

RUSSIAN DOLL

Episode 203

"Brain Drain"

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1 **OMITTED**

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1A **INT. NYC - ASTOR PLACE - GRAFITTI TRAIN - MORNING (3/24/82)** 1A

OVERHEAD SHOT of NORA, asleep in the heavily graffitied subway car. She's sprawled across a few seats, huddled underneath her coat. A TRIO OF NUNS make the sign of the cross above her. A MOTHER pulls her CHILD close.

SOUNDTRACK: "Put A Straw Under Baby" by Brian Eno.

SFX. The train doors open. The subway intercom scratches on.

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Now arriving Astor Place. Last stop. This train is going out of service. All passengers must exit. Please make sure to take your personal belongings.

As the train comes to a complete stop, a thin early morning CROWD, including the CONDUCTOR, exit.

ANGLE ON: An MTA engineer on her way to work, AGNES, holding a SCHEMATIC seated by TWO MTA CONSTRUCTION WORKERS.

As she spots this homeless, pregnant woman, she dismisses the guys, handing over her schematic. Agnes drops a QUARTER in Nora's outstretched hand, waking her.

AGNES

Hey, last stop.

Nora stirs--

## **RUSSIAN DOLL**

--and awakens. As she sits up, we return to seeing her as NADIA. Bleary-eyed, she looks around. Still no Krugs.

NADIA/NORA

You seen any gold coins? 149 of them. I lost them on the train.

AGNES

You should get out of here. The cops sweep the train around this time every morning.

NADIA/NORA

Right, right. Got it.

AGNES

If you look crazy, they'll find  
some yuppie to sign a complaint and  
lock you up. And no offense, but  
you look crazy.

NADIA/NORA

Thanks.

Agnes holds a DING DONG and a COFFEE.

AGNES

This way.

As she gestures to the door, she spills some of the liquid on  
Nadia/Nora. She finds some OLD TISSUES in her pocket.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Shit. My circadian rhythm's all  
off. I haven't seen sunlight in  
days. Yesterday I blew my nose and  
steel dust came out.

She wipes at the stain on Nadia/Nora's coat.

NADIA/NORA

It's fine, it's not a big deal.

AGNES

No, I know it's going to bother me  
all day.

In the background, an MTA CLEANING PERSON enters with a MOP,  
shakes awake a HOMELESS STRAGGLER, nudging them off.

NADIA/NORA

(blinks, groggy)

Do you know where the MTA lost and  
found is?

Agnes laughs.

AGNES

Doesn't exist. It's a myth. Like El  
Dorado.

NADIA/NORA

City of gold. Apparently, not a  
stop on my train.

AGNES

Alright, I gotta get to work.

Nadia/Nora gets up, Agnes steers her to the exit.

NADIA/NORA

You work down in the tunnels?

AGNES

Rain gets into the tracks and  
someone's got to rebuild the city  
to keep the trains moving.

SFX. The crackle of a walkie talkie.

A COP walks by out the window, taps his night stick.

NYPD COP

Let's go.

AGNES

Let's get you out of here.

She pops her last bite of Ding Dong. They step off.

1B

**INT. ASTOR PLACE - PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS (3/24/82)**

1B

Agnes looks at Nadia/Nora as they step onto the platform.

AGNES

(walking off)

You take care of yourself, okay?  
Stairs are that way.

Nadia/Nora watches Agnes join some MTA CONSTRUCTION WORKERS  
at her work station, then makes her way up to the exit.

2

**OMITTED**

2

3

**EXT. RUTH'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY (3/24/82)**

3

Nadia/Nora knocks insistently on Ruth's door. YOUNG RUTH, her  
hair in a TOWEL, opens it.

NADIA/NORA

I fucked up, Ruthi.

4

**INT. RUTH'S TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (3/24/82)**

4

Young Ruth smokes and drinks TEA while Nadia/Nora paces  
around the living room. Ruth watches her warily, taking in  
Nadia/Nora's frenetic energy and disheveled appearance. An  
URN sits on the coffee table, surrounded by FLOWERS.

NADIA/NORA

So. I'm on the train with the Krugerrands. About to return them to Vera. You know, make everything nice. And then I see Alan! Which is a whole long story you don't need to hear involving multiple deaths, anyway, cut to, I turn around, and the gold is gone! So I stay up all night, riding the trains, looking for the gold, looking for the asshole who stole it -- nothing. Five million people ride the trains each day, so *that* narrows it down nicely.

(then, noticing the urn)

Is that Thomas?

Young Ruth nods slowly.

YOUNG RUTH

It is.

NADIA/NORA

Hi, Thomas. Anyway, I'm not going back to 2022 until I make things right between Nora and Vera. What are you doing?

RUTH

What?

Nadia/Nora stops abruptly and takes Ruth's cigarette.

NADIA/NORA

I thought I told you. Please. No more smoking. What if this is the cigarette that kills you?

RUTH

Nora.

NADIA/NORA

Here I am, bringing wisdom from the future, but no one listens.

