning to ask.

That lands. Osei drinks her coffee to buy a moment, and knows he knows it.

OSEI
My grandmother queued for water in Accra. Four hours, every morning, for the family cistern. She sent my mother to school with the money she saved being the first in line. You want to lecture me about scarcity -- I was raised inside your data set.

OSCAR
Then you already know how the
pattern ends.

OSEI
I know the queue was orderly
because somebody ran it. Take the
schedule away and my grandmother
gets trampled by whoever's biggest.
That's the part your five thousand
years keeps leaving out -- between
the sealed gate and the open one,
there's a woman holding a bucket,
and she doesn't get to be a
variable in anyone's proof.

Silence. Real silence -- because he doesn't have an answer,
and doesn't pretend to.

OSCAR
(finally)
That's the best argument anyone in
this building has ever made to me.

OSEI
It's not an argument. It's a
memory.

She stands. Squares her chair.

OSEI (CONT'D)
Finish the assignment, Mr. Damus.
Close the window. And then get on
the plane south -- because the day
after the window closes, one of us
is going to be proven a fool, and
I've read enough of your file to be
very sure it won't be decided in a
cafeteria.

She goes. Oscar watches her the whole way out.

OSCAR
(to himself)
The woman with the bucket.

He takes out the notebook. Writes.

EXT. AMARYN BASIN -- SOUTHERN INTAKE TOWN -- DAY (NEWS
FOOTAGE)

Grainy wire-service video on a crisis cell monitor: a
standpipe queue three blocks long under a white sky.

Jerry cans in a chain. A WOMAN ENGINEER in a faded station jumpsuit -- NARGIZA, 40s -- arguing with a soldier at a valve house, a BOY of nine hanging off the fence behind her, watching his mother the way boys watch a fight.

Shaw and Wade watch the feed in the crisis cell.

WADE

Southern intake's at nine percent.
My delay bought hours, not days.
Whatever move exists, we're in the
window for it now.

On the monitor, Nargiza wins her argument -- the soldier steps back, she opens the valve, the queue surges forward with buckets -- and the feed cuts to the anchor desk.

Shaw watches the dead monitor a beat too long.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- OSEI'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Osei with Margaret's deep-archive file. She turns a page: a financial ledger, decades old. Wire transfers, a courier schedule -- and a photograph, surveillance-grainy: a MONASTERY on a Himalayan ridge, prayer flags snapping.

Attached: a 1990s memo. SUBJECT: M. DAMUS -- UNAUTHORIZED CONTACT, GANDEN CHOLING MONASTERY. RECOMMEND NO ACTION -- SUBJECT RETIRING.

Osei looks at the photograph a long time. Then picks up the phone.

OSEI

(into phone)

I need the liaison desk. Whoever we
have in-country nearest the Nepal-
Tibet corridor.

A pause.

OSEI (CONT'D)

A retrieval. Sensitive documents,
foreign soil, no footprint. How
fast can a team be at altitude?

She listens. Writes a number on the corner of the memo: 36
HRS.

She circles it. Then looks at the countdown feed on her
monitor -- 06:50:12 -- and under the circle writes one word:
HOLD.

Her pen hovers over the word.

She leaves it there. For now.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- DAY -- SESSION FOUR

Clock on the wall outside: 04:58:10.

Official target: the Amaryn Basin itself. Wade wants eyes on the southern intake. Oscar goes.

EXT. AMARYN BASIN -- SOUTHERN INTAKE STATION -- CONTINUOUS

Wind over concrete. A Soviet-era pumping station patched with three generations of parts. WORKERS queue at a standpipe with jerry cans. A CHILD rides a bicycle in circles around a dry fountain.

Oscar drifts through the station -- turbine hall, control room --

-- and stops.

Because the pull is HERE. Not in the past. Here, in the paperwork.

The station's founding documents, framed on the office wall. A treaty annex, twenty years old. And in the signature block, among the technical advisors, a HANDLER NUMBER he knows the way he knows his own hands:

His mother's.

Margaret Damus helped build the Amaryn arrangement. And the arrangement was built on an intelligence assessment -- Oscar feels the shape of it like a scar under paint -- an assessment that was INCOMPLETE. A viewing that flagged the basin's northern reserves and was never delivered. Filed. Buried.

His viewing. His first year in the program. Nineteen years old.

The whole basin -- the schedule, the thirst, the window Moscow is waiting on -- is standing on a hole where his transcript should have been.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- CONTINUOUS

Oscar surfaces. Doesn't move for a long time. The room hums.

Then he opens the notebook and writes one line.

INSERT -- THE NOTEBOOK

"My silence cost as much as Shaw's. I just didn't know I'd already paid it."

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- MEDICAL SUITE -- NIGHT

Lenz at a light panel with two ECG strips pinned side by side. Shaw standing. Oscar buttoning his cuff, already impatient.

LENZ

Baseline, five days ago. Tonight.

Even a layman can see it: the second strip is a different weather system.

LENZ (CONT'D)

The dropout is every eleven seconds now, and it's longer. Whatever the sessions cost, the price has gone up by a factor of four in five days.

SHAW

In English, Doctor.

LENZ

In English -- the next long session could stop his heart. Not might. Could, with a probability I'd decline in a patient and can't quantify in whatever he is.

Silence. Shaw looks at Oscar. Oscar looks at the strips with the detachment of a man reading someone else's bill.

OSCAR

How long would I have? In a long session. Before the probability gets unfriendly.

LENZ

You're asking me to put a number on it so you can spend it.

OSCAR

Yes.

LENZ
(a beat; hating it)
Forty minutes. After that I extract
you, orders or none.

OSCAR
(to Shaw, leaving)
Then whatever's at the end of this
pattern, it's forty minutes away.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- SHAW'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Shaw at her desk. Oscar comes in without knocking and lays
four documents in front of her, one at a time, like exhibits.

OSCAR
Bronze Age. 1315. 1908. And this
morning, the Amarny intake.
Different centuries, identical
decision architecture. A resource
under pressure. A fork -- share or
seal. Fear wins the fork, and the
sealed resource dies anyway, from
the inside.

Shaw looks at the pages. His handwriting. Diagrams like
weather maps of history.

SHAW
(carefully)
Pattern recognition under extreme
stress is --

OSCAR
-- is not what this is, and you
know it, because you've watched me
work for twenty years. Katherine.
Meridian isn't preventing the war.
Meridian is the advisor telling the
king to seal the gates. Your
program IS the pattern, running at
scale, with better fonts.

SHAW
Meridian stood down three armies.

OSCAR
Meridian postponed three armies,
and called the delay peace.

(MORE)

OSCAR (CONT'D)

The basin's been dying on Osei's schedule for twelve years, and Moscow is about to harvest the corpse. There's one move left. The data. All of it. Everyone. At once.

