

THE REGIME

"Don't Yet Rejoice"

Episode 106

Written by

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DRAFT FIVE
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A frosty field. Empty and quiet. The sun is just rising.

We ANGLE ON a patch of earth. It SHUDDERS from below. Then the earth RISES in great clumps, pushed up by unseen forces.

A metal HATCH DOOR in the ground lifts, revealing a dim subterranean passage below.

ZUBAK pulls ELENA from the tunnel into the open-air stillness of the field. He closes the hatch door behind them.

They catch their breath on all fours in the cold dawn.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE:

"40 MINUTES LATER"

Zubak looks around to see if the enemy is near. He sees smoke at various points on the horizon. But no one in sight.

Elena observes the bleak, threatening landscape around them.

ELENA

Herbert--

ZUBAK

Shh, stay low.

But Elena is somewhere far away, still very much in shock.

ELENA

No. I can't do this... I can't.

ZUBAK

Just, quiet. Let me think.

ELENA

This has to be over now...

DISTANT GUNFIRE. Could be miles away. Zubak moves urgently.

ZUBAK

Okay, we can't stay here. Let's go.

He tries to take her arm but she pulls away. She's crying.

ELENA

No. No, no.

ZUBAK

Elena. We have to move. Now.

But Elena is spiraling, in shock and denial. The words tumble out in a tangle of tears and desperation.

ELENA

I can't, no, I can't be in this -
state of being - or not being, like
I'm just some - person, surviving -

ELENA (CONT'D)

Listen to me--

ELENA (CONT'D)

-- I have to go back, I have to -
we're going back - to who I was--

She starts to head back, in a daze, toward the palace, her bubble of power and safety and fantasy for all these years.

Zubak grabs her forcefully and pulls her to the ground. .

ZUBAK

No. Stop.

ELENA

Fuck you, get off of me--

Elena slaps him across the face. Hard.

ZUBAK

You're in shock.

ELENA

I don't care, you halfwit, let go--

ZUBAK

Listen to me.

ELENA

I can't, I can't--

He's suddenly right in her face, looming over, screaming.

ZUBAK

I SAID SHUT THE FUCK UP AND LISTEN
TO ME YOU MANIAC!

His voice pierces the quiet. Elena snaps into the present.

ZUBAK (CONT'D)

It's over. You have no power. It's
gone. I am in charge of us now.

She looks at this scary brute. Her leverage seems to vanish.

ELENA
Herbert-- ?

ZUBAK
I am the soldier. I am the weapon.
And we're in my world now. So you
listen to me. Understand?

She trembles at his hulking frame. And his holstered PISTOL.

ELENA
I-- I understand.

He nods, softening. He offers his hand.

ZUBAK
Then come with me. My love.

She hesitates briefly. Then takes his hand.

2

EXT. WOODS. EARLY MORNING

2

LATER. Zubak leads them through the overgrown woods. His military training has taken over. He is a man possessed.

ZUBAK
We follow the soldier's code now:
We never surrender of our own free
will. If we're captured, we resist
by all available means. We make
every effort to escape. If we
become prisoners, we make no
statements disloyal to our fellow
prisoners. Yeah?

Elena meanwhile still believes she can turn this around.

ELENA
Yes, but-- if I could get a camera
crew, or, something on social, I
could--

ZUBAK
No. We're done with that shit.

ELENA
But, if my people could see me--

ZUBAK
We can't be seen by anyone, they'll
report us. We just need to get you
out.

An ENGINE sound in the air. Elena and Zubak listen under tree cover as it rumbles over their heads. And then it's gone.

Then it occurs to Elena.

ELENA

China. What about China? That's it.
China's always been fair to me.

Zubak shakes his head and keeps walking.

ZUBAK

No. China's over there. We're over here. Forget it.

ELENA

Then, then, Rinnburg. That's where my people are. Those are the real people. Daddy's people, we just--

Zubak stops and wheels on her.

ZUBAK

Listen to me. Rinnburg's on the other side of the country. We're on foot and they're hunting you.

ELENA

Then we find an airfield.

ZUBAK

They've been captured, surely.

ELENA

Then we send a plane to meet us somewhere, why is this so fucking hard? We just, we get a plane--

ZUBAK

How, Elena?

ELENA

I don't fucking know! I just do it!

ZUBAK

You can't!

Suddenly, pieces of PAPER begin to drift from the sky, raining down through the branches like fallen leaves. Zubak grabs one of the air-dropped leaflets.

INSERT:

THE VERNHAM REGIME HAS BEEN DEFEATED.
 THE COUNTRY IS YOURS.
 DISREGARD ANY NEWS TO THE CONTRARY.
 ALL SERVICES WILL SOON BE RESTORED
 BY THE WESTGATE RESISTANCE ARMY.

Elena reads it over his shoulder. A rage comes over her.

ELENA
 We'll fuck them all. That's what
 we'll do. We'll fuck them forever
 for what they've done to me.

ZUBAK
 Keep marching and be quiet.

Elena has cycled through the stages of grief onto anger.

ELENA
 The ministers too. Laskin. Bartos.
 They wanted me to fail. It's their
 fault. All of this. We'll chop them
 to bits and throw them in the
 fucking river like Keplinger.

He grabs her by the hair on the back of her head and pulls
 her close.

ZUBAK
 STOP TALKING NOW.

The sudden violence shocks her. He's never touched her this
 way before. Then it seems to shock her into a revelation:

ELENA
 Nicky.

ZUBAK
 (confused)
 What'd you call me?

ELENA
 I know where he is. Where he's
 staying, in Switzerland? We find a
 phone and call him, yeah? We
 contact him and, and he sends help.

Elena's moved on to the bargaining stage. Some manic
 authoritarian élan still grips her.

ELENA (CONT'D)
 And then we take it all back. This
 is the plan, Herbert.
 (MORE)

ELENA (CONT'D)

It won't fail because it's still our country, it's still mine, it will always be mine, it will always be ours, yours and mine. Yeah? You know it's true, Herbert. You know how this ends.

She touches his face. Zubak falls into her eyes, drowning as always in her wild charisma, lost.

TITLE CARD: THE PALACE

3

EXT. TOWN OUTSKIRTS. DAY

3

The edge of a town on the capital outskirts. Much of it is hollowed out from the war. A ghostly sight. Maybe a stray BODY lies somewhere alongside a road.

Zubak and Elena crawl into a ditch beneath an empty road.

ELENA

Where are we?

ZUBAK

I dunno. Were we walking East, or-?

ELENA

My people are in here, I know it. It's got that - look to it.

ZUBAK

East Ganz - maybe? Ten miles out?

Elena shivers. It's freezing. Still in her dress, no coat.

ZUBAK (CONT'D)

We need to find you shelter here.

ELENA

Do we just, knock on a door? No one could refuse my face, right?

ZUBAK

Fuck that. Stay down.

Then, in the distance, an ENGINE. Coming towards them.

ELENA

What's-- ?

ZUBAK

Shh.

A MILITARY TRANSPORT coming down the road.

ELENA

Army! That's us!

She begins to stand.

ZUBAK

(harsh whisper)

No, no! Down!

Zubak grabs her arm and yanks her down into the foliage.

As the transport nears, we hear a loud VOICE emanate from a speaker on the vehicle's roof. It's a looped recording.

VOICE (O.S.)

