

Tears of a clown

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

ASA (21) moves at a pace, boxer-rhythm, through narrow rat-runs of graffiti streaked brick, sterile plazas of high-rises half-swallowed by the night sky above. Worn work boots through the leaf-choked gutter. Docker coat, collars high. Shoulder into the Autumn wind.

The ZIP of scooter engines close by. A brief SIREN blast. LAUGHTER. Drink-lucid groups of affluent faux-bohemians.

An underpass leads to different streets: take-outs and liquor stores, rough-sleepers, posturing youths, predatory glances from dark doorways and smoke-filled parked cars. The deep HUM of muffled base ahead.

EXT. JUNCTION - NIGHT

Asa tunes into a curbside transaction ahead as a young working-girl emerges from the shadows to engage a car at the curb.

Asa fixes on the girl's profile, her chestnut mane of hair, as the car door opens and she edges inside. He quickens his pace, hands emerge from his pockets ready...

She lifts her face towards him, within arm's reach - sad, vacant eyes. Asa looks away, moves on, wipes a tear from his eye, breathes again. Not the girl he's looking for.

The car rolls away in the b.g.

EXT. THE RED STAR - NIGHT

The *Red Star* in red neon above the door. Eastern lingo thick in the air. A hubbub of super-cars and engine GROWL. Real-fur and fake-diamonds mingle on the curb-side.

A tight-knit security detail mark Asa's approach as he sweeps past the entrance, eyes like hot coals beneath a damp dark fringe.

EXT. DELIVERY BAY - NIGHT

PAPPY (50s), a big old-lion in long leather-coat, tosses his 'smoke', RAPS on the steel delivery door with a fist full of rings. No words, greets Asa with a nod, business as usual.

The door CRACKS open. The doorman holds them until he's announced their arrival via a discrete audio earpiece.

Pappy walks Asa into a bright fluorescent space busy with crates, boxes and steel kegs.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK - NIGHT

A party is underway in a split-level subterranean car park space. An expensive crowd, dressed to impress. Drinks, drugs and conversations flow to the rhythm of a high-tempo SOUNDTRACK.

SABINA (20s), provocative attire, offers up vodka shots to the clientele from a waist slung holster. She has the ease and indifference of experience, a fake smile and a catwalk pout.

KAŠKA (18), the new girl, struggles to keep pace, shrugs off an over-friendly pair of hands, tugs at the micro-dress, uncomfortable. Sabina smirks. They speak in Eastern lingo.

KAŠKA
(shouts over the din)
I think I prefer upstairs.

SABINA
This is where the big tippers are,
you wait and see. You get used to
the gropers.

TORO (30s), a bulldog in a suit, snatches Sabina's arm.

TORO
(leers at Kaška)
Who's your friend, Sab?

SABINA
(wriggles free)
She's new, so hands off.

MAXY (30s), management-level muscle, yanks Toro away by the collar.

MAXY
Later, fuck-nuts. The big man
awaits.

Maxy blows Sabina a kiss as they cut a route towards Dragon.

SABINA
Stay away from that prick. He's bad
news.

KAŠKA

Which one?

SABINA

Both. The cute one's Maxy. The animal's Toro.

KAŠKA

Who's the silver-back?

Eyes on Dragon (50s), a stocky silver-haired maniac and the most important man in the room, surrounded by an entourage of faithful hounds, old lions and young goons who hang on his every word.

SABINA

You're kidding, right? That's Dragon. He owns the place.

KAŠKA

The Red Star?

SABINA

The city.

Dragon's cold stare flicks over Kaška and Sabina like a lash.

Fuck!

They turn away. Dragon smirks, strokes a close-cropped beard with a heavily tattooed hand.

Kaška goes back to working the crowd - hot work - Toro's bulldog eyes still on her across the space.

KAŠKA

That guy creeps me out.

SABINA

He's a fucking psycho.

Kaška shivers for effect, steps into Asa's path. They collide. Asa's eyes bore back with brooding intensity.

Kaška flushes as he pushes past.

KAŠKA

(under her breath)

Dick!

SABINA

He's one of the fighters.
They call him, the Gypsy. Cute but keeps to himself.

(MORE)

SABINA (CONT'D)

He might make an exception for a
horny convent girl like you though.

KAŠKA

(scoffs)

Bitch!

SABINA

Come on, you don't want to miss
this.

Sabina pulls Kaška toward the balcony where a crowd muster
for a view.

On the level below, a heaving throng of polished thugs and
tanked-up city boys compete for the attention of over made-up
molls while anticipation mounts around INK (30s), a proto-
male, naked from the waist, his oiled muscular body a canvas
of angry tattoos.

As Asa and Pappy wade through towards the centre lights,
MURMURS of *Gypsy* circulate.

Ink fixes Asa in a grimace as he peels off his coat and
sweater to reveal a lean functional physique. Asa offers a
hand-shake. Ink shoves him away. A hint of a smile brushes
Asa's lips as he slips a gum-shield into his mouth, tows the
line.

All eyes turn to a CHALK BOARD on the back wall where the
bookies scribble the odds, Ink the favourite.

A FEVER of money changes hands.

Dragon watches with a keen eye from the balcony, nods to the
Referee who waves the fight on.

Asa and Ink circle. Ink throws some bombs but Asa, smothers,
pushes off, circles away unscathed, to the SCORN of the
crowd.

Ink smirks - cat and mouse - he knows this routine. He
launches another assault, tries to cut off the space but is
dazzled by Asa's easy footwork.

Frustrated, Ink volleys again but eats a well-timed stretto
of straight shots.

Kaška winces, partially covers her eyes but can't stop
watching.

KAŠKA

This is sick.

Kaška looks for Sabina, finds her close by, locked in a discrete conversation MOS with Maxy.

Sabina tries to break away but Maxy takes her by the back of the neck, talks to her ear, forcefully. She stiffens in pain, reluctantly nods consent. Maxy slips her a small 'baggie' of white powder, blends away. Sabina returns to Kaška's side.

'the fuck was that about?

SABINA
(shakes her head)
Just business.

Sabina bites her nails, zones out on the fight below.

Ink tries to smother and maul Asa at close range but Asa's inside game is a world above. He blasts Ink's torso with hurtful shots, leaves him no place to hide.

A ROAR from the crowd as Ink drops to one knee, breathes hard.

The Referee starts the COUNT but Ink surges to his feet, throws all his chips into a wild right barn-buster...

Asa short-cuts with an inside left uppercut that SLAMS Ink's exposed jaw. Ink loses his legs, drops in slow-mo to the concrete, where he stretches out, blinded by the lights, GASPS for air.

Betting stubs shower over the circle as the Referee thrusts Asa's hand skyward.

Asa looks over the jeering faces with disdain - finds Dragon's demonic stare.

DRAGON
(to a confidant)
What did I tell you? This kid is the fucking business. This is the kid we need for Sailor.

PAPPY
(claps a towel over Asa's shoulder)
Nice work, kid.

Asa shrugs off the towel to take Ink's hand, help him back to standing.

ASA
 (over the racket)
 Fuck 'em, man. They don't have the
 stones to be in here.

Asa touches his forehead to Ink's - respect, before Ink's
 Second draws him away.

SECOND
 That kid's a ringer, fucking pro
 for sure.

PAPPY
 Why don't you stay a while, kid,
 meet some people?

ASA
 People like you?

PAPPY
 Yeah, smart guy. Look at the
 fucking girls in this place. You
 wanna get laid?

ASA
 (dresses)
 Maybe next time.

Pappy shakes his head, shrugs - I give up!

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The doors slide shut on Sabina, Kaška and an overflowing
 wheelie bin. The elevator judders into motion.

Sabina opens the 'baggie' that Maxy slipped her, dips a
 finger, offers it to Kaška. Kaška shakes her head.

SABINA
 Might help you relax a little.

Sabina prods the crucifix around Kaška's neck, smirks.

She checks her look in the mirror-wall, serious suddenly,
 while Kaška fingers the crucifix, self-conscious.

Don't believe what they say about
 this place. You're just another
 Eastern here. Nobody gives a damn.
 Take whatever you can get because
 sooner or later the bubble's gonna
 burst.

The doors open on the upper floor. Sabina exits, leaves the bin to Kaška.

KAŠKA
(to self - facetious)
Good chat.

EXT. THE RED STAR - DELIVERY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The mist has set in, the ordinary world transformed into a labyrinth of magical realism.

Kaška empties the contents of the wheelie-bin into the dumpster opposite while Sabina lights up a cigarette, shivers in the cold.

A black BMW slow rolls through the mist, tinted glass, no lights, bad intentions.

Sabina backs into the shadows as the BMW pulls alongside. STRONG HANDS snatch Kaška into the back, her SCREAM stifled by the closing door. The car RIPS into a rapid acceleration.

Sabina tosses her cigarette, drags the wheelie-bin back inside, hurriedly.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Toro fights to smother Kaška on the back seat while VAL (30s), at the wheel, checks the action in the rear-view, smirks. Glimpses of street-life flash past the tinted glass.

TORO
(enjoying it)
Save your energy, bitch, you're going to need it.

MAXY
Hold her fucking still.

Maxy reaches back from the front seat with a syringe, gropes for Kaška's exposed thigh and plunges the needle home.

Kaška bites down hard on Toro's hand, drives a heel into Val's, thigh. He CURSES, yanks on the wheel. The car banks hard.

VAL
Fuck!

Choppy POV through windscreen of a Taxi appearing out of the mist. The collision tosses the interior, AIRBAGS explode.

Engine HISS, GROANING.

EXT. JUNCTION - NIGHT

The two cars, warped and coupled, FIZZ and flash in the centre of the junction.

The doors of the BMW CRACK open.

Maxy and Val get out, look over the damage.

Toro leans into the window of the Taxi, slams the recovering driver in the mouth before returning to the BMW.

TORO
(pointing)
The girl!

Maxy and Val note Kaška, limping on foot away from the scene. She disappears into the mist

MAXY
(checks his watch)
I don't have time for this shit.

They get in the car.

Engine GROWL as the BMW's tires tear at the tarmac. The two cars wrench apart. A bumper CLATTERS loose.

INT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Asa paces the rat-runs, inky-black reflections in a maze of glass, concrete and brick. An ancient church squeezed between corporate high-rises.

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Kaška stumbles through a crowd of smokers huddled on the sidewalk, steadies herself on a lamp post. Drug-slurred POV. She staggers on, barefoot.

INT/EXT. BMW - NIGHT

The car speeds through the street lights on an empty boulevard. Toro and Maxy scan for movement through the glass.

TORO
Maybe we should call it a day?

MAXY

Wasn't this your fucking idea!

VAL

She's gone, passed out in a drain
somewhere.

Maxy sees something.

MAXY

Stop!

The car breaks. Maxy exits.

TORO

(follows)

Fuck.

Val accelerates into the first left.

EXT. COBBLED JUNCTION - NIGHT

Asa enters a pool of streetlight, slows as Kaška emerges from the fog ahead, stumbles, slides down a lamppost to the ground, head skyward.

He slows, stoops over her, uncommitted, notes her grazed knees, laddered tights, bare feet and bloodied lip.

He stands at the sound of FOOTSTEPS approaching.

MAXY

Back off man, she's with us.

Asa marks Maxy and Toro in his peripheral vision but doesn't turn around.

ASA

She doesn't look so good.

TORO

What's that to you, motherfucker?

Toro takes a handful of Asa's sleeve and eats a snap uppercut in return. He staggers forwards, legless.

Asa twists free as Maxy charges, grapples with him for a BEAT. Toro crashes to the ground at Kaška's feet, out cold.

Asa loses his beanie-hat in the scuffle.

MAXY

I fucking know you...

Asa's head slams into his face, followed by a right kidney shot that sends him writhing breathless to the cobbles.

A LONG BEAT.

Headlights.

The BMW arrives.

Val exits, scans the scene - Toro out cold, Maxy on all-fours, spitting blood.

VAL
What the fuck!

MAXY
(hoarse)
Get me some fucking guys down here,
right now.

Val takes out his mobile, makes a call.

Fucking tooled up!

EXT. VIADUCT - NIGHT

A narrow viaduct cuts through an antique quarter. Asa pauses in the blackness beneath, Kaška unconscious over his shoulder.

Asa checks the street, takes out a key, opens a door in the shadows just beyond.

INT. LIVING SPACE - NIGHT

A dark room, roughly shaped by the weak light through the dusty window.

Asa gently sets Kaška down in a shabby arm chair.

He fumbles in a blackened hearth for a BEAT, sparks a flame that lights a small paper and wood fire. Warm fire-light radiates.

A black cat appears, sniffs around Kaška, MEOWS, brushes Asa's leg.

ASA
I don't know who she is.

Asa drapes a blanket over Kaška, slumps in the hearth, yawns.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Daylight seeps through the mottled curtains.

Kaška wakes with a start in the tatty arm-chair, makes a hasty survey of the dilapidated space:

A fire smoulders in an open hearth below a mantle lined with dusty books. On the bare floorboards lays a bed constructed of wooden pallets. In the other corner, a guitar, a clothes rail. A punch-bag made from a stuffed military kit-bag dangles from an open beam. Dark charcoal sketches and a chalked diary cover the crumbling plaster on the main wall.

Kaška wraps the blanket around herself and heads for the door, unsteady on her feet.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

At the bottom of a dark hallway, a door, SOUNDS behind. Kaška approaches, peers through a crack into...

INT. BATHROOM - KAŠKA POV - DAY

Light through a part-boarded window. Asa rinses under a make-do bucket-shower rigged up to the bath-taps with a pipe. He reacts to the CREAK of the floorboards beyond.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Kaška CURSES, backs away from the door, retraces her steps, finds a door at the end of the hallway, hurriedly fights to open the lock but can't.

Kaška recoils as Asa appears behind her, wet still, towel around his waist.

Asa reaches past Kaška, unlatches the door. Daylight seeps into a stairwell through broken roof-tiles above. Kaška backs out of the door, stumbles on her hurried descent.

Asa closes the door behind her.

ASA
(hushed tones - to self)
Fuck you too.

EXT. THE SQUAT - DAY

Kaška steps out from the almost invisible doorway - black against a mossy brick wall. The door CLICK-LOCKS behind her.

The city beyond and above is shrouded in thick dreamy mist. Passersby emerge like apparitions.

An old woman walks her poodle, looks Kaška up and down, disapprovingly.

Kaška looks down at her feet, bare but for laddered tights. The cold hits her. She folds her arms, walks.

EXT. MARKET STREETS - DAY

Within a few twists and turns Kaška is among the BUSTLE of a busy vintage market.

INT. RUN-DOWN PUBLIC TOILET - DAY

Kaška shivers hard, checks her look in the scratched mirror.

She washes the streaks from her face, the mud from her hands, finds a hair-band on the floor, ties up her hair.

INT. BASEMENT BOXING GYM - DAY

A converted basement warehouse hosts a back-to-basics boxing gym. Fighters spar beneath the electric lights as their respective coaches study the action and confer in hushed tones MOS. A big gas heater churns like a jet-engine in the corner.

Pappy watches from the shadows, distracted by the sight of a business class Volvo slowing outside the street-level window. He CURSES under his breath.

EXT. BASEMENT BOXING GYM - DAY

Asa rounds the corner, stops dead and hugs the shadows. Ahead, Pappy emerges onto the sidewalk, cold-greets Maxy and assorted Goons as they spill from the business class Volvo.

The discussion, MOS, quickly becomes heated with some pushing and posturing.

Maxy ushers his Goons back towards the car, gestures - call me - to Pappy before the car RIPS into traffic and away.

Pappy spits, goes back inside.

INT. DARK ENTRANCE FOYER - DAY

Pappy starts at the sight of a figure framed in the darkness.

ASA
(steps forward)
Easy, pops.

PAPPY
Took you for an Eastern.
Motherfuckers! The fuck have you
gotten yourself into, kid?

EXT. BASEMENT BOXING GYM - DAY

Pappy and Asa huddle inside the recessed doorway, eyes on the street. Pappy smokes, twitchy.

ASA
So, what now, I can't fight?

PAPPY
Dragon has a hard-on for you, kid,
but you need to make amends - hand
over this girl.

ASA
Girl's gone.

PAPPY
So find her or hope they do.
You heard of a guy named, Sailor?

Asa shrugs - maybe.

That's a big money fight, the
biggest fight out there. Don't let
the dust settle on this.

They shake hands. Pappy goes back inside.

Asa watches the street for a BEAT, thinking fast.