SHAW

You put that in an option paper for Wade. It'll die in a safe.

OSCAR

Then it can't be an option paper.

Shaw goes very still.

SHAW

You're talking about release. Unauthorized. That's not policy disagreement, Oscar, that's the rest of your life in a federal building.

OSCAR

There's a bigger version of it than you know.

He sits. Lowers his voice.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

My mother found this pattern forty years before I did. Different method -- archives, not viewing. Fourteen years of analysis. She called it the Scarcity Reflex. Director Harmon read it in 1987 and buried it, and she kept working anyway, and when she knew they'd come for the rest --

SHAW

-- she sent it somewhere they couldn't follow.

OSCAR

The monastery. Rinpoche has it. Forty years of evidence in a wooden box at the top of a mountain, waiting for someone with the standing to make the world read it.

A long silence. Shaw walks to the window. The Potomac, black and moving.

SHAW
How do you know all this? The
letter?

OSCAR
First page.

SHAW
You still haven't read the rest.

OSCAR
I've been saving it.

SHAW
For what?

OSCAR
For when I need her.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CRISIS CELL -- NIGHT

Alarms without sirens: every analyst standing, every phone lit. On the main monitor, a satellite thermal map of the Amaryn Basin -- and the northern half of it going DARK, gridline by gridline.

ANALYST
Confirmed cyber event -- the
northern pumping grid is down. All
of it. Remote intrusion, twenty
minutes ago.

WADE
Whose intrusion?

ANALYST
It's dressed as a maintenance
cascade. It's not one.

On a second monitor: news footage, night streets in a northern basin city -- dry taps, people in stairwells with buckets, a hospital generator sign flickering.

WADE
(quiet; to Shaw)
They got tired of waiting for our
schedule to do it. They're
manufacturing the thirst themselves
-- and in forty-eight hours the
same cameras will film them turning
the water back on. Rescue, on
schedule.

Shaw stares at the dark half of the map.

SHAW
Then the window isn't eighteen
hours anymore.

WADE
The window is now.

INT. THE KREMLIN -- COUNCIL CHAMBER -- NIGHT

The four men. On their monitor: the same blackout map, inverted -- their dark half glowing on a friendly graphic. The SENIOR MAN watches footage of stairwells and buckets with the expression of a chess player admiring his own position.

The younger fifth man says something. Intent: The Americans will suspect the intrusion.

The senior man replies without turning from the screen. Intent, dry as dust:

Suspicion is not water. In two days, we will be the only ones offering water. Let them suspect us while the world watches us turn the pumps back on.

He taps the screen twice -- an appointment confirmed -- and the men begin gathering their papers, unhurried, the meeting simply, chillingly, over.

EXT. AMARYN BASIN -- SOUTHERN INTAKE STATION -- NIGHT

The southern valve house under a sodium lamp. Beyond the ridge line, where the northern half of the valley should glow -- darkness. A hole in the world.

Nargiza stands at the fence with her son, looking at the dark half of the valley the way coastal people look at a receding tide.

NARGIZA'S SON
(subtitled)
Why are their lights off?

NARGIZA
(subtitled)
Their pumps stopped. When the pumps
stop, everything stops.

NARGIZA'S SON
(subtitled)
Will ours stop?

She doesn't answer. That is an answer.

Behind them, an old watchman's rifle leans against the valve house door -- brought out tonight, after twelve years in a cupboard. Nargiza looks at it, and at her son, and at the darkness over the ridge that will be thirsty by morning.

She sends the boy inside. Takes up a position on the steps.

A woman guarding water. The oldest job in the world, newly reopened.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- OSEI'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Osei with a young ANALYST (COLE, 20s, glasses, the posture of the perpetually summoned). Between them: pages from Oscar's seized session transcripts -- the official ones -- and a stack of academic printouts.

COLE

You asked me to falsify his historical detail. I can't.

OSEI

Try harder.

COLE

General -- the 1315 material describes a specific famine council in a specific valley. I found it. Chronicle fragments, a Benedictine source, digitized nine years ago in a database with forty views. The Bronze Age site -- there's a 2019 excavation paper. Two mass-casualty layers on a paleochannel, and a spring horizon two meters under the battle layer. Water under the battlefield, General. He didn't read this anywhere. Nobody's read this anywhere.

Silence. Osei squares the printouts.

OSEI

Who else has seen your workup?

COLE

No one.

OSEI

Keep it that way.

Cole hesitates at the door.

COLE

General -- if the historical claims corroborate, doesn't that mean the framework --

OSEI

It means the framework is true, Cole. It's been true since before we had a word for policy. The question was never whether it's true.

She looks at the transcripts.

OSEI (CONT'D)

The question is whether it's survivable.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- ELEVATOR / CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Elevator doors open on Wade, overcoat still on, White House visitor badge still clipped to it. Shaw is waiting. She reads his face and has her answer before he speaks.

WADE

The answer is no.

SHAW

Did the President read the option paper or did the paper read the room --

WADE

The President read every page. Then the Chief of Staff said the words "unilateral transparency" out loud, and I watched the idea die in front of witnesses.

They walk. Wade pulls the badge off, pockets it.

WADE (CONT'D)

The guidance is: manage the basin quietly, extend Meridian, revisit transparency "in a calmer window." Direct quote.

SHAW

There is no calmer window. The calm windows are when nobody reads option papers at all.

WADE

(stopping; tired, honest)
I know. I sat in a room tonight,
Katherine, with seven of the most
powerful people alive, and I
watched a tired man make the only
decision he believed he could
defend.

Shaw stares at him -- the sentence landing like a bell. Wade
doesn't even know what he said.

WADE (CONT'D)

Get some sleep. The window closes
at six.

He goes. Shaw stands in the corridor, alone with it.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- WADE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Wade behind his desk. Osei across from him, the 1987 document
and a red folder in her lap. The clock behind Wade: 03:12:44.

OSEI

Damus has been running unauthorized
historical targets inside
sanctioned sessions. Abbreviated
transcripts. Thirteen minutes here,
twenty there. He's reconstructing a
document this agency buried in
1987, and the reconstruction ends
with the exposure of Meridian and
the public autopsy of forty years
of resource operations. In the
middle of an eighteen-hour window.

WADE

Is he wrong?

Osei doesn't answer.

WADE (CONT'D)

General. The man moved my fleet
with his eyes closed and he's been
right twice. I'm asking you a
direct question. Is the analysis
wrong?

OSEI

(evenly)
The analysis is the most dangerous
kind. It's true, and it can't be
acted on.

