CH-CH-CHANGES

Written by

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EXT. BOOK DEPOSITORY – DAY

Crowds line the pavements. Police in evidence.

CAPTION: Dallas, Friday 22nd November, 1963

A Patrol Cop, CASTLE, 30s, fit, is keeping an eye on the crowd. He casually looks up at the building behind them. Something glints just inside a room with an open window.

He watches this for a moment.

Then he heads into the building.

INT. BOOK DEPOSITORY STAIRWELL – MOMENTS LATER

Castle quickly ascends the stairs.

Outside can be heard the sounds of cheering increasing.

INT. BOOK DEPOSITORY ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Castle enters a large room. He’s sweating from running up the stairs, but not out of breath.

No signs of life. He’s not sure he has the right room. Then a sound.

Castle pulls his gun. Walks further into the room. Sees a MAN crouching by the open window. Rifle in hand.

The Man realises he is no longer alone. Tenses.

Castle aims his gun.

CASTLE
Put the rifle down, and move away from the window now.

He speaks calmly, authoritatively.

The Man does not move.

He has frozen in the position, looking through the sights if the rifle at a target, his finger on the trigger.

CASTLE (CONT’D)
Don’t do it...

They both fire at the same time.

FADE TO BLACK.
MONTAGE -

Newspaper front pages from around the world, in many different languages.

MRS. KENNEDY DEAD - JACKIE KENNEDY DIES - ASSASSIN KILLED - WORLD STUNNED

The images show a grieving JFK, and a grim looking Castle, as well as pictures of the building.

FADE TO:

INT. DIMITRI'S BEDROOM - DAY

A room in semi darkness. Dimitri lies, clothed, unshaven, on the small bed.

From outside, at a distance, can be heard gunfire, explosions.

Then one closer to home. Dimitri stirs.

A phone rings shrilly somewhere in the flat. Then stops. Dimitri sits up.

He's in his thirties. Tough. Scarred.

The door to the room opens. VLADIMIR, 50s, fat, stands in the doorway. He wears a shabby uniform.

VLADIMIR

It's time.

Dimitri nods. Gets off the bed, goes to the window and opens the curtains.

We see the city outside. A city devastated by war.

CAPTION: Moscow, Russia, Now.

I/E. CAR/CITY STREETS - LATER

Vladimir driving. Dimitri, now in a patchwork military uniform with Soviet insignia, beside him.

They drive through war torn streets. Starved and despairing people make their way through destroyed buildings looking for refuge.

Destroyed tanks litter one street, like discarded toys.

Buildings, those still standing, fly tattered Soviet flags.
VLADIMIR
The Poles are supposed to be in Red Square. Leo told me they'd burnt Lenin's body. Just dragged it out and burnt it.

Dimitri says nothing.

I/E. CAR/GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS - MORNING

They come to an area filled with troops. Less signs of fighting here. Buildings, heavily fortified, relatively intact.

They go through checkpoints. Soldiers, many just kids, in makeshift uniforms, looks grim and hardened.

They park outside a building. Dimitri gets out.

VLADIMIR
Good luck.

Dimitri says nothing. He enters the building.

INT. ROSTOV'S OFFICE - MORNING

ROSTOV, wearing grubby white lab coat, 60s, tired looking. Wears glasses that have been fixed with electrical tape, sits at desk piled with papers, reports.

Nearby a balding, thin faced KGB AGENT sits in a shabby black suit, chain smoking.

Dimitri enters. He nods a greeting to Rostov, barely notices the Agent.

ROSTOV
Take a seat, Colonel.
(Dimitri sits)
We'll be ready shortly. We're just carrying out final tests.

Dimitri nods.

ROSTOV (CONT'D)
We just wanted to go over the mission...

AGENT
Make sure you know what you have to do.

ROSTOV
As you are aware, the procedure, it cannot be repeated. At least, not until next year.
(MORE)
ROSTOV (CONT'D)
(Beat)
And it doesn't look as if there
will be a next year.

AGENT
That is dangerous talk, Rostov.

ROSTOV
(ignoring him)
We can only link to a specific
correlating date. So, today, fifty
years ago. If you fail... We can't
repeat the experiment until this
date next year.

DIMITRI
I won't fail.

AGENT
You can't. The fate of Mother
Russia depends on you.