EXT. SHABBY APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A narrow shabby apartment building squeezed between other narrow shabby apartment buildings. Kaška keys in the digital access code and enters.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Junk-mail spills from rows of mailboxes onto the worn carpet. Kaška finds the elevator out of service so takes the stairs.

INT. TOP FLOOR - DAY

Kaška takes the dingy corridor to Apartment 39, keys in the numerical lock.

INT. APARTMENT 39 - DAY

The door opens into a dull living space, messy with magazines, an old TV, overflowing ash tray on a scratched coffee table.

Sabina, slouched into a worn armchair, headphones on, stops texting, stands, visibly shocked as Kaška enters, goes straight to her room.

SABINA

Kaška?

Kaška SLAMS the door behind her. Sabina drags at her hair, stressed.

INT. KAŠKA'S ROOM - DAY

Kaška takes in the scene at a pace - the room has been turned upside down in a hurry, clothes, trinkets, books, cosmetics are strewn over the floor and the bed.

Kaška drops to her knees, reaches under the mattress for something which she doesn't find. She lifts the mattress properly...nothing.

She CURSES, breathless panic, hears MUMBLED talk from the living room.

INT. APARTMENT 39 - DAY

As Kaška rounds the corner into the living space, Sabina lowers her mobile to her side.

KAŠKA

Where are my things?

SABINA

What things?

KAŠKA
My passport, my papers, my money?

SABINA
Just calm down.

Kaška slaps her, hard, snatches the phone from her hand
throws it across the room.

KAŠKA
Where are my things, Sabina?

SABINA
I told you, I don't...

Kaška slaps Sabina again.

I just did what I was told.

Sabina drops to her knees and sobs.

You do what you're told and you
don't ask questions. That's how it
is.

INT. KAŠKA'S ROOM - DAY

Kaška hurriedly dresses in some jeans, a top, pushes her feet
into some pumps. She throws a few things into a shoulder bag
and exits.

INT. APARTMENT 39 - DAY

Sabina, still slumped on the floor, stares at her hands as
Kaška exits.

SABINA
(a whisper)
I'm sorry.

INT. TOP FLOOR - DAY

Kaška slumps against the wall for a BEAT, panic, wipes the
tears from her cheek.

EXT. SHABBY APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Kaška exits, quickly dives for cover as a blue Mercedes SKIDS
to the curb outside the apartment. A pair of Thugs enter the
building.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

An overrun, undermanned police station, reception rooms heaving with the disgruntled, impatient and half-asleep.

In adjacent anti-rooms, Asa and Kaška both wait for their slots, unknown to each other. Kaška struggles to complete a lengthy witness statement form.

INT. BUSY CORRIDOR - DAY

Asa and COP 1 (40s) talk in hushed tones pressed between a swinging door and a photocopier.

COP 1

I'm sorry, I've got nothing for you. She's not in the system but that's not surprising, but hey, sometimes, no news is good news. Best thing you can do is go home, wait for a call, hope things work themselves out.

Cop 1 slaps Asa's arm, takes a call that burning a hole in his pocket, waves his ID card in front of a digital lock and disappears through a white door marked - *no unauthorised personnel*.

Asa exits, demoralised, steps aside for COP 2 (30s), female, and Kaška coming through the door. They don't see each other.

Cop 2 and Kaška walk and talk.

COP 2

I'm going to be honest, we'll pursue this but don't expect much. This is an industry and the people who run it have all the cards. Sounds like you've been luckier than most, this guy, whoever he was, may well have saved your life.

Cop 2 pauses by the digital lock.

COP 2 (CONT'D)

Take this.

(hands Kaška a card)

It's no palace but it's a roof over your head and a hot meal.

Kaška looks over the card, downcast.

And this one's mine. Stay safe.

(MORE)

COP 2 (CONT'D)

I wish there was more I could do
for you but this problem is out of
control at the moment. We're not
even seeing the tip of the iceberg.

Cop 2 swipes her card and disappears through the white door.
Kaška stares at the door for a BEAT.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Kaška exits. The wind hits her hard, chills her to the bone.

INT. PERIOD STONE CHURCH - DAY

Damp and disheveled, Kaška shelters in the doorway for a
BEAT, shakes the rain off, before she enters the nave.

Candles flicker. Weak light through stained-glass.

Kaška finds a pew in the shadows. She sits, hugs her knees,
eyes moistening.

FIZZ (O.S.)
(Eastern lingo)
New in town?

FIZZ (18), heroine chic, appears at Kaška's side.

I'm Fizz. Come here to get warm
mostly.

Fizz offers Kaška gum. Kaška shakes her head.

Haven't seen you around before.
Fresh off the boat? Look like it.
(strokes Kaška's hair)
You don't say much. Cat got your
tongue.

KAŠKA
(uncomfortable)
Whatever it is you want, I'm not
interested.

Fizz glares back for a silent BEAT.

FIZZ
You think you're better than me,
Princess?

Fizz pokes a short blade at Kaška.

KAŠKA
No, I didn't mean...

An old parishioner appears to collect hymn books. Fizz conceals the blade.

FIZZ
(hushed tones)
I see you on my patch again and
I'll fix your pretty face.

Fizz takes off.

Kaška breathes again, feels for the crucifix at her neck with shaky hands.

EXT. THE SQUAT - DUSK

Kaška slows outside the squat, struggles to find the door in the shadows, looks for a handle but doesn't find one, presses her forehead to the metal door, nothing.

She paces, waits.

Asa rounds the corner, sees Kaška slumped outside the door and doubles back.

INT. PHONE-BOOTH - DUSK

Asa enters a street-side phone-booth, makes a call, watches the street through the glass as the phone PURRS.

The call connects.

PAPPY
(voice on the line)
Pappy, what d'you know?

Asa hesitates. He replaces the receiver, cuts off the VOICE on the line, CURSES to himself.

EXT. THE SQUAT - NIGHT

Kaška emerges from the shadows, shivers, as Asa approaches, stony-faced.

EXT. FOOD STALL - NIGHT

Beneath the shelter of a flimsy awning, close to an overhead heater, Asa watches the rain bounce off the neon-streaked pavement, while Kaška eats a messy handful of flatbread and stew, ravenous.

Kaška looks up from the food to find Asa's eyes on her. She wipes her mouth, self-conscious.

KAŠKA

I don't think I've ever been so hungry in all my life.

ASA

Get used to it.

KAŠKA

I'm Kaška, by the way.

No response.

At the Red Star they called you, Gypsy.

ASA

Last thing I need is those people knowing who I am.

KAŠKA

Makes sense. I've been trying to fill in the blanks from last night.

ASA

Friends got a little rough, did they?

KAŠKA

(scoffs)

Friends? That's funny.

Kaška's eyes narrow - pricked.

Cops said you probably saved my life. Not that you care.

ASA

(smirks)

Your chastity maybe.

KAŠKA

Glad this amuses you so much. I'm struggling to see the funny side.

No response.

I know how it must have looked but
I'm not some Red Star good time
girl, you know?

ASA

Good for you.
You done?

Asa steps out from the awning, into the rain, heads off.

KAŠKA

I guess so.
(hushed tones)
Mu-dak!

Kaška dumps her left-overs in the trash, follows, washes her hands in the rain.

EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

A glass-domed building surrounded by a broad awning, lined with tobacconists, fried-food and cheap mobile phone outlets.

Junkies cluster in the doorways opposite. Teenage working-girls pout on the curb in the street-light, over-made-up faces, distant eyes, drug-hollowed cheeks.

KAŠKA

Nice neighbourhood.

EXT. WOMEN'S REFUGE - NIGHT

A tired period facade hedged between tired offices and low budget hotels. Asa steers Kaška through a pack of smokers toward the entrance.

KAŠKA

(pauses)
What's this?

ASA

A bed for the night, hot food.

Kaška peers through the security glass into a dimly lit reception where a rough pack of street-wise women squabble and jostle.

Asa opens the door, unleashes the SOUNDS of the fight within. Kaška backs away.

KAŠKA

I don't think so.

ASA

No money, no friends, what else you gonna do?

(catches her arm - takes her aside)

I don't have time to baby-sit some kid.

KAŠKA

Kid, right. What are you, twenty-one? I can look after myself.

ASA

So I see.

KAŠKA

(shrugs off Asa's grip)

Thanks for the food. I appreciate it.

Their eyes lock for a BEAT. Kaška's bravado partially masks the fear in her eyes, her quivering lip. Asa almost folds.

ASA

(hands up - surrender)

Okay, it's your life, kid, good luck to you.

Asa backs away, turns, moves on.

Kaška watches Asa go, angry still for a BEAT. She swallows hard, deflated.

KAŠKA

Fuck!

The altercation erupts from the interior and spills out onto the street as a full-bloodied street fight.

EXT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

Asa paces through the flashing blue-light and siren WAIL of a passing police car, slows to speak MOS to a bus station security guard.

At a discrete distance behind, Kaška hugs the shadows, watches Asa show the security guard what looks to be a passport photograph. The security guard takes a good long look, shrugs, shakes his head. They exchange a few more words before Asa moves on.

Kaška hovers for a BEAT and follows.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

A never-ending stream of taxis cut through the bright haze of shopfronts, fluorescent and neon lights rebound on the glistening tarmac.

INT. UNDERGROUND STATION - NIGHT

Asa vaults the barrier in one fluid motion.

A BEAT behind, Kaška pauses, CURSES, lifts herself over, conscious of the disapproving glances.

She rounds the corner just in time to beat the train doors.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - NIGHT

A packed carriage. Kaška looks for and finds Asa's profile at the far end of the carriage. She struggles to stay standing with the motion of the train.

After a rush of motion, the train slows towards the next stop. A collective GROAN rises from the carriage at the sight of a cluster of rail officials and a cop waiting on the approaching platform - ticket check! The doors slide open, pandemonium ensues.

INT. PLATFORM - NIGHT

Kaška is dragged with the wave of alighting passengers out onto the platform towards the dragnet. She sees an opening and lunges through the gap.

EXT. MARKET STREETS - NIGHT

Vibrant colours and flavours, laughter, MUSIC, hot lights, heated bartering in a mix of LANGUAGES, money changing hands.

Asa eyes a heavy-set market Honcho ahead. The Honcho banter with the traders on his rounds, helps himself to a sugared cake, takes a payment of some nature, slots the cash into a fat wallet that he slips into his back pocket.

An ARGUMENT between an old woman and delivery rider draws attention, provides Asa with enough distraction to swoop in for the Honcho's fat wallet. He makes a clean 'snatch' and getaway, cuts into an alley ahead.

Kaška fights hard to press through, follows.

INT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Kaška steps into the alley and is slammed hard into the dripping stone wall, Asa's forearm wedged under her chin.

ASA

The fuck do you want?

Asa drops her. She slides down the wall, hands to her throat, breathes hard.

You been on me since the refuge?

KAŠKA

It's a free country.

ASA

Of course it is.

KAŠKA

You stole that wallet, didn't you?

ASA

That's right. Last night didn't go down too well with our mutual friends which leaves me pretty much high and dry. You think I like snatching fucking wallets? Know what last night cost me, saving your ungrateful ass? No more fights. No fights, no money.

KAŠKA

I saved you some brain cells, at least.

ASA

That smart mouth's not doing you any favours.

KAŠKA

Neither are you. What's the point in saving someone just to throw them back to the wolves?

Asa shakes his head, CURSES.

ASA

Want my help?

He tosses the wallet into Kaška's lap.

ASA (CONT'D)

Take it. If you're smart, you'll
buy a ticket back to where you came
from. Just leave me the fuck alone.

Asa moves on down the alley.

Kaška stands, brushes herself down.

KAŠKA

(hushed tones)

With pleasure, shit-head!

She opens the wallet, checks the thick spread of notes,
smirks, turns towards the exit but comes face to face with
the Honcho who glares down at the wallet in her hands.

It's not what you think.

The Honcho tries to drag Kaška back into the street, makes a
big NOISE in the common tongue. Kaška shoots a knee into his
groin, crumples him to the cobbles and runs but is chased
down by a pack of traders who have flocked to the scene.

Asa burst into the fray, snatches Kaška's wrist, yanks her
behind him. Hands grab at their clothes, FISTS and FEET
flail.

Asa knocks a Trader down, uses a dumpster to slow their
advance, drags Kaška after him but more Traders flock to the
fight with bats and paring knives.

A frenzied fight ensues. Asa catches a rolling pin in the
face, a heavy kick to the ribs. Blood in his eyes, he
struggles to see but fights on.

Kaška tosses the wallet full of cash into the air. Notes blow
through the electric lights. A frantic cash grab follows.
Kaška claws a note from the wet cobbles before Asa drags her
away.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - TOILET - NIGHT

Kaška pushes through a hovering pack of youths into the tiny
metallic space, washes the blood from her hands, grabs a wad
of paper towels and exits.

EXT. RECESSED DOORWAY - NIGHT

Kaška pushes the wad of towels into Asa's bloody hand. He
presses the towels to his gaping brow.

KAŠKA

We should go to the hospital.

Asa tries to get himself upright but is in a bad way. Kaška takes his arm.

ASA

(yanks it free)

'the fuck off me.

EXT. BACK STREETS - NIGHT

Kaška and Asa struggle through the rain. Asa spits blood into the gutter.

Occasional traffic, passersby. A cop car in the near distance. Asa pushes Kaška into the shadows until the car passes. They move on.

EXT. THE SQUAT - NIGHT

Asa slumps, head in hands, on the street while Kaška fumbles with the key.

ASA

Come on! Come on!

KAŠKA

I'm trying. Fuck you.

She eventually unlocks the door.

INT. LIVING SPACE - NIGHT

Asa crawls into his pallet-bed fully clothed.

ASA

Light the fire.

KAŠKA

Yes sir!

Kaška scrambles around in the dark until she finds matches. She struggles for a few BEATS to light a fire.

Asa pulls the blanket clumsily over himself. Kaška watches the flames build, rakes at her hair.

The cat appears from the dark. Kaška starts, CURSES.

INT. LIVING SPACE - LATER

Kaška wakes in the armchair to the SOUND of vomiting.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Kaška finds Asa naked from the waist, hunched over the toilet bowl, hair and face glistening damp.

KAŠKA

Jesus! You need a doctor.

ASA

I don't need a doctor. I need you
to leave me the fuck alone!

Asa waves her away, vomits again.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

The first grey daylight through the curtains. Kaška wakes in the armchair, checks Asa. He sleeps, uneasily, dark blood smears his face with clotting around his eye.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Kaška washes her face quickly, notices the blood smears on the sink. She checks her reflection in the mirror - no answers there. She soaks a rag in water.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Kaška uses the rag to clean the blood from Asa's eye, face, hands. Her breath freezes on the air while she works.

She revives the dying embers, watches the fire build, wrapped in a blanket. A tin cup steams on the hearth.

The cat noses at her, MEOWS.

KAŠKA

Me too.

Kaška adds a sugar sachet to the water and dips a finger, tentative, cool enough. Kaška puts the cup to Asa's lips and tips a little liquid into his mouth which sets him COUGHING.

Kaška paces, surveys the drawings on the wall - a prominent charcoal portrait of a young woman (Jess) on the crumbling plaster, the chalked training diary marked for rounds per day at various exercises, fight days etc, the books on the mantle.

She checks the corner clothes rail, finds an over-sized sweater.

She finds the note in her pocket that she salvaged from the alley-way cash grab.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Kaška braves the bucket shower, GASPS as the freezing water pours down over her, soaps her body frantically.

EXT. THE SQUAT - DAY

Kaška exits, checks the street, folds her arms as the wind bullies through her clothes.

EXT. UNIVERSITY STREETS - DAY

Student-land. Retro-styled happy, smiling young people with foppish hair and heavy satchels. Kaška checks notice-boards and ads in shop windows.

EXT/INT. STUDENT BAR - POV THROUGH GLASS - DAY

Kaška speaks MOS with the bar tender. He shakes his head, apologies. Kaška exits, disappointed.

EXT/INT. PHONE BOOTH - DUSK

Kaška checks a note scribbled on paper, dials a number, waits. She speaks MOS, jovial but hangs up after a LONG BEAT, visibly disappointed.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Kaška walks the drizzle-wet sidewalk, fragile, dejected, swims against the tide of corporate suits and umbrellas, is splashed by a passing delivery van, almost hit by a bicycle courier.

INT. LIVING SPACE - NIGHT

Kaška stoops in the hearth, shivers, feeds screwed up newspaper to the fire. The flames illuminate Asa's face, contorted in his fitful sleep.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa wakes with a pained GROAN, eyes sensitive to the weak light. He crawls slowly from his cocoon of blankets, past the glowing fire. His fingers, bandaged with gauze, paw at the wound above his eye, patched with butterfly stitches.