(MORE)

OSEI (CONT'D)

Open the gates unilaterally in a world where the other side reads doctrine and not philosophy, and you don't get cooperation, you get harvest. Eventually everyone shares or everyone starves -- fine. Eventually is not a policy. I work in the seventy-two hours. He works in the five thousand years. Both of us can't be in charge.

WADE

What do you want?

OSEI

Authority to close him down. Tonight. The notebook secured, the sessions ended, Damus on a plane south, no prosecution. And Shaw rotated out of the building.

Wade looks at her for a long moment. A soldier deciding which war he's in.

WADE

The window's still open. He's still my only eyes in that room.

OSEI

Then the moment it closes -- either way --

WADE

(a beat; then, quietly)
The moment it closes.

Osei rises. At the door:

OSEI

For the record, Marcus. I read her document. I didn't bury it because it's inconvenient. I'm stopping it because I've spent twelve years keeping three nations watered in the world as it is, not the world as it ought to be. Somebody has to.

WADE

That's what worries me, Patricia. Everybody in her document said that too.

She leaves. Wade sits alone with the clock.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- SHAW'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Shaw at the window. Osei enters without knocking, sets a file on the desk. Not aggressive. Precise.

OSEI
You know what's in here.

SHAW
Margaret's document.

OSEI
And a timeline of every maintenance session you authorized against targets that don't exist. When this surfaces -- and it surfaces the moment the window closes -- you're not a witness, Katherine, you're a co-author.

SHAW
What do you want?

OSEI
The notebook. Tonight. He flies south, clean, no review. The document goes back in the archive where Harmon put it. Sealed. Not destroyed -- sealed. Until the world is ready for it to be true.

Shaw looks at her for a long beat.

SHAW
That's what the king said to the monk.

Osei doesn't flinch.

OSEI
I know. I've read the document. I know exactly what I sound like.

A beat.

OSEI (CONT'D)
I'm asking anyway. Because the alternative is a grieving man's notebook tearing down the one structure that is currently, tonight, holding three wars shut. The notebook by morning.

She goes. Shaw stands between the window and the file. The Potomac on one side. Five thousand years on the other.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- WADE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Wade behind the desk, coat still on from the White House. Osei standing. The countdown feed on the wall: the numbers now meaningless -- the blackout broke the clock.

OSEI

The window is closing on their schedule now, not ours. Which means Damus's operational value is spent - and his notebook is a live munition in an unlocked drawer. I'm invoking the authority you gave me.

Wade looks at her a long moment. A soldier at his own fork.

WADE

(finally)

The moment it closes. That was the deal.

OSEI

Marcus. It closed.

A beat. Wade nods -- once, small, the tired man's nod. The Advisor gets the gates.

OSEI (CONT'D)

(already moving)

Seizure order for the notebook at oh-six-hundred. Damus manifested on the morning flight south. And pull Shaw's compartments tonight -- all of them.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- SECURITY CHECKPOINT -- NIGHT

Shaw badges through a sublevel turnstile she's used for fifteen years.

RED LIGHT. Denied.

She badges again. Red. The SECURITY OFFICER behind the desk is already standing, already apologetic, already reaching for the phone.

SECURITY OFFICER

Ma'am, I'm going to need you to --

SHAW
(calm; already turning)
I know the procedure. I wrote the
procedure.

She walks back the way she came -- unhurried, professional -- and the moment she rounds the corner out of camera coverage, her pace changes completely.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- EVIDENCE INTAKE -- NIGHT

A processing room. Sealed bags on steel shelves. A CUSTODIAN logs items at a terminal. On the counter, tagged and bagged: THE NOTEBOOK -- seized early, ahead of the 0600 order, because Osei is nothing if not thorough.

Shaw enters with a transfer form on a clipboard and fifteen years of walking into rooms like she owns them.

SHAW
Transfer to SCIF Four for the
morning review. General Osei's
order.

The custodian checks the form. Checks the log.

CUSTODIAN
I don't have a transfer flagged --

SHAW
You have a general who reorganized
the morning at one a.m. You're
welcome to call her and confirm.
She's with Wade and the White House
liaison.

The custodian looks at the phone. At Shaw. At the phone. The eternal arithmetic of the night shift.

He stamps the form.

Shaw signs, takes the bag, and walks out with her career in an evidence sleeve.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

Shaw descends fast, unsealing the bag as she goes. She stops on a landing, holds the notebook a moment -- and opens it. Begins to read.

One page in, she sits down on the concrete step, like her knees made the decision without her.

She reads.

CUT TO:

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- OSCAR'S QUARTERS -- 2:00 AM

A cot, a lamp, a duffel never unpacked. A knock -- Shaw in the doorway, the notebook in her hand. Something decided in her face.

SHAW

Osei took it tonight -- ahead of her own order. It was in an evidence bag an hour ago. I signed it out with a forged transfer.

Oscar looks at the notebook. Then at her.

OSCAR

How long until someone checks the log?

SHAW

Six. Maybe five.

SHAW (CONT'D)

I read it. All of it. The Bronze Age. The valley. Karim's name. Your mother's number on the Amaryn treaty.

OSCAR

And?

SHAW

And Osei offered me the same deal Harmon offered your mother. Seal it until the world is ready.

OSCAR

What did you tell her?

SHAW

Nothing yet.

She holds out the notebook. He doesn't take it.

OSCAR

Why are you giving it back?

SHAW

Because Karim's daughter draws yellow birds for a father who can't see them -- and the calculation that killed him was made by somebody who also believed the world wasn't ready.

Oscar takes the notebook.

SHAW (CONT'D)

Whatever you're going to do, it has to be tonight. And Oscar -- there's a thing you need to hear first. The last session your father ran --

OSCAR

I know.

SHAW

You don't. The cardiac event. The file says he found a boundary and went through it, and what came back wasn't --

OSCAR

Katherine. I know. I've felt it. Every session, closer. There's a place at the end of the pattern -- where it breaks. A session that doesn't show fear winning. If I can find it and document it, the argument is finished. Complete. Unburiable.

SHAW

And if you go where your father went?

He looks at her. The only honest answer:

OSCAR

Then you release it anyway.

A silence with everything in it.

SHAW

Read the letter first.

OSCAR

Why?

SHAW
Because you said you were saving it
for when you need her.

A beat.

SHAW (CONT'D)
You need her.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- STAIRWELL -- 2:05 AM

Concrete and handrails. Oscar on a burner phone Shaw pressed
into his hand on her way out. It rings four times, five --

SEMI (V.O.)
(filtered; shouting over
wind)
Who is this?

OSCAR
It's Oscar.

A pause on the line. Wind. A gull.

SEMI (V.O.)
You're not dead.

OSCAR
Not yet.

SEMI (V.O.)
(away from the phone)
Losa! It's Oscar! He's not dead!