YOUNG RUTH

Are you feeling alright, Nora?

Nadia/Nora takes a drag of Ruth's cigarette and makes a face.

NADIA/NORA

Now that you mention it, I have been feeling a little off.

(MORE)

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)

Exhibit A, I used to hate menthols,  
now I only want to smoke menthols.

Young Ruth checks the time.

YOUNG RUTH

Let me get ready, we're almost  
late.

NADIA/NORA

Where are we going and does it  
involve taking the train?

YOUNG RUTH

You know what? Let's take a cab.

5 **INT. BETH ISRAEL - OB-GYN OFFICE - WAITING ROOM (3/24/82)** 5

Nadia/Nora and Young Ruth sit in the OB-GYN waiting room.  
VERA enters and sits across from them, arms crossed, silent.

YOUNG RUTH

(trying to ease tension)  
Hi, Vera.

A gyno nurse, REBA, emerges.

REBA

Nora Vulvokov? The doctor is going  
to need a urine sample. Thanks.

She hands Nadia/Nora a SPECIMEN CUP.

6 **INT. BETH ISRAEL - OB-GYN OFFICE - BATHROOM - LATER (3/24/82)**

Nadia/Nora smokes, considers the SPECIMEN CUP. *Is she really  
gonna piss in this?*

VERA

What are you doing?

She realizes Vera (also smoking) has followed her in. Vera's  
brimming with anger, hissing at her through the stall door.

NADIA/NORA

This is one of the rare situations  
in which it's exactly what it looks  
like.

VERA

You did not come home last night. I  
stay up, waiting, all night.

(MORE)

VERA (CONT'D)

I got your message but you never came. No Nora.

NADIA/NORA

(through the stall)

I had the gold. Then, I lost it on the subway, but I swear, I'm gonna fix everything.

VERA

You only break things, Lenora. You break trust. You break promise. You are broken.

She exits the stall, crosses to the sink--

NADIA/NORA

See? This is why I prefer to piss in cups in private.

We catch Nora's reflection as Vera loses it, screaming--

VERA

*Annyit ér, mint halottnak a csók!*

7 **INT. BETH ISRAEL - OB-GYN OFFICE - WAITING ROOM (3/24/82)** 7

Muffled Hungarian emanates from the bathroom. Young Ruth flips through a WOMEN'S MAGAZINE, smiles at Reba.

YOUNG RUTH

(re: the Magazine)

It looks like men fake orgasms too.

REBA

Not with me.

BACK TO:

8 **INT. BETH ISRAEL - OB-GYN OFFICE - BATHROOM - DAY (3/24/82)** 8

Vera continues yelling at Nadia/Nora in Hungarian. This sequence favors Nora in the mirror.

VERA

*Akinek vaj van a a fején ne menjen a napra!*

NADIA/NORA

*'She who has a head of wax cannot walk in the sun.'*

(MORE)

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)

(then)

Why do I understand Hungarian?

VERA

What? Your first word is Hungarian.  
Kutya.

NADIA/NORA

(understanding again)

'Dog.'

VERA

You speak only Hungarian until you  
were four.

NADIA/NORA

No, Nora speaks Hungarian, not me.  
I'm Nadia.

*What's going on?* Nadia/Nora shakes her head, takes a drag. Vera looks at her, concerned, does the same. *Nora's acting so strange.* Their eyes meet as they notice -- they've just inhaled in the same manner. An uncanny reflection. Nadia's eyes flick to Nora's reflection in the mirror.

VERA

Nora, you have to be strong. You are all you can depend on in this world. This life... they took everything, put it on the gold train. Gold disappears. Then gold reappears. The Krugerrands. But it disappears again.

NADIA/NORA

Jesus, it's like HPV, this gold.

(something clicks)

Wait. You're telling me this family lost its gold *twice* on a train under suspicious metaphysical circumstances? That can't be a coincidence. 'First as tragedy, then as farce,' et cetera.

VERA

(carefully)

There are things in life that cannot be explained. They would think I'm insane. Throw me out like garbage.

Nadia/Nora takes Vera's arm, certain she's onto something.



NADIA/NORA

Inexplicable things happening is my entire modus operandi. What exactly happened?

A rap on the door. Vera opens it to find Reba--

REBA

Is everything alright in here?

Vera exits, breaking the moment. Nadia/Nora hands the nurse the CUP as she follows Vera--

NADIA/NORA

Just so you know, I'm not entirely sure whose urine this is.

9

INT. LENOX HILL HOSPITAL - OB-GYN EXAM ROOM - DAY (3/24/82) 9

Nadia/Nora lies back on an examination table. Vera and Young Ruth sit on one side. Vera has a HUNGARIAN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY and is taking diligent notes.

DR. WOLFF

This is going to feel a little cold.

The doctor applies ULTRASOUND JELLY to Nadia/Nora's belly.