After a bout of COUGHING, Asa uses the armchair to labour to his feet, pain in his right side.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Asa scoops water into his mouth, thirsty. He checks his look in the mirror, his patched eye, heavy stubble. He lifts his top with difficulty to view the patches of bruising and knitted scratches.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa re-enters to find Kaška, still rain-damp, framed in the window light.

ASA

Thought you'd have taken off by now?

KAŠKA

Someone had to make sure you didn't die in your sleep.

ASA

If only.
(holds up his patched fingers)
Your handiwork?

KAŠKA

It's broken, I think.

ASA

How long was I out?

KAŠKA

A few days.

Asa CRACKS his neck, tries to touch his toes, gives up.

Probably a bad concussion.

ASA

What are you, a fucking doctor?

KAŠKA

Hardly.

Asa scoops up his coat from the back of the chair, drags it over his shoulders, back turned to Kaška now.

ASA

So, what did I miss?

KAŠKA

I don't know if you usually feed the cat. She looked pretty hungry.

ASA

The cat is a she, explains a few things?

KAŠKA

What, why she doesn't like you?

Asa notices his pocket is ripped half open, CURSES, tugs at it. He slow-rummages in a tin box on the mantel and finds a needle and thread. He perches on the armchair, struggles to thread the needle.

Here, let me.

(takes the needle and thread from Asa.)

Take off your coat.

Asa looks Kaška in the eye for a confrontational BEAT, takes off the coat, with difficulty.

Sit down before you fall down.

ASA

I'm fine.

KAŠKA

Sure you are.

Asa squats, painfully, over the hearth while Kaška stitches the coat pocket, fast work.

So, how long have you been here?

ASA

Too long.

KAŠKA

What's with all the books, you like to read?

ASA

They burn well.

KAŠKA

You're full of shit.
(gestures to the guitar in
the corner)
D'you play, the guitar?

ASA

No. D'you?

KAŠKA

Why d'you have a guitar then?

ASA

I like to look at it.

KAŠKA

What's the calendar for?

ASA

It's a training schedule. I have to hit forty rounds a day to stay on track. Fuck all chance of that now.

KAŠKA

On track for what?

ASA

This is a profession for me.

KAŠKA

Strange profession.

ASA

Yeah, what d'you do?

KAŠKA

I'm a dancer, at least, that's what I trained for.

ASA

Just what this town needs, another stripper.

KAŠKA

How did I know you were going to say that? Mu-dak.

(nods to Jess's charcoal portrait on the plaster)

Who's the girl? She why you're here?

ASA

That's my business.

KAŠKA

Touchy.

ASA

(irritated)

D'you always talk this much?

KAŠKA

Are you always so obnoxious?

ASA

Always.

KAŠKA

You think I'd be here, if I had a choice?

ASA

Why is that my problem?

KAŠKA

I just need a few days. You look like you could use a little help anyway.

ASA

With what, feeding the cat?

KAŠKA

Stitching coats, maybe.

Kaška throws the coat at him, angry. Asa checks the workmanship on the pocket, pulls it over his shoulders.

Kaška paces to the window, looks over the rooftops melancholy.

ASA

We can watch each other starve to death, how does that sound, or freeze, whichever comes first?

KAŠKA

I don't know what to call you.

ASA

Call me whatever you like.
Anything to eat around here?

KAŠKA

Some cold porridge in the pan.

ASA

Let the good times roll.

Asa spoons up a mouthful of porridge from the pan in the hearth, watches Kaška for a BEAT, closes his eyes.

INT. THE SQUAT - PRE-DAWN

Asa wakes, rolls from the blankets, drags himself to standing, shuffles past the embers of the fire and Kaška asleep in the armchair.

He peeps out through the curtains at the still-dark horizon, pain in his side bothers him.

EXT. THE SQUAT - DAWN

Asa, dressed in a blue boiler-suit, pulls on a slim-line hat that covers his ears, breath freezing, and jogs, uncomfortably, out into the misty blue-black dawn.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAWN

Asa builds into a slow running rhythm through the amber street light. Heavy boots drag on the tarmac. Delivery trucks and street cleaning vehicles THUNDER past.

INT. ROOF-TOP CAR PARK - DAWN

An empty car park space surrounded by corporate high-rises of mirrored glass, on fire in the first embers of dawn light.

Asa shadow boxes at a moderate pace, the puddles of sitting water beneath ablaze. His focus and expertise tell of a lifetime of consolidated routine but his flow is interrupted by the pain in his side. He CURSES, slows to a stop, breathes out the violence as he paces back and forth.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAWN

Rain DRUMS on the fire escapes above. Asa rummages through a dumpster, emerges with a handful of sealed foods which he looks through in the weak light. He pockets some granola bars, tears into some chopped fruit, smells it before scooping it into his mouth with his fingers.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Kaška wakes to the sight of Asa stooped in the hearth holding a pan over the flames of the fire.

KAŠKA

What's that smell?

ASA

Soup.

KAŠKA

No, something else.

ASA

Hard work and dedication.

Asa gestures to his boiler suit which hangs, steaming, from a rigged up drying rail on the other side of the hearth.

KAŠKA

(holds her nose for
effect)

What a way to start the day.

ASA

Welcome to the gutter.

KAŠKA

Shouldn't you be resting, until
you're healed up.

ASA

(gestures to the soup)
You want some?

KAŠKA

You make it?

ASA

Came out of the trash.

KAŠKA

Trash soup, how appetising.

Kaška pulls the blanket over her head.

EXT. BOHO QUARTER - DAY

Reclaimed industrial architecture, trendy unmarked cafes, studios, fire-escape apartments. Small classic sporty cars parked among rows of bicycles and Vespas.

Kaška checks a street name against a scribbled note in her hand.

INT. SERVICED APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Kaška pushes inside the minimalist interior, clean lines, upmarket feel, and props up the reception desk.

MARGO (20s), well-groomed corporate, emerges from the interior with a polite smile.

MARGO
(Eastern accent)
Good morning.

KAŠKA
Margo?
(Eastern lingo)
We spoke on the phone about a job.

MARGO
Kaška?
(handshake)
Get you a coffee?

KAŠKA
Coffee would be great.

MARGO
Give me a minute, then I'll show
you around.
(disappears in the back
for a beat)
So, tell me a little about
yourself.

A KNOCK on the glass interrupts the conversation. A face through the tinted window - Maxy. Kaška looks away quickly.

MARGO (CONT'D)
(stiffening)
Excuse me a moment.

Margo takes an envelope from under the reception, opens the door, hands the envelope to Maxy, who kisses her hand like a gentleman before he drives away.

Margo turns her attentions back to Kaška.

Sorry about that. The owner.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Kaška slumps against a damp alley wall and takes long calming breaths, head in hands for a LONG BEAT.

On the street opposite, a trio of young women pass chatting MOS, dressed for dance-type exercise. Kaška's eyes follow them with interest.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa taps at the punchbag, frustrated by his inability to commit with his broken finger, the pain in his side.

He stretches, touches his toes, steps away from the bag, hands on hips, eyes on the floor, long calming breaths. His eyes settle on the mantle, the row of dusty books. He sweeps at his hair, CURSES.

EXT. RED BRICK STUDIO - DAY

Kaška slows at the entrance of a red-brick studio at a discrete interval behind the trio.

INT. RED BRICK STUDIO - DAY

Kaška peers through a small interior window into a dance studio where a dance company are mid-rehearsal, choppy innovative choreography.

ADMINISTRATOR

(soft-voice)

Can I help you?

Kaška turns to find a young ADMINISTRATOR (20s) at her shoulder.

KAŠKA

The choreography's amazing.

ADMINISTRATOR

Yes, it's going to be a great show.
Do you dance? We get a lot of girls
through from the East.

Kaška's eyes flash - defensive.

Still a strong culture there.

KAŠKA

Yes, there is.

ADMINISTRATOR

These are our sessions.

(hands Kaška a flyer)

Best to book in advance. It's very competitive.

Kaška takes the flyer with a smile.

EXT. RED BRICK STUDIO - DAY

Kaška exits into the rain, melancholy.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

The last of the light through the curtains.

Asa, sat in the hearth, pockets the book he's reading at the SOUND of the main door. Kaška enters a BEAT after, damp and disheveled. She slumps in the armchair, wraps herself in a blanket.

ASA

Tough day at the office?

KAŠKA

What d'you care?

ASA

I don't.

Kaška shivers. Asa labours to his feet, grabs a duffel-coat from the clothes rail.

Put this on!

KAŠKA

It's not my size.

(reads the name tag)

Which school boy did you steal this from?

Kaška pulls on the duffel-coat.

Got any of that soup left?

ASA
If I had, I'd have eaten it.

KAŠKA
Such a gentleman.

ASA
Every man for himself.

KAŠKA
I'm not a man.

EXT. BUSY COMMERCIAL STREETS - NIGHT

Heavy rainfall through the stationary headlights of gridlocked traffic. Asa and Kaška wade down-stream against the vast commuter migration, hug the awnings for shelter.

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

Kaška and Asa shake off the rainfall outside the art-deco exterior of a grand department store. Kaška peers in through the glass at the exquisite window display.

ASA
Come on.

Asa pulls on the heavy ornate door handle, winces a little with the pain.

KAŠKA
Go inside?
(gestures to her attire)
Like this?

ASA
Come on. That look is big this season.

KAŠKA
Seriously?

ASA
Fuck no!
(smirks)
You hungry or not?

Asa enters. Kaška hesitates, CURSES, follows.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE GROUND - NIGHT

An opulent foyer leading to a dramatic central atrium. Kaška drifts inside, wide-eyed, but shrinks under the disapproving gaze of the over-groomed cosmetic girls.

ASA
(takes Kaška's arm)
Come on.

Asa leads Kaška right up to the counter, brazen.

Ladies.

Asa thrusts his arm under the nose of a superior older woman who reluctantly sprays his wrist with a high-end male fragrance. Asa smiles, moves on.

KAŠKA
Why bother?

ASA
To piss them off.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE FASHIONS - NIGHT

Asa browses fashions, tries on an expensive coat, a hat, scarf, models in front of the mirrors, all under the close gaze of the roving security staff. Kaška shakes her head, self-conscious.

ASA
Here, try this.

Asa hands Kaška a beanie hat. She refuses, he insists.

KAŠKA
Stupid.

Kaška pulls on the hat, looks at herself in the mirror, slumps.

Look at the state of me.

She pulls off the hat, hands it back to Asa.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Asa and Kaška ride the glass elevator down on opposite sides of the space, like strangers.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE FOOD HALL - NIGHT

They step out into a lavish food hall stocked with foods both familiar and exotic. The aisles and counters buzz with shoppers, sweetened by a bounty of free samples on offer at every turn - chocolates, cheeses, breads, canapes, sweet wines, hors d'oeuvres.

ASA

Hope you brought your appetite.

Kaška gawks, open-mouthed.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Asa and Kaška exit the department store, Kaška lucid and kinetic.

KAŠKA

I think I'm drunk.

They move on into a blast of icy wind - Kaška's high spirits wither.

Fuck! Not drunk enough.

ASA

Here.

Asa hands her the beanie hat that she tried on.

KAŠKA

You didn't?

Kaška checks back over her shoulder, pulls the hat on.

They cross through a Chinese-themed block with traditional street art, dragon motifs, through narrow streets where the awnings almost meet.

Asa's eyes linger on a doorway, where a working-girl, in a micro-skirt and monster heels smokes in the neon haze.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)

See something you like?

Asa scowls, not amused.

Kaška looks back at the girl, hollow haunting eyes - a look of Jess.

EXT. COMMERCIAL SQUARE - NIGHT

Kaška follows Asa into the crowd. They slowly circle an old-world CLOWN (60s), who mimes a melancholy tale of unrequited love with a wooden doll prop. Kaška notes the expectant audience, hung on every gesture, eager with tension.

KAŠKA

That guy's amazing.

After the crescendo, the Clown circles with his hat, winks at Asa as he passes.

Know him?

ASA

We've crossed paths.

KAŠKA

Okay, man of mystery.

ASA

He's a drunk.

KAŠKA

Inspiring.

ASA

Nobody's perfect.

KAŠKA

You have such a depressing outlook.

ASA

It's a gift.

Asa drifts away into the crowd. Kaška hesitates for a BEAT, watches the clown pack up his battered suitcase.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Rain DRUMS against the window, DRIPS from the ceiling into a copper pot.

Asa limbers up, pain in his side still, nudges at the punchbag with his head, shoulders, elbows, gently popping it with his fists, walking through the movements, smothering - frustrated.

Kaška sits in the armchair, stirs into the fire.

ASA

No answers in there.

KAŠKA

You sure?

Asa clutches the punchbag, leans against it like lover, massages his still bandaged fingers.

ASA

I never found any.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Kaška peers into a flat paved atrium, roofed with glass, surrounded on three sides by high dark stone facades. She enters, cautiously.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa lifts his pallet bed against the wall. He removes a loose floorboard and slides out a tin box. He takes out a silver watch from a small bundle of effects.

EXT. ATRIUM - DAY

A locked entrance to a nightclub stands at the far side of the atrium, fluorescent lights over the door and two potted trees on either side.

Kaška looks up through the rain-splattered glass. She is alone.

She paces to the centre of the atrium, takes a breath and extends into a balletic form. She hesitates, checks her surroundings again - still alone. She repeats the movement. Stretches, walks, flicks, limbers into a series of positions, turns, spins and extensions that come with relative ease and precision.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Asa puts a coin in the slot, dials. The phone PURRS. He straightens as the call connects. Asa and Pappy speak on the telephone.

PAPPY

What d'you know?

ASA

It's me.

PAPPY
You find the girl?

ASA
I put her on a bus a few days ago.
She's long gone.

A silent BEAT.

PAPPY
Then it's your debt, kid, and
you've got to work it off. That's
the way they'll see it.

ASA
They don't own me.

PAPPY
They own all of us, one way or
another.

Asa ends the call, watches street life through the glass for
a BEAT, exits.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DUSK

Kaška enters to find Asa laid on his back in front of the
fire.

KAŠKA
You alive?

ASA
Undecided.

He rolls over slowly, painfully, rises to standing.

KAŠKA
You hungry?

Kaška lays a handful of coins on the table, triumphantly.

ASA
You rob an old lady's purse or
something?

KAŠKA
I earned it.

ASA

(raises an eyebrow)

I thought you'd have got more for that kind of thing, a little more at least.

KAŠKA

Zho-pa!

(gestures - fellatio)

I bet you're a big favourite with the old men.

Kaška double pirouettes slowly and gracefully.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)

I danced for it, right there in street. If an old drunk can do it, so can I.

ASA

Can't keep a good man down.

KAŠKA

I'm a woman, in case you haven't noticed. Come on, let's eat, my treat.

ASA

Save your riches. I pay me own way.

KAŠKA

I thought you were penniless?

ASA

I've got a little stashed for emergencies.

KAŠKA

This isn't an emergency. What, are you too proud?

ASA

Must be.

KAŠKA

Forget I asked!

Kaška scrapes the money off the table, exits, angry.

ASA

Suit yourself.

EXT. BASEMENT BOXING GYM - DAWN

Asa jogs the dawn streets, slows outside the basement boxing gym, peeps in through the window at fighters working. The hint of an inward glance - envy - as he moves on.

EXT. RIVER BRIDGE - NIGHT

A busy well-lit walkway across the broad black river, lined with artisan stalls. In the b.g., a busker pumps out ACCORDION favourites.

Kaška stops in the thick of human traffic, takes a tweed flat-cap from her pocket, drops it on the ground. She peels back her hood and unbuttons the coat, takes up a poised stance, breathes. Passersby view her with curious, puzzled glances.

After a still BEAT, she extends slowly and gracefully into a fluid balletic routine that flows in one continuous movement, never hurried, always measured. A small crowd gather to watch.

At the conclusion of her dance, Kaška takes a bow. The crowd give a small APPLAUSE and toss coins into the flat cap.

Kaška breathes. A slow measured CLAP persists. Kaška turns to find Asa in the dwindling crowd.

KAŠKA

Well?

ASA

Not bad.

KAŠKA

Like you could do any better.

Asa hesitates, pensive.

ASA

But...how long before one of your Eastern friends sees your little performance out here?

Kaška glares at Asa.

You think that's over? It's not over.

KAŠKA

How did I know you'd find some way
to shit on it. You suck the
positivity out of everything.

ASA

It's not a criticism.

KAŠKA

The fuck it's not!

Kaška hurls the handful of coins at the ground and storms
away.