Faintly, Losa's voice, and footsteps, and the phone changing
hands --

LOSA (V.O.)
(filtered)
You're eating?

OSCAR
(closing his eyes)
Yes.

LOSA (V.O.)
You're lying. When are you coming
home?

Oscar leans his head back against the concrete. Down the
line: the village. A dog. Someone's radio. The whole ordinary
world, running without him, at the far end of a wire.

OSCAR
There's one more thing I have to
do. It's the kind of thing where I
can't -- if I don't --

LOSA (V.O.)
(cutting through it,
gently)
Oscar.

OSCAR
Yeah.

LOSA (V.O.)
The kids set up the board every
afternoon. Wrong, but they set it
up.

Oscar's jaw tightens against something.

LOSA (V.O.)
Do the thing. Then come home and
fix the board.

The line clicks dead -- Losa doesn't do goodbyes. Oscar
stands in the stairwell holding the phone against his chest,
next to everything else he keeps there.

CUT TO:

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- 2:14 AM

The room half-dark, the way he keeps it. Oscar in the chair --
not the viewing posture. Forward. Elbows on knees. The letter
in both hands.

He unfolds it. Four pages, handwritten. He starts where he
stopped, three weeks and a lifetime ago.

HER VOICE comes in quiet -- a woman writing to her son at the
end of something. The officer in the precision. The mother in
everything else.

MARGARET (V.O.)
Your father's name was Daniel
Damus. You know that. You don't
know that I recruited him.

MARGARET (V.O.)
Budapest, 1979. A translator who
saw through walls.
(MORE)

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

He looked at me across a hotel bar, before I said a word about why I was there, and told me: "You're here because of what I can do. You're frightened of it. And you're going to ask me to do it for you anyway." He was twenty-six. I recruited him on a Tuesday. By Friday I loved him in a way completely incompatible with my professional responsibilities, and I have never once regretted it.

Oscar's face -- something young moving under it.

MARGARET (V.O.)

The program called what happened to him a cardiac event. I was outside the room. The sound he made when he surfaced was wrong, and I knew before they opened the door -- the way I knew what you were when you were four years old and I found you in the garden at three in the morning, sitting straight as a monk, eyes open, somewhere I couldn't follow.

MARGARET (V.O.)

I made a decision that night I have never unmade. The monks were not a spiritual choice, Oscar. They were an engineering choice. I needed the architecture of you built before the program got to the wiring. I sat across from Rinpoche and said: my son sees through walls -- teach him why that is sacred before the world teaches him it is useful. He asked how old you were. Four, I said. He said: you should have come sooner.

MARGARET (V.O.)

I left you there on a Tuesday. You were crying and trying not to, and I was not crying and trying not to, and we were both failing. I came back every time I could. I know it wasn't enough.

Oscar stops reading. Breathes. Goes on.

MARGARET (V.O.)

In 1987 I finished fourteen years of work. Every major conflict in recorded history, cross-referenced against resource pressure and decision architecture. One finding. Every war shares a single decision point: a resource under pressure, a fork between sharing and sealing, and fear winning the fork. And the sealed resource lost anyway -- always, Oscar. Not usually. Always -- to the rot that hoarding breeds inside the walls.

MARGARET (V.O.)

I called it the Scarcity Reflex. Harmon read it and said: Margaret, if we publish this, we don't have a foreign policy. We have a confession. He wasn't wrong. He buried it. I kept working. And when I knew they'd come for the rest, I sent it where they couldn't follow. Rinpoche has all of it. Forty years of evidence in a wooden box at the top of a mountain. Waiting for you.

The last page. The handwriting changed -- smaller, written closer to the end.

MARGARET (V.O.)

I have stage four. I am not frightened of dying. I am frightened of the box staying on the mountain. Not for the historical record. Not for vindication. For the girl who draws birds for a father the pattern took -- and every child like her.

MARGARET (V.O.)

One more thing, and I am telling you with open eyes, not your father's optimism. His last session -- it wasn't his heart. He found the place where the pattern breaks. He went in to see it, and the part of him that crossed didn't come all the way back. He lived eleven more years. He never once said it wasn't worth it.

MARGARET (V.O.)
You will feel that boundary. You
will have to decide. Decide
knowing.

MARGARET (V.O.)
Finish it. Not for the agency, not
for me, not even for him. Finish it
because you are the only person
alive who can prove it, and you
have spent four years on a beach
drinking against the knowledge that
this was always what you were for.
You've known since the garden. I
stood at the window watching a four-
year-old go somewhere I couldn't
follow, and I thought: there he is.
There is the one who will do the
thing I couldn't.

MARGARET (V.O.)
I'm your mother. I'm always right.

MARGARET (V.O.)
I love you. I'm sorry it took this
long. Go finish it. -- M.

Silence. The hum of the building.

Oscar folds the letter along its creases. Shirt pocket. Over
the yellow bird. Two things against his heart.

And then -- first time in this building -- he SMILES. Small.
Private. A man given permission he didn't know he needed, by
the only person whose permission ever mattered.

He checks his watch: 2:41 AM. The seizure order lands at six.

He picks up the notebook, sets it on the table where it can
be found -- deliberate -- and takes the chair. Spine stacks.
Hands open.

He goes.

SMASH CUT TO:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. A ROAD BETWEEN TWO VILLAGES -- WINTER -- DAWN -- 1683

Cold that predates machines. Two frozen ruts through black forest. A grey dawn deciding whether to commit.

On the road: a WOMAN, 60s. Small. Dark coat. A leather satchel worn across her body, dented by decades of carrying. She walks like someone who has always had somewhere to be.

Oscar is here the way he is always here -- present without mass. But something is different.

She slows. Her head lifts. And she NODS -- at nothing, at him -- and keeps walking.

He follows.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- SECURITY OPERATIONS -- SAME TIME
(2:52 AM)

Osei at a console with a DUTY OFFICER. On screen: Room 7's door log. IN USE.

OSEI
Who authorized a session?

DUTY OFFICER
No one, General. He badged in eleven minutes ago.

Osei looks at the screen a moment. Then:

OSEI
Wake the response team. And find Shaw.

EXT. HIMALAYAN RIDGE ROAD -- NIGHT

Headlights climbing switchbacks through blowing snow. Two Land Cruisers. Inside the lead vehicle: FOUR CONTRACTORS in civilian cold-weather kit, a LIAISON OFFICER on a sat phone.

LIAISON OFFICER
(into phone)
Two hours to the ridge if the pass is open. Confirm the order.

Static. The voice on the other end -- Osei's -- does not confirm. The liaison lowers the phone.

LIAISON OFFICER (CONT'D)
(to the driver)
Keep climbing. We'll have it by the
top.

