

Private Intelligence

by

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INT. OFFICE SPACE, CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

LOU KIPPLING, 49 years old, handsome, cunning, ladykiller - the sheen of his life as a spy clashes violently with the realities of his intense paranoia. He's a listener, a watcher, a manipulator. But more on that later...

Lou stands before a group of FIVE RECRUITS. He unbuttons the jacket of his Armani suit...it does nothing to make him appear more casual to the young people staring up at him from their office chairs.

LOU

Um. Achem.

Lou looks to the right.

LEAH ELBAZ, early 40s, earned arrogance, the smartest person in most rooms, cares not if you know, leans against a file cabinet with her arms crossed. The smirk on her face betrays the fact that she knows Lou hates public speaking and absolutely loves watching him squirm.

LOU

I'm Lou Kippling. My associate, Leah Elbaz, will give you a run-through.

Lou takes a seat on a file cabinet against the wall. Leah roles her eyes, her smirk evolves as she takes center stage.

LEAH

Thanks boss, inspiring introduction...As he said, that's Lou, I'm Leah, and if you're sitting here listening to this half-cocked schpeal, it means we've been watching you. Studying you. Listening in on your private conversations. Digging through your trash and eavesdropping on your dangerous liaisons.

The Recruits attempt to gauge one another's reactions.

LEAH

If you're sitting here, it's because you understand privacy is a myth, intelligence is the highest form of currency, and J. Edgar Hoover is the most important man in American History.

Lou chuckles to himself.

LEAH

I'm just kidding about that last part. *Maybe*. If you're sitting here tonight, it's because you've got a special set of skills, or the raw materials needed to succeed in private intelligence.

Leah looks at the first recruit--

MANDY PALMER, early 30s, go-getter, her eyes give too much away, she's eager. That'll dull with more experience...or it'll get her killed.

LEAH

You've all got your reasons for joining the private sector.

INT. BANK, MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Mandy sits across the desk from the BANK MANAGER, a sweaty, middle-aged man, balding from stress.

LEAH (V.O.)

For some of you it's money.
Others...circumstance.

Mandy's in a pant-suit she got off the rack, gun holstered to her hip, her FBI credentials hang from a thin chain around her neck. She tries to make sense of the financial records in front of her.

She reads, she cross references, she shakes her head.

MANDY

You know, this figure keeps popping up, almost at random, across all of your documents. And if what you're telling me is correct--

BANK MANAGER

Let me just take a look at that.

Bank Manager rises, walks around his desk, stands over Mandy's shoulder, pretends to study the documents in front of her. HE WRAPS HIS LEFT ARM AROUND HER THROAT, grips Mandy tight in a headlock. She's stunned, too slow to reach for her gun, he yanks it out of her holster, presses the barrel against *his own temple*--BANG--

INT. OFFICE SPACE, CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Leah looks at the next recruit--

SPENCER LUDWICK, 29 years old, the waspy kind of handsome, wants to be James Bond, and as you're about to see...his dick is his North Star.

LEAH (V.O.)

Some of you can't help yourselves.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, OUTSIDE OFFICE - DAY [FLASHBACK]

TWO SECRET SERVICE AGENTS stand guard. They wear black suits and ear pieces.

AGENT 1

Trust me, as far as assignments go, you can do a lot worse than First Daughter-duty.

AGENT 2

I mean, I didn't think I'd stroll in here and protect POTUS on day one--

INT. WHITE HOUSE, OFFICE - SAME TIME [FLASHBACK]

The PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER unbutton's Spencer's black suit, kisses his neck with the ferocity of a starved cannibal.

SPENCER

Ma'am, I--

PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER

Shut up.

She grabs both sides of his face, as she bites his lip, her left hand knocks against his ear piece--

INT. WHITE HOUSE, OUTSIDE OFFICE - SAME TIME [FLASHBACK]

Secret Service Agent 1 raises his hand to his ear piece.

AGENT 1

Did you hear that?

Agent 2 raises a finger to his ear piece, listens hard.

AGENT 2

Oh shit.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER [FLASHBACK]

The President's Daughter performs oral pleasantries on Spencer, who's enjoying himself but visibly flustered.

The door to the office opens--in walks JEREMY, late 30s, head buried in a bunch of documents.

JEREMY

Babe, we should really reconsider your father's upcoming appearances.

Jeremy finally looks up from his documents.

JEREMY

What in the fu--

INT. OFFICE SPACE, CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Spencer, red in the face, sits up in his office chair, can't get comfortable. Leah looks at the next recruit--

REMY HENDERSON, 40s, his permanent five o'clock shadow is a projection of his burnt out, self-involved demeanor. Remy doesn't notice Leah looking at him, he's too busy fixing his menacing glare on the recruit to his right--

MAXINE WHEELER, mid-30s, her upright posture and turtleneck/blazer combo screams by-the-book. The twinkle in her eye indicates it's all a front...*maybe*.

LEAH

And some of you just can't stand the thought of helping others.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT, INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Remy's handcuffed to a silver table. Across from him, Maxine reclines in her seat, one leg casually draped over the other. She matches Remy's piercing cold stare with an indifference that is utterly demoralizing.

District Attorney WASHINGTON sits next to Maxine.

REMY

If I name names, I get to keep my badge. It's how its gotta be.

WASHINGTON

If you name names, we'll *consider* time served. Your badge is gone.

REMY

Than it's like my lawyer said before I dismissed him - no deal.

WASHINGTON

I can't allow you to continue being a cop, Mr. Henderson--

REMY

Detective Henderson.

WASHINGTON

Inmate Henderson.

REMY

I'll give you enough dirt on a dozen different criminal groups across Manhattan and the Outer Boroughs. I'm talking about one hundred plus convictions...that will *stick*.

WASHINGTON

You don't seem to get it. None of it sticks if it comes from a dirty cop--

REMY

There's that word again. *Dirty*. Like no one understands this job. Not you pencil pushers in the DA's office or you boy scouts in Internal Affairs.

Maxine rolls her eyes, nudges Washington's shoulder.

WASHINGTON

There's one more way this can go. And it's...unorthodox. It was Ms. Wheeler's idea, actually.

REMY

And it involves nailing my palms to a large cross, I'm sure.

WASHINGTON

It's *that* very God complex that makes me want to take this offer off the table and let the Judge throw the damned book at you. Unfortunately, I actually care about cleaning up this city. And this department.

REMY

I already told you, I won't name names if I can't keep my badge--

WASHINGTON

You will name names, Mr. Henderson. You'll point fingers, too. And you'll provide us hard, concrete evidence to back it all up. You'll sing for your supper, or you this deal of a lifetime goes away forever.

LEAH (V.O.)

That's all fine. We don't care about any of it. We work for the highest bidder.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, OFFICE SPACE - NIGHT

The Recruits all look at one another.

LEAH (V.O.)

You clock in, you check your virtues at the door. And if *that* is a problem for any of you, *now* would be the time to get up and leave.

DARREN GOLD, mid-30s, his bomber-jacket over a button down shirt and loose tie matches his boyish charms. Perhaps it's all a ruse. He's the only recruit to actually look at the door that Leah just half-heartedly referred to. When he finally turns his head, Leah stares right at him.

LEAH

Good. You checked your phones into a locker on the first floor when you entered this building. When they're returned to you, you'll notice a small device plugged in at the base. These are scramblers. One of the most important tools of our trade.

Leah holds her smartphone up, shows off the small device plugged into its charge portal.

LEAH

While these scramblers are plugged in, it becomes very difficult to track your location, and even more difficult to eavesdrop on your conversations. Not *impossible*, but *difficult*.

LOU

One phone call without a scrambler could be the difference between a blown mission and a job well done.

LEAH

It could be the difference between life and death.

LOU

You're all going to be paired off on assignments for which you will receive a generous stipend. You'll have 48 hours to complete the assigned task, and to do so in a covert manner. You'll get your missions from Leah. I'll either see you again in 48 hours...or I won't.

Lou checks his watch, rises, leaves the room.

INT. HALLWAY BY ELEVATORS - MOMENTS LATER

Lou hits the down button, waits for the elevator. Leah emerges from their conference room.

LEAH

What the hell? Where are you going?