Asa shrugs, stoops painfully to pick up the coins.

EXT. COMMERCIAL SQUARE - NIGHT

Asa slows to watch the old Clown perform his routine.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa wakes, winces with pain as he turns towards the window
light. He starts as Kaška appears from the white blindness
wearing a Venetian swan mask. Asa CURSES.

KAŠKA

What d'you think?

Kaška removes the Venetian mask, runs her hands through a
head of hastily boy-cut hair.

ASA

Different.

KAŠKA

That's the idea. Don't want my
Eastern friends to recognise me, do
I?

Asa painfully drags himself to sitting while Kaška
pirouettes, empowered.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Asa takes a pee, notes the sink is thick with Kaška's once
long hair. He picks up a lock, scowls, drops it into the
toilet.

EXT. URBAN MALL - NIGHT

A mall of youth-brand retailers and fast food restaurants popular with teenagers who group inside and out in large numbers. Asa hovers on the periphery, searches faces.

EXT/INT. JUNK SHOP - NIGHT

A narrow cobbled street of boutique shopfronts. Asa shelters beneath an awning, watches the street beyond, notices a junk shop opposite, crosses to peer in through the window, enters.

Through the glass we watch Asa rummage through a basket of electrical items, coils of wire, obsolete tech from the last century. He finds a tape deck, plays with it.

EXT. RIVER BRIDGE - NIGHT

Kaška dances in the swan mask, for a small crowd. The tinny SOUND of the tape-deck plays classic melodies in the b.g..

Asa, perched close by, watches, disinterested - passing faces, the steady but mediocre stream of coins landing in the flat-cap.

Kaška ends the dance, takes her bow to a modest APPLAUSE.

She notes Asa's distant glance as the crowd disperse.

EXT. TAKE-OUT - NIGHT

Asa and Kaška eat steaming hot food and people watch. Rain drips off the awning above, glistens in the haze of electric light. In a shop window opposite a large screen TV plays highlights from a title fight.

KAŠKA

What did you think of the dance?
It was pretty flat, huh?

Asa shrugs.

Pretend you give a shit.

ASA

You gotta find a way to make it
work or...
(gestures fellatio)
...accept the alternatives.

KAŠKA
You're such a pig.

Kaška gestures to the screen opposite where the fight plays out.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)
People like stories.

ASA
So give them a story.

KAŠKA
I need a partner for that.

ASA
So, find one, someone desperate enough to put up with you.

KAŠKA
(looks sideways at Asa)
Or someone with nothing better to do.

ASA
'I look like a dancer to you?

KAŠKA
You don't have to be. You just need to be an antagonist. Should be easy for you. You'd rather pick pockets?

ASA
That or dancing, probably.

KAŠKA
What have you got to lose?

ASA
Plenty.

KAŠKA
You want to stay in the gutter forever?

ASA
If I have to.

KAŠKA
What, chasing some girl who doesn't want to be found?

Asa checks his surround, serious suddenly.

ASA
 (angry stare)
 I told you before, that's my
 business.

KAŠKA
 Fine.

ASA
 I don't want to be partners in
 crime, dance partners or any kind
 of partners. I just want you out
 from under my feet so I can get on
 with what I'm here to do.

Asa screws up his food, dumps it in the trash.

KAŠKA
 (to self - Eastern lingo)
 That went well.

EXT. THE HILL - DAWN

A steep flight of stairs reaching up to the celestial heights
 of an ancient cathedral. Asa races from bottom to top.

At the top, Asa skips on his toes, brooding self-loathing
 through gritted teeth. He looks off into the waking city
 below, the flames of a building fire reflected in his eyes.

EXT. BROAD COBBLED STREET - DAWN

Asa jogs through the flashing lights, past fire-fighters who
 mop up the last of a blaze in a large residential building.

EXT. MODERN SQUARE - DUSK

Street lights flicker on as the day light relinquishes to
 deep blue dusk.

Kaška slowly walks through dance-steps on the pavement, draws
 chalk outlines around her feet.

She sets the tape-deck playing and begins a routine, her feet
 track the chalk footprints precisely as she goes.

Passersby slow to watch but a security guard intercedes,
 moves her on.

EXT. URBAN PARK - NIGHT

Asa passes an urban park where wayward teens, adolescent gang affiliates, dealers and pimps conjugate in the shadows. Teenage girls play on the swings in the floodlights.

Asa stares down eyes on the street, scans faces through the rails, moves on, brooding violence.

EXT. CIVIC SQUARE - NIGHT

Asa's eyes pick out Kaška in the near distance as she performs her chalk-steps routine in the blustering wind.

As he drifts through the square, scans faces and wallets, a pair of shifty youths snatch Kaška's tweed hat from the ground, bundle Kaška off her feet, race away. The tape-deck CLATTERS across the ground.

Asa springs into action, gives chase but the youths tear recklessly into traffic, split up into the night. He finds the hat, tossed to the ground, as he picks a way back.

Asa finds Kaška slumped on a step, head in hands. He drops the cap beside her.

ASA

You okay?

KAŠKA

What d'you care?

ASA

Let me see.

Asa lifts her chin, inspects the graze on her cheek.

You'll live.

Kaška pulls away.

KAŠKA

And this?

She thrusts the broken tape deck at him.

ASA

Maybe not.

KAŠKA

What's the fucking point!

ASA

Come on, you're not ready to quit,
yet. What would Gene Kelly do?

KAŠKA

What d'you know about Gene Kelly!

ASA

Pick yourself up. Dust yourself
off...

KAŠKA

(interrupts)

That's Fred Astaire, zho-pa!

ASA

Whatever. Old guy, good footwork.
(offers a hand)
Come on.

KAŠKA

You promise to stop talking?

Kaška takes Asa's hand. He pulls her to standing.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Kaška awakes to Asa stooped over the fire with a pan of porridge. His boiler-suit steams on the rail. The cat coils around his feet.

Kaška stands, wrapped in her blanket, heads for the door but sees the tape deck, repaired, on the table top.

KAŠKA

Does it work?

ASA

Try it and see.

Kaška puts a tape into the slot and plays - the familiar tinny SOUND. Kaška stops the tape.

Better with machines than with
people, I guess.

KAŠKA

That wouldn't take much.
(second thought)
Thanks.

ASA
It takes balls to keep going when
life's kicking the shit out of you.

KAŠKA
Thanks, I guess.

ASA
(uneasy eye contact)
You really think there's money in
this dancing shit?

KAŠKA
What's on your mind?

ASA
I need some way of making money
that's not fighting. Maybe I'm
desperate enough to give it a try.

KAŠKA
There's only one way to find out.

ASA
Guess so.

Kaška exits. Asa stares into the fire, rakes at his hair.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Kaška checks her look in the mirror, bites her lip, pensive.

KAŠKA
You asked for it.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

The fire CRACKLES and SPITS in the charged silence.

Kaška and Asa stand face to face, guarded body language.

KAŠKA
So, storytelling in dance is all
about conflict which shouldn't be a
problem for us. I've got a vague
idea but...

ASA
(interrupts)
Talk me through it.

KAŠKA

I don't know. We could begin like the clown, with a doll, something a little Copelia-esque maybe.

ASA

Whatever.

KAŠKA

A doll. Not a wooden doll, maybe a wind-up doll like one in a music box. She's enchanted, a prisoner. When she dances, she comes to life but when he touches her...

ASA

Who?

KAŠKA

The one who made her, enchanted her, a sorcerer, something like that.

ASA

That's me? Do I get to wear a mask?

KAŠKA

Sure. We'd need some music, like a music box, you know?

Asa exits.

Where are you going?

NOISE from the spare room. Kaška follows.

INT. SPARE ROOM - DAY

Asa wrestles an ancient leather travel-case out of the dust and cobwebs.

KAŠKA

What are you doing?

ASA

You said a music box.

KAŠKA

I was just talking out loud.

ASA

Give me a hand with this.

Kaška chips in.

You think you could fit in here?

KAŠKA

At a push. Not sure I'd want to.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa probes the travel-case locking mechanism with a fork.

KAŠKA

What d'you think of this?

Kaška drapes herself in a dusty old shawl, patched with mildew, which she throws off to extend into a balletic pose.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)

He opens the box, she's covered with a veil. He takes it off, winds her up and...

She starts to SNEEZE. Asa POPS the lock on the case. They both stare inside at the paper shell of a colossal wasps nest.

ASA

What the fuck is that?

KAŠKA

It's wasp nest.

Asa slams down the lid.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, they're all gone.

ASA

How d'you know?

KAŠKA

I'm a country girl.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DUSK

Light fading through the window. A wasp nest fire roars in the hearth. Kaška walks through the sequence of the performance, builds in more expression to the movement as she goes. Asa watches, absorbs.

KAŠKA

The ending needs to be dramatic.

ASA
Dramatic how?

KAŠKA
Like a catch but I don't know.

ASA
Show me.

KAŠKA
You sure?

Asa nods.

Don't drop me.

ASA
I won't.

Kaška prepares to leap but hesitates.

Trust me.

Kaška throws herself into Asa's hands, droops lifeless as he catches her. Asa drops into a crouch on one knee, over the lifeless form in his arms.

KAŠKA
Well, that works.

Kaška stands, elated, wipes the sweat from her brow, takes sip of water. Asa stretches a little, pain in his side.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)
You okay?

ASA
I'm fine.

KAŠKA
We should call it a day.

ASA
Let's go again.

Kaška raises her eyebrows.

Lazy in the gym, lose in the ring.

KAŠKA
Whatever that means.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

The city streets glisten in electric light.

Asa and Kaška press into a corner of the crowded square to watch the performance of a Fire Juggler in a devilish mask.

ASA
Lot of people.

KAŠKA
He's good.
We could use some of that fire.
Ribbons maybe?

ASA
Or smoke, smoke bombs?

EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY

Asa and Kaška run through the routine in a quiet alley way. Asa is distracted by college kids, passing the mouth of the alley who pause to watch.

ASA
Get lost!

KAŠKA
(angry)
Forget about them.

Kaška pulls his face to hers.

Focus.

Asa takes a deep breath, tunes in.

From the fucking top.

They start over, Asa more focused. Kaška COUNTS the beats, impatient. At the crescendo, Asa lifts Kaška above his head as she folds, lifeless for a BEAT before he lowers her back to a hold.

Not bad. Let's go again.

Kaška's face shows alarm.

Fuck, did I catch you?

Blood drips through the butterfly stitches onto Asa's cheek.

Here.

Kaška presses a tissue into his hand.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Kaška sits on the chair, stooped over Asa, slumped on the floor beneath the window ledge, topless.

KAŠKA
I can't do this.

ASA
Yes, you can.

KAŠKA
No, I can't.

ASA
It's you or me and I'm gonna make a mess.

Asa holds up his bandaged fingers.

KAŠKA
What if I slip or get a vein?

ASA
You won't.
(beat)
Don't!

Asa takes Kaška's hand, a suturing needle and thread pressed between her thumb and finger, and moves it towards his eye.

ASA (CONT'D)
I trust you.

KAŠKA
That's a first.

Kaška's hand shakes. She takes a drink of vodka from a small bottle on the window ledge.

ASA
Easy with that.

She leans in close, focuses, pinches the wound and prepares to make her first stitch. Asa winces as the needle shifts into his skin.

KAŠKA
Shit, are you okay?

ASA
I'm fine, just keep going.

Kaška stitches with half-closed eyes. Droplets of blood fall onto Asa's chest. Kaška CURSES.

KAŠKA
Guess this puts your dancing career on hold.

ASA
Fuck that. I'm good to go.

KAŠKA
I thought you'd have quit by now.

ASA
If it keeps you off the street.

KAŠKA
Let's see how smart you are when you get in front of an audience.

ASA
That your idea of motivation?

Kaška's crucifix swings loose from her neckline, lays over Asa's cheek. Their eyes meet briefly.

KAŠKA
My mother's.

ASA
You close?

KAŠKA
Not so much.

ASA
Didn't want you to come out here, huh?

KAŠKA
Understatement.

ASA
Maybe she had a point?

Kaška pauses, tucks the crucifix back inside the sweater.

The weather through the window turns blustery, wet.

Kaška continues stitching.

EXT. RECESSED DOORWAY - NIGHT

Kaška sits on the leather travel-case, uses the small mirror to paint her face like a doll's. Under the duffel-coat, she wears a dress, doll-like, theatrical ruff, tailored around the waist.

ASA

Here.

Asa adds the finishing touches to her face paint, focused. Their eyes meet, almost nose to nose, awkward.

KAŠKA

You nervous?

ASA

(pulls on a red Scaramouch
mask)

You?

KAŠKA

I'm too cold to be nervous.

ASA

(opens the travel-case)

Jump in.

Kaška steps inside just as a rain starts to fall and grows quickly in intensity.

KAŠKA

You're kidding me.

They shrink back beneath the shelter and watch as the streets clear - a wash out.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Rain THUNDERS over the roof, against the window glass. Drips from above collect in the copper pot on the floor.

Kaška, wrapped in a blanket, stairs out into the grey.

Asa enters, wet, shivering, empties a bag of assorted flammables onto the hearth - brochures, bibles, junk mail, a stack of pencils. He rips up the bibles and feeds them to the dying fire.

KAŠKA

(tuts)

Straight to hell for you.

ASA
If I'm lucky.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - NIGHT

Kaška and Asa rummage through a dumpster with a torch, filling a canvas bag with sealed food items.

ASA
Carrot cake! Who puts carrot in a cake?

KAŠKA
It's nice. I'll take it.

ASA
Trade you for that granola bar.

KAŠKA
Done.

INT. THE SQUAT - NIGHT

Kaška and Asa huddle into the hearth, shivering and wet, try to light a fire with matches. They shout over the noise.

ASA
Last one.

KAŠKA
Let me try.

Kaška takes the match with a shaky hand.

Asa grabs a sachet of sugar from the mantle.

ASA
Use this.

KAŠKA
Sugar?

ASA
It burns.

Kaška SPARKS a match. The golden flame dances over the sachet, a fire curls and writhes over the scraps of junk mail and trash.

Kaška slumps by the fire, arms folded, closes her eyes as the fire builds.

Asa empties the canvas bag in the hearth - looks over the hoard of sealed food.

KAŠKA

It can't rain forever.

Kaška opens the carrot-cake, hesitates, takes a bite. The wind HOWLS in the chimney.

INT. BUSTLING SQUARE - NIGHT

A cold wind bullies through the square but doesn't perturb the crowds of tourists soaking in the night city.

Asa, dressed in the Scaramouch mask, drags the travel-case into the centre of the square, turning heads as he goes. He sets down the case. A HISS of blue-white smoke begins to swirl around the case. A MUSIC BOX tinkle grows louder as he throws opens the case.

A circle of wind-red faces, wide-eyed with wonder watch now as Asa whips the shawl from Kaška's contorted body, winds her up with a big key prop.

Kaška begins her haunting dance, wooden at first, becoming more human, ethereal with leaps and twirls around Asa who gestures like string-less puppeteer.

At the crescendo, Kaška leaps into the catch. Asa lifts her before she wilts to her lifeless form, limp in his arms. He places her back into the suitcase, like a doll, covers her with the sheet. He closes the box, sprawls over the lid, distraught.

A silent BEAT followed by an enthusiastic APPLAUSE, a WHISTLE or two.

Asa straightens, lifts the lid. Kaška emerges from the travel-case, breath freezing in the cold air, takes a bow.

ASA

(relieved)

Jesus!

KAŠKA

You did good.

ASA

The fuck I did.

Glowing still, Kaška circles the crowd with the flat cap which fills with coins and notes.

OLIVER (25), bemused confident air of the rich handsome socialite, pushes through to the front of the audience, watches Kaška with interest. He reaches over, puts in some cash as Kaška passes.

OLIVER
Nice work.

Kaška looks him over for a BEAT.

Oliver, in case you were wondering.

Kaška smiles, piqued, moves on.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa performs 'planks' under the window while reading a book, laid open on the floorboards beneath.

KAŠKA
Who said men can't multi-task!

Kaška enters, shivering, her hair wrapped in a towel, stoops in front of the fire, warms her hands.

That shower is inhumane.

Asa's POV of Kaška - the details of her face, lips, neck, the shape of her body. He shakes it off, transitions into a downward dog stretch.

The cat materialises from the shadows, finds Kaška.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)
You're sociable at least, Fifi.

ASA
Fifi?

KAŠKA
Cats have names, don't they, Fifi.
People too. Some people don't tell
you theirs but they're just
psychos. Stay away from those kind.