EXT. VILLAGE -- EASTERN SIDE -- 1683 -- CONTINUOUS

The healer enters a low house without knocking. A CHILD in a mother's arms -- the stillness of a child who has stopped fighting what's in them.

The healer's hands go to work. No drama. The competence of ten thousand repetitions, performed with complete attention.

She takes no payment. She takes SUPPLY -- a jar of herbs from the family's winter store -- and Oscar understands: she is carrying something from this village to the other one.

The village that has been at war with this one for eleven years.

The road runs both directions. She always has.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR, SUBLEVEL 2 -- 3:07 AM

Elevator doors open: Osei, the duty officer, TWO SECURITY OFFICERS -- and Shaw, already there, standing in front of the Room 7 door like furniture that won't move.

OSEI
Step aside, Katherine.

SHAW
He's in session.

OSEI
He's in violation.

SHAW
You pull a viewer out mid-session and you don't get a prisoner, you get a stroke. Ask the program medics. Ask the file on Daniel Damus.

Osei stops. That name did something.

OSEI
(to the officers)
Hold.

Osei steps close to Shaw. Low, just the two of them:

OSEI (CONT'D)
You gave him the notebook back.

SHAW
I did.

OSEI
Why?

SHAW
Because somebody has to stop
calculating what's acceptable.

Osei studies her. Then looks at the door. On the wall panel,
the room's BIOMETRIC FEED: heart rate climbing. 96. 104.

Running footsteps -- LENZ arrives, coat over pajamas, a
medical bag, a portable monitor already in his hand. He
clocks the biometric feed on the panel and goes pale.

LENZ
How long has he been under?

SHAW
Fifty minutes.

LENZ
I said forty. I SAID forty --

He moves for the door. Shaw catches his arm.

SHAW
You extract him mid-crossing and
what happens?

LENZ
I don't know.

SHAW
His father. Somebody opened the
door early. You processed the
intake, Doctor -- you've read what
came back. Tell me I'm wrong.

Lenz stares at her. At the door. At the feed -- 126,
climbing.

He doesn't open the door. He sets up the crash kit against
the wall instead, hands moving fast, a man preparing to lose
an argument with physiology.

LENZ
(to the door; to no one)
Come back on your own, you stubborn
son of a bitch.

EXT. VILLAGE -- WESTERN SIDE -- 1683 -- CONTINUOUS

The healer walks into the western village -- and a MAN steps out of a doorway and blocks the road. 40s. Broad. A community's fear given a body. He didn't choose the job. He is very committed to it now.

Words -- sharp, accusing. Oscar hears the intent: We know where you've been. We know what you carry.

She opens the satchel. Shows him. Herbs from the eastern village. Medicine.

The man looks at the herbs. At her. At the herbs.

And Oscar feels it arrive -- the fork. The same fork. The riverbed, the stone hall, the lecture hall, the council chamber. A room holding its breath around one person.

The man steps aside.

That's all. No speech. A man deciding, in the grey of a winter morning, that the medicine matters more than the message.

She walks past him without ceremony -- as if she expected it -- toward a house where a child is sick. There is always a sick child.

Oscar, watching, feels something crack open in the five-thousand-year argument:

It breaks. It has always been breaking. Quietly. Daily. On roads nobody watches.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR, SUBLEVEL 2 -- 3:26 AM

The biometric feed: 118. 126. An ALARM tone starts, soft and evil.

DUTY OFFICER
General, those are cardiac numbers.

Shaw's jaw tightens. She doesn't move from the door. Osei watches the feed -- and then looks down at what the duty officer carried up from the room's table on her order, sealed in an evidence bag:

THE NOTEBOOK.

She takes it out. Opens it. Starts to read.

EXT. THE ROAD -- 1683 -- LATE AFTERNOON

The light lower. The healer walking east again -- the fourth crossing of the day -- and this time the road is not empty.

THREE SOLDIERS at a fallen tree. A checkpoint, in a war eleven years old. Fires banked, pikes leaned. And among them: the MAN FROM THE MORNING -- the one who stepped aside.

A YOUNG SOLDIER intercepts her. Opens the satchel without asking. Herbs. A wrapped loaf. Rolled linen bandage. He starts to unwrap the loaf --

-- and the man from the morning says one word.

Just one. Flat. Final.

The young soldier looks at him. Looks at the old woman. Rewraps the loaf, puts it back, closes the satchel with exaggerated care -- the exaggeration the only permission his pride allows.

The healer takes the satchel and walks through the checkpoint. She does not thank anyone. Thanking would make it remarkable, and it must not be remarkable. It must be the road.

Oscar drifts past the man from the morning, close enough to hear the intent under his silence:

I don't know why I do this. I know that I will keep doing it.

And Oscar understands something that almost breaks him open:

The pattern doesn't lose to arguments. It loses to habits.

EXT. THE ROAD -- 1683 -- DUSK

The healer walking home, satchel lighter. She stops. Looks up at the darkening sky and SPEAKS to it -- not prayer. Report. This is what happened today. This is what I found.

Then she LAUGHS -- small, private -- a woman who finds the whole enterprise, the villages, the war, herself crossing the line forever, genuinely funny in a way that coexists with the seriousness of it. She shakes her head. Walks on.

And Oscar -- for the first time in any session -- SPEAKS.

OSCAR
Did you know?

She slows.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
What it meant. What it would start.
I came through five thousand years
of the same room and the same fear
winning, looking for the place it
breaks -- and you're just walking
home.

She turns around.

She looks directly AT him. Not through him. At him.

Oscar goes still in a way he has never been still.

She says something. He doesn't know the words. He knows
everything else:

I've always known. What else would I do with knowing?

She holds him one moment longer. Then turns, and walks home.

INT./EXT. THE THRESHOLD -- CONTINUOUS

The road stays. The forest stays. But the light goes strange -
- pressure, rising, the consciousness stretched against the
edge of its own architecture.

Oscar knows what this is. What it cost his father.

The healer's footprints in the frozen mud. The disturbed snow
where a man stepped aside.

Karim's daughter draws yellow birds.

He makes his father's choice.

And at the edge -- where the pressure is worst -- something
in it is FAMILIAR.

Not a voice. Not a face. A handprint of intention, decades
old, left on the inside of the door like warmth in a chair
someone has just left.

Someone held this open. Someone paid to hold this open,
eleven years of his life, and never once said it wasn't worth
it.

OSCAR
(barely sound)
Hi, Dad.

He goes through.

WHITE. We don't follow. We can't. Only this:

It's enough. It has always been enough. People keep crossing the line. That's all it is. That's everything it is.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR, SUBLEVEL 2 -- CONTINUOUS

The biometric alarm goes SOLID -- 141 -- and then the trace stutters --

On the panel: 132. 136.