LOU

I've got to meet an old associate. Someone's got to keep the lights on around here.

The elevator door opens, Lou enters.

INT. SUB-GARAGE - NIGHT

The elevator door opens, Lou exits, steps into the concrete dungeon of a garage. Lightbulbs flicker. Lou maneuvers through parking spots, constantly looks over his shoulder.

He *feels* a SHADOW follow him. Instincts kick in, evasive maneuvers. Sharp turns. Serpentine movements. Head on a swivel. The Shadow is good. Still on him.

Another sharp right turn should do the trick...Lou leans against the concrete wall of the garage, pulls a thin metal wire from his inner suit pocket, prepares himself. The Shadow turns right, passes by Lou, who leaps out, wraps the metal wire around the throat of his pursuer.

The Shadow's fingers rise up to the wire - it's no use, Lou will have him strangled to death in a matter of moments. The Shadow struggles, tries to kick back at Lou--fruitless. Lou swings The Shadow around, looks at its reflection in the circular turn mirror perched at the top of the garage wall...

LOU

Shit.

Lou relinquishes his grip on the wire, lets The Shadow live.

LOU

Sorry, Pete.

PETE RAUSCH is no shadow at all. He's a 60-year-old in jeans and a sweater with grey hair and a mouse-like face. He rubs at his nearly-sliced throat, debates whether or not to murder Lou where he stands.

PETE

What the fuck, Kipling?

LOU

You startled me.

PETE

You called *me*.

LOU

I didn't think you'd sneak up on me.

PETE

Wanted to make sure you hadn't lost a step...my mistake.

Pete slowly reaches his hand out, they shake and then bring it in for a reluctant, and brief, embrace.

PETE

How goes it with the startup?

LOU

Wait.

Lou takes his key fob out, unlocks his car, pops the trunk. Pete follows him over. Lou removes a briefcase from the trunk, opens it, takes out a handheld wand, proceeds to wave it around Pete's body.

PETE

You serious with this? Bugs?

LOU
Don't act like you're insulted.

PETE
Beep, beep, beep. You found one, now
what? Gonna finish strangling me?

Lou puts the wand back in the briefcase, satisfied.

He takes out a handheld device, walks by parked cars, waves the device over each one he passes. Pete follows close, rolling his eyes. The fourth car turns on as Lou waves the device over it - it's a sort of master key.

INT. RANDOM PARKED CAR, GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Lou and Pete climb into the back seat.

PETE
Are you satisfied, or should we
checked this random car for bugs, too?

LOU
I'm satisfied.

PETE
Good. I've got an assignment for you.
Should help you put this new startup
of yours on the map; and placate your
venture capital overlords.

Pete removes a manila folder from his mahogany-colored briefcase, slaps it into Lou's chest.

PETE
If your results satisfy us, the Agency
will farm work out to you more
consistently.

LOU
A try out, Pete? After all these
years?

PETE
Hey, private sector's incredibly
competitive. You know how many former
associates use that exact same line on
me? Not to mention, after that
business in the Sudan...let's just say
Langley is less than certain you've
still got the juice.

Lou's relaxed fingers ball up into a fist of tension and rage. Pete takes note.

PETE

Hey, just giving you some perspective.

LOU

Appreciated, as always.

Lou moves to get out of the car.

PETE

One last thing...the new firm, what's it called?

LOU

Clockwise.

EXT. SURVEILLANCE VAN, WEST 32ND STREET - NIGHT

Midtown Manhattan. Just West of Herald Square. It's busy, it's dirty, it's tourist central. The van is parked across the street from Madison Square Garden.

From the outside, the vehicle looks like a piece of shit.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - NIGHT

From the inside, the vehicle is still a piece of shit. A curtain separates the front of the van from the back. Spencer sits in the driver's seat. Mandy's in shotgun, aims a camera with a large lens attachment at the entrance to MSG.

SPENCER

That thing's ridiculous. We could just use the camera on my phone.

MANDY

Do you see a security guard standing just inside the entrance?

SPENCER

No--

MANDY

No. The camera on your phone can't zoom in this effectively.

SPENCER

Still...we're supposed to be conspicuous.

MANDY

You know then maybe you shouldn't have parked this hideous van right across the street.

SPENCER

Hey. This is a great van. This van might save your life one day. It's saved mine on many occasions.

Mandy lowers the camera from in front of her face, flares her nostrils, SNIFFS the air.

MANDY

I can smell the dried semen and latex.

SPENCER

Oh ha-ha, you read my file. Well, two can play at that game. At least no one's ever--

Mandy turns the camera's flash on, moves it right in front of Spencer's face, SNAPS a photo.

SPENCER

Ahhhhhhareyoukidding?

He rubs his eyes.

MANDY

You don't know *anything* about me. File or no file. Understand?

Spencer rubs his eyes.

SPENCER

Alright, shit. Did you think for a second that maybe my file doesn't exactly tell the whole story either?

MANDY

You're saying you don't sleep with women in this van?

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - DAY [FLASHBACK]

MONTAGE IN DOUBLE TIME:

Spencer has sex with a litany of women in the back of his van, in just about every position, and style, imaginable.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - NIGHT

Spencer opens his mouth to retort...Mandy faces him, SNAPS another photo, this time no flash.

MANDY

Don't worry, I don't actually care.

Spencer relaxes in his seat.

SPENCER

Good, for a second there I really felt like you were judging me.

MANDY

Oh no, I absolutely was. I just don't care.

Spencer puts the car in drive.

SPENCER

Fair enough. You got what we need?

MANDY

Yeah, where to?

SPENCER

I know a guy in the Garment District.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE, ALPHABET CITY - NIGHT

Maxine is perched in a man-made birds nest on the fire escape of an abandoned building. The building's windows are boarded up, the brick is tagged with gang signs, it's now a home to rats and vagrants...which means it's perfect.

Maxine knows this, so she's content to let her lit cigarette hang from the corner of her mouth as she gazes through binoculars, aimed across the street.

What is she looking at?

EXT. THIRD STORY APARTMENT, ALPHABET CITY - SAME TIME

More like, *who is* she looking at. It's Remy, through the window, snooping around a third-story apartment.

Uh oh. Two windows over, Maxine spots the HOME OWNER arrive through her binoculars. He's a young Asian-American man in a wrinkled suit.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE, ALPHABET CITY - NIGHT

Maxine puts the binos down, removes a laser pointer from her fanny pack.

She shines the laser across the street, aims it into the window which she studies Remy through.

INT. HOME OFFICE, THIRD STORY APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Remy hovers over the home owner's laptop. He spots the red dot from the laser as it hits the wall beside him.

REMY

Shit.

He pulls the USB drive from the home owner's laptop, pockets it, moves to the wall, pulls open the window as quietly as possible, crawls out onto the third-story fire escape.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE, ALPHABET CITY - SAME TIME

Maxine watches Remy climb down the fire escape across the street. He navigates the slow traffic on the ground, climbs up the fire escape of the abandoned building, meets her at the bird's nest.

REMY

Next time...I keep look out, you pull the B and E.

MAXINE

No.

Remy gets his bearings in the bird's nest.

REMY

What do you mean, *no*?

MAXINE

I mean, no. We both bring skill sets to the table. No doubt why we were paired up for this try out. So we'll each just stick to what we do best.

REMY

You're saying what you do best is *watch*?

MAXINE

Precisely.

REMY

And what I do best is--

MAXINE

Dirty work.

REMY

And you think *that's* why they paired us off? Not to see if we can work together, considering our history?

MAXINE

I'm sure that had *something* to do with it.

REMY

OK, Watcher. As usual, you seem to know everything. Tell me what you know about the others.

MAXINE

Palmer, Mandy. Worked corporate fraud investigations for the Bureau. She's all sugar - too sweet. The private sector will chew her up.

REMY

Caught a peak at her file. She didn't exactly have a choice in the matter.

MAXINE

Then there's Ludwick, Spencer.

REMY

He's a cliché, can't keep his dick in his pants.

MAXINE

Something perhaps the two of you can relate on.

REMY

Hey, I'm nothing like that joker.

MAXINE

I suppose that's true, he doesn't seem to have to pay for puss--

Remy has his hands wrapped around Maxine's throat in the blink of an eye. Her face darkens as he squeezes, she won't shed that damned smile though.