Asa smirks, labours to his feet, peers out through the window but his eyes come back to Kaška, her profile, eyes reflecting the fire-light.

So, I've been thinking.

ASA
Never a good thing.

KAŠKA
 Since we're an equal partnership
 now...

ASA
 Equal?

KAŠKA
 I'm sick of sleeping in a chair. I
 want a bed like yours.

INT. LIVING SPACE - LATER

Asa and Kaška lay cardboard boxes onto a makeshift wooden
 pallet-bed frame, sandwich in a layer of bubble-wrap.

Kaška throws a blanket over it to complete the mattress.

Kaška lays back, MOANS with pleasure.

KAŠKA
 The luxury!

The cat joins her.

Asa pops lightly at the punchbag, not sharing the moment.
 Kaška notices.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

Asa and Kaška perform the wind-up doll routine, writhe and
 strain in the cold air for a sizable audience. Asa's part has
 expanded to a few steps, holds and breaks which he handles
 competently.

Afterwards, Asa runs his hands through his sweat damp hair as
 Kaška circles the crowd with the cap.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Kaška stitches while Asa works on perfecting his pirouettes.

KAŠKA
 Chin up.

Frustrated, Asa CURSES, touches his toes, squats, stretches
 then returns and repeats. He takes off his top, wipes the
 sweat from his brow. Kaška glances over his glistening body,
 pretends not to be distracted.

EXT. SMALL CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

Asa and Kaška perform their routine with an expanded array of acrobatic and dance content which takes the performance to the next level. Their chemistry is strong, focused, easy. Asa brings a brooding masculine force to Kaška's balletic grace.

Once again, Oliver is in the crowd. He presses to the front after the applause, approaches Kaška as she circles the audience with the flat-cap.

OLIVER
You're amazing.

Kaška smiles, brushes off the compliment.

I'm in love with your choreography.

KAŠKA
That's good to know.

OLIVER
I have a little business proposition for you.

KAŠKA
And what's that?

OLIVER
(hands Kaška his card)
Let's discuss over coffee?
(fishing)
Bring your boyfriend too.

Kaška raises an eyebrow.

Not too subtle, huh?

KAŠKA
You tried.

Asa drifts back towards Kaška as the crowd disperse, watches Kaška's exchange with Oliver, their shared laughter, animated body-language.

Oliver says his goodbyes, withdraws as Asa approaches.

ASA
'that punk want?

Kaška shakes her head, dismissive.

KAŠKA
We did good.

Kaška shows Asa the cap, heavy with change, a few notes.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)
We should celebrate.

EXT. UPMARKET BAKERY - NIGHT

Asa hovers outside the window leaning on the upright travel-case, an array of cakes and delicacies stare back through the glass.

Kaška emerges with a small ribbon-tied box in her hand. She makes a show of breathing in the aroma of the contents. Asa shakes his head, refusing to play along. Kaška scowls.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - NIGHT

Kaška and Asa perch against an ornate stone fountain in the heart of a busy square. Asa casually scans faces, arms folded.

KAŠKA
(mouthful of cake)
Oh, that's so good.

ASA
When you're starving, everything
you eat tastes good.

KAŠKA
There's got to be some virtue to
poverty.

ASA
You know you're alive, that's for
sure, the highs and the lows.

KAŠKA
So what's this, right now?

Kaška holds Asa's eyes with challenge.

You're allowed to enjoy something,
you know, even if it's just for a
moment.

Asa's face hardens suddenly.

It was just a joke!

Asa pushes past, distracted, paces into the crowd, gathering speed. Kaška struggles to follow with the travel-case rolling on tiny wheels behind.

Asa ploughs a path towards the far side of the square, eyes fixed on a gaudy sports car where a young player, XANDER (20s) opens the passenger door for a young woman who remains partially obscured until the last moment - JESS (15), dresses and looks older, hovers for a fleeting glimpse and then disappears inside the car.

With a SCREECH of tires, the car swings recklessly into traffic and away.

Asa slows to a stop, stares after, eyes locked on the near distance, jaws clenched.

INT. BACK STREETS - NIGHT

Kaška and Asa walk in tense silence. The travel-case CLATTERS over the cobbles.

KAŠKA

Was that her, the girl you're looking for?

No response.

I know you don't like to talk about it but if you..?

ASA

(facetious)

If I need a shoulder to cry on, I'll let you know.

KAŠKA

It might do you some good to talk...

ASA

I just need a little head-space. Is that too much to ask?

KAŠKA

Fine, just don't...

A COMMOTION from a Volvo parked ahead interrupts them. A THUG (20s) drags a young woman (Fizz) from the passenger seat of the car and throttles her on the pavement, while he SCREAMS at her ear in rough Eastern lingo.

...shit. I think I know her.

The Thug drags Fizz into the road, kicks at her, oblivious to Asa and Kaška's approach.

They pass in silence. Fizz's SOBS and WHIMPERS echo along the street.

ASA

Take this.

Asa hands the travel-case to Kaška, eyes glazed with violent intent.

KAŠKA

What are you going to do?

Asa doubles back.

The thug, a handful of Fizz's hair in his hand, turns in time to eat Asa's sledgehammer right...he tries to crawl to his feet but Asa punts his head like a football.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)

(drops the case)

Jesus!

The Thug rolls onto his back, the glint of a small blade in his palm. Asa stomps his heavy boot down onto his hand.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)

(pushes and pulls Asa
away)

That's enough. That's enough!

EXT. SHADED AWNING - NIGHT

Fizz, beat-up, shelters beneath an awning, Asa's coat over here shoulders.

Kaška and Asa talk, out of earshot, in the neon rain.

KAŠKA

We should've kept walking. She's not our problem. She's trouble, you know that.

ASA

(solemn)

She's someone's daughter.

KAŠKA

You gonna save the whole world?

ASA

And if that was you?

KAŠKA

I wouldn't be in that situation.

ASA

Because you're special? You got lucky, that's all.

Kaška glares back, dripping wet with rain.

KAŠKA

This isn't even about her. This is about you and that girl...

ASA

(cuts in - angry)

I told you, that's my business. You mention her again and we're fucking finished.

A SIREN blast close-by distracts them.

INT. LIVING SPACE - NIGHT

Fizz sits in the armchair wrapped in a blanket, clutching a steaming mug. Kaška shivers by the fire. Fizz and Kaška speak in Eastern lingo.

FIZZ

He snorts too much shit, you know. He's like a different person.

KAŠKA

Don't you have anywhere else to go to? What about back home, family?

FIZZ

(scoffs)

Back home?

Fizz stares into the fire for a LONG BEAT.

How long have you two been together?

KAŠKA

We're not together.

FIZZ

I thought you...

KAŠKA

There's a girl. It's complicated.

FIZZ
Isn't it always.

Kaška fingers the crucifix, tucks it back inside her sweater.

I thought it would be so different
here, new life, new
opportunities...

Asa perches against the back wall, wrapped in a blanket, on
the outer periphery of the light, silent, brooding.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa wakes with a start on the pallet bed.

He strains to focus in the half-light. The armchair is empty.
Kaška sleeps, still.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Asa checks the room is empty, enters.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

Asa returns to the room, finds Kaška awake, searching the
room, in a sore temper.

KAŠKA
The hat's gone with last night's
takings. That fucking su-ka. I told
you she was trouble.

Asa peers out through a crack in the curtains, pensive.

ASA
She's an addict. What did you
expect?

KAŠKA
I didn't expect her to sneak out in
the middle of the night. Did you
see her go?

Asa shrugs off the question, tries to resurrect the fire.

Fucking great start to the day!

Kaška stomps out of the room.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Cold, frosty streets through the glass. Kaška taps her feet, pensive, receiver at her ear. The phone PURRS for a BEAT and connects. Kaška perks up.

KAŠKA
 (on telephone)
 Oliver? Yes, the dancer. Kaška.
 Don't ask. Yes, I can find it. I
 think so. Okay. See you then.

Kaška hangs up, catches her breath, flustered.

INT. BASEMENT BOXING GYM - DAY

Fighters in the ring, measured sparring. Pappy takes his eyes off the action as Asa enters, in his boiler suit, stony-faced.

PAPPY
 Look what the cat dragged in.

ASA
 (not a question)
 I need a few rounds.

Asa tosses his hat, pulls on a head-guard, some gloves. Pappy shrugs.

PAPPY
 (to the fighters in the
 ring)
 Okay, Abe, take five.

Pappy straps up Asa's gloves, tries to make eye contact but Asa is in the 'zone'.

You shouldn't be here, kid.

Asa climbs in through the ropes, touches gloves with the Fighter in the ring. At the BELL, they begin.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE GROUND FLOOR - DAY

Kaška plays the good customer at the cosmetic counters, takes a spray sample of a fragrance, lets one of the girls pin up her hair and tests an eye-liner in the small mirrors.

INT. BASEMENT BOXING GYM - DAY

A crowd of fighters and coaches hover around the ring as Asa puts on a masterclass, controls the action, draws attack - the counter puncher. He covers a left hook to his right side but winces with pain on impact. He works it off, hesitant for a LONG BEAT after but quickly recovers dominance and then invites attack, absorbs the punishment, feeds off it like some form of penance.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Hazy, blinding winter sun. Kaška emerges from the underground station, hair pinned, subtle make-up, crosses the busy junction.

INT. HIGH SPEED DEPARTURES - DAY

A huge domed space lined with cafes and up-market bars overlooking a run of high-speed platforms where sleek trains pull in and out frequently.

Kaška greets Oliver MOS. They kiss cheeks.

INT. CHAMPAGNE BAR - DAY

An open plan champagne bar for upmarket train travellers - classy, understated and expensive.

KAŠKA

What happened to coffee?

OLIVER

(shrugs)

Coffee is too ordinary for a girl like you.

Oliver perches, comfortable with the setting. Kaška fidgets a little, self conscious.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

So, what's the story with this guy?

KAŠKA

(shrugs, perturbed)

No story, not one I could begin to explain, anyway.

OLIVER

So, you're an item, used to be an item?

KAŠKA
 (scoffs)
 You're joking right?

Kaška stares at her glass for a BEAT.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)
 We tolerate each other. That's as far as it goes.

OLIVER
 But the chemistry...

KAŠKA
 That's just...performance.
 There's a girl. I don't know, an ex or something. He came here to find her.

OLIVER
 Like a stalker?

KAŠKA
 I don't know, I don't think it's that simple.

OLIVER
 But you don't know.

KAŠKA
 He doesn't like to talk about it.

OLIVER
 He could be some kind of psycho, for all you know?

Kaška takes a deep breath, wrestles with emotions.

KAŠKA
 When someone's saved your life, I suppose it builds a level of trust.

OLIVER
 I guess so.
 (jokes)
 I hate him.

Oliver sips from his glass, watches Kaška. A quick flash of something hard in his stare, brushes behind a fast and easy.

KAŠKA
 Enough about him, I have to put up with him all day. Tell me about this proposition.

Kaška meets Oliver's eyes, sprightly. The WAITER arrives with day time cocktails.

EXT. BASEMENT BOXING GYM - DAY

Pappy catches Asa in the doorway on his way out.

They talk, MOS for LONG BEAT.

PAPPY

...you wanna fight Sailor with those busted ribs?

(interrupts)

You think I didn't see that?

Pappy taps Asa's right side, Asa covers.

ASA

I just wanna get those fuckers off my back. If that's what it takes.

PAPPY

You know what's at stake? They'll bet the island on this.

Pappy lights a cigarette.

Can you win? This guy's no joke.

ASA

Afterwards, the slate's clean, the girl too...

PAPPY

The girl? A little birdy told me they already found the girl.

ASA

What?

Pappy shrugs.

PAPPY

Street gossip. Could be wrong.

Asa shakes Pappy's hand.

ASA

Tell them to make the fight.

Pappy spits, goes back inside.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DUSK

A blood red dusk sky through the window.

Asa stoops by the fire, toys the passport photo of Jess between the fingers of one hand. A candle burns in a jar on the mantle. The cat rubs its ears on the military kit-bag, stuffed full, sat on the floor at Asa's feet.

At the SOUND of the door, Asa pockets the photo, stands, turns to face Kaška, hair pinned back off her face, eyes lined and striking. He double-takes.

ASA

The fuck have you been?

KAŠKA

(tipsy)

What's that to you, dad?

(sees the bag)

What's going on?

ASA

(shoulders the bag)

We need to get out of here. I'll explain on the way.

KAŠKA

What're you talking about?

ASA

(takes Kaška's arm)

She gave us up. They know where we are.

Kaška yanks her arm free.

Fine. Stay here.

Asa heads for the door...

The cat races away suddenly. Both stiffen at the sound of VOICES below, the CLATTER of glass and tin cans.

Asa peers through the curtains.

EXT. YARD - DUSK

Asa's POV of Maxy picking his way through the tiny yard to the rear of the building, eyes surveying the ground floor exterior.

ASA (O.S.)
They're not waiting for dark.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DUSK

Asa drags Kaška towards the door and into the hall.

A heavy CRASH from the floor below. MALE VOICES, Eastern lingo.

INT. HALLWAY - DUSK

As Asa and Kaška slink past the main door, the handle turns. WHISPERED talk on the other side.

INT. SPARE ROOM - DUSK

A thin crack of red light through the hole in the ceiling and rafters above.

ASA
Give me your foot.

Asa boosts Kaška into the rafters.

He turns the travel-case on its side, steps on some boxes and carefully balances himself on top. He passes Kaška the kit-bag and with an extreme effort, pulls himself up and through just as...

INT. THE SQUAT - DUSK

The interior door caves in with a CRASH of splintering wood. Toro and two Goons pile in after.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - DUSK

Asa pushes through the tiles onto the wet roof. Kaška follows, swallows hard. They drag themselves along the ridge, slowly and drop down a level onto the adjacent rooftop. Kaška STARTS as the cat races over her back and down.

They pause at the edge of the roof, look down into the alley some distance below.

ASA
Do what I do.

Asa drops the kit bag into the alley below, swings himself onto cast-iron drainpipe and climbs down a little way.

KAŠKA

I can't.

ASA

You can.

Kaška CURSES, closes her eyes for a BEAT, swings herself down and walks the wall down. Asa reaches the ground below.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - NIGHT

Kaška gulps for air, looks up at the cat above, staring down over the ledge.

KAŠKA

We can't leave her.

ASA

She can take care of herself.

EXT. THE SQUAT - NIGHT

A Goon leans on a blue BMW parked at the curb, smokes a cigarette. SOUNDS from inside the squat through the open door.

Kaška and Asa dash across the street at the corner, unnoticed.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - NIGHT

The train tears through the blackness.

Kaška paces, rakes at her hair, manic.

KAŠKA

What now, what now?

ASA

Relax. Save your energy. It's over.

KAŠKA

It's not over. It'll never be over.
Why can't they just leave us alone?

ASA

What's with the eye-liner?

KAŠKA
What does it fucking matter?

ASA
A date?

KAŠKA
Just drinks.

ASA
The preppy guy?

SKAŠKA
His name's Oliver. He actually has
a name.

ASA
Good for him.

A awkward silent BEAT.

So, how did it go?

KAŠKA
What d'you mean, how did it go?

ASA
(shrugs)
How did it go?

KAŠKA
What d'you care? Why are we even
talking about this?

Kaška bites her nails, sways a little, tipsy still.

It was nice, if you must know, nice
to have a conversation for once
with someone civil.

Asa smiles, stares out into the black beyond the glass.

He has a proposition for us but I
guess we can forget about that now.

ASA
What kind of proposition?

KAŠKA
He wants us to dance at a party
he's having at his house. Finally
an opportunity! The fucking irony.

The trains slows to a stop at the next platform, rocky on the tracks.

I think I'm going to be sick.

Pushes past as the doors open.

Asa shoulders the kit-bag, follows.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Asa hovers in the mouth of an alley looking out onto a broad impersonal boulevard of shut-up shopfronts and empty offices.

SOUNDS of Kaška being sick from the alley.

A LONG BEAT.

Kaška emerges, meek, looking worse for wear.

EXT. HOMELESS HOSTEL - NIGHT

A faded placard swinging from the door frame that reads - MEN ONLY. A pair of hobos on the doorstep ARGUE, more bark than bite.

Across the street, Asa and Kaška wait in the shadows as a tinted BMW slow-rolls past.

Asa pulls Kaška's hood up high over her head.

ASA
Put your hands in your pockets.
Don't speak.

KAŠKA
Why here?

ASA
You want to take your chances alone
at the women's refuge, go for it?

KAŠKA
No thanks.

Kaška stuffs her hands into her pockets, follows Asa across the road and into the hostel.