DUTY OFFICER
General, do we breach? General.

Osei doesn't answer. She is on page ninety of the notebook, reading like the building isn't on fire around her -- reading the way she has read everything her whole life, completely, or not at all.

DUTY OFFICER (CONT'D)
General, I need a decision --

OSEI
(not looking up)
Wait.

SHAW
Patricia --

OSEI
(turning a page)
Wait.

Four seconds. Five. The alarm tone. Shaw's hand flat against the door like she could feel his heartbeat through it.

Osei reaches the last entry. Reads it. Closes the notebook.

And looks up at the door with the expression of a woman standing in a doorway on a winter morning, medicine on the road in front of her.

DUTY OFFICER
He's arresting --

SHAW

Open it -- OPEN IT --

Security breaches the door. Lights blaze on: Oscar in the chair, rigid, grey, one hand clamped over his shirt pocket --

-- and then he BREATHES. A ragged, tearing inhale. The trace stabilizes -- at a new rhythm. Syncopated. Different from what it was before.

His eyes open. He looks at the room full of people -- Shaw at the front, Osei behind her, the notebook open in Osei's hands.

OSCAR

(hoarse)

Page ninety-one, General. You're almost there.

INT. VIEWING ROOM 7 -- MINUTES LATER

Medics check Oscar's vitals. He waves them down, stays in the chair. Shaw crouches beside him. Osei stands with the notebook, and she has, in fact, read to the end.

The last entry, in handwriting slightly changed -- more deliberate, the hand of a man who crossed something:

INSERT -- THE NOTEBOOK

"She didn't know it would work. She could see the person on the other side of the line. That's the entire five-thousand-year argument. You don't need to know it will work. You need to know they're human. Either way, you cross."

Osei closes the notebook. A long moment. The forensic accountant and the anomaly, looking at each other across a room.

OSEI

The window closes in two hours.
Moscow moves at six our time
whether or not anyone in this
building has an epiphany. Your
mother's box on the mountain
doesn't change that.

OSCAR

It changes it tonight. The pretext
is thirst, General. Thirst
manufactured by a schedule -- your
schedule -- that three governments
have never seen. Publish the basin.

(MORE)

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Reserves, flow models, allocation
math, Meridian's whole ledger.
Everyone, at once. There's no
rescue to perform if nobody's
drowning in the dark.

OSEI
And Meridian is exposed. Twelve
years of my work, on trial in every
capital in the world, by Friday.

OSCAR
Yes.

Silence. She looks at the notebook in her hands.

OSEI
You know what I am in your mother's
document. I'm the advisor. I'm the
man in the doorway.

OSCAR
No.

He gets up -- unsteady, holds the chair, stands without it.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
The man in the doorway is whoever's
standing in it when the medicine
arrives. That's the whole point.
It's never the same person twice.
Right now, tonight -- it's you.

Osei looks at him. At Shaw. At the biometric monitor still
ticking its new, strange rhythm.

Then she looks at her watch, and does the arithmetic of her
entire life in about four seconds.

OSEI
The release has to come from
outside the government or it reads
as an American information
operation and makes everything
worse. It can't be us.

OSCAR
It was never going to be us.

Beat. Osei almost smiles -- at the shape of it, the mother's
forty-year chess move.

OSEI
The mountain.

OSCAR
I need a phone.

Osei turns to the duty officer -- the order that ends her program and maybe saves everything her program was for:

OSEI
Stand your team down. And get him a line.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- WADE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Wade at his desk, landline at his ear, listening. Osei stands in front of the desk. She has just finished saying something that cannot be unsaid.

WADE
(into phone)
Stand by.

He covers the receiver. Looks at her a long moment.

WADE (CONT'D)
You're telling me the notebook is real, the document is real, the mountain is real -- and your recommendation, the recommendation of the woman I authorized to shut all of it down, is to let a monastery publish forty years of classified material while the window is still open.

OSEI
The window is the argument, Marcus. It closes from daylight or it closes from armor. Those are the options on the table, and only one of them is survivable, and for the first time in my career I can't schedule my way to a third.

Wade looks at the phone in his hand. At the ribbons on his jacket. At sixty years of locked doors.

How do the people we like get in.

WADE
(into phone)
Cancel the flag on the archive line. Whatever call goes out of this building in the next hour -- it's on my authority.

He hangs up. To Osei, quietly:

WADE (CONT'D)
If we're wrong, they won't even
bother with hearings.

OSEI
If we're right, the hearings are
the point.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- ARCHIVE ROOM, SUB-BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Pre-digital. Filing cabinets in rows like a library of secrets. On a corner desk: a rotary phone. Black. Absurdly permanent.

Oscar sits -- the walking has cost him; he doesn't let it show until he has to. Shaw and Osei stand among the cabinets. He dials from memory. International. Long.

Two rings. A VOICE answers -- old, male, accented, the calm of a man who has been waiting thirty years for this exact call.

OSCAR
Rinpoche. It's Oscar Damus.

The voice, warm and unhurried. Oscar listens -- and something in his face gives, just for a second.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Yes. I found it. The place it
breaks.

A beat. He steadies.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
My mother's box. I need it
released. All of it -- the
document, the transcripts, her
annotations. Not to a government.
Not to an institution. Everyone.
All of it. At once.

He looks at Osei. She nods once. Not a calculation. A choice.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Tonight.

He hangs up.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
How long will it take them?

SHAW
(already smiling, small)
It's already done, Oscar.
Rinpoche's been ready for thirty
years. Your mother was very
thorough.

INT. GANDEN CHOLING MONASTERY -- SCRIPTORIUM -- NIGHT

Butter lamps and stone. Shelves of cloth-wrapped texts. At the center, on a low table, incongruous: a HARDENED LAPTOP, a satellite modem, a coiled cable running out through a gap in a five-hundred-year-old wall.

RINPOCHE, 80s, sits before it -- a face like weathered wood, entirely at peace with the machine. A YOUNG MONK kneels beside him, hand on the trackpad, waiting.

On the table beside the laptop: a WOODEN BOX. Open. Inside -- decades of paper. Bound documents. Session transcripts. A woman's small, ruthless handwriting on every margin.

Rinpoche rests his hand flat on the papers. The touch of a man greeting an old friend.

The phone on the table -- an ancient corded handset spliced to the sat rig -- RINGS.

The young monk looks at Rinpoche. Rinpoche smiles like the punchline of a thirty-year joke, and picks it up.

EXT. HIMALAYAN PASS -- NIGHT

The Land Cruisers crest the pass. Below, across a moon-blue valley: the monastery on its ridge, one window glowing.

The liaison officer's sat phone BUZZES. He reads the message. Reads it again.