REMY

Let's get one thing straight. You're only safe, because I need you for this dry run. Once this exceptionally high paying job is mine--

CLICK. The sound of a gun cocking alerts Remy that at this very moment, Maxine has the barrel of her 9mm Pocket Pistol poking right into his crotch.

Maxine squeaks her words out through his clenched grip--

MAXINE

Let's get one thing straight: I will always be one step ahead of you.

He slowly relinquishes his grasp on her throat. Her smile remains, oxygen returns to her brain.

MAXINE

Shall we continue? Kipling was with the Agency. A Lifer. Central America, Afghanistan, Russia, The Sudan...then he went dark. Popped back up in NYC.

REMY

How do you know this? I couldn't get my hands on his file--

MAXINE

Like I said, one step ahead Remy. Every time.

REMY

Elbaz was Mossad. That much is obvious.

MAXINE

Sure.

REMY

She's the killer. The one we have to watch out for.

MAXINE

I don't disagree.

REMY

That leaves one, the kid. What do you know about him? I've read conflicting reports. Seems a little out of place.

MAXINE

Maybe that's the point.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM, UNION SQUARE STATION - NIGHT

Darren checks his watch. It's midnight as an N train pulls up to the station. He doesn't board. Civilians step off, civilians step on, the train leaves the station.

Darren checks his watch. 12:01am.

When he looks back up, he sees what he's been waiting for.

Who he's been waiting for.

ROGER FERRIS, 72 years old, full head of white hair and a belly full of wisdom, strolls up the subway platform reading the New York Times.

Roger walks right passed Darren without looking up at him.

An R train arrives at the platform. When the doors open, Roger Ferris climbs aboard, still reading the Times.

Darren checks his watch.

12:02am. He looks over both shoulders, boards the R train.

INT. UNIFORM MANUFACTURER, GARMENT DISTRICT - SAME TIME

Spencer and Mandy are being fitted for blue blazers and white button down shirts.

SPENCER

I heard he was a street kid, a car thief. Got arrested by an undercover Fed and brought up by the Bureau.

MANDY

Sounds like a cover if ever I've heard one. I asked around about him--

SPENCER

You're kidding?

MANDY

I asked around about everyone.

Spencer can't hide his surprise.

MANDY

Heard he washed out with the FBI.
Authority issues. Consulted for ATF
for a little while, moved over to the
private sector.

SPENCER

Riddle me this, what kind of spook
uses headphones with wires?

MANDY

How do you mean?

SPENCER

I saw him outside, before the intro.
He was using wired ear buds.

MANDY

Maybe he's afraid of bluetooth...You
know paranoia runs deep in this
industry.

INT. SUBWAY CAR, R TRAIN - NIGHT

Darren sits several seats away from Roger on the mostly empty
train car. The subway comes to a stop at the next station,
doors open, doors close, the passengers continue to thin out.

Another stop. Doors open. Doors close.

The train car is now empty except for Darren, Roger and a
homeless man asleep on the far end.

Darren checks his watch. 12:08am. Go Time. He rises, takes
the seat next to Roger.

DARREN

You're the guy?

Roger finally puts the newspaper down.

ROGER

If I'm not, we're both in the wrong
place.

Darren looks to his left, his right. Homeless guy hasn't
moved in minutes.

ROGER

Don't look so squirrely, kid. You're
doing fine.

DARREN

Am I? I haven't heard from anyone in weeks.

ROGER

That's how you know you're doing fine.

DARREN

You've...done this before?

ROGER

Sure, kid. I've been where you're sitting. Quite a few times, quite a few different operations. I've been a handler now for three years. Haven't lost an operative. Now that my bonafides have been established...

DARREN

Sorry, I just, this is my first.

ROGER

I'm aware. *You're doing fine.* But the trick to being a good undercover operative is to bifurcate your mind. Understand?

DARREN

I think so.

ROGER

When you're with them, you *are them*. You've got to be able to flip that switch.

DARREN

I just think it would help if I knew exactly what you all wanted out of this.

ROGER

You've got to trust me when I tell you kid...it wouldn't.

The R train comes to a halt, the doors open, Roger rises.

ROGER

Ride this train two more stops before you get off.

Darren checks his watch. When he looks back up, Roger's gone.

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE - NIGHT

Limestone walk ups, massive pre-war towers. Affluent couples push strollers, beggars beg, young men on bikes menace the sidewalks, police officers ignore them.

Lou Kippling, hands in pockets, walks with a paranoid hunch.

He stops in front of one of those massive pre-war residential buildings, looks up toward the penthouse. He checks his surroundings. He never doesn't check his surroundings.

Lou enters the lobby.

INT. 34TH FLOOR, HIGH-RISE - NIGHT

Lou exits the elevator.

Eyes the front door of his apartment at the far end of the posh, narrow hallway. He begins the slow walk down the hall, removes his coat, exposes the handgun tucked into the back waistband of his immaculately tailored slacks.

As he passes each of his neighbor's apartments, he holds his coat up over the peepholes of their front doors.

Christ, what a long, slow walk down the hall. But he's made it. He pulls the keys from his right pants pocket, studies them in his palm, maneuvers them into the lock on his front door. He doesn't turn it.

He leaves the keys hanging there, drops his coat, turns in an instant, pulls his gun out, crouches and aims it...at nothing...just an empty hallway. He's sweating now.

He wipes his brow, picks up his coat, holds his gun low against his hip, ducks into the stairwell--pops back out a second later to pull the keys he's forgotten in the front door, gun out and ready...then disappears back into the stairwell.

EXT. HOTEL, MIDTOWN - NIGHT

Lou can relax for a moment amidst the urban density of the business district, but just a moment.

The outside of the hotel is inviting.

His coat's back on, hiding his weapon, his crutch.

Lou enters the lobby.

INT. 10TH FLOOR, HOTEL - NIGHT

Lou exits the elevator, approaches the door to room 1007, slides the key card in, grants himself entry.

Gee, that was easy enough.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He stands against the door, eyes scan the small room like he's on the hunt for booby traps. He locks the door twice.

Coat off, over the chair. Gun out, atop the coffee table.

Lou moves to the far end of the couch, pushes it up against the hotel room door. Over to the windows - looks out, scans the sidewalk below, pulls the blinds over.

He checks the bathroom - empty.

Checks under the bed - clear.

Checks the closet - all good.

He sits down on the bed, hunches over the rotary phone on the side table, takes it apart piece by piece, studies the inner workings as they become outer workings...

He lays down on the bed, closes his eyes - they pop right open. He can't stop looking at the windows. He gets up, pushes the bed further away from the windows, lays down again, closes his eyes. They pop back open.

He rises, grabs his gun off the coffee table, returns to the bed, holds the gun down by his side as he tries once more for sleep, closes his eyes. They pop back open.

INT. BEDROOM, APARTMENT - SUNRISE [FLASHBACK]

SUPER: KHARTOUM, SUDAN...RECENTLY.

Messy apartment. Cozy, though. An oasis from the constant violence outside.

GUNSHOTS rattle off in the distance. INTERMITTEN SCREAMS.

Smoke rises to the level of the bedroom's window, no doubt emanating from a burning car down below.

None of it bothers the SLEEPING ANGEL on the bed positioned on the floor in the corner. None of it wakes her.

The version of Lou who enters this cozy apartment is far less clean cut. He wears jeans and an open button-down over a stained undershirt. He pulls the handgun out from his shoulder holster, barely hidden by the button down.

He places the gun on the counter, meanders over to the angel, still sound asleep. He joins her on the mattress, brushes some hair from her face--shit. Something's not right.

He shakes her shoulder...nothing. He puts two fingers to her throat...nothing. He shakes her, he checks her breathing...nothing. He cries silently.

He grabs the bedside lamp, hurls it across the room, watches it shatter into a million pieces. He rises, smashes his fist through the drywall - he's floored by what's revealed...a small listening device. A bug.

His manic, wandering eyes catch the rubble of the shattered bedside lamp. He kneels down, reaches into the shards of porcelain, pulls out another listening device--

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Lou stares at the ceiling. Did he sleep? Were those nightmares? Memories?