INT. HOSTEL RECEPTION - NIGHT

Asa and Kaška join the queue of hobos clustered around the weak fluorescent light of the reception desk.

Kaška scans faces, winces away from the light, unsteady on her feet still. She notices the old clown in the queue ahead, bleary-eyed, face-paint streaked, the battered suitcase under his arm. Asa steadies him from falling, keeps him on his feet. As Kaška stares, she sinks beneath the weight of the realisation of where she is, the epiphany that she is no better.

INT. HOSTEL DORMITORY - NIGHT

A weak fluorescent light flickers on to reveal ordered barracks of military cots, row upon row. Gnarled and aged faces, young-old men, drunks, vagrants, crooks, a rogues gallery.

Asa navigates them to a pair of empty cots in a quiet corner. Kaška starts to untie her shoes but Asa stops her. She lays back, boots and coat on, pulls the rough blanket up to her chin. Asa makes a pillow of the kit-bag, slips the strap through the frame of the cot.

The lights HUM and cease. Darkness. GROANS and mild BICKERING. Kaška lays with her eyes wide, twitches with every SOUND in the dark.

INT. HOSTEL DORMITORY - DAY

First light vaporises the frost on the rooftops beyond the glass. Asa wakes with a start. He double-takes, CURSES. Kaška's cot is empty and most of the cots in the dormitory too.

A mob jostle around the shower-block doorway.

Asa tosses off the blanket.

INT. HOSTEL SHOWER-BLOCK - DAY

The FIZZ of a shower, steam in the air.

At least a dozen men and another dozen trying to push through, stand peering into a shower cubicle through cracks and peep-holes.

Asa pushes through the crowd, gets an eye-full of Kaška through a crack in the cubicle door, who showers in ignorant bliss.

ASA
Okay, everyone out, NOW!

Angry BANTER. Kaška pops her head out of the cubicle, takes in the scene - oops! Locks herself back inside.

Asa aggressively herds the reluctant crowd back out of the door. A Rough-neck stands his ground. Asa pops him to the gut. He drops fast, crawls to the door.

Anyone else?
(a beat)
Get the fuck out!

Asa wrestles the door closed and backs against it while the weight of numbers push from the other side.

You should hurry up.

Kaška emerges from the cubicle, hastily dressing, hair wet. The door gives way. The crowd stumble in, part as Kaška passes through.

INT. HOSTEL DORMITORY - DAY

Kaška tosses the towel, takes a bow and exits. Asa snatches back his kit-bag from inquisitive hands and follows, a BEAT behind. An APPLAUSE echoes back.

EXT. HOMELESS HOSTEL - DAY

Asa emerges into the crisp cold light close on Kaška's heels.

ASA
You couldn't resist.

They come face to face - hostile resentment bubbles beneath the surface.

KAŠKA
So what now?

Asa stares off into the wind, pensive, for a LONG BEAT.

ASA
You wanna do this party, seal the deal with whatshisname, fine, I'm in.

KAŠKA

How? We need to rehearse...

ASA

(interrupts)

I know a place, maybe.

KAŠKA

Okay.

ASA

Whatever money we make, is all yours but after it's done, we go our separate ways. You sail off into the sunset with prince charming and I go back to doing what I came here to do.

Kaška takes a deep breath, speechless for a BEAT.

KAŠKA

If that's what you want.

ASA

Nothing in this whole fucked up situation has anything to do with what I want.

Wind rips through the street, overturning trash. Kaška turns away, fragile, closes her eyes for a BEAT. When she opens them, Asa is stood around her, sheltering her as he stares off, pensive.

INT. COMMUTER CHAIN CAFE - DAY

A busy pit-stop cafe open on two sides. Commuters and tourists swarm the overworked counter, crowd the small tables.

Asa's eyes follow the action. A 'suit' on a call bundles through with a take-out bag. He bumps a girl with a tray spills coffee down her front, sets down his take-out bag on the stand to apologise profusely. When he turns back his bag is gone, so is Asa.

EXT. BROAD COBBLED STREET - DAY

Kaška huddles beneath an awning, drinks steaming coffee from a paper cup. Across the street looms the fire-damaged residential property, the main door and the ground floor windows, freshly boarded.

Kaška bins her empty cup, stuffs her hands into her pockets, shivers, pulls out Oliver's business card.

Moments later, Asa appears from the alley beyond, beckons Kaška to follow.

EXT. WALLED-ALLEY - DAY

A high-walled alley. Asa combs back a clump of Ivy to reveal a foothold in the stone wall at waist height.

ASA

One, two, three.

He steps up, reaches for an enlarged space in the mortar, pushes upwards for a second foothold created by an old rusty pipe, pulls himself up and straddles the top of the stone wall.

Now you.

He drops down. Kaška follows his directions and at a stretch makes it over the wall.

INT. GUTTED APARTMENT - DAY

Kaška stumbles through the dark of a fire gutted apartment.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

She emerges into a broad stairwell. Weak light from above from a shattered skylight. Rainfall pools inside an upturned table.

Asa waves from the top. Kaška follows, her eyes flit over the debris on the stone stairs, furniture, heirlooms.

At the top, she scans for an open door and enters.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Kaška steps into a large apartment space, mostly undamaged other than the corner kitchen which is black and open to the sleet tearing through smashed windows.

Asa kicks away some rubble, forces the sturdy kitchen door closed which cuts off the draft. Kaška looks over the expensive fittings, the bathroom, the large bedroom, clothes still in the wardrobes.

ASA
What d'you think?

Asa pushes closed the heavy front door, killing the SOUND of the WIND.

KAŠKA
Feels kind of creepy, don't you think?

ASA
You want a place to rehearse, this is it.

Kaška picks up a picture-frame from the floor, an old black and white.

I'm sure they're keeping a bed free for you back at the hostel, if you'd prefer.

KAŠKA
I can't tell you how good that hot water felt. It was worth it.

ASA
I can't even remember hot water.

INT. LIVING SPACE - DAY

The glow of sunset on the horizon through the broken window panes.

Asa carefully picks over the mess of the once familiar space, books tossed, furniture broken, clothes spread over the floorboards.

He traces Jess's face on the plaster but starts at the SOUND of movement, spins as the cat springs through the detritus towards him.

ASA
Hey there, cat.

Asa stoops to stroke the cat.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DUSK

Kaška buys candles, toiletries, snacks, two miniature bottles of vodka. While the sales assistant gets her matches from the back display, she eyes a cheap cake on the counter.

SALES ASSISTANT
(follows Kaška's eyes)
Anything else?

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Asa enters to find the space lit with candles. A fledgling fire burns in the hearth, illuminates a mattress on the floor by the hearth and a small cake sat on the tiles.

Kaška emerges from the interior with a bundle of blankets, dressed in multiple coats, floral scarves.

KAŠKA
(starts)
Fuck! You scared me.

ASA
You wearing?

KAŠKA
(dumping the blankets)
I don't care as long as I'm warm.

ASA
(gestures to the hearth)
What's the occasion?

KAŠKA
My birthday.

ASA
Seriously? I brought you a gift.

Asa slides the kit-bag off his shoulder, unlatches it. The cat leaps out and races to Kaška.

KAŠKA
Fifi, my beautiful Fifi!

Asa approaches the fire, perches on the sofa.

Kaška sits down on the mattress wrapped in a blanket, offers Asa one of two miniature vodka bottles.

ASA
I don't drink.

KAŠKA
Explains a few things. I'll show you how it's done.

Kaška drinks off the bottle.

Asa hesitates, takes a sip - doesn't enjoy it. Kaška CURSES, snatches it back, drinks it off too.

The cat paws onto Asa's lap but Asa pushes it down onto the floor. It tries Kaška instead.

ASA

Flea-bag.

KAŠKA

She doesn't have fleas. You're just jealous.

ASA

Yeah, I'm in competition with cats. That's my level.

KAŠKA

Doors will open for you, once you have a name.

Asa shrugs.

Michael? Andrew? Boris?

Asa smirks.

You're such a dick.

The fire starts to ROAR.

ASA

How much fucking wood d'you put on that fire?

KAŠKA

It was freezing!

Asa takes off his hat, rakes his hair.

Kaška strips off her flowery layers down to her vest. Asa notices Kaška's slender neck, her lips, eyes sparkling in the fire-light. He rakes at his hair, stands.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)

Don't go.

(catches his hand)

Sit down, relax for a minute. It's my birthday remember. You have to do what I say.

Kaška pulls him back down next to her.

And relax.

Asa collapses onto his back on the mattress, stares at the ceiling. He swallows hard as Kaška joins him, shoulder to shoulder, hands incidentally touching.

Maybe, since this is our last few days together, we should have a truce, you know, try to get along?

A BEAT.

ASA
Sounds good.

KAŠKA
(turns on her front, leans on her elbows)
Something's on your mind?

Asa shrugs.

Everything feels strange today, don't you think?

ASA
It'll all work out in the end.

KAŠKA
You're so full of shit.

They share a smile - connection.

Don't say it.

ASA
What?

KAŠKA
Whatever cynical thing you're about to say. You always do it whenever there's a connection between us.

Asa smirks, turns back to the ceiling.

ASA
Okay, I won't say it.

KAŠKA
No, you don't.
(turns his face back to her)
Stay here, right here.

Their eyes meet and lock, like a game of stares.

Kaška touches Asa's forehead.

Unfrown your brow.
 (smiles)
 There, I see him.

ASA
 Who?

KAŠKA
 That boy you keep locked up in
 there.

Asa raises an eyebrow.

ASA
 What's he like?

KAŠKA
 He's kind of sweat, a little shy.
 I'd like to meet him one day.

Kaška strokes the hair from Asa's face, their eyes still
 locked.

You could use a hair cut. I'll do
 it, if you like?

ASA
 The hell you will!

The cat suddenly takes off. They both sit up.

KAŠKA
 What is it?

ASA
 I don't...

The front door EXPLODES open.

Rough VOICES and torch-light penetrate the darkness, three
 big SHADOWY FORMS on them in a half-beat.

Asa shields Kaška behind him, winces into the blinding light.

A HAND grips for Asa. Asa clinches up fast and drives his
 head into someone. He takes a torch-butt to the face but
 keeps fighting...

INK
 Stop!

The action freezes. CURSING in the dark. Someone SPITS. Blood trickles over Asa's lip.

INK (CONT'D)

Stand down.

ROUGH NECK 1

What're you talking about, man?

INK

I said stand the fuck down. Wait for me downstairs.

Two shadowy forms reluctantly withdraw, CURSE under their breath on the way out.

Ink shines the torch up to the white ceiling. A bubble of light spreads around them, revealing his face, the familiar tattoos.

ASA

Fuck me.

INK

Small world, huh?

Asa shakes hands with Ink, the man he fought in the opening scene.

Owner wants to keep the squatters out, you know how it is.

ASA

No trouble. We'll pack up our shit.

INK

Just you two?

ASA

Yeah.

INK

Nothing happening 'til new year. Should be fine until then, if you wanna stay.

ASA

You're a life-saver.

INK

Not so long since I was in your shoes.

Ink withdraws, closes the door behind him.

KAŠKA

Fuck, fuck. I told you I didn't
like this place.

Kaška paces the floor, CURSING, tries to steady her
breathing.

ASA

Relax.

KAŠKA

Can we trust that guy?
Can we trust that guy?

ASA

We'll know, soon enough.

KAŠKA

That's not good enough.

ASA

What the fuck do you want to do at
this time of night, freeze to death
walking the streets, get our
throats slit at the bus station?

Asa stems a small bleed from the bridge of his nose with his
fingers.

KAŠKA

You're bleeding, fuck.

ASA

It's nothing.

Asa disappears into the interior.

Kaška rakes at her hair, breathes hard.

INT. PENTHOUSE - MORNING

Kaška walks through a dance in the weak window light,
phrases, revises and repeats.

Asa enters with food, a cut over the bridge of his nose.

Kaška approaches.

KAŠKA

Let me see.

Asa begrudgingly takes off his hat to reveal an old school high-fade and fringe hair cut that has transformed him from rough diamond into chiseled handsome.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)
(taken aback)

Wow.

ASA
(scowls)
Students.

KAŠKA
No, it's great. It suits you,
really.

ASA
The jury's out.

Asa takes off his coat, touches his toes.

So, what have we got to work with.

Asa takes a coffee from the bag, hands it to Kaška.

KAŠKA
You got me chocolate. You star.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

MUSIC plays from the tinny tape deck - a pacy 80's beat - while Kaška and Asa rehearse a routine that's still rough around the edges. The pace is fast, tense.

KAŠKA
You missed it again! What's wrong?

They halt. Both breathe hard.

ASA
I don't like the step, it doesn't
flow.

KAŠKA
You're a choreographer now? Fine.
Do it your way!

Kaška places Asa's hands roughly back into hold.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)
From the top.

A BEAT. They begin the sequence again, with the change. It flows. At the end of the sequence, an emerging sexual tension is palpable.

KAŠKA (CONT'D)

Let's take a break.

Kaška paces. Asa stares off into space, brooding, physical.

ASA

Let's go out.

KAŠKA

What?

Kaška follows his POV towards the window - snow falling over the rooftops. Asa snatches up his coat.

We've got work to do.

ASA

We can work outside. I know a place.

Asa scoops up the tape deck on his way out.

KAŠKA

The party's tonight!

Kaška CURSES, grabs her coat, follows.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Kaška and Asa pace through the snowfall.

KAŠKA

You never seen snow before? I was born in the snow, you can keep it.

Asa's eyes soak in the scene, child-like with wonder.

You really are excited.

A gust of wind bellows through the street. Kaška shudders, CURSES.

ASA

Here.

Asa pulls the hat from her pocket and pulls it onto her head, starts to button her coat up.

KAŠKA
 (stops him)
 I'm not a little girl, you know.

ASA
 I know.

KAŠKA
 Do you?

ASA
 (moves on)
 I've seen you naked remember.

KAŠKA
 (flushes)
 You and every hobo in town.

EXT. BANDSTAND - DAY

A vintage bandstand surrounded by sculpted privets. A magical setting in the snow.

Asa and Kaška run through the routine to the SOUND of the tinny tape deck in the last of the daylight.

At the crescendo, Asa and Kaška hold their final positions, breath freezing in the air, eyes locked.

An unexpected APPLAUSE from the impromptu crowd of dog-walkers distracts them. They take a bow, rosy-cheeked.

INT. UNDERGROUND TRAIN - NIGHT

Asa and Kaška ride the subway in pensive silence.

EXT. GEORGIAN TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Kaška and Asa gaze up at an impressive double-fronted stone facade, the glow of soft light behind the blinds, the gentle HUM of ambient music.

ASA
 You're sure this is the place?

KAŠKA
 This is the place.

Kaška heads up the stairs. Asa sucks in a deep preparatory breath and follows.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Soft MUSIC, mood and lighting. Well-dressed hip young things flirt and chat over drinks and canapes.

Oliver, tuxedo suave, waves Kaška from within the press of bodies.

KAŠKA

We should say hello.

Asa nods, hangs back, watches Kaška and Oliver's animated greeting.

OLIVER

I'm so glad you made it. I didn't know if you would.

Asa shakes Oliver's hand, smiles politely.

Kaška takes a glass from the passing waiter, drinks it back.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

A soft-lit marble space. Asa stares back at his reflection, squirts some frothy soap into his palm and paints on the mirror. He steps back to view his work - a clown face.

INT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Asa peers over the balcony to the action below in the atrium where Oliver, the life of the party, introduces Kaška to everyone he speaks with.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Asa finds himself in a kitchen lit only by a huge skylight above.

SISSY

Pretty cool, huh?

Asa sees SISSY (20's), suave, perched on the marble top on the outer edges of the light.

Sissy.

(offers her hand)

You a friend of Ollie?

ASA

Friend of a friend.

SISSY

(looks Asa over)

I like your look, industrial. Cool.

She takes a rolled-up cigarette - orange embers in the blue light - offers it to Asa. Asa declines.

Strong silent type, huh? Not so many of you left these days.

(nudges a stool opposite)

Take a load off.

Asa sits, looks up at the moon through the glass as it breaks free from the wispy clouds momentarily.

INT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Kaška slowly apologises her way through the squeeze of people on the balcony, takes a stairway left.

INT. POOL - NIGHT

She pushes through a door and finds herself looking over a small swimming pool under-lit in low electric blue light. She CURSES, passes through.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kaška enters, approaches Sissy and Asa, Sissy LAUGHING, leaning into Asa, smoking and flirtatious.

SISSY

...you're so easy to talk to. I haven't even spoken about this stuff with my friends and we share everything.