LIAISON OFFICER
(to the team)
Stand down. Turn it around.

CONTRACTOR
We're twenty minutes out.

LIAISON OFFICER
(pocketing the phone)
We're thirty years late.

Through the windshield, in the valley below: the monastery's one lit window. And rising faintly beside the ancient walls, red in the darkness -- the status light of a satellite dish, blinking. Transmitting.

INT. GANDEN CHOLING MONASTERY -- SCRIPTORIUM -- CONTINUOUS

The young monk's finger comes down on the trackpad. One click.

A progress bar. Then a cascade -- mirrors, relays, addresses spooling down the screen faster than reading. Forty years of evidence leaving the mountain in every direction at once.

Rinpoche watches the screen a moment. Then ignores it entirely, and begins, with great care, to close the empty wooden box.

RINPOCHE
(to the box; in Tibetan,
subtitled)
There. You can rest now.

INT. THE KREMLIN -- COUNCIL CHAMBER -- PRE-DAWN

The four men. The fifth, younger, enters without knocking -- a tablet in his hand, held like a live grenade. He sets it on the table.

On screen, cascading across news wires in six languages: THE AMARYN PAPERS -- AQUIFER DATA, ALLOCATION SCHEDULES, FORTY YEARS OF EVIDENCE -- and the header of a 1987 document: THE SCARCITY REFLEX.

The senior man reads. His jaw works once.

On a second screen: crowds already gathering in three Amaryn capitals -- not riots. People holding PRINTOUTS. Reading them aloud to each other under streetlights.

The senior man looks at the schedule on his table, with its red circle. A pretext that has just died of daylight -- a rescue with no one drowning, on a stage with the lights up.

He closes the folder.

No dialogue. None needed. The window shuts.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The countdown clock: 00:47:12 -- and then the main screen repopulates: satellite imagery, armor formations breaking laager, columns turning north. Standing down.

Holt watches, phone forgotten in his hand. Chen exhales twelve years of her life.

HOLT
Somebody find out what the hell
just happened.

CHEN
(reading her tablet)
A monastery published it.

HOLT
Published WHAT?

CHEN
(a beat; scrolling)
Everything.

INT. NEWSROOM -- LONDON -- NIGHT

A wire editor at a bank of monitors, phone wedged at her shoulder, scrolling the Amaryn Papers with the specific stillness of a journalist who understands she is early to the biggest story of her life.

WIRE EDITOR
(into phone)
No, listen to me -- it's not a
leak, it's a LIBRARY. There's a
1987 framework document under it
that reads like -- hold on.

She stops scrolling. Reads. Her lips move: "the scarcity reflex."

WIRE EDITOR (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Wake everyone up.

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT -- AMARYN NORTH -- DAWN

A frontier gate between two of the basin nations. Concrete barriers, a queue of trucks a kilometer long -- the permanent traffic jam of a managed border.

A BORDER SERGEANT stands outside his booth reading his phone. His OPPOSITE NUMBER, fifty meters away across the line, is reading his.

They look up at each other across the no-man's land -- two men who have stared past each other for years.

The far sergeant holds up his phone. A question.

A beat. The near sergeant holds up his. Same page.

Neither smiles. But the near sergeant walks to the barrier, and lifts it -- for the first truck in the queue, and the next, and the next.

EXT. AMARYN BASIN -- SOUTHERN INTAKE TOWN -- DAWN

The standpipe queue -- but wrong. Nobody is queuing. People stand in knots in the street, holding phones, holding PRINTOUTS, reading aloud to each other in the grey light.

Nargiza on the valve house steps, a printout in both hands -- the allocation schedule, HER basin, twelve years of decisions made about her water in a language of column headers. Her son reads over her elbow.

She looks up from the page, at her neighbors, at the soldiers by the truck who are reading it too.

Nobody riots. It's quieter than that, and bigger: the specific silence of people finding out the weather had an author.

A NEIGHBOR calls to her, holding up his phone -- a headline in their language. She reads it. And Nargiza -- engineer, mother, four hours in every queue of her life -- starts, incredulously, to LAUGH.

The laugh spreads. It shouldn't make sense. It makes perfect sense.

The gates of the valve house stand open behind them.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- WADE'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Dawn through the blinds. Wade with a printed stack of the Amaryn Papers. Across the desk: Osei. Straight-backed. Already dressed for the hearing that hasn't been scheduled yet.

WADE
Every capital in NATO is asking
whether the data is genuine. State
wants to stall.

OSEI
It's genuine.

WADE
Patricia --

OSEI
It's my data, Marcus. I built the
ledger. I'll say so under oath, in
public, by name -- because the only
thing that makes this land as truth
instead of an op is the architect
confirming it.

Wade studies her.

WADE
You know what that costs you.

OSEI
(standing; squaring her
jacket)
I've read the document. Sealed
things rot. I'd rather be the
confession than the archive.

She goes. Wade watches the door a moment -- then picks up his
phone.

WADE
(into phone)
Get me the President.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR -- MORNING

Oscar, jacket over one arm, escorted the polite way now. Shaw
walks him toward the daylight at the end of the corridor.

SHAW
There'll be hearings. Years of
them. They'll want the viewer on a
stand.

OSCAR
They'll get the documents. The
documents are better company.

They stop at the door. Beyond the glass: morning, ordinary and enormous.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Karim's daughter.

SHAW
I found her yesterday. Marseille.
Her aunt has her.

She hands him a folded page -- an address, and a photograph. He doesn't look at it yet. Pocket. Over his heart. Three things now.

SHAW (CONT'D)
What do I do, Oscar? After this building, there's no --

OSCAR
There's a road between two villages, Katherine. There's always a road.

A beat. Then, quietly:

SHAW
Go home.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM -- MARSEILLE -- DAY

Twenty kids at desks. A TEACHER at a laptop, the morning's news on the projector behind her -- the Amaryn story, the monastery, the document.

In the third row: a GIRL, nine, dark serious eyes. Drawing instead of listening, the way she always does.

The teacher, reading from the projector, says a name -- and the girl's pencil stops.

She looks up at the screen. At the story about a man who could fly anywhere without moving, and the buried paper he carried down a mountain.

She looks back down at her drawing: a yellow bird.

She adds a second one beside it.

INT. SENATE HEARING ROOM -- DAY (DAYS LATER)

Flashbulbs like small arms fire. A gallery packed to the fire code. At the witness table, alone, no counsel, no notes: OSEI. Squared jacket. Squared shoulders.

A SENATOR leans into a microphone.

SENATOR

General, for the record -- did the intelligence community of the United States covertly control the water allocation of three sovereign nations for twelve years?

Osei pulls the microphone one inch closer. The room goes quiet.