As the TRANSDUCER moves over her stomach, she turns to the monitor to see a gently pulsating FUZZY BLACK-AND-WHITE IMAGE of a FETUS. She watches it, a strange look on her face.

DR. WOLFF (CONT'D)

The most important thing in these last couple weeks is to get lots of rest, stay calm, don't put any stress on your body. Do you have any questions?

NADIA/NORA

I do. Do you think consciousness is an emergent property of the brain? Like, could one person's consciousness, uh, displace someone else's? Y'know, two minds knockin' around the same body?

DR. WOLFF

Hm... No, never heard of that!

NADIA/NORA

I'm assuming most of your patients  
grapple with bringing more  
consciousnesses into existence?

YOUNG RUTH

Nora, I know you're nervous, but  
motherhood is a celebration!

NADIA/NORA

Of what? People treat procreation  
like recreation. Not me. Bearing  
the responsibility of someone  
else's existential pain? I'm like,  
hard pass, I can barely handle my  
own.

Young Ruth leans in and takes Nadia/Nora's hand.

YOUNG RUTH

(with kindness)

Being born doesn't make you a  
victim.

NADIA/NORA

I see why Nora likes you.

Ruth and Vera share a look, disturbed by what appears to them  
as Nora's erratic behavior.

VERA

Let's get you home.

10

**INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY (3/24/82)**

10

Nadia/Nora sits on the chaise, watching DELIA comfort an  
emotional Vera. Delia glances back at Nadia/Nora, concerned.

DELIA

(in Hungarian)

*It's okay, Vera, I'll watch her  
while you go to Con-Edison.*

With her newfound ability to understand Hungarian--

NADIA/NORA

Did you just say you're going to  
the electric company?

Vera throws her a scornful glance and exits.

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)  
(trying to follow)  
Grandma...

DELIA  
(stopping her)  
Your mother thinks it's best for  
you to stay here. Best for you and  
the baby.

Nadia/Nora notices a NURSERY set-up in the corner.

NADIA/NORA  
A bit narcissistic, all this mommy  
business, no? I mean, if I wanted  
to make something in my own image,  
I'd take a painting class.

Delia laughs: a loud, weird chortle. This unexpected rapport  
gives Nadia/Nora an idea. She spots a bottle of LIQUOR.

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)  
Do you remember the gold train? Did  
it happen to your family too?

She pours Delia a glass of PÁLINKA and sits with her.

DELIA  
Ha! They didn't respect us Romani  
enough to steal from us. But we  
survive. We study in hiding and  
keep our minds alive. Everything is  
hidden. Just in case.

Nadia/Nora looks around. *Are things hidden here?* Delia takes  
a swig from the bottle, shakes her head looking at the label.

DELIA (CONT'D)  
Not so good. I go to my apartment  
and bring back something worth  
drinking.

Nadia/Nora nods, eager for a moment alone. Delia exits.

Nadia/Nora fiddles with a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH on the table.  
There's something hidden in the backing: an old HUNGARIAN  
PASSPORT with a photo of YOUNG VERA (30). *Is this how she  
hides all her important documents?* Nadia/Nora palms it and  
moves to an OIL PAINTING on the wall: HARRY, NADIA'S  
GRANDFATHER, the Bronx furrier. His face looks remarkably  
like Nadia's. She peeks behind it -- there are OLD PAPERS  
hidden here, too. She pockets them. Then, she spots the door  
to Nora's childhood bedroom. She's drawn to it.

11      **INT. VERA'S APARTMENT - NORA'S BEDROOM - DAY (3/24/82)**      11

Nadia/Nora is surprised at the smallness of the room and everything in it: BALLET TROPHIES, CHILDREN'S BOOKS, DOLLS who've seen better days. Nadia/Nora puts her PILE of DOCUMENTS on the bed. She removes a PILLOWCASE, making a hobo sack. She grabs one of the FACELESS DOLLS.

NADIA/NORA

What happened to your face?

She pulls it close for the whispered answer. Looks shocked.

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)

Pervert.

She slides the doll into her sack and sits on the low twin bed, opposite a VANITY MIRROR. Propped up against the mirror is a FRAMED PHOTO OF CHILD NORA (we'll see this again later).

Nadia/Nora pushes up her sleeves and scratches at her arms. In the mirror, Nora's arms are covered in FRESH SCABS. *That's not good.* A BLACK BUG crawls over the surface of the mirror. Nadia/Nora tries to swat it away but misses. Things are getting weird.

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)

Maybe it's getting to be too much  
Mommy-in-Me time.

She hears Delia's footsteps in the hall. Nadia/Nora freezes.

DELIA (O.S.)

Nora? Nora!

She exits out the window.

12      **EXT. VERA'S APARTMENT - CONT (3/24/82)**      12

Nadia/Nora walks down the street outside Vera's apartment, holding the unwieldy pillowcase of family mementos.