(from speaker)

... provide for your future! Happy Christmas!

(beat, the loop repeats)

This is a curfew warning! We cannot guarantee the safety of those found outside after 9 PM tonight. For the safety of this community, anyone harboring members of the Vernham regime will be apprehended or shot on site. Mobile phone services will remain down for the time being! The Westgate Resistance Army will soon provide for your future! Happy Christmas!

(beat, the loop repeats)

This is a curfew warning...

The vehicle drives off into the distance as its loop repeats.

Zubak peeks out to make sure it's gone.

ZUBAK

It's not safe here.

ELENA

No phones.

ZUBAK

Let's not worry about that now.

ELENA

But landlines, maybe? There must be-

ZUBAK

(shakes head)

FORGET ABOUT THAT, we just need shelter or you'll freeze. That's all we're thinking about. Some place to hide where no one would ever go.

But what place might fit this description?

4 EXT. POETRY CENTER. DUSK 4

One of Nicholas's hollowed-out, war-pocked poetry centers.

A sign: "The National Poetry Project - Robert Frost Center".

5 INT. POETRY CENTER. DUSK 5

Elena huddles on the ground in a bombed-out room. Volumes of poetry scattered everywhere. It's cold and dark.

Zubak returns with his pistol in hand and huddles for warmth.

ZUBAK

Nothing. No food. No water.

Elena stares numbly at the poetry books on the floor.

ELENA

I told Nicky it's a pointless fucking genre. Eighty words of drunken indentation about a pussy willow.

They sit in silence for another moment. And then:

ZUBAK

Elena.

ELENA

What.

ZUBAK

Were you really going to do it?

She turns from the poetry books to Zubak.

ELENA

(she knows)

Do what?

ZUBAK
Make me chancellor.

Elena hesitates for a moment, caught out. Then recovers.

ELENA
Well, yes. Of course. That was the
plan wasn't it?

ZUBAK
(coldly)
Was it?

A feeling that he's pinning her down a bit. She glances at
the PISTOL resting at his side.

ELENA
It was all happening, wasn't it? I
said it.

ZUBAK
No. You didn't say it. You stalled.

ELENA
Did I?

ZUBAK
Yes.

ELENA
I don't think - ?

ZUBAK
Don't fucking pretend with me.

Does his hand tense on the pistol just slightly?

ELENA
Herbert. Look at me. And tell me I
would betray you.

He looks in her EYES. As always she's able, when needed, to
project endless reserves of warmth, honesty, vulnerability.

He looks away from the sun. And nods.

ZUBAK
All right.

She touches his HAND. He instinctively releases the pistol
and holds her hand.

A GUNSHOT somewhere outside. It's close. Elena screams, Zubak
covers her mouth.

ZUBAK (CONT'D)

Quiet, quiet.

Zubak peeks out the window and sees: A MAN DRAGGING A BODY ACROSS THE STREET IN THE FAR DISTANCE. He crouches back down.

ELENA

I can't live in the shadows.

ZUBAK

You have to.

ELENA

I won't. My people are out there. I know it. I can feel them. They can't give me up.

(then)

They're the only ones who can help me. We have to find them.

Zubak hesitates. But what choice does he have? It's her.

ZUBAK

(nods)

Okay. We'll find them.

Elena kisses his cheek.

ELENA

Happy Noel.

They hold each other on this cold, dark Christmas gloom.

6

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. NIGHT

6

DARKNESS. It's late. Nearly curfew. The road is quiet and empty. Most folks are staying in their homes.

Finally, two HEADLIGHTS appear. A SMALL SHITTY CAR makes its way down the road.

Zubak emerges from a copse of trees and runs into the road. He blocks the car's path, waving his arms. The car slows.

Zubak approaches the driver: A MAN (60s), who looks nervous.

ZUBAK

Good evening. Happy Christmas.

MAN

Yes, I-- sorry, was I--?

ZUBAK

No, no. You're not in trouble.

The man stares at Zubak. It suddenly dawns on him who he's talking to: Is it... the Foundling's Heir?

MAN

My friend, I'm sorry, but I um--

ZUBAK

Could you lend us a ride? My friend and me?

MAN

I'm, I'm already late, you see-- the curfew-- ?

ZUBAK

We're not going far. We've been waiting ages for someone to pass.

MAN

The roads are not safe, I, my home was ruined, I'm just, I'm trying to get to my brother's?

ZUBAK

Listen. My friend. It's Christmas.

A look of pained ambivalence from the man.

ZUBAK (CONT'D)

It really won't be far.

Zubak gestures to the trees. Elena emerges and runs to the car. As she nears, the man recognizes her with wide eyes.

MAN

Oh, Christ. No, my friend, listen--

ZUBAK

We go wherever you go. No trouble.

ELENA

My dear, what's your name, eh?

MAN

(should he say?)
Um, I don't -- Gregor--

ELENA

Gregor. I'm telling you as your Chancellor, you don't have to worry about the curfew, or the roads.

Gregor must think: But you're not the Chancellor anymore.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Kill the noise in your head,
Gregor. You know you can trust me.
When this is all over, very soon,
they will say your name: 'Gregor,
The Man Who Drove Her'... 'The
Savior'... 'The Ferryman.'

Gregor glances anxiously at his CONSOLE CLOCK: '8:55.' Then
Zubak leans forward and Gregor sees the holstered PISTOL.

Elena knows she doesn't have him.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Gregor. Listen to me. Whatever you
want, for your future, for your
family? It will all be provided.
Money, a new house? Cars? You like
cars, Gregor? You will have as many
as you like. A helicopter? I always
remember heroes. I always take care
of them, I always--

ZUBAK

You have a phone? Here, just let us
in--

(reaching for the door)

Gregor panics at the sight of the PISTOL again and suddenly
steps on the gas.

The car peels out. Zubak pulls the pistol out and fires two
shots after it. One might ricochet. But the car speeds off.

He turns and sees Elena in the MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, facing an
oncoming car.

ZUBAK (CONT'D)

Elena!

ON ELENA'S FACE lit by headlights. She is calm, certain the
approaching car will stop. It speeds toward her, then stops.

Elena approaches the driver. He is blaring CHRISTMAS MUSIC on
his radio. And he is quite drunk.

The drunken man, TOMAS, recognize immediately who it is
approaching him. A kind of strange awe washes over him.

TOMAS

Fuck me, you're joking?

ELENA
Will you help your Chancellor?

Tears well in Tomas's eyes at the sound of her voice.

TOMAS
Me, miss? Oh, yes, yes. Where you
going then? You're all right?

ELENA
Your home, sir. If you'd be so
kind?

Tears are now streaming down Tomas's smiling face.

TOMAS
Oh, miss, I'm, I would be-- it's a,
a most fucking great honor indeed.

Zubak appears. He sees the drunken Tomas.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
And, fuck me, you as well?

ZUBAK
(quietly to Elena)
Maybe we should find another?

TOMAS
(overhears)
No, no, sir. No, no, corporal. My
corporal. I am your man. I am your
man. Yeah? I am your man.

Elena looks at Zubak with quiet conviction.

ELENA
He is our man.

7 INT. CAR. NIGHT

7

Elena and Zubak load into the backseat and duck down.

Tomas hits the gas and motors ahead somewhat haphazardly.

ZUBAK
You're sure you can drive?