Dimitri looks at him coldly.

ROSTOV
You know the situation, Colonel.
But it is worse even than you
think. The Central Committee...

AGENT
You can't tell him that.

ROSTOV
Does it matter, Putin? If he
succeeds, it won't have happened.
If he doesn't. Well. He won't be
coming back.
(beat)
Moscow will fall within the next
couple of hours, in all likelihood.
Russia has been defeated. We. The
Central Committee has decided to
take Europe with us. As you know,
after the war with China, we
decided not to use nuclear weapons
again. We'd already done enough
damage. But now... It's madness.
(Beat)
So, you see... You have got to
succeed.

Dimitri nods.

INT. WHITE ROOM - LATER

Rather like a morgue. Dimitri lies on a slab, dressed in
civilian clothes. Rostov stands beside him.
ROSTOV

Ready.

DIMITRI

Do it.

Rostov leave. There is a hum of power. The room becomes increasingly white, until it bleaches everything out.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rostov, the Agent, various TECHNICIANS working at computer consoles (all of 1970s type).

AGENT

Will this work? Your theory... It's never been tested.

ROSTOV

What do we have to lose?

A SECOND AGENT enters, goes to the Agent and whispers something to him.

The Agent nods.

AGENT

(To the room)

We've launch nuclear strikes again Western and Eastern European targets.

ROSTOV

May God have mercy on our souls.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BAR - EVENING

A cop bar, Lone Star, in Dallas, 1963. Lots of off duty cops, all dressed in 1960s clothing.

Dimitri enters. His dress attracts some looks from the cops.

He goes to the bar. The BARTENDER comes up, tough retired cop.

BARTENDER

Yeah, what can I get you?

NB As Dimitri is now speaking English, he has an accent in this scenes.

DIMITRI

I am looking for a man called Castle.
The Bartender looks at him suspiciously.

BARTENDER

Why?

DIMITRI

I have business with him.

A cop comes up, HOUSTON. Big, fifties.

HOUSTON

Hey, Polak, what's your business with Jim?

Dimitri looks at him coldly.

DIMITRI

That is between me and him. And I am Russian, not Polish.

HOUSTON

Hey, everybody, you hear that? We got a God damn genuine Commie here.

He puts his hand on Dimitri.

HOUSTON (CONT’D)

So, Boy, what does a Commie want with Jim Castle?

With one quick movement, Dimitri flattens Houston.

There are a dozen guns produced in a flash of an eye, shouting cops, the Bartender pulls out a shotgun from under the counter and aims in point blank at Dimitri.

Dimitri looks around. Puts his hands up.

The Bartender clocks him with the butt of the shotgun.

INT. HOLDING CELL/SQUAD ROOM – NIGHT

Dimitri comes round in a Police holding cell adjacent to a room full of Police, plain clothes and uniformed, at desks. He shares the cell with a DRUNK, who's muttering to himself.

Dimitri sits up, rubbing his head. He looks out at the Squad room and sees - Castle, standing talking to a DETECTIVE.

Castle looks round and comes over to the cell.

CASTLE

Heard you were looking for me?

Dimitri looks at him to confirm it is him.
Dimitri
You are James Castle.

Castle
To my mother. Friends call me Jim. You can call me Sir. Come on. Detective wants to talk to you.

Dimitri
I don't have time. I need to speak to you. No one else. I have come a long way to see you. What I have to tell you will change the history of the world.

Castle starts to laughs. But something about Dimitri's tone stops him.

Castle
What's your name?

Dimitri
It is unimportant. Of all the people here, you, you are the only important person in this room.

Castle
Look boy, I don't have time...

Dimitri
No. You do not. None of us do. You need to hear what I have to say.

Beat. Castle turns and goes back to the Detective. They speak. Then Castle comes back and unlocks the cell. He puts handcuffs on Dimitri's wrists.

Castle
Come on. You can explain yourself to me. We're charging you with assaulting Denny Houston. You put him in the hospital.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Castle and Dimitri enter and sit.

Castle
OK. Shoot.

Beat.

Dimitri
Tomorrow, your President will be visiting Dallas. You will be on duty outside the Book Depository.
CASTLE
Yes. How do you know...