13      **INT. TOMPKINS SQUARE LIBRARY - NIGHT (3/24/82)**      13

The library is filled with VAGRANTS stealing a place to spend the night. It's a strange scene: CRUST PUNKS hanging out around rows of MICROFICHE READERS. Nadia/Nora, still toting her hobo sack, stops in front of a massive CARD CATALOG CABINET and opens a drawer marked "G." She seems a bit manic.

NADIA/NORA

Gold train, gimme gold train...  
Galileo, Goethe, where's Golightly?  
Okay, no Golightly. 'Grand  
unification, the theory of'... What  
am I doing? It should be train  
comma gold!

TIME CUT:

She opens a BOX OF SLIDES labeled '*BUDAPEST, 1940-1944*' and holds one up to a light, squinting. The uptight ARCHIVIST, IRENE, spots Nadia/Nora--

ARCHIVIST IRENE

Please don't expose those slides to the overhead lights, they'll fade.

NADIA/NORA

Then how do you look at them?

ARCHIVIST IRENE

My job isn't to look at them, my job is to preserve them, so that they can be looked at in the future.

NADIA/NORA

Ah, you're immune to paradox. I'd like to check these out, please.

ARCHIVIST IRENE

In-Library use only. Those are originals.

NADIA/NORA

You librarians really love hoarding information, don't you?

ARCHIVIST IRENE

I wouldn't say I love it, but I certainly like it a lot.

In the background, a group of NYPD OFFICERS, including OFFICER STONE, approach the CRUST PUNKS on the floor.

NYPD OFFICER STONE

Let's go. Everybody out. This isn't a hotel.

The Crust Punks scatter, muttering under their breaths. Nadia/Nora grabs the box of slides and darts into the STACKS.

CRUST PUNK (O.C.)

1-3-1-2...

NYPD OFFICER STONE (O.C.)

What did you just call me?

IN THE STACKS: She pulls out a THICK BIBLICAL VOLUME, only to make direct eye contact with a JERK-OFF JOHNNY masturbating on the other side. He smiles wide.

JERK-OFF JOHNNY

Hey! I was using that!

NADIA/NORA

Jesus!

She drops the book and runs to the front desk.

14

**INT. TOMPKINS SQUARE LIBRARY - FRONT DESK (3/24/82)**

14

Nadia/Nora waits in line. She carries some WWII books, flipping through an ATLAS at the top of the stack. The text is small and dense, hard to read. A BLACK BUG crawls across the page. Nadia/Nora flicks it away, misses. She tries again, still no dice. Nadia/Nora slams the book shut.

NADIA/NORA

People never talk about how there were so many bugs in the 80s.

OFFICER STONE approaches with a GERMAN SHEPHERD. The CHOKER COLLAR is tight on the dog. She taps her foot nervously. The BOOKWORM in front of her is taking forever, speaking to the reference librarian, ETHEL SORTER.

BOOKWORM

So what *I* want to know is, where do the ducks in Central Park go when the pond freezes in the winter?

Ethel writes down the question on an INDEX CARD.

ETHEL SORTER

We'll look for it and call you later.

The Bookworm leaves and Nadia/Nora approaches the desk.

NADIA/NORA

Duck, duck, goosestep, my turn.

She glances at the NYPD Officer. He seems to be the same cop she saw in the station. Irene seems to be flirting with him, petting his dog.

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)

(leaning in, low)

Alright Ethel, I gotta make this quick because I think that cop is after me. I'm looking for information on the whereabouts of a lost 'gold train' in Budapest during World War II. Very sensitive info, high-level stuff.

Ethel takes down her question.

ETHEL SORTER

Could you leave your name and number?

NADIA/NORA

Yeah, sure, great.

She digs in her pockets and finds DANNY'S CRAZY EDDIE'S BUSINESS CARD from 201. She considers it and instead jots Nora's phone number down on an OLD NAPKIN.

15      **EXT. CRAZY EDDIE'S - FRONT WINDOW - NIGHT (3/24/82)**      15

Nadia, holding the business card, walks up to the storefront. A wall of TVs in the window are playing a Crazy Eddie's commercial [ARCHIVAL]: *'The prices are insannnne!'*

16      **INT. CRAZY EDDIE'S - NIGHT (3/24/82)**      16

Nadia finds DANNY fiddling with a VIDEO CAMERA pointed at the TELEVISION it's hooked up to. An abstract, spiraling pattern plays on a DISPLAY WALL OF TV SCREENS.

DANNY

It's called a video feedback loop.

Nadia/Nora is mesmerized by the visual.

NADIA/NORA

Whoa. Analog.

Danny jumps in front of the television and mugs for the camera, doing an impression of Crazy Eddie.

DANNY

I'm Crazy Eddie. These prices are  
insannnnne!

On the display wall, we see Danny as Crazy Eddie, advertising  
his insane prices over and over in an endless nested series.

DANNY (CONT'D)

See? The camera is seeing what the  
camera is seeing in an endless  
recursion. I like to call it: the  
introspective camera.

NADIA/NORA

But there must be an original Crazy  
Eddie, right? It can't just be  
endless Eddies, all the way down  
the line.

DANNY

It's like standing between two  
mirrors. The image is being  
reflected, over and over. You can't  
point to one of the reflections and  
say, 'That one's the original.'  
It's like the history of mankind,  
unless, you're not a creationist,  
are you?

NADIA/NORA

Wouldn't it be nice to have someone  
to blame?

He laughs, she gets it.

DANNY

Feedback is usually considered a  
bad thing. Don't point a microphone  
at a speaker, and so on.

(re: their first meeting)

I'm glad you came by even though  
you must be so busy with all the  
time traveling. How can I help you,  
Nadia?

NADIA/NORA

I'm looking for a slide projector.

She pulls out the box of slides. He examines one.

DANNY

Agfacolor Neu, huh? These were only  
in production for a few years, in  
the late 1930s. What's on these?



NADIA/NORA

I don't know. Hence, the projector.

DANNY

Gimme a second.

Danny disappears into the back.

While she waits, Nadia/Nora steps in front of the video feedback loop camera. We see Nadia, while the television wall behind her displays an endless nested series of Noras.

He returns with the PROJECTOR, decides to take his shot.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Nadia, I want you to know that I'm not just a Crazy Eddie's Stockroom Associate. I'm an artist. And I'm also the assistant editor of a zine about commodity fetishism and the Debordian spectacle.

NADIA/NORA

Impressive.

She takes the projector from him.

DANNY

(still hopeful)

I could walk you back. Do you need help setting up the projector?

NADIA/NORA

You just plug it in, right?

DANNY

You just plug it in, yeah.

PAN back to the now empty screens. We linger on the static.

17 **OMITTED**

17

18 **INT. NORA'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - LATER (3/24/82)**

18

Nadia/Nora enters Nora's apartment, struggling to carry both the projector and her hobo sack. She flicks on the light to find the apartment nearly empty, aside from a few MOVING BOXES, FORGOTTEN BOOKS, pieces of TRASH and other DETRITUS. A TELEPHONE left on the floor is still plugged in.

NADIA/NORA

Christ, Vera. You move fast.

Undeterred, Nadia/Nora sits on the floor and pulls a few FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS out of the bag. One of the frames has a piece of FOLDED PAPER attached to the backing. Nadia teases it out. It's a LETTER. Nadia/Nora reads the letter aloud.

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)

'Dear Vera, with deep sorrow I have learned that your dear parents have fallen victim to the Nazi tyranny...'

TIME JUMP:

It's darker. Nadia/Nora sits surrounded by the projector, slides, books, documents, the faceless doll, framed photographs, all laid out in a messy spiral on the floor. She stands up to stretch. Her hands are dirty from the floor.

NADIA/NORA (CONT'D)

Uch, fuckin' mold.

19

**INT. NORA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT (3/24/82)**

19

Nadia/Nora washes her hands. On the mirror, Nora has taped two AFFIRMATIONS, written in her looping cursive on torn slips of paper.

One reads: '*All the world was made for you.*' The other: '*Everything is dust and ashes.*'

Nadia/Nora had dismissed these scribblings in 201, but in her new state of mind, she registers them in a different light.

A BLACK BUG crawls across the mirror. We recognize this scene from the opening of 201. She raises a HAIRBRUSH and swings it down, shattering the mirror. She jumps back, shaken.

She pushes up her sleeves and scratches at her arms. To her surprise, Nadia/Nora sees that HER OWN ARMS ARE NOW COVERED IN SCABS, just like Nora's were in the mirror earlier. She can't stop scratching. There seems to be something in her arm. She digs into her forearm...

Wide-eyed, she pulls a BLACK BUG out of an open wound on her arm. In shock, she throws open the bathroom door -- to find NORA standing in the doorway.

NORA

I told you there were bugs in this apartment.

Nora spins out, Nadia follows.

20

**INT. NORA'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - CONT (3/24/82)**

20

Nora paces around the apartment, checking the walls, prattling along matter-of-factly. Nadia looks shell-shocked. Between the black bug in the bathroom and the living, breathing Nora before her, it's a lot.

NORA

It's because there's mold in the floor and the walls. I've called Vera about it twice and she swears the Super ripped the whole thing apart and didn't find a trace of mold, but I don't believe her.

Previously, Nadia has been *inside* her mother. Now, Nora seems to be there with her. Nora turns suddenly to make full, intense eye contact with Nadia.

NORA (CONT'D)

Do you believe her?

NADIA

I don't believe her, I believe you, mom.

NORA

My smart baby, I knew you would.

The lights go out. In the darkness, we hear Nora's disembodied voice.

NORA (CONT'D)

I see that Vera's turned off the electricity. She's trying to control us, and it's not going to work.

The lights flicker back on. Nora, her mood suddenly shifted, smiles at Nadia brightly.

NORA (CONT'D)

I'm hungry.

21

**INT. DELI - EAST VILLAGE - NIGHT (3/24/82)**

21

Nadia and Nora enter the deli together. Buddies. As Nadia talks to FERRAN'S DAD, SALIM, Nora flits back and forth between the shelves and the register, adding items impulsively to a big pile on the counter. CARR'S CRACKERS, SCALLIONS, TOMATOES...

NADIA

Can I get two packs of Benson and  
Hedges Ultralight Mentholated  
100's, please?

NORA

You love these water crackers,  
don't you, baby?

Salim pulls TWO PACKS and starts ringing Nadia up.

SALIM

Long night, huh?

Nora adds a block of ORANGE CHEESE, some CREAM OF WHEAT.

NORA

Orange is the color of fascination.

Nadia puts a cigarette in her mouth and hands one to Nora.

NADIA

And can I get a lighter, too?

SALIM

(having fun)

Sure, Nora, just don't light the  
cheese on fire.

SALIM'S POV: A pregnant Nora, two cigarettes in her mouth,  
muttering, walks out with a bizarre armful of items.

22

**INT. NORA'S APARTMENT - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT (3/24/82)**

22

This has turned into a great, warped, mother-daughter night.  
Nadia sits on the floor while Nora perches against the wall,  
brushing Nadia's hair.

NORA

You have to take better care of  
your hair. When it gets all tangled  
like this--

NADIA

It breaks, I know, mom.

A line of strange hors d'oeuvres sits atop a MOVING BOX:  
orange cheese, tomato, and scallion atop a Carr's cracker.  
Nora feeds Nadia.

The floor is a mess of 'clues.' To Nadia's research, Nora has  
added some SPIRITUAL TEXTS (OSHO, KABBALAH), A BOOK ON  
NUMEROLOGY, and a HEBREW-ENGLISH DICTIONARY.

FAMILY PHOTOS litter the floor. The carousel projector advances automatically through a series of images.

**FIRST SLIDE [SLIDE 1]: KÉLETI STATION in 1940s Budapest. (We will later recognize this location in 205.)**

Nadia and Nora trade off in a seamless, non-sensical stream of thought, looking at a PHOTO of Young Vera and YOUNG DELIA and a MAP OF BUDAPEST.

NADIA (CONT'D)

So in 1939, Vera was--

NORA

A total bitch. Like she always is.  
I mean, how dare she try to  
puppeteer our lives?

NADIA

She was in college, studying  
physics, right, mom?  
(she turns over the photo)  
Dohány Street...  
(she looks at the map)  
...by the synagogue.  
(looking closer)  
Are they singing? Like a Jewish  
thing...

NORA

I always hated Hebrew school, the  
cantor caught me smoking in the  
bathroom even though I made sure to  
exhale directly into the vent---

**NEXT SLIDE [SLIDE 2]: WELL-DRESSED YOUNG ADULTS, in 40s-era clothes, at a picnic by the Danube. The date reads 1944.**

NADIA

I know, mom, I've heard it all  
before.

She squints at the date on the slide.

NADIA (CONT'D)

1944. Full blown war and look at  
them, just having a picnic. People  
are crazy.

**NEXT SLIDE [SLIDE 3]: The ornate interior of a CHURCH. (We will later recognize this location in 204 and 205.)**

Nora moves to sit beside Nadia, the projector between them.

NORA

Vera was so angry, she enrolled me in Yeshiva. I had half a mind to become a Catholic just to piss her off, plus, I liked how all their saints looked so despondent, and the opulence, of course. Did you know Deuteronomy prohibits any images of God? What a loss, not being able to see something so beautiful...

**NEXT SLIDE [SLIDE 4]: A CARGO TRAIN with a swastika emblazoned on the first car. A soldier leans out the window.**

NADIA

More false idols, that's what I say! Is that *the* gold train?

Nadia gets lost in the slide as Nora riffs.

NORA

I think God is a tree, or a wheel. There was a saint who was kneeling to pray one day when a bird landed in her outstretched hands. The bird began making a nest, so the saint knelt there, in the same position, until the bird finished laying her eggs, raising her young and finally flew away.

**NEXT SLIDE [SLIDE 5]: A MOTHER holds her CHILD on an empty, bombed-out post-war Budapest street.**

Nadia is immersed in the map, passes her cigarette to Nora.

NORA (CONT'D)

I always thought of you as my bird, baby.

NADIA

(looking up, smirking)  
And you're a saint in this story?

The phone on the floor RINGS. Nadia and Nora jump back, startled. Nora crawls to the phone, picks up the receiver--

NORA

Hi, I'm busy with my daughter, don't call back.

Nadia grabs the phone and hits SPEAKER. We hear the cool, dispassionate voice of Ethel Sorter on the SPEAKERPHONE:

ETHEL SORTER (O.S.)  
Ms. Vulvokov... Calling from the  
New York Public Library with the  
information you requested.

**NEXT SLIDE [SLIDE 6]: a TRAIN CAR, filled with CARTONS and large, ornately FRAMED OIL PAINTINGS against every wall.**

ETHEL SORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
As the Soviet Army advanced on  
Budapest in 1944, the Schutzstaffel  
sought to evacuate the possessions  
of the Hungarian Jews.

**NEXT SLIDE [SLIDE 7]: A few pairs of anonymous hands reaching into a carton filled to the brim with tangled GOLD NECKLACES.**

ETHEL SORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
They forced Jewish families to hand  
over any items of value, including  
jewelry, watches, paintings, rugs,  
silverware, porcelain, record-  
players. These were placed on a  
train headed to Berlin, and each  
family was issued a receipt under  
the pretense that they would one  
day see their belongings  
returned...

**NEXT SLIDE [SLIDE 8]: Another angle on SAINT LASZLO CHURCH.**

Nadia passes the cigarette back to Nora and a chunk of ash  
falls INTO THE PROJECTOR.

INSIDE THE PROJECTOR: the glowing ash drops between two  
slides. The image burns, then the next slide starts to bubble  
and melt à la *Don't Look Now*.

NADIA  
Can you confirm that the Vulvokov  
family--

NORA  
The *Peschauer* family. That's mom's  
maiden name.

Nora holds up a LETTER, addressed to Vera Peschauer.

NADIA  
Can you confirm that the Peschauer  
family goods made it on this train?

A pause on the other end of the line, then--

ETHEL SORTER (O.S.)

I'm sorry, but that information is not available through the New York Public Library system.

The line clicks. Nadia and Nora look at each other, making connections quickly together.

NADIA

We need to find that train!

NORA

Yes, the train and the bugs, it's all connected!

NADIA

Find the train -- mitigate this epigenetic k-hole before it starts!

NORA

Exactly! I'll get right on it. It's us against the world, baby.

Nora dials a number. It rings, then goes to voicemail.

NADIA

Who are you calling?

NORA

Hi Ruthi, I just want to let you know, I'm here with my daughter Nadia, and she says she sees the bugs too. So, you know what that means. My mother is putting them here. I've already caught a dozen, I'll show you--

A click on the line as YOUNG RUTH picks up--

YOUNG RUTH (O.S.)

(muffled)

Nora, are you alright?

SFX. Ambulance sirens.

Red flashing lights play through the window.

YOUNG RUTH (CONT'D)

Your Super called Vera, you're not supposed to be in your apartment anymore, what's going on? We were looking for you all day--



NORA

What are you talking about? I'm fine! Love you. Bye.

Nora hangs up.

NADIA

We need to go to Budapest.

Nora shoves a JAR full of BLACK BUGS into Nadia's hands.

NORA

We need to get these analyzed! I know a guy! To St. Marks!

A KNOCK on the door. Nora turns to Nadia, wide-eyed. More knocking, louder, more insistent. Nadia, holding the empty jar, opens the door, revealing TWO EMTs and OFFICER STONE.

EMT #1

We're looking for Nora Vulvokov.

NADIA

That's me.

NORA.

That's me.

23

**OMITTED**

23

24

**INT. LENOX HILL - PSYCH WARD - NIGHT (3/24/82)**

24

A NURSE wheels Nadia/Nora, CLOTH RESTRAINTS around her torso, through the psychiatric ward emergency room.

NADIA/NORA

(muttering)

What's going on in cuckoo town?

25

**INT. LENOX HILL - PSYCH WARD - PADDED CELL - NIGHT (3/24/82)**

Nadia sits at a TABLE in a padded cell, STRAITJACKET still tied loosely around her torso. DR. BUONO enters and sits across from Nadia with a PATIENT FILE and his NOTEBOOK. NOTE: Dr. Buono, of course, sees only Nora across from him.

NADIA

Doctor, we're both incredibly busy people. Let's not waste each other's time.

He checks her FILE. Nadia sees Nora standing behind the Doctor, leaning against the wall, casual.

NADIA (CONT'D)

I'm not the crazy one, she is.

Nadia points to Nora with her chin.

DR. BUONO

Who is 'she?'

NORA

What a prick. Fuck this guy. So disrespectful.

NADIA

I'm the sane one, always have been. To be clear, when I say 'sane,' I mean eccentric, but you know, lucid. It's kind of my defining characteristic. Think 'good cop, crazy cop.'

Then, to Nora--

NADIA (CONT'D)

Tell him I'm right, mom.

NORA

I'm not getting involved in this. I don't trust him. We should get out of here.

DR. BUONO

Are your hallucinations visual or purely auditory?

NADIA

None of the above.

DR. BUONO

Do you think you see your mother right now, or do you just hear her voice?

NADIA

What kind of question is that? I don't *think* I see her, I *see* her. She's right there. Do you *think* you see this table, doctor? Do you *think* you see this charming young redhead before you? This isn't some cogito ergo sum bullshit. I *think* therefore I am *seeing* my mother.

DR. BUONO

There's nobody else in the room.  
Just you and me.

NADIA

Don't fuck with me, doctor. Look  
behind you.

DR. BUONO'S POV: He checks. Nothing.

DR. BUONO

There's no one behind me, Nora.

Nadia's stomach drops. *Is this Nora a hallucination?*

NADIA

(her voice breaking)

You're wrong, doctor. You have to  
be. She's right there.

He scribbles furiously in his notepad.

NADIA (CONT'D)

Mom. Please say something to him.

NORA

(whispering)

I bet they're recording us.

DR. BUONO'S POV: Nora at the table, talking to herself.

A pitying look crosses Dr. Buono's face. It's not unkind, but  
it's patronizing, judgmental. Nadia takes in the crushing  
blow of her mom's reality.

NADIA

Look doctor, I'll be perfectly  
honest with you. I'm Nadia, I'm  
Nora's daughter. I'm from the  
future. I thought I was just  
inhabiting her body, but now I  
realize, I'm inside her mind, too.

DR. BUONO

I'd prefer not to have to use  
Thorazine but if we need to, I  
will.

(alerted)

Your due date is March 30th, just a  
few days away. Let's do our best to  
keep you stable until the baby  
comes and then reevaluate.

He leaves, closing the door. Nora comes close to Nadia.

NORA

Why is it bad for me to be a  
paranoid schizophrenic and have  
this baby?

NADIA

Is this what every day was like for  
you, mom? I'm so sorry mommy, I  
didn't know. I was just a kid. I  
want to fix you. I need to find a  
way to fix you.

Her eyes well with tears. Nora leans over and wipes her eyes.

NORA

Nobody understood me until I had  
you.

Nora begins untying Nadia's straitjacket, a glint in her eye.

NORA (CONT'D)

Nobody locks us up. Nobody.

26

**INT. LENOX HILL - PSYCH WARD - ROOM - NIGHT (3/24/82)**

26

Nadia and Nora finish tying a CHAIN OF BEDSHEETS AND  
STRAITJACKETS together into a LONG ESCAPE ROPE. It feels  
heightened, surreal.

NORA

Okay, this is good. Very firm.

NADIA

Great. Let's get the eff out of  
here. I think if we can just get  
back far enough we can  
circumnavigate this whole future  
hellscape and you'll never have to  
go through any of this.

NORA

My smart baby. I know you'll do  
great things. Anything you put your  
mind to, you can do.

NADIA

Thanks for the pep talk, mom.

Nora tosses one end of the makeshift rope out the window.  
Nadia begins to climb out, before turning back to Nora--

NADIA (CONT'D)

Aren't you coming?

NORA

I can't. Otherwise, who would hold  
the other end of the rope?

She smiles. Nadia climbs down the rope.

27        **INT. LENOX HILL - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS (3/24/82)**        27

Nadia/Nora lands in the Lenox Hill courtyard.

SOUNDTRACK: The optimistic glockenspiel of The Velvet  
Underground's "*Sunday Morning*."

27A       **OMITTED**        27A

28        **INT. LENOX HILL - PSYCH WARD - HALL/ROOM - MORNING (3/25/82)**

FOLLOW a morning shift NURSE as she heads down the hospital  
hallway toward Nora's cell door. She unlocks it. The room is  
empty aside from a rope of bedsheets. One end is tied to the  
leg of a cot, the other dangles out the open window.

29        **INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - MORNING (3/25/22)**        29

Blackness.

SFX. THE SCREECHING OF A TRAIN.

30        **EXT. NADIA'S APARTMENT - MORNING (3/25/22)**        30

As Nadia heads in, she finds a NOTE taped to her front door:  
'*Why aren't you picking up? CALL ME. Alan.*'

31        **INT. NADIA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING (3/25/22)**        31

Early morning light creeps in as Nadia crouches by her bed,  
pulling out several FRAMED FAMILY PHOTOS. *We recognize these  
from Season One.* Back then, she was adamant about keeping  
them out of sight. Now, she spreads them out on her mattress.

She finds the FRAMED PHOTO OF CHILD NORA that we recognize  
from Vera's apartment. She peels away the photo. A DELICATE,  
OLD SHEET OF PAPER falls out.

As she unfolds it, she hears a 'meow' at the kitchen door.  
OATMEAL has entered the bedroom.

NADIA

Hey, ya little hoe-bag with ya  
little fuckin hoe-bag feet, why  
don't you come over here?

She turns back to the paper. It's a very beat-up RECEIPT.

NADIA (CONT'D)

*Budapest, 1944. Peschauer, number  
1407.*

Nadia continues to read the receipt aloud, Oatmeal now wrapped around her neck, Phillip Marlowe style.

NADIA (CONT'D)

Signed and sealed by one *Captain  
Marton Halasz.*

(to the receipt)

*Hogy vagy, fuckface.*

(then)

Big boy shit, Oatmeal. Looks like  
you and me are going to Budapest.

PAN off Nadia back to the receipt atop the photo of Child Nora and over to the hanging image that reads "*Life is a Killer.*" "*Sunday Morning*" kicks back in, signaling hope ahead. Oatmeal MEOWS.

CUT TO BLACK.