TOMAS
Oh, yes, yes! Been driving all
night! No war stops me, best damned
driver in East Ganz you've got
here! For my angel!

ELENA

You have my undying gratitude, sir.

ZUBAK

Where do you live?

TOMAS

(overcome with emotion)

My god-- I am, how can this be happening? How the-- how are you here with me?

We see in the backseat that Zubak is gripping the PISTOL.

ZUBAK

Sir. Your home is safe?

TOMAS

Oh, very safe. Good, clean house. We'll have a Christmas toast yeah?

ELENA

What is your name, my love?

A little look from Zubak. 'My love'?

TOMAS

Me, I'm Tomas. 'The Rooster.' That's what they call me, don't know why, these fucking idiots out here! Call me what you like.

ELENA

Do you own a cell phone, Tomas?

TOMAS

Oh, yes. At home. No service. But it's coming back tonight, they say. You want to use it? Use it! Use me! Use all of me, I'm yours, my angel!

Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" blares. On the lam with a fool.

8

EXT. ROAD. NIGHT

8

The little car speeds through the darkness.

9

EXT. HOUSING BLOCK. NIGHT

9

A grim, gray, housing block set next to a wooded area.

The car pulls into an isolated section of the lot.

10 INT. CAR. NIGHT

10

Tomas parks the car but leaves it running. Zubak peers out the window at the large building.

ZUBAK

You said you lived in a house?

TOMAS

Yes, sir. My big, lovely house. With all my fat fuck neighbors, ho ho.

ZUBAK

No, no. This is too public --

TOMAS

Don't worry, s'just me in my unit. I'll take you right up. You just wait here first, all right? I'll fetch you something to wear. Okay? For hiding? Good? Yes? We're here! Yeah? We've done it!

He kisses the glass of Elena's window and smiles lovingly.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

My love!

ELENA

My love.

With that, Tomas exits and stumbles to the housing block.

11 EXT. HOUSING BLOCK - LOT. NIGHT

11

The darkened car sits in the nearly empty lot. All is quiet.

12 INT. CAR. NIGHT

12

MINUTES LATER. Elena and Zubak are alone in the running car, crouched in the back. Yuletide music on the radio.

ZUBAK

He'll fuck up. I know it.

ELENA

Don't worry. He's what we want. A beautiful perfect idiot who will do anything for me.

A LOOK from Zubak.

Elena switches the RADIO to the news. Rebel controlled.

NEWS REPORT (O.S.)
 ... and betrayed the trust of the
 people. If you see the former
 chancellor, report her whereabouts
 immediately and receive your
 reward.

Elena shows no emotion. But a LOOK of alarm from Zubak.

NEWS REPORT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Loyalists will not be tolerated.
 The Vernham partisans are losing
 support, and will soon lay down
 their arms to face the--

Zubak reaches into the front seat and turns the radio OFF.

ZUBAK
 No use hearing these lies.

Outside, we hear VOICES. Elena and Zubak freeze. Zubak grips
 the PISTOL. He peeks out the window and sees:

TOMAS in the distance, talking to TWO ARMED MEN by a TRUCK.

ZUBAK (CONT'D)
 Christ.

ELENA
 What is it?

ZUBAK
 Shh. Don't move.

Zubak continues watching the men talk. Tomas points somewhere
 to the road. The conversation ends. The armed men get in
 their truck and drive off. Zubak is surprised, and relieved.

Tomas returns, opens the door, throws some CLOTHES at them.

TOMAS
 Here. Some of mine. And a fake fur
 from my dead mother, the old sow's
 cunt, ha.

ZUBAK
 What did they want?

TOMAS
 They wanted a slicky prickly who
 would give you up, but they got me
 instead, ha ha!

ELENA
Bless you, my love.

TOMAS
Bless you, sweet angel.

Zubak hates their vibe.

13 EXT. HOUSING BLOCK - ENTRANCE. NIGHT

13

Tomas leads them to the front door. Elena and Zubak disguised in coats, hats, scarves. They look faintly ridiculous.

ZUBAK
(whispers)
What side are these people on?

TOMAS
Here? All sides, you know.
Everywhere, is all sides.

A DISHEVELED MAN sits on the ground, against the wall by the front entrance. His clothes are a mess. His face dirty. There is some sort of wound on his leg. He drinks from a bottle.

Elena and Zubak keep their faces down as they pass the man, who doesn't look up. They follow Tomas into:

14 INT. HOUSING BLOCK - LOBBY

14

A very grim lobby. The tumult of war and sanctions has hit this already blighted part of town quite hard.

It is eerily quiet and cold. A few DISPLACED CITIZENS sleep on the floor in sleeping bags or under whatever cover they could find.

ON ELENA as she eyes them. Does she feel for them? Does she feel culpable for their plight at all?

Tomas leads them past the sleeping bodies to the elevator.

TOMAS
We ride express to the top, yeah?
First class!

ZUBAK
(very quietly)
Shhh...

He hits the BUTTON. It's an old elevator. It takes forever to make its way down.

As they wait, the man who was outside staggers in through the front door at the end of the hall. He's coming their way.

The elevator DINGS. The doors open.

15 INT. ELEVATOR. CONTINUOUS

15

Tomas leads Elena and Zubak inside.

TOMAS

My private funicular. Hehe --

Zubak hammers the "CLOSE DOOR" button as the man nears. The doors shut very slowly. Finally they shut and we're moving.

ELENA

We cannot thank you enough, Tomas.
You will be remembered as the man
who saved a country.

TOMAS

Yes I think I'd like that, I would.

ZUBAK

But you can't tell anyone she's
here. You know that, yeah?

TOMAS

No, of course. I only told my
mother.

Beat. They look at him.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

And my papa. And my brother and my
sister and my sister's brother's
cock, ha ha, your faces, you should
see them.

Elena smiles appreciatively. Zubak doesn't.

The elevator reaches the fifth floor. Tomas leads them into:

16 INT. HOUSING BLOCK - HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS

16

They walk down the hall. Not as quickly as Zubak would like.

ZUBAK

(whispers)
Which one?

TOMAS

S'just here.

Tomas reaches his door. He fumbles drunkenly with his KEYS.

Nearby, an OLDER WOMAN is exiting her apartment. She and Zubak LOCK EYES for a moment. The woman looks spooked, and heads back inside. Zubak worries: 'Did she recognize me?'

Tomas finally gets the door open and they enter.

17

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

17

Tomas shuts the door and Zubak quickly LOCKS IT.

Elena looks at the INTERIOR of Tomas's apartment. She sees how "her people" really live. A sad little hovel.

ZUBAK

The woman in the hall, you know her?

TOMAS

Who, Greta? Wouldn't she like to know me! Been eyeing my prick like a plum pudding, that one.

ZUBAK

But you can trust her?

TOMAS

Oh sure, fuck it, sure.

ELENA

Tomas, my love? You said you had a phone?

TOMAS

Yes, yes. Just through here. You want a brandy? Shall we toast? I would like to, very much?

They talk off their disguises and he leads them into:

18

INT. SPARE ROOM. NIGHT

18

Another grim little room. Seems to be mainly filled with storage. Piles of junk, no furniture.

TOMAS

There you are, then. Very good phone.

He points toward a LANDLINE shoved inside a packed shelf. But it doesn't appear to be plugged in to anything.

ELENA

Right-- It is connected, or?

And then... TOMAS pulls the gun from Zubak's side holster and SLAMS the door.

Elena and Zubak turn around. They hear a heavy deadbolt LOCK.

ZUBAK

What--?

From the other end of the door, they can hear Tomas shout:

TOMAS (O.S.)

Ha ha! You fucking pig woman!
They'll hang you out like sausage!
Just you wait, you mad bitch!

ZUBAK

What is this? Open the door!

TOMAS (O.S.)

I am calling my cousin in security services! You will see! You killed my country and now I will kill you!

ELENA

Tomas, my love! My angel! We are friends!

TOMAS (O.S.)

(almost in tears)
YOU ARE A DEMON BITCH AND YOU WILL
BE SENT BACK TO HELL!

ELENA

Tomas!

ZUBAK

OPEN THIS DOOR!

But he's gone. Zubak sees his pistol is gone.

They look around the room. No windows. No other way out.

ELENA

Herbert - ?

Zubak takes a few steps back and then attempts to break the door down with all his might. Elena begins to panic.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Come on! Just break through! Break
it!

He tries again and again. But it appears to be reinforced and locked with a deadbolt.

Then, in frustration, the big brute destroys the room, tearing the shelving off the walls, laying everything bare, trying to find a exit, or just venting his rage.

Then he stands with his hands on his knees, out of breath.

Elena just stares numbly at the wall.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Herbert.

ZUBAK

What?

ELENA

It's over.

ZUBAK

No, no. Listen to me, listen. We'll
- we can-- we'll find some way--

ELENA

I am dead.

ZUBAK

You're not.

ELENA

I have died.

ZUBAK

Stop it! I order you!

Elena quickly grabs a SHARD of shattered wood shelving on the ground and frantically attempts to stab and slice the veins in her arm. It's a pathetic tool for the job, though she does break a layer of skin and draw blood in excruciating fashion.

Zubak attempts to wrestle the tool away from her.

ELENA

NO! LET GO, YOU FUCK! LET GO!

He pulls the shard away and throws it across the room.

ZUBAK

You don't! No! You don't EVER!

Elena falls to her knees with tears in her eyes.

We hear TOMAS from the other side of the door.

TOMAS

They are on their way, you fucking savages! You pigs!

ZUBAK

I WILL GUT YOU! I WILL GUT YOU!

Elena sinks down until her cheek rests on the cold linoleum. She has hit bottom.

Zubak tries to gently lift her. But she won't be lifted.

ZUBAK (CONT'D)

Please, my love-- please--

ELENA

All the love...

ZUBAK

Please.

ELENA

... I gave them...

He sinks to the ground next to her.

19 EXT. HOUSING BLOCK. LATE NIGHT

19

Some time has passed. It is very late now. All is quiet.

A few CARS pull into the lot. They look official.

20 INT. SPARE ROOM. LATE NIGHT

20

Elena and Zubak sit in exhausted silence, holding each other, waiting for whatever cruel fate might arrive.

The lock turns. Elena and Zubak look up.

The door swings open and the traitor LASKIN enters with FOUR GUARDS from the Security Service and a LIEUTENANT.

Elena is hardly surprised to see Laskin.

ELENA

I will not speak to traitorous rat spy cunts.

LASKIN
 (to lieutenant)
 Note that the former chancellor is
 refusing a civil dialogue.

ELENA
 I will only recognize Parliament.
 Where is your bill of indictment? I
 demand to see some documentation,
 of your, your, fucking legitimacy,
 of which there is none!

LASKIN
 (to Zubak)
 You. Come.

The guards move towards Zubak.

ELENA
 No! Leave him!

Zubak is so large and powerful that he nearly throws them all
 off. But eventually they subdue him, kicking and screaming.

ZUBAK	ELENA (CONT'D)
GET OFF! NO! NO! ELENA!	Do not harm him! I will kill
ELENA!	you if you harm him!

They pull Zubak from the room. The subjects are separated.

LASKIN
 (to lieutenant)
 Note the corporal's aggression.

ELENA
 Who pays you, yeah? Which country?
 Or are you such worms that you fix
 America's toiletry for free?

LASKIN
 You will answer our questions now.

ELENA
 I will absolutely not.

LASKIN
 (to lieutenant)
 Note the former chancellor refuses
 to answer the people's questions.

ELENA
 Tell the people I will only answer
 to the true representatives of the
 working class, at Parliament.

LASKIN
Parliament has been dissolved.

ELENA
Parliament cannot be dissolved
unless I dissolve it.

LASKIN
The Security Service and the WRA
have merged to form a new supreme
governing body called the National
Freedom Front.

ELENA
(laughs derisively)
No one knows what this is. No one
cares. It's a joke.

LASKIN
We shall read your offenses.

ELENA
I have committed no offenses.

The lieutenant steps forward with a written list.

LIEUTENANT
(reads)
The defendant, Elena Vernham, has
committed the following offenses...

ELENA
'Defendant.' You fucking infants.

LIEUTENANT
Carrying out acts incompatible with
human dignity; acting in a despotic
and criminal manner; murdering
former Chancellor Edward Keplinger;
procuring luxurious foodstuffs from
abroad while the people subsisted
on 200 grams per day --

ELENA
Lies. Incontrovertible lies.
Not one of which would be
recognized by an
international body. You are
grasping, sordid little men--

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Undermining of the national
economy; armed attack on the
people; and, in accordance
with Article 6 of the Rome
Statute, the crime of
genocide.

ELENA (CONT'D)
'Genocide!' You are delusional!

LASKIN

Did you hear the charges? Have you understood them? Answer me.

ELENA

I will not answer you, for you have no authority to recognize!

Laskin finally snaps.

LASKIN

HEAR ME NOW, YOU PSYCHOTIC! I tried with you - over and over I tried! - to make your crippled brain walk straight but you WOULDN'T LISTEN! It was mold and menopause and daddy-please-fuck-me bullshit all the way to hell, so now you will pay the piper and ANSWER FOR YOUR CRIMES!

ELENA

(with utter conviction)

No, you will answer for the crime of treason and I will drag your festering corpse to the people's palace!

21

INT. BEDROOM. AT THE SAME TIME

21

In an adjacent bedroom in the same apartment, Zubak has been tied to a radiator. A couple of LASKIN'S MEN stand guard.

Laskin enters the room. No sign of fluster whatsoever.

LASKIN

Right. So. We're nearly finished in there.

ZUBAK

What are you doing to her?

LASKIN

Saving her. If we let her outside she'd be raped raw and gutted by morning.

We hear A VOICE from the other side of the door:

VOICE (O.S.)

It's done! She's done it!

LASKIN
(calls out)
Thank you, Nils.

ZUBAK
You will take me to her now!

LASKIN
You do know what she's just done in there?

ZUBAK
I won't talk to you!

LASKIN
She's betrayed you.

Zubak knows it's a lie. Doesn't he?

ZUBAK
Fuck you.

LASKIN
She wants you to wear the hair shirt. Pin her sins on you, 'The butcher made me do it.' Cruel girl.

ZUBAK
I'll never believe a word you say.

LASKIN
No, we know the truth, you and I. She's not wired right, is she? The father, god knows what he did. Put his cock in her mouth is the rumor, who knows, I'm not so sure, but it doesn't matter. She's incurable.

ZUBAK
Fuck your mother.

LASKIN
Like you're fucking yours?

Zubak tries to break his restraints. A volcano of rage.

LASKIN (CONT'D)
She used you to feel strong again. And now the country's dying. She's killing us. Thousands, everywhere. Fathers, mothers, sons. The working people. For nothing, for pride. For the story she tells herself.

Zubak hesitates for a moment. A glimmer of truth there. Then he attempts to break through his restraints.

ZUBAK
I WILL NOT LISTEN TO YOU!

LASKIN
But you know it's true, don't you?
I assumed you always knew.

It's weighing on a weary Zubak now. The separation. And the creeping possibility that his captors may be right.

22 INT. SPARE ROOM. NIGHT

22

LASKIN returns.

ELENA
What's happening?

LASKIN
What we expected. Your big ox has deserted you. Says you poisoned his brain. What do you make of that?

Elena hesitates ever so briefly. Then she smiles.

ELENA
You can't hurt me with him. He can't go there.

LASKIN
Everyone's left you, Elena.

ELENA
You're scrambling, aren't you?

LASKIN
You're all alone. You've got no choice but to cooperate. You will tell your people the truth. You will publicly admit your crimes to everyone. And you will do it on television.

Elena looks at this man. Who now suddenly seems quite small.

ELENA
On television.
(then)
You need me. Don't you?

A flicker of hesitation from Laskin. Then stone-faced:

LASKIN
I do not, Madam.

ELENA
That's why I'm alive. Why else?

LASKIN
No, we believe - in the principle -
a legal transition of power--

ELENA
You need me to sell it, pig. You
don't have the numbers, do you,
piggie?

LASKIN
Quite the contrary, I assure you--

ELENA
You have a broken constituency.
Millions of my people, in Rinnburg,
in the Hills, who will never grant
you moral authority. You don't even
have America, do you? You're too
dirty, too *turbid*. Admit it!

Another flicker of hesitation from Laskin.

LASKIN
No. We've all the support we need.

ELENA
If that was true you'd be burning
my bones and picking out
upholstery.

LASKIN
(losing his patience)
Listen to me. I am ordering you to
cooperate.

ELENA
You couldn't order a fucking
omelette.

An impasse. She won't play ball. And she's sniffed out the
truth.

LASKIN
Right. Then this all becomes quite
simple.

23 INT. BEDROOM. AT THE SAME TIME

23

Laskin returns.

Zubak has gone silent. Drained. Gutted.

Laskin pulls his chair close to Zubak. He speaks to him softly. Like a friend. Or a father.

LASKIN

I am not your tormenter. I am not here to exact anything.

Nothing from Zubak.

LASKIN (CONT'D)

But I've watched it all. We all have. How she's hurt you. Deceived you. The humiliations. Caging you, torturing you, turning it around and calling it 'love.' Convincing you of some deep, ancient fucking tether you'd be lost without.

Zubak stares off, silent, exhausted, lost in thought.

LASKIN (CONT'D)

This is what she's done to all of us. Held us captive to her love. But now it's over. And the time has come to renounce her. Publicly. Okay? OKAY? Will you join us?

Zubak blinks. A feeling that he may be on the brink.

LASKIN (CONT'D)

I think you will.

Laskin gets up and leaves.

24 INT. SPARE ROOM. AT THE SAME TIME

24

Laskin reenters and affixes an oxygen mask to Elena's face. Elena resists, screaming, truly terrified.

ELENA

STOP THIS! STOP! STOP!

Laskin affixes the hose on the oxygen mask to a small air tank, upon which the words "DANGER: BLACK MOLD" have been rather crudely scrawled. A rather inelegant torture.

ELENA (CONT'D)
NO! NO! STOP!

25 INT. BEDROOM. AT THE SAME TIME 25

Zubak hears Elena's screams and freaks out, desperately trying to break his shackles.

26 INT. SPARE ROOM. AT THE SAME TIME 26

Laskin nods at the lieutenant, who puts his hand on the "mold" spigot. Elena begins to thrash around wildly?

LASKIN
You'll help me, yes?

Elena has reached her end. The flame has gone out.

ELENA
YES! YES! I WILL!

Laskin removes the mask from Elena's face.

LASKIN
Today? It must happen today.

ELENA
... yes.

LASKIN
(to lieutenant)
Note the former chancellor has agreed to cooperate.
(to Elena)
Listen to me. Are you listening? Here's how we manage it: We get you out of here, yes? Then we ferry you to Parliament. We marshal the broadcasters, and you confess your crimes to the people. Do you agree?

She hesitates. Laskin pulls the "mold" mask close, and then:

ELENA
Yes... yes.

LASKIN
(to lieutenant)
Note the former chancellor acknowledges her crimes and agrees to confess.
(to Elena)
(MORE)

LASKIN (CONT'D)

We do it all above board, legally.
Because we are not butchers. We are
servants of the constitution.

Elena offers no response. Laskin nods at the Lieutenant, who unties Elena and leads her from the room.

27 INT. HOUSING BLOCK - ELEVATOR. EARLY MORNING

27

They ride in the elevator in silence. And then:

LASKIN

We'll clean you up first. Make you
presentable. I'm not seeking to
humiliate you.

She says nothing in reply.

LASKIN (CONT'D)

And Corporal Zubak will of course
be treated fairly under the law,
same as you.

DING! The elevator doors begin to open.

LASKIN (CONT'D)

Once you've confessed, we'll--

POP! A bullet pierces Laskin's head. Blood sprays across the elevator and its occupants.

A FEW MORE POPS. Confusion. Elena falls to the floor of the elevator.

A LARGE MAN with a rifle speaks in what sounds like a Russian or Eastern European accent:

LARGE MAN

Let's go, let's go--

We see in the hallway what look like SPECIAL FORCES SOLDIERS, but they wear no insignia, no designation of rank or nationality. More like a private army or militia of some kind, with different accents from various parts of the world.

Laskin, his lieutenant, and the guards lie dead around the elevator. We might see a few more PRIVATE SOLDIERS moving in through the front entrance of the building.

The terrified displaced citizens in sleeping bags are being zip tied at the wrists and subdued at gunpoint.

Shouting, chaos.

It's all messy and unclear. Are these people on the same team? What are the sides exactly?

ELENA

Are we - what are we - ?

She's treated roughly by the soldiers, dragged to her feet. She hears the voice of an AMERICAN MAN.

AMERICAN MAN

We're moving you now.

What? What does it mean? Soldiers of fortune drag her down the hallway to the front entrance.

She begins to scream, the shock finally catching up to her. She SHRIEKS as she's dragged across the floor.

28

EXT. HOUSING BLOCK. EARLY MORNING

28

Out front, we see multiple security service vehicles and a few SECURITY SERVICE GUARDS who have been beaten and subdued by the private soldiers.

We see more mercenaries crowded around armored vehicles. And also somewhere in a safe area with soldiers is the OLDER WOMAN who recognized Zubak earlier and tipped someone off.

The American gestures with his rifle.

AMERICAN MAN

We're right over here.

ZUBAK

Where are we going?

The man with the Russian accent hurries her forward.

LARGE MAN

This way. This is us.

Elena is ushered brusquely by rifle-point into an armored car. The soldiers deposit her roughly into the vehicle.

29

INT. ARMORED CAR. EARLY MORNING

29

Elena sits alone in the back of the car as it begins to drive quickly. Holding her sleeve over her mouth like some sort of makeshift gas mask.

She's hyperventilating, whilst sobbing.

Who is this? America? NATO? Surely she knows if they don't kill her then she'll wind up in The Hague, where the Grand Inquisitors of liberal Western democracy will finally have their way with her.

30 EXT. HOUSING BLOCK. EARLY MORNING 30

The armored car pulls away from the checkpoint. Two or three similar cars follow suit.

31 EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS. MORNING 31

The armored car caravan moves through the outer suburbs of the capital.

The feeling of low-lying residential/commercial sprawl near an airport. Signs of the insurgency, of disruption.

32 INT. ARMORED CAR. MORNING 32

Elena watches the grim scenery from the window, seeing with her own eyes the chaos that has come to her country. Does she feel any guilt? Or does she feel only that this has happened to her? Whatever it is, the fear and exhaustion have finally rendered her silent, nearly catatonic.

She sees a plane taking off or landing somewhere nearby. Perhaps we see an air traffic control tower as well.

ELENA

Are we flying? ... ARE WE FLYING?

But the two burly soldier types up front don't respond.

33 EXT. BUSINESS HOTEL - STREET SIDE. MORNING 33

The caravan of armored car pulls into a soulless, very corporate hotel across from the airport. A real business commuter type chain hotel.

We see a sign in front of the hotel that reads: "Bartos Quality Suites."

34 EXT. BUSINESS HOTEL - ENTRANCE. MORNING 34

The cars pull up and stop at the front entrance. Various other military and luxury civilian transports are scattered around out front.

Elena is led from the caravan at gunpoint into:

35 INT. BUSINESS HOTEL - LOBBY. MORNING 35

The sleek but anonymous lobby of a chain hotel.

Inside is the command center of what appears to be a small private army or militia. SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE of various nationalities and backgrounds. As well as SUPPORT STAFF of a more distinctly corporate flavor.

Elena sees that Zubak is being ushered in at the same time. They are relieved to see each other unharmed but are then immediately led at gunpoint toward an elevator bank and into:

36 INT. BUSINESS HOTEL - ELEVATOR. MORNING 36

Elena and Zubak are pressed against the back wall. One of their captors presses the button for the top floor.

Zubak and Elena WHISPER TO EACH OTHER, scared.

ZUBAK

You're all right? Are you hurt?

ELENA

What? What's happening?

ZUBAK

I don't know.

ELENA

It's the Americans. Herbert, it is, I know it.

ZUBAK

I never gave you up, Elena. I never betrayed you.

ELENA

Herbert, they'll kill us all.

Zubak look unsure. He shakes his head.

ZUBAK

They would have done it already.

ELENA

Herbert...

ZUBAK

I won't let them. It's all right.

But he's powerless, just like her. They CLASP HANDS.

Zubak grasps Elena's HAND. The two hands clasp firmly but lovingly. They will face their fate together.

Finally they reach their floor.

37

INT. BUSINESS HOTEL - 25TH FLOOR HALLWAY. MORNING

37

Elena and Zubak are led down the hallway, which features additional SOLDIERS/GUARDS stationed at regular intervals along the walls.

Elena and Zubak continue to hold hands as they are led forward.

About halfway down the hallway, their captors stop them.

LARGE MAN
Alright, let's go.

They attempt to separate them.

ZUBAK
No. NO.

AMERICAN MAN
C'mon, let's go.

ZUBAK
(screaming)
NO! NO! STOP IT STOP IT!

They continue to hold onto each other's HANDS for dear life as the giant men attempt to pull them apart.

Elena is crying, hysterical, screaming the first words she's spoken in ages:

ELENA
HERBERT! HERBERT!

Their link is almost unbreakable. Until, finally, with violent force, Elena and Zubak are uncoupled.

They scream as they are dragged away from each other.

Zubak is tucked away inside another room.

Elena is on her own now.

They force her to her feet and nearly drag her down the hall to a room marked "Presidential Suite" with ARMED GUARDS posted on either side. They open the door for Elena and move her into:

38 INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. MORNING

38

Elena enters the large room. She steps forward hesitantly.

She rounds a corner and enters the living room area of the suite. And there, standing, waiting for her, is EMIL BARTOS.

Elena sinks to the ground, in a kind of relief. A familiar face. And a powerful one at that.

ELENA

Oh, Christ. Emil... Thank god...

BARTOS

Thank god indeed. I apologize profusely for the rough transit. You're all right then, Madam?

Elena is speechless. Still reeling.

BARTOS (CONT'D)

What am I saying? You must be gassed.

She looks around. How is she here? What's happened? Why?

ELENA

What- what is this?

BARTOS

Here. Please, sit.

He gestures to an empty chair.

ELENA

(mind racing)

Is it - is it over? If it's over I must be taken to the palace, at once. And if it's not over, I need- I need to get to China. I need a guarantee against extradition, you understand? Yes? I need it now, Emil, I need--

BARTOS

Madam. Please.

Elena notices a threatening ARMED GUARD against the wall. She hesitates, then sits. Bartos sits as well. He smiles.

The sound of a SMALL COUGH. Tinny sounding. Elena turns and sees a teleconference SPEAKERPHONE on the coffee table.

BARTOS (CONT'D)

Look. God. What does one say? Makes me sick, the whole thing. What they've done to you. The humiliation, the ingratitude.

Somewhere outside, the distant BOOM of mortar fire.

ELENA

(growing impatient)

Emil. Tell me what's happening. Am I alive or am I dead? What's the fucking play here, where are we?

Bartos nods sympathetically. He might enjoy his status here.

BARTOS

Well. It's close. The rebels have gained ground, but they're soft at the edges. Your loyalists have the mines, the Hills, most of the Army, but? It's all so fluid, precarious.

He lets her sit with the uncertainty for a moment. And then:

BARTOS (CONT'D)

I myself remain neutral. Being a partisan is bad for business. But I can see the situation cries out for some rigor. The Roman *dignitas*.

ELENA

Then we can't waste time, Emil. Listen to me --

BARTOS

(forceful)

No I think it's time you listen to me now.

Elena blanches. She sees the guards tense against the wall.

BARTOS (CONT'D)

(enjoying his power a bit)

Dignitas you have. It's rare, can't be taught or measured. But right now, you're cut off. You're a baby on an ice floe. You'll never live.

Elena contemplates this. He's almost certainly correct.

ELENA

So - what are you suggesting?

BARTOS

What you'd need is a buffer. Not a friend, or a visible ally, per se, but a good strong levee to stop the shit from rolling in.

Elena stares at him. Beginning, perhaps, to see his larger insinuation. But not yet willing to accept it.

ELENA

China.

BARTOS

(shakes head)

Too hot for them now. And moreover, I've come to see the danger they pose in the region.

Elena eyes him coldly.

ELENA

Have you.

BARTOS

I have. And indeed so should you.

Another SMALL COUGH from the SPEAKERPHONE. Elena notices.

BARTOS (CONT'D)

The other side would welcome a breakwater in the region - someone to talk tough, a New Cold Warrior - who won't buckle, or let the cobalt stream slide Eastward.

What is this? An offer?

ELENA

It's not possible. What you're saying. It's - we're too far gone.

Bartos shrugs. Perhaps she's right. But, then again?

BARTOS

You're probably right. Although? Pivots are not uncommon. Not in public of course, but where these things happen: In pieces. In the dark.

(MORE)

BARTOS (CONT'D)

A little material support, coming your way, through back channels, to aid the war effort. A little more lift in your haunches. And then - quietly - the priorities shift, their new administration settles in, the sanctions ease? And one day, who knows, we're nearly back to the old shape of things.

After everything that's happened, can it be possible? And yet the world turns quickly.

BARTOS (CONT'D)

What do you think, Judith? It's so speculative, I have my doubts. But would it track with the new admin?

PAUSE. Then, a familiar American voice from the SPEAKERPHONE:

SENATOR HOLT (O.S.)

(on speakerphone)

It's plausible. In the abstract.

BARTOS

I think so too. But. I don't know.
(back to Elena)
Maybe we should leave it there for now?

Elena just stares at the speaker phone.

BARTOS (CONT'D)

(to Holt)

We'll hop off now. But thank you.

Bartos ends the call.

BARTOS (CONT'D)

So. We'll get you cleaned up fresh. And then talk next steps. It's safe here, safe rooms, clean air.

Elena stares at Bartos, considering everything but betraying nothing. She seems ready to stand and leave, but then:

BARTOS (CONT'D)

Ah. Sorry. Sorry Madam. There is just one last piece?

Elena freezes. Bartos takes some pleasure in this.

BARTOS (CONT'D)

He would have to go of course.

ELENA
 (she knows who)
 Who?

BARTOS
 It doesn't work, the two of you.
 Your trouble started with him. And
 so it will end with him.

A clear ultimatum.

ELENA
 And if I object?

BARTOS
 Oh, of course. Object. Do as you
 like. It's your call.

Is it?

BARTOS (CONT'D)
 But anyway. I'll leave you here to
 freshen up. Then we'll see where
 we're at.

Elena stares at Bartos. What is hiding behind her eyes? Is it relief... or is it defiance?

38 As Bartos exits the room, we see an ARMED GUARD stationed 38
 outside the door.

Elena walks in a daze to the bed and sees a box from the
 fashion house Lanvin. She numbly opens the box and finds a
 beautiful, expensive dress inside. She stares at it.

39 INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - BATHROOM. MORNING 39

Elena showers. Cleaning off the residue of 48 hours of fear,
 grime, and uncertainty.

She goes completely still for a moment, thinking, letting the
 water run off her.

She seems to make a decision.

40 INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. DAY 40

Elena puts on the dress. She looks reborn. Confident. Once
 again ready to vanquish all challengers.

41 INT. BUSINESS HOTEL - SMALLER ROOM. DAY

41

A much smaller and less luxurious room.

Zubak sits on the edge of the standard hotel double bed.

He hasn't cleaned up at all. He's still a mess. And he has no idea what's going on out there.

A KNOCK. The door opens and two GUARDS lead Elena inside. Zubak is relieved to see her.

ELENA
(to guards)
That'll be all, thank you.

The guards leave the room. The door shuts.

Elena walks to the bed and sits next to Zubak. They are finally reunited. She takes his HAND in her hand.

ELENA (CONT'D)
My love.

Elena pulls Zubak in for a long embrace. All is right with the world again.

BUT THEN... she leans in very close and whispers in his EAR:

ELENA (CONT'D)
(whispers)
We can't talk here. It's not safe.

ON ZUBAK'S FACE. Fear.

Elena ends the hug. She leans away from him and smiles theatrically.

ELENA (CONT'D)
(louder now)
So. I was thinking we could go sit by the swimming pool, what do you think?

ZUBAK
(getting her meaning)
Yes. Let's do that.

42 INT. BUSINESS HOTEL - SWIMMING POOL. DAY

42

Elena and Zubak sit by the side of an indoor swimming pool. We may see a few GUARDS in the background on the perimeter but Elena and Zubak are otherwise alone and have privacy.

Elena continues to smile presentationally in case anyone is watching her facial expressions from afar.

ELENA

(softly)

We have to speak very quietly.

ZUBAK

(lowers his voice)

Yes. Of course.

(then)

What's happening?

ELENA

What we always knew would happen. They're here, Herbert. The Americans and Bartos have moved in to fill the vacuum. They've ordered me to kneel, to be the face of it.

A flash of anger on Zubak's face.

ZUBAK

No... No, you can't.

ELENA

Of course I can't.

ZUBAK

So - what do we do?

ELENA

We'll do what we've always done. We'll fight them. To the death.

Zubak nods. It's bold. Basically suicidal. And yet thrilling.

ZUBAK

Yes, my love. Yes.

ELENA

I don't care what the consequences are. We may suffer. We may even die. But you and I will finally atone for everything we've done.

It hits Zubak like a bullet: At last. The time has come to finally relieve himself of his pain.

ZUBAK

Please. Please, please yes.

ELENA

We'll play their tune of course.
 But only for a moment. And then,
 once their backs are turned, we'll
 raise the curtain. We'll trigger
 the counterassault from our people,
 with reinforcements from our
 friends in China. And then we'll
 flog Bartos in the Palace Square
 and jail him for his crimes and
 seize his wealth and redistribute
 it amongst the working people.
 We'll close our doors, we'll look
 inwards, to our love for each
 other. We'll build it from our own
 Earth and we'll make it last ten
 millennia, long after the American
 nightmare has failed and burnt to
 ash and blown away forever. And our
 dreams will go on, my love. Our
 dreams will never end.

It's utterly insane, but no matter. They're deep in the dream
 now.

ZUBAK

We can do it, my love.

ELENA

I love you.

ZUBAK

I love you too.

They CLASP HANDS.

43

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. DAY

43

LATER.

Elena and Zubak gently lie down on the bed in Elena's room to
 take a nap together. They face each other on the bed.

ELENA

You must be tired.

ZUBAK

I'm too excited to sleep though.

ELENA

You have to, my love.

ZUBAK
I know. I know.

ELENA
You'll sleep, and we'll dream, and
then we'll make this all go away.

She smiles sadly. And then, she's almost crying.

ZUBAK
What is it?

ELENA
Nothing.

But there's something there. He runs his hand through her hair.

ELENA (CONT'D)
Herbert.

ZUBAK
Yes?

ELENA
I was happy you came along.

ZUBAK
(smiles)
Me too.

ELENA
I needed a Herbert. I really did.

She stares off.

ZUBAK
You all right?

ELENA
Yes.

Elena continues looking away. What is she trying to say?

ELENA (CONT'D)
I don't know. It's just a joke,
really.

ZUBAK
What is?

ELENA
I don't know. All the work it
takes, growing old, all the years.
(MORE)

ELENA (CONT'D)

Then one day your worst fears
arrive, and there you are again:
The same child.

Zubak looks at her. There's something in Elena, something driving her, something Zubak can't fix. Something in him too maybe.

ELENA (CONT'D)

(sighs)

Anyway. I was happy you came along.

ZUBAK

You're just tired.

ELENA

I know. You're right.

Zubak yawns. Elena smiles.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Ah. You too eh?

ZUBAK

Yes.

ELENA

Well. Then I'll see you in my
dreams. My love.

They smile and gently drift off to sleep together.

We PUSH IN on Zubak's face, his eyes closed.

DISSOLVE TO:

44 INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. LATER

44

CLOSE ON ZUBAK'S SLEEPING FACE. Perhaps an hour has passed.

Zubak is in a deep sleep. His eyelids twitch. He is dreaming, some happy and contented dream of her.

We hear a CLICK somewhere very close. And then a CREAK, like a bedspring.

A slight puzzled furrow on Zubak's brow, and then:

His eyes open.

We see from Zubak's POV a GUARD standing above him with a PISTOL pointed right at Zubak's head.

The guard flinches, startled, as if he wasn't expecting Zubak to wake up.

GUARD

Shit--

The guard pulls the trigger right as Zubak begins to lunge up from the bed.

The gun fires next to Zubak's ear and a bullet explodes into the pillow.

Zubak shoves the guard so hard he rockets to the floor.

We see there are TWO OTHER GUARDS in the room as backup. They frantically grab for their pistols.

ZUBAK

(looking around)

WHERE IS SHE?!? WHERE IS SHE?!?

Another guard fearfully aims a pistol at Zubak and fires as Zubak lunges toward him. The third guard backs up, terrified.

A bullet strikes Zubak in the shoulder. But he barely seems to notice.

Zubak barrels toward his attacker, who instinctively shields himself.

Zubak tackles the second guard to the ground as TWO MORE GUARDS enter the room. It's now taking five men to subdue Zubak.

ZUBAK (CONT'D)

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER?!? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!?

One of the other guards pulls a COMBAT KNIFE from his belt and plunges the knife into Zubak's back. The knife just stays there as Zubak spins around and strikes his attacker.

The other guards move toward Zubak with their weapons drawn.

WE SLOWLY PULL OUT OF THE ROOM from the open door into...

45

INT. BUSINESS HOTEL - HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS

45

... and we continue to PULL OUT, backwards from the room, and down the long hallway as the struggle continues off screen.

Until finally when we're almost at the end of the corridor we hear a GUNSHOT.

And we STOP.

And then TWO MORE GUNSHOTS.

Beat.

Silence.

46 BLACK 46

47 INT. PALACE - ELENA'S BEDROOM. MORNING 47

CLOSE ON ELENA'S FACE.

Her eyes open.

She awakens from a peaceful sleep.

She turns her head and sees the bed EMPTY next to her.

Then she presses the BUZZER next to her bed and heads to:

48 INT. PALACE - ELENA'S EN SUITE BATHROOM. MORNING 48

Elena showers.

She combs her hair in the mirror. A trace of sadness in her eyes, as if remembering something.

49 INT. ELENA'S BEDROOM. MORNING 49

Elena reenters the bedroom in her silk robe.

A KNOCK at the door.

NICHOLAS enters with her wardrobe for the day. He looks a bit gaunt, a bit haunted, as if something has been permanently cut out of him, but he smiles warmly.

NICHOLAS
Morning, my love.

Elena smiles back and gets out of bed.

Nicholas helps her get dressed.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)
And per Karla, salmon's still your preference for tonight?

ELENA

Yes, fine.
 (thinks for a moment)
 Although... maybe something more
 vigorous? Lamb, beef, something
 red, doesn't matter.

NICHOLAS

Yes, you're right. More appropriate
 for the Memorial.

We've come all the way around to the Memorial again. Perhaps
 a full two years have transpired since Elena and Zubak first
 met.

Nicholas finishes dressing Elena. They admire her in the
 mirror.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Lovely luscious lady.

ELENA

It's hideous.

NICHOLAS

Right. We'll do the Givenchy
 instead.

He begins to take the dress off.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Your 9th memorial. Christ. The
 fucking years.

ELENA

Mm. Stacking up.

NICHOLAS

Can I say though? You do look quite
 strong, my dear.

ELENA

Thank you.

NICHOLAS

No, but, really. Especially given -
 you know?

ELENA

Yes.

NICHOLAS

The tricky patch. *Annus horribilis*.

ELENA

Yes.

Nicholas continues dressing her. He works up the nerve to ask a question he's been wanting to ask for quite some time.

NICHOLAS

I do wonder sometimes... what was that all about, you think? The whole - all of it?

Elena thinks long and hard about this question. Everything she went through. The entire Zubak adventure. The isolationism. The populist fervor. The annexation. The insurgency. The counterinsurgency. The rebellion. The coup. The restoration. And back to where she started. The whole horrific, momentous, murderous journey through history.

ELENA

(tiny shrug)

I guess I had a little wobble.

Nicholas looks at her. 'A little wobble.' He smiles and nods.

NICHOLAS

Right.

He kisses her on the cheek and continues dressing her.

50 INT. HALLWAY. DAY 50

Elena walks down the hallway, powerful and regal, flanked by SECURITY behind her.

51 INT. ELENA'S OFFICE. DAY 51

A CAMERA CREW sets up lights, cameras, and a green screen for Elena's daily address at her desk.

Elena enters and sits at her desk. A hair and makeup team gives her a last-minute touchup.

She pins a LEOPARD PIN to her lapel.

We CUT AHEAD TO:

52 EXT. PALACE - BALCONY. NIGHT 52

A CROWD watches her from the balcony. CAMERAS everywhere. She delivers her speech into a microphone from a perspex box.

ELENA

Good evening, and indeed it is a glorious evening. For I am so glad you'll be joining me in celebrating tomorrow's memorial holiday. A day of remembrance, to commemorate our triumph over the enemies who oppose us.

(pause)

But let me reflect for a moment on the long road that led us here. As you recall, our love was tested. Our faith in our way of life was very nearly brought to the brink. We know the forces of darkness who brought us to that point: The radical left. The corrupt Security Service. Of course the Chinese menace, who even now seek to overrun Europe with their totalitarian economics and their cancerous 5G technology. And yes, even individuals in my own government, individuals I valued, who claimed to have the best interests of working people at heart, but in the end were not to be trusted. I'm only grateful I was able to see their true nature before it was too late.

(looks down dramatically,
pauses, looks back up)

But now we stand at the dawn of a new era. We can look at our past divisions and turmoil not as mistakes but as opportunities for learning and for growth - teachable moments that will lead us forward to new heights of compassion and cooperation, even with people and nations we once differed with. It will be my honor to spearhead that process. And it remains my deepest honor to lead you. Because all that I am, I am through you.

(smiles lovingly)

And so I bless you all. And I bless our love. Always.

Her eyes sparkle with charm. We are in the palm of her hand.

53 INT/EXT. COURTYARD. DAY 53

Elena carefully clips an armful of flowers in the courtyard garden.

54 INT. HALLWAY. DAY 54

She walks with the flowers through the glittering corridors of the palace.

55 INT. LOWER FLOORS - STAIRCASE. DAY 55

Elena descends down the marble stairs.

56 INT. MAUSOLEUM. DAY 56

DARKNESS.

The door opens and the LIGHTS AUTOMATICALLY TURN ON.

Elena enters and hesitates for a moment. Then she walks across the floor of the mausoleum, flowers in hand.

She finally reaches the GLASS CASKET and lays the flowers at the feet of the preserved body of CORPORAL HERBERT ZUBAK.

She lingers for a moment, her hand on the glass, staring at the peaceful face of the man who once was and forever will be the love of her life.

Elena lifts her hand from the glass and walks away.

As she departs, we hear A FAMILIAR MELODY: "If You Leave Me Now" by Chicago.

Elena leaves the room and closes the door.

The lights automatically TURN OFF, and darkness falls on the final resting place of The Foundling's Heir.

THE END