DIMITRI
You will see something that makes you enter the building. There you will find an assassin, a man called Lee Harvey Oswald. You will kill him. Your actions save the President, but Mrs. Kennedy dies.

CASTLE
Christ, what are you on?

DIMITRI
You will be hailed a hero. Kennedy will win the election for a second term, partially at least because of public sympathy for his wife’s death. He will end his second term the most popular President in history. In 1968 his brother, Robert, will become President too - beating Richard Nixon, who retires from politics.

CASTLE
(losing patience)
You ought to write a book, boy. You'll have plenty of time in prison. I've wasted enough of my time...

He gets up.

DIMITRI
I have not finished. You must hear me out. Please.

Beat. Castle sits.

CASTLE
I don't know why...

DIMITRI
In 1970 there will be a dispute between Russia and China. It escalates into war. Nuclear war. The death toll runs into millions. China is devastated, as is most of Asia from fallout.

(Beat)
The whole world is poisoned. Nothing is ever the same. Wars become common place. America collapses into civil war.

(MORE)
After the Chinese war, Russia is weakened, Eastern Europe breaks away from the USSR's influence, forms a new block, aligned to a neo-Fascist regime that takes power in a reunited Germany. A new world war starts. On and off, it will last over thirty years and end with the nuclear destruction of Europe.

CASTLE
You must be fucking me.

Dimitri has begun to cry involuntarily.

DIMITRI
I fought in the war. Saw it at first hand. It was... I am a Communist. I am not religious, but I know Armageddon when I see it.

CASTLE
I think you are ill, boy. You need help.

DIMITRI
I need your help. That is what I need.

CASTLE
What? Why?

DIMITRI
Because you caused it all to happen.

CASTLE
Fuck you say.

DIMITRI
Soviet scientists, by accident, found a way to see alternative histories. How single events can domino to change the whole history of the world. They found a way to go back in time and so give us a chance to change the outcome of those events.

(Beat)
At first the thought was that this could be used to win the war. But then... We realised that one event could be seen as the foundation for all that followed.
CASTLE
Mrs. Kennedy dying?

Beat

DIMITRI
No. President Kennedy not dying.

CASTLE
What?

DIMITRI
If Kennedy dies here, tomorrow, Lyndon Johnson will become President. He will not be popular. He will embroil you in an unwinnable war in Asia. Nixon will win in 1968. It will be Nixon, the great anti-Communist, who will intercede to stop the conflict between Russia and China. Many terrible things will still happen. But the world will not be plunged into world war.

Pause. Castle looks at Dimitri in confusion.

CASTLE
So what are you saying, boy?

DIMITRI
Tomorrow, when you see the glint of a rifle in a window... Look the other way.

CASTLE
And let my President die?

DIMITRI
Yes.

CASTLE
(More)
You must live, but you must change the future.

Castle looks at him.

CASTLE
I think you are completely mad.

He gets up, visibly shaken, and exits. Dimitri looks down at his handcuffs in despair.

EXT. BOOK DEPOSITORY - DAY
As in the first scene.
Crowds line the pavements. Police in evidence.

CAPTION: Dallas, Friday 22nd November, 1963

CASTLE, is keeping an eye on the crowd. He casually looks up at the building behind them. Something glints just inside a room with an open window.

He watches this for a moment. It is just as Dimitri said. He is transfixed by the glint.

INT. CELL - DAY
Dimitri sits despondent in a Cell.

EXT. BOOK DEPOSITORY - DAY
Castle continues to look at the window. Cheering starts. He looks round. The motorcade is coming into view.

He turns round, his back to the building.

FADE TO BLACK.

BLACK SCREEN -
The sound of gunshots. Screams.

INT. DIMITRI'S BEDROOM - DAY
In half darkness. Dimitri is lying on the bed.

He is different. No scars. Not as tough. The bedside clock/radio comes on. He wakes. Looks at it.

Goes over to the window and opens the curtains.
A bright sunny Morning. The city as it is today - no signs of war. A Russian Federation flag flies on a building opposite.

He smiles.

INT. CASTLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

1963. The room is in near total darkness, lit only by the light from a TV, which is showing news coverage of the assassination.

Castle sits, in his uniform, crying. Bottles lies discarded around the room. He's been drinking heavily.

His gun is in his hand.

He puts it too his head.

FADE TO BLACK.

The sound of a gunshot.