KAŠKA

Hey.

Sissy withdraws onto her perch as Kaška appears, eyes her with suspicion.

Sorry to interrupt.

(takes Asa's arm)

Can I borrow you?

SISSY

(to Asa, flirty)

To be continued.

Kaška leads Asa up the short flight of stairs.

KAŠKA
(hushed tones)
Who's your friend?

ASA
Apparently, I'm a good listener.

KAŠKA
By virtue of not actually giving a
shit?

ASA
Maybe other people just find me
likable.

KAŠKA
That's because they don't have to
live with you. You tell her your
name?

ASA
Maybe later.

KAŠKA
Zho-pa. I'll never speak to you
again. Can you believe this place,
these people?

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A softly lit corridor, doubling as an overflow, leading back
towards the atrium. A cliche of young women look Asa over
covetously as they pass.

KAŠKA
(whispers)
What's with you tonight, Romeo?

Kaška stops Asa, looks him in the eye for a lingering BEAT -
uncertain emotions.

Ready to do blow the lid off this
place?

ASA
Lead the way.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Asa watches Kaška push through to the centre of the atrium. Time seems to slow. He catches her eyes as she throws him a glance over her shoulder, framed in the light, her smile, her spark.

As a spotlight plucks Kaška out of the half-light, a space opens around her. CONVERSATION drops to a murmur. The background MUSIC tapers off. All eyes turn.

Asa plunges into the white space with urgency, snatches Kaška's wrist, roughly. Kaška tries to pull away, can't, slaps his face. The SOUND silences the room. Asa spins with the momentum into a double turn and STOMPS the floor hard.

Asa lifts Kaška under the arms and tosses her. She lands, cat-like, flies towards him. He swings her off her feet but she rolls over his shoulders and away. They circle, animalistic.

The crowd thickens around the action, confused but captivated.

Rhythmical MUSIC slowly builds in the background as they clash again, dancing through a series of sexually charged wraps and holds. Their heavy coats are shed, revealing matching white vests beneath and their intertwined sinuous muscle.

The intensity of the panting and pouting, lip biting, scratching, hair pulling is both perfectly theatrical and suddenly, seemingly genuine for both.

At the crescendo, their lips hover expectantly, millimetres apart, their locked stare unperturbed by the CHEERS of the crowd - something unexpected happening between them. Only Oliver's hand on both their shoulders, breaks the spell.

OLIVER

That was no fucking joke!

Kaška and Asa breath, wipe sweating brows. The space closes around them. Asa and Kaška's eyes reconnect momentarily before they are pulled apart by the enthusiastic crowd, eager to share their praise.

That was so amazing, seriously.

Kaška is distracted suddenly, watches Jess slice through to Asa, wraps him in an urgent tearful embrace.

JESS

Is that really you?

Kaška watches in glimpses through the crowd as Asa takes Jess' head in his hands tenderly, strokes the tears from her cheeks, kisses her forehead, pulls her to his chest.

OLIVER
 (to Kaška's ear)
 Don't tell me, this is the girl?

Kaška is speechless.

They look pretty close.

Xander and a mixed pack of friends bundle past, en route to the door.

Here comes trouble.

Xander takes Jess's arm, casually, drags her after. She protests, pulls free. An argument erupts with Xander and friends SHOUTING and posturing. Garbled VOICES of conflict overpower the music and conversation. Champagne is thrown, a glass SMASHES on the floor. A minor casualty takes an accidental elbow in the mouth. Oliver tries to intercede. Kaška takes Asa's arm.

KAŠKA
 (shouts over the din)
 What's going on?

Asa meets her eyes but the jostling intensifies and they are separated as the altercation shifts as a bubbling huddle of NOISE out of the door into the street.

Oliver closes the door, shuts out the pandemonium.

OLIVER
 (to the room)
 Well, that one wasn't staged.

Conversations resume and the party goes on.

KAŠKA
 (prepares to exit)
 I'm so sorry.

OLIVER
 (easy smile)
 No big thing but I can't let you go out there alone.

Oliver grabs his coat.

EXT. GEORGIAN TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Oliver and Kaška exit into a chaos of indecipherable SHOUTING - boys and girls in varying states of intoxication argue and jostle.

Xander and two friends, lay, writhing with abdominal pain in the street while Asa helps Jess up to her feet, leads her away, tearful and CURSING.

OLIVER

Jesus!

Kaška covers her mouth.

Do I need to call the cops?

KAŠKA

(visibly deflated)

I think it's over.

Kaška slumps on the wall. Oliver joins her.

Asa and Jess argue MOS for a BEAT in the street before Asa drags her away by the arm.

Xander and his entourage crawl into the sports car. The car GROWLS and exits the scene.

OLIVER

You okay?

Kaška rakes at her hair.

KAŠKA

I don't know. I should go.

OLIVER

Go where? Stay. I've got plenty of room.

Kaška stares into space, struggling to process.

I'll drop you at your place later,
you can pick up some things, if you
like?

EXT. MARKET SQUARE - NIGHT

The generic SOUNDS of the night city in the b.g.

Jess yanks her arm free of Asa's grip, slams him in the chest, paces towards a frozen fountain in the centre of the deserted square.

JESS
(shivering)
God damn you.

Asa throws his coat over her shoulders.

ASA
(softer)
Put this on.

JESS
(shrugs it off)
Don't touch me.

Jess turns to face him, cheeks red with tears, make-up streaked.

You've got no right. It's my life!

ASA
Does your sugar daddy know how old you are? What d'you think he'd do if he found out?

JESS
Not that it fucking matters now.

A BEAT.

How is she?

ASA
What d'you think?

JESS
I don't...

ASA
(interrupts)
She's a fucking wreck, not knowing if you're on the street, shooting up somewhere.
(snatches her arm)
You fucking broke her in two, after all she's been through.

JESS
(breaks down)
Don't put that on me. Don't put that on me.

ASA
(softer now)
What were you thinking?

JESS
I wasn't thinking. I just needed to get away. You don't know what it's like, all of the pressure, the expectation. Everybody sacrificing for me, trying to be the perfect whiter than white high-achiever. I want to live my life, make mistakes, pull my weight, just like you.

ASA
You want to pull your weight? Fine, go back home, pull your weight.

Asa takes a deep breath, softens his physicality, strokes the hair from Jess's face.

JESS
Don't!

Jess pulls away, turns back, shivering badly.

How long have you been here? Since I left? Jesus. What about your life, everything?

Asa shrugs.

ASA
What did you think would happen, that we'd just give up on you?

Jess CURSES to herself, shakes her head.

It wouldn't have hurt you to call, let her know where you were.

JESS
So she could call the cops on me or send you to bring me back?

Asa gestures - here I am.

I like it here. I feel alive.

ASA

It's always going to be here, when you're ready but you've got to put things right first, with her. You owe her that much.

JESS

(snaps)

I know I do.

(softer)

I know I do.

Jess rests her head on Asa's chest. He wraps her in the coat.

What a fucking mess.

ASA

It's nothing. You're safe. That's all that matters.

They hold each other with unbridled sibling love.

JESS

Where did you learn to dance like that?

Asa shakes his head, looks off into space, pensive now.

EXT. BROAD COBBLED STREET - NIGHT

All is still, street light, shadows. A flicker of electric light from a BMW parked in the shadows.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Maxy and goons sit in the dark interior, all eyes on the street. Maxy answers his VIBRATING mobile.

MAXY

(Eastern lingo - on phone)

Freezing my nuts off...no, no sign. Wait...

INT/EXT. BMW - NIGHT

Maxy eyes an Aston Martin pulling in at the curb through the rear view mirror.

MAXY POV THROUGH WING MIRROR

Oliver exits the Aston Martin, opens the passenger door for Kaška, who steps out into the cold.

MAXY
 ...might be her. Don't recognise
 the guy. Okay, will do.

Maxy hangs up.

It's on.

A MUMBLE from the back as the car doors CRACK open.

EXT. BROAD COBBLED STREET - NIGHT

Oliver locks the car, catches Kaška by the arm as she crosses the street.

OLIVER
 This place? Are you serious? People
 joke about living in places like
 this, they don't actually do it.

KAŠKA
 (slows)
 Maybe you should leave me here. I
 could call tomorrow...

OLIVER
 Don't be crazy. You shouldn't...

Kaška sees, like a hazy dream, the figures moving towards them out of the dark.

What?

Oliver is SPARKED with a cattle prod before he can turn.

MAXY
 (Eastern lingo)
 Remember me, bitch?

Maxy catches Kaška by the collar.

Oliver drops to his hands and knees, watches from the ground as Kaška is lifted roughly off her feet and away by Maxy's goons.

Maxy snatches a clump of Oliver's hair.

Tell that fucking gypsy not to be a stranger.

He uses a pen to write a number on Oliver's forehead before dropping him on the sidewalk.

Oliver rolls over onto his back, GASPS for air, sees stars above in a black wispy sky.

Wheels GRIND at tarmac. Engine GROWL growing distant.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Kaška, squeezed in the back between two big goons, watches through the glass, powerless as the city streams by.

She turns as she glimpses Asa and Jess skirt a street light, just a half-beat before it's gone. She wipes a silent tear from her cheek.

EXT. BROAD COBBLED STREET - NIGHT

Oliver comes around to Asa stooped over him.

ASA

You hear me? You hurt?

Asa lifts Oliver, MUMBLING, to his feet.

Moments later, Oliver sits in the driver's seat of the Aston Martin, wrapped in his coat, his feet out on the tarmac. The lights are on.

Jess shivers in Asa's coat beneath the shop awnings.

Asa makes a call on Oliver's mobile.

OLIVER

I don't understand why we can't just call the cops.

ASA

We'll never see her again.

OLIVER

Who are these people?

Oliver rubs the back of his neck while Asa rakes at his hair, impatiently.

Asa SHUSHES Oliver as the call connects.

ASA
 (on the phone)
 It's me.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

The only light source beyond the glass wall where a scantily clad dancer performs a pole dance to a HEAVY BASS for an audience of one, framed in the shadows.

Dragon leans forward into view, silver hair to match his silver suit, close-cropped beard, eyes aglow with menace, perfect white teeth behind a mischievous maniacal smile, tattoos beneath the shirt cuffs, climbing from his chest towards his throat, shamanic in the half-light.

The volume drops on the sound-system. Dragon talks into his phone.

DRAGON
 You know how I found you? I own that fucking building. Life has a twisted sense of humour, huh, my friend?

INTERCUT: ASA AND DRAGON PHONE CALL

ASA
 I said I'd be there.

DRAGON
 Call it an insurance policy. Now you know what's at stake.

ASA
 There's showing up and there's closing the show. It's up to you.

DRAGON
 You beat that piece of shit and the slate is clean, the world is your fucking oyster.

ASA
 The girl too, papers, passport.

DRAGON
 I don't need to tell you what happens to her if you lose.

ASA
 I won't.

DRAGON

Make sure you're where you need to
be and you make sure you do what
you've got to do.

ASA

Nobody lays a finger...

Dragon ends the call, a smug smile stretches over his face.

EXT. BROAD COBBLED STREET - NIGHT

Asa CURSES, hands Oliver back his phone.

INT. HOLDING ROOM - DAWN

A bare room, stripped of any humanity. Weak dawn light from a skylight above illuminates a mattress on the floor where Kaška wakes from an uncomfortable sleep. She turns her head painfully to see rats nibbling at a crumb of old food, close by.

Kaška drags herself up to sitting, hugs her knees, looks up towards the light, shivers - cold fear.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Jess wakes on the mattress to the feel of the cat, pawing over her legs. She takes in the glowing fire, looks around for...

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAWN

Silhouetted against the damn sky, a landscape of tiled geometrical slopes, valleys and ridges punctuated by a forest of aials, steeples and chimneys.

Asa stoops, precariously on the ledge - certain death below. Snow flakes circle. As the sun breaks through the mist, Asa shields his eyes, stands, bathed in the brilliant light - reborn?

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Asa and Jess wait in line at a busy counter.

JESS

I want to help.

ASA
So help. If this thing goes south,
I need to know that you're
somewhere safe, you understand?

JESS
I feel like this is my fault.

ASA
It's not.

JESS
It fucking is and you know it.

Asa kisses her forehead. Jess lays her head on his chest.

What's she like?

Asa's face softens.

ASA
Hard work.

JESS
That dance was pretty hot.

ASA
Don't be fooled. She hates my guts.

JESS
Sure about that?

ASA
Sure.

JESS
You don't sound sure.

Asa shakes his head.

In love much?

ASA
Fuck off.

JESS
Whatever.

The SOUR FACE at the counter calls 'NEXT'.

INT. TRAIN STATION - PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Asa waits impatiently for a call to connect. Busy train station scenes and SOUNDS in the b.g.

INT. HOLDING ROOM - DUSK

The door wrenches open suddenly. Kaška sits up on the mattress, trying to look strong, defiant.

Maxy steps inside, looks her over, stoops at her side.

MAXY

(Eastern lingo - gentle menace)

Time to get cleaned up, bitch.
Tonight, you start working off that tab.

He snatches the crucifix from her throat.

Don't want to put off the clientele.

INT. RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY - NIGHT

Jess sits in the glow of the fire, wrapped in blankets. Asa stoops close by, eyes lost in the flames.

After a LONG BEAT, Asa stands, kisses Jess on the forehead.

JESS

Hey!

Asa pauses at the door for a BEAT, disappears into the dark.

EXT. WALLED-ALLEY - NIGHT

Asa drops over the wall into the alley, paces, shoulder into the wind, hands stuffed into his pockets, head low, boxer-rhythm.

He takes a folded slip of paper from his pocket as though not expecting to find it there. His eyes trace the letters - *1206 Central Station.*

INT. ATRIUM - NIGHT

Oliver toys with his keys, hesitant for a BEAT, pulls on his coat, thinks about putting on a scarf but decides against it and steps out into the night.

EXT. COMMERCIAL SQUARE - NIGHT

The usual crowds enjoy the festive fanfare of the city at night. In a recessed doorway, on the periphery, Asa speaks MOS with the old clown. They reach an agreement about something.

EXT. THE RED STAR - NIGHT

A lurid crowd cluster outside the Red Star. Tension in the air as two tribes, Eastern and Moroccan, respect an uneasy peace.

INT. DELIVERY BAY - NIGHT

Sounds of music and a vocal crowd from below. In the shadows, a parked BMW with tinted windows.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Darkness, silhouettes. Kaška, sat in the back, framed in a slither of light.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK - NIGHT

Sabina works the lurid crowd, crammed into the car park space, shouts over the high-tempo MUSIC - vodka shots with a pout and a fake smile.

The lights shut off.

Spotlights BUZZ onto the lower level, pick out SAILOR (30s), in a buccaneer sailor's cloak, flanked by a duo of Moroccan heavies and SAMI (40s), a soft-bodied mobster in an expensive suit and provocative red tie.

MC (O.S.)

(over the sound system)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for
joining us for tonight's special
event...

INT. FIRE ESCAPE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Pappy stands watch as Asa bounces on the balls on his feet, his back to the space. A RAP on the door before Maxy enters, chest-puffed and confident. Asa doesn't turn.

MAXY

You ready to do what you gotta do,
Gypsy-boy?

ASA

Where's the girl?

MAXY

Take his fucking head off then
we'll talk about the girl, huh?

Maxy notices Oliver on the stairs for the time, framed in shadow, exits.

SOUNDS from beyond echo into the space.

MC (O.S.)

(muffled)

...the black-hearted buccaneer, the
reigning champion...

The ROAR of the crowd.

ASA

Remember, once the shit hits the
fan, you get her out, okay?

OLIVER

What if they don't bring her out.

ASA

They'll bring her out. I'll make
sure of it.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Kaška sits, listens to the muffled drawl of the MC, virtually indecipherable but for the word 'Gypsy'.

Kaška feels for the crucifix. It's gone.

INT. FIRE ESCAPE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Pappy opens the door wide.

PAPPY
You ready, kid?

Asa turns to face the baying crowd beyond, face painted like the old clown's, streaked with sweat, melancholy and sinister.

Remember, he finds out your weak to
the ribs, it's finished.

Pappy leads out through the parting crowd, the glaring eyes, silenced to a whisper.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK - NIGHT

Asa fixes on the partially obscured figure of Sailor in the spot-light, weathered and battle-scarred, cold calm composure.

The Referee brings both fighters face to face.

Asa shakes Sailor's big pallet hand, they nod respectfully to one another as they part.

A pre-fight betting furore erupts around the floor.

Asa slips his gum-shield into his mouth, watches as Oliver drifts into the crowd, glances up to the balcony, silhouettes against the spot-lights.