OSEI

Yes, Senator. I built it. And if you'll permit me, I'd like to explain what I've learned about why we build such things -- and why we always will, until we learn to read a document I'd like to enter into the record.

She lifts it from her case and sets it on the table, face up. The cover page fills the frame:

THE SCARCITY REFLEX -- M. DAMUS.

EXT. COASTAL HEADLAND -- AUSTRALIA -- DAY

Wind and gulls and a hard blue sea. A lighthouse, red and white horizontal bands. On the rocks below, painted: two names and a date.

Climbing the headland path: OSEI -- in civilian clothes that don't quite know how to sit on her -- beside a YOUNG WOMAN, 20s, her daughter, mid-story, laughing.

Osei is listening. Actually listening. It looks like a skill she's relearning.

They pass the lighthouse -- and Osei stops. Looks up.

At the top, behind the glass: the LAMP, turning. Lit. Somebody fixed it.

Osei looks at it a long moment. Her daughter says something -- "Mum?" -- and Osei shakes her head, smiling at a joke she has no intention of explaining, and walks on.

EXT. TAVARUA ISLAND -- DAWN

The world becomes color again. The same turquoise. The same palms. The same white sand catching first light.

A fishing boat on the near shore. Semi. He doesn't look up when the charter plane circles the lagoon.

He looks up when it lands.

EXT. TAVARUA DOCK -- CONTINUOUS

Oscar steps off the boat from the charter. No bag. Jacket over one arm. The shirt pocket, over his heart, carrying everything he owns that matters.

He stands on the dock and breathes the air: salt, fish, woodsmoke.

Then he closes his eyes. Four counts. And -- just to check -- he goes.

A moment. He comes back. Touches his own face like a man taking inventory.

Still there. Different. But still there.

He starts walking.

EXT. TAVARUA VILLAGE -- MORNING

Losa at her kitchen. She doesn't look up. Then she does.

 LOSA
 You look terrible.

 OSCAR
 Good morning, Losa.

 LOSA
 Worse than before. I didn't think
 it was possible.

She crosses to him and takes his face in both hands -- the examination of a woman who has been checking people for damage her whole life. She finds something she wasn't expecting. Looks one beat longer.

Then she nods, once, and steers him to the kitchen and puts food in front of him without asking.

He eats. The village doesn't make a scene of him. A woman nods from across the compound. A man squeezes his shoulder in passing and keeps walking.

The chess kid materializes at his elbow. Waits.

OSCAR

What.

KID #1

I castled. In the game with Mere. She was attacking and I castled instead and she didn't know what to do.

KID #1 (CONT'D)

You were right. It was the right move.

OSCAR

Castle first. Always.

The kid nods, satisfied, and vanishes.

EXT. LAGOON -- DAY

Semi's boat inside the reef. Oscar working the nets -- actually working them, sleeves rolled, hands remembering. Semi watches him haul with a critical professional eye.

SEMI

Your knots are still terrible.

OSCAR

My knots are fine.

SEMI

For a government man.

They haul together. Fish spill silver into the box. The work is the conversation.

Then, not looking up:

SEMI (CONT'D)

You went somewhere. This time. Further than the other times.

Oscar's hands keep working.

OSCAR

Yeah.

SEMI
You came back different.

OSCAR
Yeah.

Semi nods -- the complete Fijian sentence -- and ties off the net.

SEMI
Good. You were done being the other one.

EXT. TAVARUA SHORE -- LATER

Oscar and Semi at the water's edge, the ease of two men who know how to stand together.

SEMI
It worked? The thing you went to do.

OSCAR
Some of it. Some of it takes time.

Semi nods -- entirely sufficient. Then he digs out his phone and hands it over without a word.

Oscar reads the screen. We don't see it. We see his face: not surprise -- the stillness of a man watching something he set in motion arrive on the far shore.

He hands it back.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
When did this come through?

SEMI
This morning. Before you landed.

Semi pockets the phone. Picks up his net. Work continues. The world continues.

EXT. TAVARUA VILLAGE -- MIDMORNING

Oscar walks the village slowly. Under a tree, a knot of ELDERS argue about a water channel between two plots -- mild, no heat, two men explaining their positions and listening to them explained back. A third elder mediates without being asked.

The argument resolves. Nobody wins. The channel will be shared. The conversation moves on to other things.

Oscar stands at the edge of it. Nobody told them how to do this. No document required.

He keeps walking.

EXT. TAVARUA BEACH -- AFTERNOON

The driftwood table. The chess board, set up wrong -- the kids have been playing. Oscar starts resetting it. Stops halfway. Looks at the wrong arrangement.

Leaves it.

The chess kid arrives. Two more. Then a fourth -- a GIRL, new, hanging back with the hunger of someone who wants in and hasn't been invited.

OSCAR
(to the girl)
You want to play?

She comes and sits.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
First thing.

He taps the king.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
This one looks the most important.
It isn't.

The queen.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
This one does all the work and gets
none of the credit.

A pawn.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
This one changes everything -- if
you're patient enough to let it.

GIRL
How?

OSCAR
It crosses the board. All the way.
Takes forever.

(MORE)

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Everything tries to stop it. But if
it makes it across --

A beat.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
-- it becomes whatever it needs to
be.

The girl picks up the pawn. Examines it with the seriousness
it deserves. Sets it back.

GIRL
Show me.

OSCAR
Okay.

EXT. TAVARUA BEACH -- DUSK

The children gone. The light going amber, then rose, then the
particular purple of a Fijian dusk.

Oscar alone on the sand. He takes out the letter. Doesn't
read it -- holds it. Then the drawing: a yellow bird in four
colors of crayon. Then the photograph from Shaw's folded page
-- a girl, nine now, dark serious eyes, in a doorway in
Marseille.

He looks at the photograph for a long time.

OSCAR
She draws well.

He folds all three together. Returns them to the pocket. Sits
a moment more with the island in its evening -- cooking
fires, voices, a child being called in for the night.

Then he straightens. The monks' posture. The spine that is a
channel. Hands open on his knees. Palms up.

EXT. TAVARUA ISLAND -- CONTINUOUS

The island continues around him.

Semi checking his lines. Losa's voice from the kitchen.
Children somewhere. The water doing what water does.

A community in its evening -- living the oldest argument with
the ease of people who never knew it was an argument.

Oscar's face, in the last light: the guardedness gone. What's underneath is simple.

A man on a beach. Going somewhere.

We stay. On the island. On Semi and his lines. On Losa's fire. On the chess board with one pawn advanced three squares.

On the ordinary, irreplaceable texture of people choosing, in ten thousand small daily ways, the open gate.

We don't follow Oscar.

We know where he goes. We know what he finds.

We've always known.

FADE TO WHITE.

THE END

FADE OUT.