A KNOCK at the door. He sits up, cocks his gun, aims it. His cell phone RINGS. He looks at it. Then at the door.

RING RING RING. He peers over at his phone once more, then quickly back to the door. He rolls off the bed to his right, lands in a kneeling position so the bed is his cover, gun in his right hand still aimed at the door. RING RING RING.

He reaches his left hand over toward his phone, the tips of his fingers manage to scoop it up, pull it toward his ear.

LOU (INTO PHONE)

Yeah?

LEAH (O.S.)

Lou, it's me.

LOU (INTO PHONE)

So?

LEAH (O.S.)

I mean, outside the door. It's me. I'm here. At the hotel, open up...and please don't fucking shoot me.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - DAY

Empty driver's seat. Empty shotgun seat. A wire is plugged into the cigarette lighter, fed through the curtains toward the back of the van, where it powers a Keurig coffee maker.

Spencer and Mandy, dressed in their brand new blue blazers, slacks and button-downs, are huddled in the back. Mandy balances a styrofoam four-cup coffee holder across her palm. Three of the four rings have white paper cups of coffee sitting in them, the fourth currently brewing.

Spencer opens a vial that has a dropper attached to the cap.

MANDY

Where'd you get this stuff?

SPENCER

Veterinarian friend of mine.

MANDY

Friend? Or *friend*?

SPENCER

Get your mind out of the gutter--

INT. VETERINARIAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Spencer has sex with THE VET.

She is naked besides her white lab coat. They are surrounded by howling, caged animals.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - DAY

Spencer drops three liquid drops from the vial into each cup.

MANDY

And you're sure it won't kill them?

SPENCER

Kill them? No one's ever died from diarrhea before.

MANDY

That is patently false.

SPENCER

Apologies, let me rephrase. No one in the First World has ever died from diarrhea before.

Mandy rolls her eyes, ties her hair back into a tight bun.

Spencer screws the cap back onto the vial. Grabs a small green duffle bag, tosses it to Mandy.

She pulls a blond wig out, fixes it over her hair, fishes out a pair of fake spectacles, hands them to Spencer.

SPENCER

Think these will be enough for the security cameras?

MANDY

As long as nobody makes a fuss.

He puts the fake glasses on, they climb out of the van.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, ENTRANCE OF LOCKER ROOM - DAY

TWO SECURITY GUARDS stand outside the locker room, shoot the shit. Their blue blazers and slacks match Spencer and Mandy's.

Spencer and Mandy approach - Guard 1 checks his watch.

GUARD 1

Aren't y'all a little early?

SPENCER

First day, figured we'd get the lay of the land.

GUARD 1

That so?

MANDY

Mhmm.

Mandy extends the tray of coffees out, Guard 1 reluctantly accepts the offering. Guard 2 reaches for one like she'll collapse without a hit of caffeine.

GUARD 2

Shit, you two have the afternoon shift? I don't envy that.

She chugs down her coffee.

SPENCER

Hey somebody's gotta do it, right?

GUARD 1

Sure, sure.

He sips his coffee.

INT. LEAH'S CAR - DAY

Lou sips coffee. He sits in the shotgun seat of the black Toyota Camry. Leah's in the driver's seat.

LOU

I don't pay you enough to drive something less...*this*?

LEAH

Toyota Camry's are the most commonly driven Ubers in New York City.

Lou tries to ponder that, he's too distracted.

LOU

How'd you know where I was, Baz?

LEAH

We turned location tracking on on our work phones, remember?

LOU

Yeah, but my exact room number...you were following me last night.

LEAH

Can you blame me?

He glares at her from across the small car.

LEAH

You know how many other offers I had to go private, Kipling? If you're completely fucking losing it, I need to know.

He sips his coffee.

LOU

That's...fair.

He tries to hide an impressive yawn, fails.

LEAH

Do you sleep?

LOU

Unclear.

LEAH

I didn't think so. Glove box.

He looks at her inquisitively. She nods at the glove box. He opens it, reaches in, pulls out a prescription pill bottle.

LEAH

Vivance. Your names on it, don't ask how.

LOU

Do I ever?

Lou pockets the pill bottle.

LEAH

You going to tell me what happened in The Sudan?

LOU

Are you telling me you don't already know?

LEAH

Not the specifics. I know there was a woman involved...they say you lost it. Went after someone who was protected--

Lou hops out of the car so abruptly it's like he teleports.

INT. BATHROOM, MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - DAY

Khaki pants, down around a pair of ankles in a bathroom stall.

Guard 1 screams bloody murder as he explodes into the toilet.

INT. HOME TEAM LOCKER ROOM, MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - SAME TIME

Spencer goes to town on the back of one of the lockers with a power drill. Mandy uses a box cutter to remove a piece of carpet from the floor. She has a set of blue prints laid out next to her.

SPENCER

How fucking paranoid does an owner have to be to bug his own team?

MANDY

Megalomaniacal billionaire is a label that likely suits the majority of the league's owners.

SPENCER

No kidding.

Spencer puts the drill down, reaches into the hole he's drilled in the locker, pulls out a listening device.

SPENCER

I just don't even understand the point, though.

Mandy reaches into the hole beneath the cut up carpet.

MANDY

Maybe he's extra sensitive...

She pulls a small camera out from the floor--

MANDY

Then again, maybe he's got other reasons.

EXT. SIDEWALK, MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY

Lou and Leah don't quite walk side-by-side. She's a quarter of a step behind him, like she's scared he might blow.

LEAH

I don't wanna to play twenty questions, Lou.

LOU

I don't have the answers anyway, Baz.

LEAH

Are you gong to tell me what happened?

LOU

The Agency wanted to send me back to Ukraine. I opted for early retirement.

Leah roles her eyes.

LEAH

Why?

LOU
Guess I was homesick.

LEAH
I need to know if somebody wants to
kill you.

LOU
Are you telling me that you can say,
with certainty, that *no one wants to
kill you?*

SIGH. She concedes.

LEAH
Fair.

Leah fishes a pack of smokes from her back pocket, lights up.

LOU
When did you start smoking again?

LEAH
The day you certified my work visa.

Lou finally cracks a smile.

LEAH
Are you at least ready to work.

He finally stops walking, turns, looks right at her.

LOU
Of course I am.

LEAH
Good, cause we can't trust the Gold
kid. So you're going to babysit his
tryout.

LOU
Your Jewish brethren? I thought you
two would've hit it off.

She just smokes and stares at him.

LOU
Alright, fine. But scrap your little
assignment. He'll come help me do
something for Rausch...How are the
others are doing?

INT. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Maxine sits at a desk. Plugged into her laptop is the USB drive that Remy used to clone the Home Owner's computer.

MAXINE

Not good, not good, not good.

Remy paces behind her.

REMY

What do you mean?

MAXINE

I mean we've waisted the last eighteen hours. This guy's clean. Hasn't sent the electric car specs to anyone outside his office cohort.

REMY

Well did you check his email?

MAXINE

Are you kidding?

REMY

Maybe he has another one, a secret one that he uses to--

MAXINE

The software Elbaz gave us would have picked up on it. He's not the guy.

REMY

He's fucking Chinese!

Maxine looks around, embarrassed.

MAXINE

Would you keep your voice down, and your pathetic single-mindedness to yourself please?

REMY

The fuck is that supposed to mean?

MAXINE

It means he's Chinese American. And as far as his financial records show, he hasn't left the country since he was twelve.

REMY

Well that doesn't mean--

MAXINE

He's not our guy, Henderson. Get over it. Faster we move on, faster we find our mark.

REMY

So where does that leave us?

Maxine's up, pulling some thing out of her bag.

MAXINE

Back at the dossier.

REMY

Ugh, that thing is like five hundred pages--

Maxine drops the THICK dossier on the large wooden table.

MAXINE

Six-hundred-seventy-two.

They sit down, comb through it.

REMY

Wonder how the math-wiz and the walking dildo are doing--

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - DAY

Spencer and Mandy hustle out of MSG.

SPENCER

Not good, not good, not good!

MANDY

You put the drops in yourself, how could you forget the coffee was tainted?

SPENCER

Ahhhhweshouldhavethrownitout!

MANDY

It would have looked suspicious.

Spencer's got a hand on his stomach, like he's stopping his organs from falling out through his abdomen.

They cross the street toward the van. Spencers unlocks the van with his key fob. Mandy tosses the bag of cameras and mics into the back, climbs into the shotgun seat.

MANDY

Where are you going?

Spencer B-lines toward 9th Avenue.

SPENCER

I'm not gonna make it!

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - SAME TIME

Mandy hops over into the driver's seat, watches in the side-view mirror as Spencer waddles up the sidewalk toward 9th avenue, gripping his own ass cheeks. She chuckles to herself.

MANDY

Oh my god.

EXT. THE GUTTER, 32ND STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Spencer can last no longer.

SPENCER

Ahhhhh!

He yanks his slacks off, squats in the gutter, lets the diarrhea burst out of him like a centuries old volcano succumbing to destiny.

SPENCER

Goodlordjesuschrist!

Relief washes the shame off his face--until blue and red lights flash and a SIREN wails.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - SAME TIME

Mandy watches in the side-view mirror as a police car pulls up to the curb, ten feet behind Spencer's makeshift toilet.

MANDY

Oh crap.

EXT. THE GUTTER, 32ND STREET - SAME TIME

His stomach flushed out, Spencer tries frantically to pull his ruined slacks back up as THE TWO COPS leap from their cruiser.

SPENCER

No, no, no, no--

SUDDENLY the surveillance van jumps back twenty feet, reverses right into the bumper of the police car.

The Cops are flabbergasted - and distracted. By the time they remember the diarrhea-oozing civilian, Spencer's hauling ass around the corner.

INT. DINER, UPPER EAST SIDE - DAY

Darren Gold sits at the bar, polishing off a plate of eggs and hash browns. He raises his mug, signals to the WAITER for another hit of coffee.

The waiter returns, telephone in hand. Gold's perplexed, like he's never seen a landline before.

WAITER

Mr. Gold?

DARREN

Y-yes...

Darren takes the phone, waits until the waiter walks away before he raises it up to his ear.

DARREN (INTO PHONE)

Hello?

LOU (O.S.)

Skip the second coffee. Pay your tab, leave through the back door. There's a blue Prius parked half way down the block on the south side of the street.

DARREN (INTO PHONE)

Okay.

LOU (O.S.)

There's an address in the glovebox. Meet me there.

Darren puts the phone down, takes some cash from his wallet, can't decide how much to leave...leaves it all.

He cuts through the diner, heads for the back door.

EXT. SIDEWALK, UPPER EAST SIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Darren emerges from the diner with a swagger in his step...until he catches himself, slows his roll, remembers his constant need to blend in, to never be remembered.

His walk morphs into a forgettable meander, and just like that his bifurcated mind is literalized. There's a reason he was drafted into this roll. They needed an everyman. He can be every man.

He finds the blue Prius. He looks both ways - mistake. *Don't let them know this isn't your car. Whoever they might be.*

He clears his throat, pulls at the driver's side door handle...the car is locked. He plays it cool, reaches into his jacket pocket, removes a handheld device and extends its antenna all the way out. The device looks like an old walkman-radio.

Right hand gripping the door handle of the Prius, left hand holding the device, Darren aims the antenna toward the apartments of the various buildings all around him.

The device locks onto a signal - the Prius opens.

INT. BLUE PRIUS - MOMENTS LATER

Darren gets comfortable in the driver's seat. He stomps down on the break, presses the push-to-start button...go time.

Darren smiles, pleased with himself. He tucks the antenna back in, pockets the car-starter device, opens the glovebox, pulls out a piece of paper with an address scribbled on it, puts his seatbelt on and pulls out of the parking spot.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Remy wears latex gloves, opens every cabinet, turns over every nook and cranny, pulls picture frames from the walls, can't find what he's looking for - *doesn't know what he's looking for.*

Maxine rolls her eyes, continues to surf through the internet history of the computer she sits at.

MAXINE

We're wasting time. He's not our guy.

REMY

He's a gambling addict, he's our guy.

Remy surreptitiously pulls a knife from the kitchenette.

MAXINE

It's like straight lines are the only ones you can draw.

REMY

Just shut up and check the computer.

MAXINE

I've checked. I've checked and I've rechecked, he's not our--

Remy thrusts the knife down into the couch, slices open the cushion, reveals a plastic-wrapped bundle of money.

REMY

You were saying?

MAXINE

Doesn't mean shit.

REMY

It's pretty compelling.

Remy goes back into the kitchenette, comes out with an empty grocery bag, bags the plastic-wrapped money.

MAXINE

What are you doing?

REMY

Follow me, I have an idea.

MAXINE

What?

REMY

Come on!

Remy's out the door, Maxine hesitates, follows him out.

INT. ELEVATOR BANK - MOMENTS LATER

As the elevator doors open, THE GAMBLER appears. He's in his 30s, over-the-ear headphone on, scruffy beard and a hoodie.

Remy pushes Maxine to the side of the elevator. The Gambler doesn't notice them, his head buried in his phone as approaches his studio apartment. Remy and Maxine enter the elevator.

INT. MULTI-LEVEL GARAGE, WILLIAMSBURG - NIGHT

Darren pulls the Prius into a tight parking spot, studies the rearview mirror, pulls off his seatbelt, opens the driver's side door as quietly as possible.

He slips out of the Prius, scans the garage like a robot owl, head on a swivel, eyes downloading his surroundings.

EXT. SIDEWALK, WILLIAMSBURG - NIGHT

Williamsburg. Repurposed factories, lofts and restaurants, boutique stores, trendy cafes. The street art's a nice reminder that this neighborhood now belongs to the hipsters.

Darren puts his hands in the pockets of his starter jacket, taps into his *forgettable meander*, walks up the block.

EXT. SIDEWALK, OUTSIDE STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maxine paces the gutter. Remy leans against a parked SUV. His eyes glued to the entrance of The Gambler's building.

MAXINE

This is some plan of yours.

REMY

Just wait for it, trust me.

MAXINE

How many times have you said that to someone before stabbing them in the back. One of your partners--

REMY

I never betrayed a fellow shield.

MAXINE

I can't tell if you actually believe--

REMY

Look.

The Gambler leaves his building in a flurry of angst, storms up the block texting furiously, panic all over his face.

REMY

French Connection. Don't blow it.

Remy darts across the street, follows The Gambler. Maxine strolls up the block, flanks him from the parallel sidewalk.

EXT. SIDEWALK, WILLIAMSBURG - NIGHT

Darren looks up at the converging street signs hovering over 8th street and Havemeyer. He checks his watch, scans the sidewalk, the oncoming cars, the faces of civilians.

A tiny piece of metal hits the sidewalk next to him, sparks as it converges with the concrete. A *meteorite*? No, just a nickel. Raining down from...Darren looks up...*there*.

Atop a three-story building across the street, Lou Kippling stands on the rooftop, signals for Darren to join him. Darren tries to stifle a smirk - *finally, a moment to show off*.

Darren lets a car pass by, crosses the street, loops around the side of the building that Kippling stands on and parkours himself onto the fire escape. He climbs up to the roof.

EXT. ROOF, THREE-STORY WALKUP - MOMENTS LATER

Lou tries not to let on how impressed he is with Darren's athletic display. He checks his watch.

LOU
You're late.

DARREN
Lotta traffic on the bridge.

Lou waves him over toward a sort of rudimentary sky light under a metal cage on the roof.

They peer down through the cage, in through the glass window, where a man sits at a desk, typing on a computer, unaware he's being watched from above.

INT. THIRD-STORY APARTMENT, WILLIAMSBURG - SAME TIME

THE AUTHOR, mid-50s, long grey hair, thick framed glasses, tweed jacket, pencil resting on his ear. Aesthetic of a reformed hippie, posture of a college professor. He types away at his laptop.

DARREN (O.S.)
Who is this guy?

LOU (O.S.)
For now, we'll just call him *The Author*.

EXT. ROOF, THREE-STORY WALKUP - SAME TIME

The Author leans back in his desk chair, Lou and Darren quickly back away from the sky light to avoid detection.

DARREN

What's his deal?

LOU

Ten years ago he began a freelance assignment for a publication that has since shuttered. His task was to interview a few B-level celebrities about the Tate-Lebianca slayings.

DARREN

The Manson Murders.

LOU

50th anniversary was on the horizon. The Author missed his deadline.

DARREN

Why's this of interest to us?

LOU

It's of interest to the United States Government. The why's not important. Somehow, after a decade of reporting, and eighty-seven Freedom of Information Act requests later, The Author has landed himself on the Government's *Must Watch List*.

Darren perks up--

LOU

And before you ask - no, that's not a real list. But here we are.

DARREN

I've got questions.

LOU

I figured you would. Now's not the time to ask, though. Look, he's on the move.

Darren inches forward, looks.

INT. THIRD-STORY APARTMENT, WILLIAMSBURG - SAME TIME

The Author closes his laptop, rises, grabs a stack of papers, shovels them into a folder.

He looks around his office - where's his damn knapsack? Ah, there, in the corner.

LOU (O.S.)

You work for me, Mr. Gold, I can make you a wealthy young man. I can help you channel that dangerous curiosity you've harbored your entire life.

The Author shoulders his knapsack, grabs a tape recorder from his drawer, heads for the door, circles back - forgot his phone, gathers it, flicks the lights off, he's out the door.

EXT. ROOF, THREE-STORY WALKUP - SAME TIME

Lou and Darren watch The Author leave his office.

LOU

You work for me, I need to trust you unconditionally. I need to be able to ask you to ruin a person's life without giving you so much as a single morsel of information.

Lou checks his watch.

LOU

He'll be out of the building in thirty-five seconds. After that, I don't know where he's going and that's a problem for me. So tell me now, Mr. Gold. Are you in?

Lou checks his watch.

DARREN

What do you need me to do?

LOU

Get down there. Follow him. Find out who he's meeting, get a picture. *Do not blow your cover.*

Darren leaps from the roof onto the fire escape, sprints down one level, parkours across a window ledge and then shimmy's down a drainpipe to the ground below. *Show off.*

EXT. SIDEWALK, EAST HARLEM - NIGHT

Remy follows The Gambler up the block. He looks to the right, sure enough, Maxine is in place across the street, following their mark in a parallel formation.

The Gambler stops at the corner, looks behind him.

Remy acts casual, avoids eye contact, continues on, walks right past The Gambler, crosses the street, strolls past Maxine, who takes over trailing their mark from behind.

Remy takes up the parallel post, follows them from the opposite sidewalk.

EXT. SIDEWALK, WILLIAMSBURG BROOKLYN - NIGHT

The Author speed-walks through a crowded Brooklyn intersection, head on a swivel, paranoia oozing off of him.

Does he *know* that he's being followed? *Unlikely.*

Far more likely that he just *assumes it*. For his part, Darren tails The Author expertly, across the street and a quarter of a block behind the man.

INT. GARAGE, EAST HARLEM - NIGHT

The Gambler ducks below a hanging garage door three-fourths of the way closed.

Sweating and disheveled, he peers into the garage attendants booth - empty.

He looks around, nothing but eerie quiet.

EXT. BILLIARDS BAR, WILLIAMSBURG - NIGHT

Darren approaches the large front window of the bar, peers inside, sees The Author seated at a table in front of a pint.

Across from The Author sits a WOMAN in her mid-70s, dressed like an aging, out of place starlet - fur coat, white pearl necklace. She looks around the bar as if confused by the ambiance.

Darren takes his phone out, snaps pictures through the window of the strange meet-up. He enters the establishment, walks right passed The Author, orders a drink at the bar.

INT. BILLIARDS BAR, WILLIAMSBURG - NIGHT

Darren opens the TAPE RECORDER APP on his phone, clicks the red button to start recording.

He carries his watered down bourbon over to the table next to The Author and the Woman, takes a seat, places his phone face down on the table, tries to act casual, fails.

EXT. GARAGE EAST HARLEM - NIGHT

Remy and Maxine converge outside the garage. He kneels down, peaks beneath the garage door, sees nothing.

She rolls her eyes.

REMY

What?

MAXINE

Come on.

She ducks beneath the almost closed garage door. He hesitates, follows her in.

INT. GARAGE, EAST HARLEM - NIGHT

Cars, cars, cars. Parked on the ground level, parked up above. Flickering lightbulbs. Not a person in sight.

Remy looks around, tentative. Maxine peaks into the attendants booth - empty.

INT. ATTENDANTS BOOTH, GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Remy stands in the doorway. Maxine sits in front of the TV monitors, watches the live security feed.

Two of the monitors display a lower level, where The Gambler pleads his case to a THREESOME OF SCARY RUSSIANS.

MAXINE

Come here. You recognize these gentlemen?

Remy complies.

REMY

Oh yeah, Russians. The Petrov Syndicate. We messed up.

MAXINE

Why?

REMY

One, if this is who he owes money to, there's no way he's connected to the Chinese Government.

MAXINE

What's so farfetched about the Russians colluding with the Chinese?

REMY

Nothing at all - just not on this low of a level. These guys are bottom feeders, cockroaches.

MAXINE

Okay, and what's two?

REMY

Two is that if this is who he owes money to--shit.

Maxine looks back at the monitor.

INT. LOWER LEVEL, GARAGE, EAST HARLEM - SAME TIME

The Gambler stands before IGOR, NIKITA and IVAN - three middle-aged, hard looking Russian gentlemen.

THE GAMBLER

Please, you have to believe me. I was robbed, they ransacked my apartment. Took my cash--

Igor and Nikita each grab an arm, hold the Gambler in place.

THE GAMBLER

Woh, woh, woh, woh Ivan! Please, please you have to believe me!

Ivan takes a long rubber tube from a cardboard box, approaches a car.

IVAN

I do believe you. I do.

The Gambler tries to relax, limbs still constrained in the monstrous grips of Igor and Nikita.

Ivan pops the gas cap off the car, feeds the rubber tube down into the gas tank, nods at his comrades. Igor and Nikita pull The Gambler toward Ivan.

THE GAMBLER

Woh woh, what are we doing? Wait,
wait, no--Ivan, I'll get the money,
I'll pay you back, I swear! Ivan!

Igor punches The Gambler in the stomach, Nikita forces him down on his knees, Igor pries his mouth open--

INT. ATTENDANTS BOOTH, GARAGE - SAME TIME

Remy pulls his handgun out from his back waistband.

REMY

Come on.

Remy turns to leave the attendants booth - Maxine grabs his arm. When he turns back toward her, she just shakes her head.

REMY

What? You want to do *nothing*?

MAXINE

We're not police. We're on a mission.
And you said it yourself, this no
longer has anything to do with it.

Remy pulls his arm free of Maxine's grip.

MAXINE

You know I'm right. You go in there,
kiss this opportunity goodbye.

He tucks his gun back into his waistband, fishes a pack of cigarettes from his pocket.

REMY

I'm not going to watch.

Remy leaves the booth, puts a cigarette in his mouth, ducks under the garage door.

Maxine turns back to the monitor, watches Ivan suck gasoline up into the rubber tube from the car's gas tank, then force the rubber tube into The Gambler's mouth and down his throat.

INT. THIRD-STORY APARTMENT, WILLIAMSBURG - NIGHT

Lou wears latex gloves. He inches through and around The Author's apartment with the methodical grace of a surgeon.

He'll leave no stone unturned, but he'll also put said stones back neatly. He will devour every inch of this apartment and then regurgitate it to its proper form. Perfectly. Like he was never here. Like a ghost.

He pops a USB drive into The Author's laptop - a message on the screens reads: CLONING DRIVE.

The book shelf captures Lou's attention. He scans it. He runs his fingers over the spine of each book, reads author names, titles, publishers. He gets to a book on the middle shelf with no copy on the spine, not a word. *A bit obvious.*

He takes it, opens it up - yeah, this ain't a book. It's a secret compartment. Nothing inside it but space to hide secrets...only this one's empty. Lou puts it back in its place on the shelf. So The Author's got something to hide. But where?

Lou continues to scan the room, runs his fingers over wall creases, looks behind framed photos, checks each drawer for a false compartment - nothing.

EXT. GARAGE EAST HARLEM - NIGHT

Remy's smoked the cigarette down to its filter. Maxine ducks under the garage door, joins him on the sidewalk.

MAXINE

Hey Mr. Sensitive.

REMY

Don't start with me.

MAXINE

I don't know what your problem is...I've seen you do some highly questionable things in the name of--

REMY

I never did *that*.

MAXINE

Sure, sure. It's like, even Little Bill Daggett had a code--

REMY

Ya know what, fuck this. And fuck you.

Remy tosses his cigarette, turns his back on Maxine, walks.

MAXINE

You're not going anywhere. We have a job to finish.

REMY

Finish it yourself.

He continues on down the block, she follows.

MAXINE

That's not how this works - it's a two man tryout.

REMY

What do you want from me? We tried, we failed. We got nowhere. Sometimes you strike out, Wheeler.

He gets to the corner, waits for the crossing light to change. She catches up, grabs his arm, turns him toward her.

MAXINE

And that's only two strikes. I'd rather burn a lit cigar on my thigh than watch baseball, but I'm pretty sure we get one more. Besides, you and I both know there's only one other person from the dossier who could be selling information to the Chinese.

He eases up, he knows she's right...

MAXINE

The VP of Communications--

REMY

With the brother studying abroad.

EXT. BILLIARDS BAR, WILLIAMSBURG - NIGHT

The Author and the Woman leave the pub, shake hands, walk separate ways. Darren emerges from the bar, eyes them both, decides to follow The Author. He saves the tape recording on his phone, calls Lou.

INT. THIRD-STORY APARTMENT, WILLIAMSBURG - SAME TIME

Lou holds the phone to his ear.

DARREN (O.S.)
He's headed home. Few blocks away.

LOU (INTO PHONE)
Got it.

Hangs up, pockets the phone, takes a step toward the door--

CREAK.

Stops in his tracks. Looks down. Takes a half step back, half step forward--

CRREEEAK.

Studies the floorboard. Crouches down slow like he knows his knees and back aren't what they used to be.

Runs his finger around the creaky floorboard...*oh yeah, found it.* He pushes down one end, the other end of the floorboard pops up - it's a hiding spot.

Beneath the removable floorboard is an external hard drive.

EXT. EQUINOX GYM - NIGHT

Spencer stands outside the gym, the shame on his face a very different variety than what he's used to. He wears sweatpants and a pullover sweatshirt that don't fit him properly.

Mandy pulls up in his van. Spencer winces at the sight of the wrecked rear bumper.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - NIGHT

Spencer climbs into the front passenger seat.

Mandy looks at him, stale face...Humor breaks the ice, they laugh. They can't stop. She finally puts the van in drive.

MANDY
I hope you know you're paying my ticket.

SPENCER
They ticketed you? For a fender bender? You kidding me?

MANDY

You know it turns out the NYPD aren't too pleased to have their cruisers wrecked.

SPENCER

How much you think the damage will run me?

MANDY

Enough that you should really just torch this thing - I know a junk yard up state we can take it to.

SPENCER

Torch it? You're kidding. It holds way too much sentimental value.

He rubs the inside door gently.

MANDY

Clearly.

SPENCER

Hey...thanks.

MANDY

You know, did it for the mission.

SPENCER

Yes, of course. But still, thanks.

MANDY

So, what now?

SPENCER

How bout a drink?

Before she can roll her eyes, Mandy's cell buzzes -
RESTRICTED NUMBER.

SPENCER

You think it's--

MANDY

Could be.

She answers.

INT. THIRD-STORY APARTMENT, WILLIAMSBURG - NIGHT

Lou has both the external hard drive and his USB drive plugged in to The Author's laptop.

A message on the screen reads: UPLOADING.

Lou's cell buzzes - a call from "Recruit #5."

Lou rejects the call, types out a text message.

EXT. SIDEWALK, WILLIAMSBURG BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Darren receives a text message, it reads:

NEED MORE TIME, DISTRACT HIM.

He looks up the block, The Author walks two hundred paces ahead, closing in on his building.

DARREN

Shit, shit, shit.

Darren looks around, frantic. What to do, what to use? He needs a tool, a sign, a--there it is!

A YOUNG MOTHER sits on a bench outside a nearby coffee shop. Distracted on her phone, she hardly pays any attention to her stroller - or her baby resting inside it.

DARREN

Shit.

Darren runs up to the coffee shop, pushes the stroller--

DARREN

Thank you!

By the time the Young Mother realizes what's happening, Darren's pushed the stroller twenty feet up the block.

YOUNG MOTHER

Oh my God! That's my baby! Help me,
somebody help he took my baby!

The Author hears the commotion, turns around - Darren's pushing the stroller right at him. The Author gets into what just might pass for an athletic crouch - like a pedestrian's been thrown into an NFL game and told to play linebacker.

THE AUTHOR

Stop!

DARREN

Here you go.

Darren releases his grip on the stroller, the momentum carries it right into the hands of The Author.

Darren ducks across the street, disappears down the block.

The Young Mother runs up the street, cries hysterically.

YOUNG MOTHER

Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god--

INT. THIRD-STORY APARTMENT, WILLIAMSBURG - SAME TIME

Lou leans over the desk, waits impatiently.

DING - The laptop screen reads: DOWNLOAD COMPLETE.

He pulls the USB drive out of the computer, pockets it, unplugs the external hard drive, puts it back in its hiding spot, replaces the floorboard, leaves the apartment.

EXT. FRONT STOOP, THREE-STORY WALK UP - NIGHT

Lou exits the building, holds the door open for The Author as he finally arrives home.

THE AUTHOR

Thank you, sir.

LOU

No problem.

Darren Gold pulls up in an old Lincoln Town Car, Lou walks down the steps of the stoop, climbs in.

INT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The car is old. No push-to-start, a genuine key ignition which Darren has pried out and hot wired. He accelerates, leaves The Author's building in the rearview.

LOU

Interesting choice.

DARREN

I like a challenge.

LOU
I can see that.

DARREN
How'd we do?

LOU
We did.

DARREN
He met with an older lady at a bar. I tried to listen to their conversation, couldn't really hear anything.

LOU
That's okay, pull over at the next corner. You're going to drop me off. Don't keep this car for too long, it's hot.

DARREN
What's my next move?

LOU
Sit tight. You'll hear from Baz.

DARREN
Got it.

Darren pulls the car over, Lou hops out, Darren drives on, turns the corner, heads down the block, makes another turn, finds a suitable place to double park the Lincoln, hops out.

EXT. SIDEWALK, WEST VILLAGE - NIGHT

Townhouses and trendy restaurants. Boutique shops and piano bars. Remy's face betrays his disdain for the neighborhood. Maxine's all business.

REMY
You think they'll come through?

MAXINE
Why wouldn't they?

REMY
Why *would* they?

MAXINE
You ask too many questions.

REMY
Nature of the work.

Spencer's surveillance van pulls up in front of them, the back door slides open.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - MOMENTS LATER

The back door slides closed. Spencer drives, Mandy's in the shotgun seat.

MAXINE
You brought them?

MANDY
I've only got two. Will that work?

MAXINE
It'll have to.

Mandy hands two windbreakers back to Maxine and Remy.

EXT. SIDEWALK, WEST VILLAGE - NIGHT

Maxine and Remy climb out of the van wearing Mandy's blue windbreakers - the sleeves say "FBI" in yellow letters.

They approach a red brick walk up.

REMY
No way this works.

MAXINE
It'll work. Just don't fuck it up.

INT. JESSICA STERN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

JESSICA STERN, late-30s, stands over the stove, watches the chicken she's cooking burn. It doesn't register. Nothing registers. Not the smoke building up in her apartment. Not the knock at the door. Not the beeping bluetooth speaker that's failed to connect to a device.

Jessica's distracted--KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK--she's finally snapped out of her trance. She wades over to the door, leaves the safety chain on, opens it a crack.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE JESSICA'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Maxine stands in front of Remy in the hallway, her right shoulder positioned so Jessica *has* to see the letters: FBI.

JESSICA

Shit.

REMY

Shit is right. Easy way or hard?

Jessica closes the door. Remy glares at Maxine like she's an idiot, but...CHAIN RATTLE. Maxine glares back like, *see?* Jessica opens the door.

INT. JESSICA STERN'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Maxine enters fast, guides Jessica to the window.

MAXINE

Look out.

Jessica complies, sees the surveillance van parked out front.

MAXINE

If we have to take you in tonight, we'll do it. This is a matter of national security now.

REMY

We'd really rather not do that, though.

MAXINE

There's another way.

JESSICA

Tell me.

Remy takes his phone out, opens the camera app.

REMY

Record a confession--

MAXINE

A full confession.

REMY

Of every piece of information you stole, sold, traded--

MAXINE

And why.

REMY

And who you gave it to.

INT. SUBWAY CAR, R TRAIN - NIGHT

Darren sits at one end of a mostly empty R train.

Roger Ferris nods from the other end.

The train comes to a halt, Roger rises.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

Darren hops off the R train just before the doors close, joins Roger on the empty platform.

The station vibes ghost town.

ROGER

What do you got for me, kid?

Darren removes the scrambler from his smartphone, plugs his headphones in, hands the phone to Roger, who pops the ear buds into his ears, clicks play.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Has anyone mentioned the name Reeve Whitson to you?

THE AUTHOR (O.S.)

No ma'am.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Talk to her photographer, you've got to talk to her photographer. He'll tell you about Reeve.

THE AUTHOR (O.S.)

Who is he?

WOMAN (O.S.)

Some kind of government spy. He was keeping people quiet during the trial. As far as I can tell, it's him and Dr. West and the clinic in Haight-Ashbury is who you should focus on.

THE AUTHOR (O.S.)

What about Sydney Gottlieb, did you ever--

Roger pulls the headphones out of his ears. The subway tunnel RUMBLES as a train approaches.

ROGER

This is great, kid. Anyone else hear this? Does Kipling know about this recording?

DARREN

No, no one.

ROGER

Good.

DARREN

What now?

Roger nods forward like someone's coming.

Darren turns to look--*no one's there*--Roger jams a taser into Darren's lower back, stuns him with fifty-thousand volts of electricity, tosses him off the platform onto the subway tracks seconds before an R train blasts through the station.

EXT. PEDESTRIAN WALK WAY, MANHATTAN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Leah waits. Not much foot traffic at this hour.

Pete Rausch approaches, wipes the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief.

PETE

Some meeting spot. You and Kipling really are paranoid.

LEAH

He's paranoid. I'm just smart.

PETE

Can't argue with you there.

LEAH

What's this about?

PETE

Lou told me you're the one to approach about wet work.

She nods so subtly she may not have nodded at all.

PETE

Smart. Things sour, you can always leave the country. Lou on the other hand, he's got a history of getting homesick.

LEAH

That's one way to put it. Another's that you've got a history of leaving him hanging. Why should I trust you?

PETE

For starters, because I know what really went down in The Sudan.

Leah flinches so subtly she may not have flinched at all.

PETE

But if this job's taught me anything, it's how to keep a secret. So take the assignment I'm about to offer you. It'll be easy and it pays well.

Pete hands her a manila folder. She peaks inside.

LEAH

You tracking his location?

He nods, hands her a smartphone.

LEAH

What's the timeline?

PETE

Twenty-four hours.

EXT. SIDEWALK, WEST VILLAGE - NIGHT

Remy follows Maxine out of Jessica Stern's building. He hop-scotches down the stoop, the pep in his step fueled by glory. Maxine remains icy-cool, a mild grin the only sign she's happy about the victory.

They approach Spencer's van, notice the front passenger seat is empty.

MAXINE

Shotgun.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - MOMENTS LATER

Maxine climbs into the front passenger seat, ready to ignore her new co-workers. The van doesn't move.

MAXINE

Let's get it.

She finally looks up--Mandy has a rag stuff into her mouth, her hands zip-tied to the steering wheel.

MAXINE

Shit.

Maxine turns around. Spencer is hog-tied, splayed out on his belly on the floor of the van. Lou sits comfortably, holds a gun to the back of Remy's skull.

MAXINE

What the fuck is this?

Lou pulls the trigger--CLICK, empty--Remy flinches.

LOU

A lesson.

MAXINE

We passed your stupid test.

LOU

And it certainly took you long enough.

MAXINE

You already knew who the mole was?

LOU

It would be mighty short-sighted of us to lay our reputation at the hands of a bunch of recruits, don't you think?

Lou lowers his gun from Remy's head, pops the clip back in, tucks it into his back waistband.

MAXINE

So what's the lesson here?

LOU

Rival firms will be after the same contracts as us. And they'll have more money and resources to get the job done.

Lou slides open the van door, climbs out.

LOU

So next time, be ready for anything.
Assume you're being followed. Assume
there's an ambush waiting around every
corner, inside every surveillance van.

REMY

*Next time...*so we're in?

LOU

You're in.

Lou slides the van door shut.

EXT. SIDEWALK, WEST VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Lou walks up onto the sidewalk. The surveillance van drives off.

He opens his phone, clicks on the RECRUIT #5 contact, holds the phone to his ear.

INT. BLACK LEXUS - NIGHT

Roger Ferris parallel parks his car in front of a bar. It's a snug spot, but Ferris is no slouch, he maneuvers the Lexus comfortably into the spot in one swift motion.

BUZZ BUZZ BUZZ. BUZZ BUZZ BUZZ. He pulls a smartphone from his pocket - it's Darren's, and it still has his headphones plugged in.

Roger tosses the phone onto the front passenger seat, kills the car's engine, climbs out, walks into the bar. The interior lights of the Lexus go off.

Leah Elbaz appears, touches a handheld device to the roof of the car - the Lexus comes alive - she lets herself in.

She places a small tool case on the front passenger seat - notices the ringing phone - recognizes the number of the caller. She presses the green button to accept the call, holds the phone to her ear, says nothing.

LOU (O.S.)

You missed the big announcement, kid.
Tardiness is a mighty red flag in this
industry...

EXT. SIDEWALK, WEST VILLAGE - SAME TIME

Lou pulls the phone from his ear, looks at the screen, sees the call is still live, puts the phone back to his ear...hears nothing.

He checks the screen once more, clicks the END CALL button, pulls the scrambler out of the bottom of the phone, walks to the gutter, drops the phone down a sewer grate.

INT. BLACK LEXUS - SAME TIME

The call ends. Leah puts the smartphone back on the front passenger seat, opens her toolkit, removes a flathead screwdriver, a pair of pliers, and a small blade.

Leah pries out the Lexus' push-to-start button.

She uses her blade to manipulate the ignition's wires, tucks them neatly back inside, replaces the push-to-start button.

EXT. BLACK LEXUS - MOMENTS LATER

She gets out of the car, lifts the hood, manipulates the ignition coil, pulls the hood back down--just as Roger Ferris emerges from the bar, walks with a slight wobble over toward his Lexus.

Leah hesitates, eyes her toolkit on the front passenger seat...disappears into the night.

Roger Ferris climbs into the driver's seat.

INT. BLACK LEXUS - DAY

A WOMAN SCREAMS. THE SIRENS OF AN AMBULANCE BLARE.

Roger Ferris' dead body sits in the driver's seat, his skin and hair charred.

POLICE OFFICERS, DETECTIVES and EMTs stand around, hands on hips. A Ford Fusion with Government plates pulls up.

ISAAC HENDRICKS, 50 y.o., climbs out. He's a hunter, determined, a dog with a bone. A man whose home life has fallen apart time and time again, but it matters not when he's on the chase. When he's on a case. He approaches the black Lexus, peaks in through the driver's side window.

A POLICE DETECTIVE hollers at him from 15 feet away.

DETECTIVE

And you are?

ISAAC

Special Agent Jeremy Hendricks, FBI.

DETECTIVE

And what brings the FBI out to an accidental motor vehicle death?

ISAAC

Man in the driver's seat used to be my partner.

DETECTIVE

Oh shit, I'm sorry--

ISAAC

Judging by the array of tools sitting on the shotgun seat, I'd say this certainly doesn't look like an accident.

Isaac reaches for the door handle. EMT 1 stops him--

EMT 1

Hang on. This man was electrocuted. Fire Department's on the way.

Isaac hesitates, grabs the handle of the driver's side door...nothing happens.

He pulls the door open, puts two fingers to Roger's throat, eyes the flathead screwdriver, the pair of pliers, the small blade.

He picks up the smartphone, ear buds still plugged into it.

END.