Dragon leans forward into view, holds Asa's eyes for a BEAT.

PAPPY
Do what you gotta do, kid!

The Referee signals the fight is on.

Silence.

Boots GRAZE the concrete as both fighters begin the cautious courtship of measuring one another's rhythm, testing reactions with uncommitted jabs and parries.

Oliver slowly pushes through the dark towards Dragon while Asa and Sailor exchange more meaningful shots, both covering well, giving away little.

The crowd GASP as Sailor slips to one knee on a damp patch of concrete. Asa checks his cocked right.

DRAGON
(screams)
Finish that fucking slag!

Asa glances up to Dragon, fuming on the balcony.

A Second wipes up the moisture before the fight continues.

Oliver slow-swims towards the bubble of protected space around Dragon and his crew, scans female faces but doesn't find Kaška.

On the lower level, Sailor lands a right in close that spins Asa to his knees. The crowd ERUPT.

Asa spits blood on the concrete, raises an eye-brow casually up at Dragon while the Referee COUNTS over him.

Sami gestures up to Dragon - 'money'.

DRAGON (CONT'D)

Get the fuck up! Get the fuck up!

Asa stands at 'nine', swims into space. The action starts again. Side-bets cascade around the bay.

Dragon CURSES through gritted teeth, yanks at Maxy, barks urgent instructions in his ear MOS.

Maxy pushes past Oliver, heads for the stairwell, talks MOS into a covert earpiece/microphone as he goes.

INT. DELIVERY BAY - NIGHT

Goons 1 & 2 hurry out of the parked BMW and walk Kaška, dressed in heels and a small dress, towards the stairwell. Maxy meets them on his way up, grabs Kaška roughly by the arm and pulls her after.

MAXY

Behave yourself! Time to show your face to lover boy.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK - NIGHT

On the lower level, Maxy pushes Kaška towards the action. Glimpses through the crowd as Sailor's left hook finds Asa's vulnerable right side. Asa visibly winces, grits his teeth, takes a knee.

The Referee steps between the fighters. Asa wipes the blood dripping from the re-opened gash above his eye, breathes hard.

Kaška's eyes meet Oliver's briefly as they pass. She looks back over her shoulder but loses him as he hurries for the stairs.

INT. DELIVERY BAY - NIGHT

Breathless now, Oliver makes a discrete call into his mobile MOS, only feet from a security detail swapping lewd (Eastern) TALK at the entrance.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK - NIGHT

The Referee COUNTS over Asa while Sailor smirks as he paces, gestures to his right side and wags a finger at Asa, knowingly.

Asa's eyes find Kaška, close enough to touch now. She smiles back through her tears. He takes a deep preparatory breath, rises at 'nine', evades Sailor's frenzied attack and circles.

Oliver pushes towards the fight now, almost stumbles into the action, jostled by angry spectators. Asa meets his eye. He nods 'affirmative'.

Relief eclipses Asa's face. His demeanour changes before our eyes as he sucks up strength for the task ahead.

As Sailor closes in, he targets Asa's right side. Asa evades, smothers and ties up but Sailor renews his efforts.

A heavy metallic THUD echoes down from the delivery bay above, distracts from the action momentarily.

INT. DELIVERY BAY - NIGHT

The security detail, in panic mode, fast TALK into their earpieces as something outside PUNCHES against the metal shutters, warping the fabric.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK - NIGHT

Sailor swings a show-stopping overhand right at Asa's jaw but he shoulder rolls, protecting his right side, and circles out.

The ROAR of the crowd conceals the repeated SMASHING from the delivery bay above but Asa hears it, bites down on the pain - now or never.

Sailor gestures - stand and fight, turns to stoke the crowd.

Asa, sees the moment, races across the space, catches Sailor off-guard and sends him sliding across the concrete with a barn-busting right hand.

Enraged, sailor leaps to his feet, shoves the Ref out of his way and charges. Asa crashes his momentum - two rams colliding - he whirs at Sailor at close range with everything in his arsenal - a toe to toe war.

INT. DELIVERY BAY - NIGHT

The shutter doors rip open and the first of an army of COPS, geared up for a riot, pour inside, wrestle through the security...

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK - NIGHT

Sailor throws a hurtful hook to Asa's right side but Asa snaps a check-hook into Sailor's exposed jaw as it lands. Sailor staggers backwards, stunned. Asa fights through the pain, drops weight, comes up with a savage left kidney hook and uppercut combination. Sailor's eyes reach for the sky as he drops, down and out.

The Referee starts his COUNT but it's clear the fight is over. Sami and his heavies try in vain to prop Sailor back up but the Eastern crowd swarm the circle, raise Asa up.

DRAGON

Clever fucking boy!

Dragon roars ecstatic from the balcony, kisses one of his goons on the forehead forcibly.

Sporadic tribal fights erupt on the lower level as COPS spill into the car park.

Kaška breaks free from Maxy and the goons, who are too distracted by the raid to care.

The main lights flicker on, signalling a frantic exodus.

PAPPY

Let's get the fuck out of here!

Pappy wraps Asa in his coat but Asa whirls, eyes searching for and finding Kaška.

They push towards each other through the volatile crowd. Asa stumbles to one knee, in pain. Kaška reaches him, tries to get him on his feet just as the COPS pounce and overwhelm Asa to the ground.

Kaška is left holding his coat unable to break through.

Oliver appears, takes Kaška's arm, drags her, reluctantly, away as chaos descends.

EXT. DELIVERY BAY - NIGHT

Blue police lights. Snow and wind bellow through the SHOUTS and scuffles. Cops and thugs wrestle on the cobbles.

Kaška and Oliver hover at a safe distance beyond the entrance.

OLIVER
(takes Kaška's arm)
We should go.

The scuffle intensifies as Asa and Sailor are frog-marched out by the Cops and tossed into a waiting van. A bottle SMASHES. A SIREN blasts.

KAŠKA
Where are they taking him?

OLIVER
I don't know but it's not safe here. The cops were a diversion, to get you out. Do you understand?

Oliver drags Kaška away.

INT. POLICE VAN - NIGHT

The outer doors SLAM shut and the van starts to move, blue-lights flash. Asa peers through the mesh window of the holding cell, glimpses Kaška for a half-beat and then she's gone.

EXT. THE RED STAR - NIGHT

Kaška tries to keep pace with the police van but in seconds, it's gone.

INT. POLICE VAN - NIGHT

Asa slumps onto the bench, clutches his bleeding eye - pain setting in now. Sailor CURSES at the cops in the other cell, tries to rip off the cage door.

EXT. GEORGIAN TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Oliver's Aston Martin pulls up at the curb. He gets out, opens the door for Kaška, still wrapped in Asa's coat, shivering.

INT. GEORGIAN TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Oliver hits the soft lights, buzzing with adrenaline. Kaška looks anything but.

OLIVER
You wanna drink, something to eat?

Kaška slumps onto the steps, head in hands, fatigued.

Oliver disappears for a BEAT, returns with two bottles of beer, smoking cold.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
You could use a drink after tonight.

Oliver holds the other beer under Kaška's nose.

KAŠKA
What I really need, is to sleep.

OLIVER
(disappointed)
Sure thing, I'll show you to your room.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Oliver opens a door off the main stairwell to a well appointment bedroom and en-suite. Kaška steps inside. Her eyes scan the scene.

OLIVER
Not your usual standard but it'll do, I hope.

Oliver rolls the coat collar back from Kaška's shoulder, strokes the skin on her neck.

KAŠKA
I really need to sleep.

OLIVER
Relax. Everything's fine.

Oliver moves towards Kaška, kisses her neck. She pulls away.

It's okay. You're safe. All your troubles are in the past. You can stay here with me now.

KAŠKA

Thanks for the offer but...

OLIVER

But what? That punchbag and his sister will be long gone by morning.

Kaška returns a puzzled look.

Didn't you know? The girl's his sister. She's only fifteen or something, a runaway. City's full of them, like rats.

Kaška shakes her head in disbelief, struggles to process.

KAŠKA

I need to go.

OLIVER

(blocks her path)
Go where? Don't be crazy.

KAŠKA

Get out of my way!

OLIVER

(stands his ground)
Not until I've had what's mine.

Kaška slaps Oliver hard. He reels back into the stairwell, shock turning to rage. He lunges for Kaška but she manages to shoulder closed the door and turns the lock.

Oliver BANGS from the other side.

OLIVER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you? I was just having a little fun. Open up. Open the fucking door.

Kaška catches her breath. The door handle RATTLES violently up and down.

You know what I fucking did for you tonight? Doesn't that entitle me to a little courtesy?

(MORE)

OLIVER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (after thought)
 How about just a blow-job? I'll
 pay, whatever the going rate.

Kaška wedges a chair against the door. Slumps to the floor,
 covers her ears.

INT. POLICE CELL - MORNING

Asa lays on his back, wrapped in a blanket on the rudimentary
 cot. Weak light washes over him through the dirty barred-
 window. His eye is patched and his bloody hands cleaned up,
 plastered in places.

A key GRINDS in the lock. Asa sits up with great discomfort.

A stony-faced cop looks down at him, gestures him to follow.
 Asa reaches out a hand which the cop ignores. Asa limps to
 his feet.

INT. ATRIUM - MORNING

Kaška silently emerges from the guest bedroom and picks her
 way over Oliver, asleep around a whiskey bottle outside the
 door. She tiptoes down the stairwell and to the door. The
 GRATE of the key in the lock wakes Oliver who staggers and
 slides down the stairs after her.

OLIVER
 Wait!

She's already out of the door.

EXT. GEORGIAN TOWN HOUSE - MORNING

Snow on the ground. Kaška is already at the corner when
 Oliver emerges. He unlocks the Aston Martin at the curb,
 jumps in. The big engine HUMS to life.

EXT. CITY STREETS - MORNING

The wind rips through the open coat and the thin dress,
 almost bundles Kaška off the pavement. She struggles to stay
 balanced in the heels.

INT. ASTON MARTIN - MORNING

Oliver accelerates and swoops into the curb, parks fast, eyes
 track Kaška as she drops into the subway.

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

A Traffic Warden stops Oliver at the car door.

TRAFFIC WARDEN
You can't park here!

OLIVER
(pushes past)
Clamp me!

Oliver descends into the subway.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - MORNING

Kaška shivers on the platform as a train ROCKETS from the tunnel and comes to a stop. She pushes on-board through the alighting passengers.

Oliver arrives, panting for breath, lunges for the closing door.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - MORNING

Oliver peers through the partition door at Kaška beyond in the next carriage, unreachable.

Kaška watches the lights flicker past, rakes at her hair, impatient.

EXT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Asa staggers down the steps to the street, wearing a woman's faux-fur coat, too small. Snow flurries. Walking is hard work but he struggles on determined.

A tinted Mercedes rolls into the curb ahead. The back door CRACKS open as Asa comes alongside, Dragon poised on the back seat.

DRAGON
You shouldn't be seen out like
that, you'll make the wrong kind of
friends.

Asa leans in, painfully.

ASA
Too late for that, I think.

DRAGON

You kept your mouth shut, I trust?

Dragon hands Asa an envelope. Asa checks the contents - Kaška's passport and papers.

Hope she was worth it.

Dragon smirks.

Asa steps back as the Mercedes speeds away back into traffic, tucks the envelope into his trousers, checks the time with a passerby.

EXT. WALLED-ALLEY - MORNING

Kaška scales the wall and disappears into the garden within.

Oliver tries to follow but can't find the footing.

INT. PENTHOUSE - MORNING

Kaška arrives at the Penthouse and finds a wet boot print on the carpet. On the floor, close to the hearth lays an envelope, 'Kaška', on the front.

Kaška hastily opens the envelope, looks over her papers inside. She wipes a tear from her cheek, stands, stuffs the envelope into the coat pocket, discovers the scribbled note within. Kaška reads - '1206 central station'.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY - DAY

Oliver checks his watch, checks his reflection in a shop window while Kaška emerges from the alley onto the street and heads away.

Oliver realises too late, CURSES, gives chase.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Kaška wades against human traffic towards the platform and boards the train.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Oliver and Kaška's eyes meet through the closing door. Oliver puts his hand to the glass. Kaška gives him the 'finger'. The train speeds away

INT. CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Asa limps through the train station, draws curious glances from passersby. He pauses for a BEAT to check the departure board for the 1206 - platform 3.

INT. PLATFORM 3 - DAY

Jess waits, impatiently, next to a train that's itching to leave. She checks the time, bites her lip, sees Asa emerge from the chaos, shakes her head, can't suppress her smile, relieved. They embrace.

INT. CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Kaška pushes through commuters and tourists, falls over a trolley-case, picks herself up, kicks off her shoes and races for Platform 3, barefoot.

INT. PLATFORM 3 - DAY

Kaška wades desperately through the rough sea of bodies on the platform, glimpses Jess climb the footplate.

A whistle BLOWS.

KAŠKA
(just a murmur)
Wait!

Kaška slows, visibly crumples as she watches the train roll away into the near distance. Her eyes moisten, hands scratch at the pain in her chest, her rendered heart.

ASA (O.S.)
There's another one along at
quarter past.

Kaška spins on a dime, sees what she missed in the heat of the chase, Asa, leaning against a pillar on the platform side, striking a pose.

KAŠKA
Zho-pa. Fucking, zho-pa!

Kaška turns away, momentarily, to compose herself, wipe the tears from her eyes.

ASA
Was that a tear for me? I'm
touched.

KAŠKA

Aren't you supposed to be on that train or wouldn't they let you on looking like transsexual Rocky?

ASA

Laugh it up. Turns out cops have a sense of humour. Who knew? Aren't you supposed to be doing the happy ending thing with your prince charming?

KAŠKA

That's why I'm here.
(approaches - serious now)
You're not going back with her?

ASA

I think I deserve a little me-time, besides, there's a girl here I wanted to get to know, under different circumstances.
(smiles)
I met her at a party the other night, she seems keen.

KAŠKA

(slams him in the chest)
Be serious.

Asa GROANS in genuine pain.

Shit. I'm sorry.

Kaška strokes the faux-fur collar for effect.

ASA

Wanna swap?

KAŠKA

Sounds good.

They take their coats off to swap. Kaška gasps at the sight of Asa's bruised and scratched body.

ASA

It's worse than it looks.

Kaška shakes her head, strokes Asa's face, kisses his lips gently, puts her arms around him. Asa is awkward with the contact at first but sinks deeper and deeper into the embrace, rests his cheek on her crown, closes his eyes.

KAŠKA

I want to stay like this
forever...only my feet are too
cold.

ASA

What's with you and bare feet?

Kaška shrugs.

Come on, jump up.

Asa stoops for a piggy back.

KAŠKA

No way. Look at the state of you.

ASA

I'm fine. I just need some sleep
and a shower.

KAŠKA

I didn't want to be the one to say
it.

ASA

Jump up.

Kaška shakes her head, amused.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Asa wades through the crowded concourse with Kaška on his
back. Mouths gape as they pass.

KAŠKA

So, I guess this puts your dancing
career on hold.

ASA

Fuck that. I'm good to go.

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

Asa wakes, wrapped in a blanket on the mattress, bathed in
the amber glow of a mature fire. His cuts and bruises look
more settled, clean, dressed.

He struggles to sit up with the pain. POV of the darkening
space - he's alone. Snow falls past the window.

He drinks from a bottle of orange juice, tries to open and close his fist, painfully.

Kaška enters from the dark interior, wearing an old-lady's floral robe, towel drying her hair.

KAŠKA

Fuck! That water's freezing.

She tosses the towel, hurries under the blanket, lays back onto the mattress, stares at the ceiling for a silent BEAT.

Kaška ruffles under the blanket, tosses the floral robe out onto the floor.

Come in, it's cold.

ASA

You wanna do this now?

KAŠKA

Oh yeah.

ASA

Could be painful.

KAŠKA

I'll make it worth your while.

Asa edges, painfully, back under the covers.

ASA

There's something you should probably know about me.

Kaška turns to look at him.

Asa. My name is Asa.

A BEAT.

KAŠKA

Sounds like a name people give to a horse.

ASA

Fuck off.

KAŠKA

I'm joking. It's a good name. It fits. Asa. Asa. Yeah, I like it.

Kaška gently slides over Asa who GROANS with pain initially and then...a smile.

So far so good?

Kaška leans in towards Asa's lips, hovers, tantalisingly. As they kiss, the door SPLINTERS open. A Building Crew file into the apartment, set for work.

Asa CURSES but Kaška keeps kissing, pulls the blankets up and over them.

FADE OUT: