

FINDING BELGRADE

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EXT. BELGRADE STREETS, SERBIA - DAY

It's a morning like any other in the streets of the capital. Our attention focuses on a street of a neighborhood inhabited by ordinary workers.

A MAN (fifty years) with a heavy-looking suitcase walks precisely in that street. He wears a curious white jacket, pants and shoes in light colors, which certainly distinguish him from other pedestrians.

Just ahead, two buildings were destroyed by bombing which in those days have devastated the capital, but still don't see the result of the attack on Belgrade.

The man stops in front of a gray building. Finds the right name on the intercom and presses the correct button. Waits. A CLICK and the door is open. The man enters the building.

INT. NIKOLA'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

The house in which there will be the rest of the scene is a pretty apartment, probably inhabited by wealthy people since there are beautiful paintings hanging on the walls, old wooden furniture and knick-knacks of value.

The living room is the first room for those who enter. In this comforting room there are two items that will surely attract more attention: a grand piano placed in the center and on the wall a huge painting depicting the Battle of Blackbird's Field (or Battle of Kosovo), fought at Kosovo Polje, where among the crowd of Slavics and Ottomans soldiers stands the figure of the prince Stefan Lazar who rides a mighty white horse.

KNOCK at the door.

The landlord, NIKOLA JOVANOVIĆ, goes to open.

Nikola is a man of forty years with watchful eyes and sometimes severe, from refined manners and polite ways of doing, but also knows how to be likeable as reserved. He has an interesting past, that sooner or later we will come to know.

The man of the previous scene, dressed in white with a suitcase, waits to be accommodated.

Nikola brings the guest into the house, then closes the door behind him. Once inside the two shake hands.

In his full white chic clothes, hair slicked and skin stretched, the man may appear a stylish guest or a threatening stranger.

NIKOLA

How can I talk with you?

GUEST

What do you mean, please?

NIKOLA

How can I call you?

GUEST

Mr. Jovanov, we agreed that I wouldn't told you my name.

NIKOLA

I know, just to have a reference point.

GUEST

Oh, yeah. Well, let's see...under the circumstances, I guess you can call me Sputnik, what do you think?

NIKOLA

Doesn't seem appropriate.

SPUTNIK

So don't call me in no way. So much better.

(indicates the piano)

Can I lay here?

NIKOLA

Sure.

The guest (SPUTNIK) puts his suitcase on the grand piano. Opens the suitcase, carefully unhooking the six hooks. His movements are slow and professional.

SPUTNIK

Really nice...tell me, do you play?

NIKOLA

Yes.

SPUTNIK

Ah! I know it's a pretty stupid question, if someone who has a piano in the living room is able to play but I know many people, people who are comfortable in terms of money, who keep at home such instruments without know how to play. They hold those tools, I

(MORE)

SPUTNIK (CONT'D)

think, for a simple matter of aesthetics. A piano in the living room makes it more...intellectual, isn't it?

(pause)

However, do you often play your piano?

NIKOLA

Sometimes, though these days...

SPUTNIK

Natural. Who would have the desire? And who would find the time, especially. What material is done, if I may ask?

NIKOLA

Wood.

SPUTNIK

Oh, I know I know. I say, what type of wood?

NIKOLA

The soundboard is in spruce, as the base of the keyboard. The somiere, instead, must be beech.

SPUTNIK

Don't tell me that the keys are ivory.

NIKOLA

Of course. Ivory and ebony.

Sputnik spreads on the flat surface of the instrument a cloth, enlarges it well and removes folds.

SPUTNIK

It must be a precious object, right?

NIKOLA

Precious for those who play it and those who have the pleasure of hear it.

SPUTNIK

Natural.

Sputnik lays some GUNS on the cloth. They all look brand new, shiny, sparkling. By the way in which the work is done,

we can guess that our guest is an expert and he does it with great elegance, similar as a seller of the expensive Fabergé eggs.

NIKOLA

Tell me, do you play something?

SPUTNIK

If I play something? Me?

(laughs)

No, Mr. Jovanov, no. Oh, I would, of course, who wouldn't know how to play? But unfortunately, because of my stubbornness, I've never applied myself to art, any kind of art, nor the composition.

NIKOLA

I'm of the idea that art, in whatever form, is within us. Every one of us. I think that anyone who has a natural gift related to art.

SPUTNIK

An interesting thought.

NIKOLA

Unfortunately, however, not all the roses bloom in the same manner. Some people are luckier than others, there's who became famous for the use of his art and who is forgotten. And that's a pity. The talent should never be wasted.

SPUTNIK

You're in true. My father loved music. He loved Prokofiev. Knew how to use the flute and I don't know how the hell he could but sounded Visions fugitives, that if I'm not mistaken it's for piano. Do you think, he was so tied to that stick that brought it at war and like him has never came back.

NIKOLA

You can't play but you're interested in music.

SPUTNIK

Oh no no no no. It's just that I know many people and among them

(MORE)

SPUTNIK (CONT'D)

there are also some musicians. No, the music is not my forte. Let's just say that I appreciate music, as we all, for that matter, but it is not my forte. Back to the subject we did a while ago, about art in all of us, I'd say to have developed a particular attitude related to my job. I'm sure many wouldn't call it art, and maybe it's true, but it's a craft of ancient origins and, fortunately for me, not many people are willing to join in this activity, which incidentally is rather profitable.

There are six guns, of different size and power, lay down on the cloth. Sputnik, or anyone really he is, is ready to prove his talent in the sale of weapons smuggling.

SPUTNIK

So, we can begin. Say what you like most.

Nikola approaches at the piano. Look at the weapons in front of him, looking for that perfect. His gaze is fixed on a long-barreled revolver. He picks up the gun, holding it as an expert. This makes us understand that isn't the first time that Nikola has to do with a firearm.

SPUTNIK

Smith & Wesson 686. Excellent weapon. A piece really resistant, as his sister, on the other hand, the model 586. In stainless steel, this. Drum with a capacity of six shots, three systems of security, eight-inch barrel, light and obviously .357 Magnum. Not bad, eh?

NIKOLA

Indeed.

SPUTNIK

But you're not limited to a single glance. Above there's all that you can be desired.

Nikola lays down the Smith and grabs a gun which looks more dated, similar to a weapon of a soldier of the Second World War.

NIKOLA

Colt?

SPUTNIK

Exactly. Model M1911, for the uninitiated Colt .45, the weapon par excellence of American soldiers, I dare say. A beautiful object, sure, though, let's face it, it's a cliché, a weapon that can be found in any lane of the city. You know, I keep it for aficionados of the genre, the nostalgics. But take care about this.

Sputnik takes the gun from the hand of Nikola and indicates the muzzle of the weapon.

SPUTNIK

(continues)

See? I cut the muzzle, so the bullet purchases more power at the time of the shooting. I understand it can damage the useful shot but I don't think you're interested in precision work.

NIKOLA

And this one?

Nikola grabs a semiautomatic pistol, similar to the previous one.

SPUTNIK

Italian. Model M9, power supply from fifteen shots, caliber 9. This's brand new, Mr. Jovanov. My price will not do anyone other, I assure you.

Nikola lays the object and thinks.

SPUTNIK

Think about it, think about it calmly.

NIKOLA

I would be interested in all six. Is that a problem?

SPUTNIK

Problem? For me there's no problem.

(MORE)

SPUTNIK (CONT'D)

You can take what wants, any article that inspires you. It's all at your disposal and at a great price.

NIKOLA

I decided. I would purchase all the samples. How much?

SPUTNIK

Let's see what we have here.

Sputnik indicates the weapons one by one, counts them. Mentally he does the calculation of the total.

Nikola takes the wallet from his pocket.

SPUTNIK

Mmmm...I'd say five hundred fifty thousand.

Nikola extracts a large number of dinar banknotes from the wallet. Passes them to the guest. Sputnik takes the loot and fast as an experienced banker counts them all. All is correct.

SPUTNIK

Perfect.

He takes the wad of banknotes, rolled them and hides them under the white dress, in a hidden pocket.

SPUTNIK

I'd say that you and I are fine. Look, I leave the suitcase so you can keep safe all that stuff. A tribute of the house.

NIKOLA

Have you any rifles?

SPUTNIK

Rifles? Sure. What kind? Semiautomatic? Assault? Carbine? Anti-tank?

NIKOLA

Close range.

SPUTNIK

Let's take a shotgun or a hunting rifle?

NIKOLA

I was thinking of a Winchester.  
Have you got a Winchester?

SPUTNIK

Mr. Jovanov, if I hadn't some  
beautiful Winchester in my  
inventory , I could close the whole  
shebang. Who does what I do and  
doesn't keep pieces of the genre,  
is like a whore who doesn't do the  
up and down. Of course I've  
Winchester.

NIKOLA

The next time you're around, bring  
me one.

SPUTNIK

Good. And for ammunition? How are  
we doing?

NIKOLA

I've to do the full. A great excuse  
to pass here next time.

SPUTNIK

Splendid. As they say, it's a  
pleasure doing business with you,  
professor.

NIKOLA

Look, I was preparing the coffee.  
Would you take a cup with a bit of  
vodka?

INT. SOFIJA'S APARTMENT - DAY

A small apartment, where can only live a family of workers:  
a bare living room, with sofa, television and radio, a  
small, narrow kitchen, a bathroom and one bedroom.

BEDROOM

SOFIJA stands in front of the mirror. She's already dressed  
to go out. Puts lipstick on her lips, looking herself  
through own reflection.

Sofija has recently exceeded thirty. She's a beautiful  
woman, with fine features and dark hair. Someone might  
mistake her for a look-alike of some French actress of the  
sixties, with those big blue eyes.

On the bedside table that holds the big glass are the bag of Sofija, a few bottles of perfume and a photo surrounded by a gold frame, and this frame seems to be the only object of some value in the room. The photo (in black and white) depicts the upper half bust of a man in his thirties, look serious, stern and proud. What makes the photograph curious is that looks just like the picture suitable for framing on a grave. Probably, the man in the photo is deceased.

We may or may not notice a small calendar, opened on "MAY". The year, written in red letters, is "1999".

SOFIJA

Wake up, we must go to Danica.

From the sheets of the bed emerges a baby, MARKO, the son of Sofija, a ten years old boy.

They communicate looking each other through the mirror.

SOFIJA

It's almost time to go.

MARKO

What time is it?

SOFIJA

It's time to go.

Sofija has ended up with the lipstick. Closes it and puts back in the bag. Then takes the comb.

SOFIJA

How do you feel today? Better?

MARKO

Yes, better.

SOFIJA

And then you haven't excuses. Go to the kitchen and have breakfast. There's some milk.

MARKO

Mom?

SOFIJA

Yes, Marko?

MARKO

The building has collapsed?

SOFIJA

No. Not yet.

Sofija smiles to her son, looking at him from the glass.

SOFIJA

Not yet.

MARKO

But if it collapses, where we go?

SOFIJA

I've already said this, and if I'm not mistaken I also said that I don't like to say these things. We aren't going anywhere. Our place is here. You and I stay here.

MARKO

But it's not safe here. The radio says--

SOFIJA

The radio is sad these days. Let's hear it, where would you go?

MARKO

Mmmm...I don't know. If possible, I would stay here at home.

SOFIJA

That's it.

MARKO

And if the building is taken?

SOFIJA

Marko, breakfast. Come on, otherwise we'll be late.

Sofija turns to his son.

SOFIJA

How am I?

INT. STAIRS OF THE BUILDING - DAY

Sofija and Marko are on the landing of their floor. Marko has a backpack on his shoulders. Sofija closes the door.

Not far away, Nikola opens the door of his apartment and leaves the guest. The two shake hands one last time. Sputnik comes down the stairs.

Sofija puts the keys in bag, takes Marko by the hand and they start to down the stairs.

SOFIJA

Good morning, Professor Jovanov.

NIKOLA

Good morning to you, Sofija.

That exchange of words so simple and natural is an habit for they two. And they're right: in the palace, there are few people who have decided to stay there and among them there are Nikola, Sofija and Marko.

Nikola backs inside his apartment.

Sofija and Marko down the stairs.

EXT. BELGRADE STREETS - DAY

It's summer, and a tepid sun illuminates the quiet roads of the capital.

Sofija holds the hand of his son Marko. They walk in front of homes, shops, hotels...

...until they pass next to a BOMBED BUILDING, standing only half. The upper floors appear to have been torn by a giant hand.

Sofija and Marko don't react to this horror and continue to walk. Apparently they're used to walking in the midst of destruction. In fact, by several days Belgrade's undergoing his punishment.

Debris...destroyed homes...pieces of buildings on the streets...then...

...a fire truck, in BLARING SIRENS, passes by them, as fast as a police car in hot pursuit.

Sofija and Marko continue to walk...

INT. KRISTINA RESTAURANT, BELGRADE - DAY

Kristina is a luxury restaurant, frequented by notaries and accountants of passage. At one time, before this mess, Kristina was also full by tourists that now there aren't more. The war also brings the crisis.

In the great hall, there are only three tables occupied: two seniors, a group of girls and a couple of men on their lunch break.

Sofija takes orders from the latter table. She wears a maid outfit, with a waistcoat and a pair of burgundy pants. Finished pinning the order on the notebook, she heads to the

kitchen.

INT. KRISTINA RESTAURANT (KITCHEN) - DAY

One cook, MATEJ, bustles between stove, pots on the fire and dishes waiting to be washed.

In the kitchen there's also the other waitress, JANA, same age of Sofija. This one, instead of helping the busy chef, has eyes glued to the TV.

There's a loud VOICE in the room which comes from a television. On television, the reporter speaks in front of the camera, commenting that surrounds him: behind him, a country literally destroyed, on the ground, like it was destroyed by a fire of monstrous proportions.

Sofija makes her entrance into the kitchen.

SOFIJA

Fish soup.

MATEJ

Fish soup? Fish soup.

SOFIJA

Jana, why aren't you in the saloon?  
Those of six are waiting for at  
least five minutes.

Jana hasn't heard. She's too passionate by the words of the journalist.

SOFIJA

Hey, you heard me? Look, if the  
boss doesn't see you in the saloon  
within a minute you risks and risks  
a lot.

JANA

(focuses on tv)

Now I'm going. Ends the report and  
then I go. Say, Sofija, how has  
been there for you?

SOFIJA

As always. Why? Has happened  
something to you?

JANA

I tell you that my parents's house  
was hit. Luckily they were down in  
the shelter of the neighbors.

SOFIJA

I'm sorry. Where they will stay?

JANA

I suppose that they'll come to stay with me for a while. At least until stop bombing.

MATEJ

Bombing never stop.

JANA

Don't be pessimistic. Of course bombing will stop.

MATEJ

I'm not pessimistic. I say things as they are. Bombing will not stop.

JANA

Of course they will stop instead. And you know why they stop? Because we give up, that's why.

MATEJ

Lower the voice, Jana.

SOFIJA

These soups come or not?

MATEJ

You'll put yourself to disturb, now?

JANA

Sofija, have you heard of Pristina?

SOFIJA

Has something happened? How many deaths?

JANA

On the radio they said fifty but perhaps more.

On television, the reporter indicates the houses affected by the bombs and the road full of rubble.

JOURNALIST

(filtered from the TV)

... and it was wiped out, as you see, a whole street of this residential area. Look. Debris everywhere. Seems to have been a

(MORE)

## JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

tornado. It was all destroyed. I don't know what effect have the images that we're broadcasting but I can assure you that here isn't a pretty sight. Undoubtedly there are dead and injured...

The silence fills the kitchen. DRAGAN, the senior manager of the restaurant, in tails, passes next to the kitchen. Enters. He's angry.

## DRAGAN

Why the hell are you both in the kitchen? There's some customers in the dining room, ladies, and in the case you forget where you are, well, you're in a restaurant and in a restaurant as it should be isn't good to leave alone customers, have you heard me?

## SOFIJA

Excuse me. I was waiting for the fish soup.

## DRAGAN

The three wants the fish soup but those two at five expect a bottle of Slivovitz which reached not the table number five. What happened to that bottle, can you tell? To bring a bottle in the dining room you don't need to wait for the cook who has to finish to prepare the dish, isn't it? Am I wrong?

## SOFIJA

No. You're not in wrong.

## DRAGAN

Good. Those of table six expect from six minutes. If they were to wait for another minute I'm going to take the order myself and you will be found out of this kitchen forever, have you understand?

## SOFIJA

I'll go, sir.

## DRAGAN

And turn off that thing. May distract the cook. If ye stunned in

(MORE)

DRAGAN (CONT'D)

front of that kind of box, it happens that instead of tomato sauce ends up bleach on the soup, I made myself clear?

(to Matej)

I mean, I made myself clear?

Matej nods his head while mixes the soup on the fire.

DRAGAN

That's the last time I see you do nothing.

(as Jana)

This goes also for you, young lady.

Dragan gets out of the kitchen.

Sofija goes to the showcase and takes one of the bottles of Slivovitz. Lifts up her eyes to the sky watching Jana. That look means "I told you to go get the order but you...". She returns in the dining room.

EXT. BELGRADE STREETS - DAY

Sofija and Jana walk together on the street. Both return home after the morning spent at work. Jana smokes a pipe of those old-fashioned, clamped between her teeth, and from mouth comes out every now and then a cloud of smoke.

The strange thing is that the streets of Belgrade for some parts retain city's architectural splendor, while in others, like a slow fade, reveal destroyed, sick, under attack.

Ruins of houses, wood, lime, cement...

Among all those wrecks, two women walk arm in arm and laugh.

JANA

I mean, after devouring a steak as big as a house, after drinking a bottle of shoddy wine and after a liter and a half of chocolate fondue, have you the courage to ask for a taste of the stew?

Sofija laughs and brings her head back.

JANA

(continues)

Have you the courage? After all that melted chocolate? Did you see that one? He was so fat, so...like a balloon, those that fly, like...

SOFIJA

(laughing)

Hot air balloon.

JANA

Worse. I tell you he couldn't take the fork because his hand was too big. With that hand couldn't take the fork and pull up the fries. He tried, poor man, made me tenderly. It took him an entire half hour. He'd have done it before to open his mouth and throw everything down. And his wife? A nail. Lean like hunger. Of course, whenever I got there and put the dish on the table, that disappeared. I had to remove fast my hand or he'd have eaten my fingers. You saw how did he end up the fondue.

SOFIJA

No. How did he do?

JANA

You know that if someone orders that dark gruel we give a teaspoon, right? Now tell me, if that walrus couldn't use a fork, how do you expect he's able to eat with a tiny teaspoon? That's why there was that sort of skeleton wife. The woman took her bag and pulled out you know what? A trowel.

Sofija is unable to restrain herself.

JANA

(continues)

Such as those for shelling ice in the fridge, you know? And you know what she did? She fed him. As a newborn. With that kind of shovel she has made him swallow the whole fondue. At the end of the meal the fatty had all the dirty face, like a pig which wallows in the mud. The same thing. His wife took one edge of the tablecloth and helped him wipe. A terrible scene.

Sofija calms down. Her face is red, but gradually resumes to be serious.

SOFIJA

At least sometimes there's a lot of fun.

JANA

Yes, sometimes. And what about that one who chewed the steak and his dentures came off?

Sofija starts to laugh again.

JANA

(continues)

He wanted to swallow that piece of meat as hard as marble. He grabbed the steak with his teeth, if you want to call teeth, so he pulled pulled pulled and then...the dentures is blown out from the mouth...he looks for search his teeth...and the dentures remained attached to the steak!

They laugh.

JANA

I saw him again, that old man. A few times he returned to the restaurant but without the dentures. Do you know what orders now? The soup.

Sofija begins to stop laugh.

JANA

It's true. Sometimes we make some good laugh.

SOFIJA

Yeah. If you start to read the newspaper or listen to the radio you can't laugh anymore.

JANA

What will be? Thirty? Forty days that we're under attack?

SOFIJA

I don't know and honestly I don't care so much. To me they look more.

(MORE)

SOFIJA (CONT'D)

Many more.

JANA

Oh, don't bring you down now,  
Sofija. We'll make it.

SOFIJA

To do what?

JANA

To stay alive. Just pray.

They continue their walk.

On a piece of wall that was once the load-bearing wall of a house, hangs a large torn poster with the face of Slobodan Milosevic.

INT. STAIRS OF THE BUILDING - DAY

Sofija climbs the stairs to reach the apartment. Immediately behind her, Marko, backpack on his shoulders, says what he did the whole morning at the home of his friend Danica. They arrive at the landing of their plan.

Nikola, ready to go out, locks the door. He turns them a greeting.

SOFIJA

Good morning, Professor Jovanov.

NIKOLA

'Morning, Sofija.

Nikola hails Marko with a gesture of his head. With the briefcase in his right hand, he begins to descend the stairs.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE (HISTORY CLASSROOM) - DAY

A large classroom that can hold at least two hundred seats. Students present, however, are very few, sparse in the classroom, in groups or solitary.

Nikola, standing, holds his daily lesson of contemporary history. His manner of teaching are direct, fast and he's able to make the subject matter interesting. In this case, the First World War.

Behind him, a large canvas for projections.

The projected slide shows the famous photograph of GAVRILO PRINCIP.

## NIKOLA

Princip was a member of Young Bosnia and was part of a secret society called the Black Hand, unification or death, which included among its plans the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. As you know, this guy of twenty years succeeded in his aim. I'll spare you the spiel about the various messes which showed that twenty-eight June. In a nutshell, as perhaps you are aware, was only for a series of coincidences, strange coincidences, thanks to which Princip was able to fire the fatal shots but we've aware that, originally, was supposed to have been a bomb to cause the departure of Ferdinand and his wife Sophie.

Nikola chooses from a basket bearing the label "WAR" and insert another slide in the projector: the new shows a photograph in poor conditions of NEDELJKO CABRINOVIC.

## NIKOLA

What you see behind me isn't as famous as Princip but that's because the story wasn't on his side. Nedeljko Cabrinovic was the one who threw a bomb at the vehicle that carried the prince and his wife to the town hall of Sarajevo. Unfortunately for him, the bomb didn't kill the designated target, and Cabrinovic arrived at the extreme solution: he took the cyanide pill in his pocket, put it in his mouth and threw himself off the bridge, ending up between the waters of the Miljacka, but didn't die. Captured by the authorities, he was sentenced to prison. It was the tuberculosis that killed him in his cell, two years after the failed attack. Cabrinovic was fourteen when he tried to kill the heir to the throne of Austria. A little boy. The next slide shows the arrest of Princip. Can you see

(MORE)

NIKOLA (CONT'D)

him? Can you see him in the picture?

The third slide is that of arrest of Gavrilo Princip, hunted by police officers.

NIKOLA

He's the one who tries to wriggle out of the seizure of the guards. So that day were arrested Cabrinovic and Princip while the remaining four bombers mingled in the crowd and nobody didn't had news about them. Princip spent four horrific years at the prison of Terezín, north of Prague. The first time he tried to commit suicide he ingested cyanide, but he vomited the poison and made no effect. The second time he tried to shoot himself, but fate once again not answered him because his gun was removed.

(pause)

History tells us that it was this guy to cause the First World War. The interesting thing is that while for rest of the world Gavrilo Princip is remembered as a terrible terrorist, a murderess, like Oswald or Booth, in Serbia he's considered a national hero, a young man who defended his homeland from Habsburg rule. I don't know what this might mean, but we can say that every nation has its champions or paladins and if for some people a man is a monster, to other can be a hero.

Silence in the classroom.

Nikola goes behind the teaching post.

NIKOLA

Small detail. I remember you what I told you last time, in case anyone was absent or didn't understand. So, I intend to finish this part of the course within the next week. I know that we're proceeding with haste but in ten days I'll be

(MORE)

NIKOLA (CONT'D)

forced to be absent from lessons. You can't find me in the college because I'll be out of town. This means that, in ten days, for your misfortune, the course of contemporary history will be kept by the teacher Kovic, who will advise you on the new time. Now, back to serious things.

Nikola carefully chooses the next slide. Once found, inserts it into the projector.

NIKOLA

A Browning M1910. The weapon that killed Franz Ferdinand. Let's take a look.

INT. PROFESSOR JOVANOV OFFICE - DAY

Nikola is sitting behind the desk in his office. Puts in order a number of documents, prepares his briefcase to go home.

It seems he's going to get out of that office, perhaps forever. He takes everything that can be useful and inserts it into the briefcase.

His gaze falls on a framed photograph on the desk.

He takes the frame and watch the picture:

Nikola and a boy younger than him, maybe the younger brother given the similarity, smile and pose behind a Kosovo's hilly landscape.

Nikola remains in silence to contemplate the photography. After few seconds, the professor opens the briefcase and throws in the portrait. Then he leaves his office.

INT. STAIRS OF THE BUILDING - EVENING

Nikola climbs the stairs of his own palace. Arrived at his landing, sees the neighbor Sofija.

Sofija, with Marko next door, opens the door. She turns to the professor.

Nikola puts the key in the lock.

SOFIJA

Oh, good evening Professor Jovanov.

NIKOLA

Good evening to you, Sofija.

Nikola enters home.

Sofija remains fixed for few seconds to look at him disappear into his own apartment, then "wakes up" and opens the door.

INT. NIKOLA'S APARTMENT (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

The apartment is wrapped in the darkness of night.

Only the kitchen is slightly illuminated by a small light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Nikola is sitting on a straw chair, elbows on the table, hands folded, eyes closed, lost in some worrying thought, staring at the empty. Wears appropriate clothing to go out, not really suitable for stay at home and sleep comfortably.

On the table, a glass almost full of water with effervescent aspirin that is slowly melting.

Nikola's eyes are stuck on BLACK BAG resting on the floor, next to the table leg. The bag is open and we can see the muzzles of a menacing rifle.

Suddenly, one OUTBREAK, from who knows where, outside Belgrade. Then another, and another, always STRONGEST, always NEAREST.

A SIREN begins to scream in the night, on the streets. The siren sound is even more frightening than that produced by the falling bombs dropped by military aircraft, this's because predicts that in a short time something terrible, something catastrophic will befall nearby.

The SCREAMING SIREN through the streets of the city, like an echo.

AIRPLANE NOISES, many aircraft, such as an army fleet of the sky, producing a hostile din, mechanical, similar to that of a washing machine that goes haywire.

The table and the lamp VIBRATE.

Nikola remains unmoved, still with his elbows on the table. His eyes now move on the glass:

On the water are formed small waves, simultaneously with bombs crashing to the ground.

The glass TREMBLES, is about to fall...

Nikola's eyes don't move from those small, sinister circles on the water...

START OF FLASHBACK - SREBRENICA, BOSNIA 1995

EXT. SREBRENICA - DAY

A GREAT UPROAR, a lot of noise:

BOMBS, GUNS THAT SHOOT, SCREAMS, CRIES of women and children...

Srebrenica, before that July 1995, appeared in the eyes of any traveler as any city in the mountains. For those not familiar with what happened in the village which today is located in the eastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, suffice to say that was the epicenter of a bloody massacre, an ethnic cleansing which caused the death of thousands of Bosnian Muslims because of Serbian troops. What is now sadly remembered as the Massacre of Srebrenica, was one of the bloodiest genocides in the history of Europe and of humanity. The wayfinding of Srebrenica today says 8372... in memory of the victims. The cemetery, with all those white tombstones, remember the immense number of crosses at Colleville-sur-Mer.

The Bosnian Serb soldiers, armed with machine guns and rifles, massacre men, women and children on the streets of the village, destroyed by fire bombs thrown at buildings, petrol bombs thrown between civilians and improvised shooting performances against the walls of the houses. The mountain village is reduced to a quagmire and strewn with dead and the remains of buildings.

A lot of confusion, a great smoke that seems to overshadow the July sun. So much fire, so much blood...

A firing squad of 6 SOLDIERS is positioned in front of a wall full of holes. The six soldiers wearing gas masks in the face, which makes them extremely scary.

With their back against the wall, 10 CIVILIANS, all women between ten and seventy. The older ones have a dark veil over their head. They're Muslims. Everyone is terrified, their cheeks streaked with tears and eyes tired of seeing death everywhere.

A SERBIAN SOLDIER, to the side of the firing squad, goes a step further. In a threatening manner, shouting, gives the command to his colleagues.

SERBIAN SOLDIER

Fire!

The SHOTS kill the 10 WOMEN. All fall to the ground, on the ruins of a destroyed house.

The soldiers lower their weapons. One of them takes off his mask. His face is dirty with ground, blood and gunpowder. We know him well.

Nikola lowers his gun still smoking. His eyes tell us that isn't at all comfortable in such a situation. He's scared and what he has done doesn't make him proud.

Nikola walks in the streets invaded by paramilitary soldiers, running from house to house. He feels bad, he can't believe what he sees, and he can't believe to be there.

He sees all the atrocities that war brings:

- soldiers shoot on Bosnians of all ages;
- creep into houses, throw hand grenades and close again the door;
- ripped women and children in tears from homes, who cry mercy;
- there are some carts filled with dead bodies;
- soldiers shoot in the air and shout to the heavens the glory of Ratko Mladic and Arkan.

LUKA, a Serbian soldier, approaches running towards Nikola holds a machine gun. His uniform is dirty with blood.

LUKA

We're done here. At the end of that road we met a bit of resistance, but...we won. Our lieutenant is dead. A bomb. Say, what's wrong?

Nikola doesn't respond.

LUKA

Are you okay? Now we go down there, towards the mosque. Do you know where the mosque is? It's behind that warehouse...that one which burning, the factory of metals, that one over there, see? Nearby is the mosque. We cook a beast and celebrate with all there's to drink. Come with us.

NIKOLA  
I'm not hungry.

LUKA  
Drink something, at least.

Nikola doesn't want. You can guess from his blankly, sad and pensive look.

LUKA  
As you wish. You know where to find us, just in case you change your mind.

Luka walks away. Runs toward the burning warehouse down the street, near the destroyed metallurgical factory.

Nikola continues his journey, machine gun over his shoulder. Seems to be lost in the desert, seems to be the only one who REALLY realizes what's happening.

In front of him, a big truck with a giant trailer passes in great speed.

Nikola moves to the side of the road, careful to not be mashed.

The huge military truck passes him on the side and its vision displaces Nikola: the immense trailer carrying a MOUNTAIN OF CORPSES, all crowded and squeezed between them, in the mud and blood.

But again, what you see in the most cruel and horrible snapshots can't get over the shock and terror you feel when you look at the death with your own eyes.

The truck moves and gives way to a field across the street, a few meters from Nikola.

Nikola remains shocked, as if someone is pointing a gun on him, as if he, this time, was the victim of a shooting:

the field across the street is an endless graveyard with the bodies of Bosnian Muslims killed and thrown in the grass, in the quagmire. The number of corpses is incalculable. This, in addition to describing the violence and ferocity of the situation, makes lose integrity to those who have died, thrown in any field. The dignity that innocent victims deserve is killed.

He seems to be the only one to contemplate that senseless massacre. All other soldiers are engaged to kill. All around him there's only chaos.

A tear falls from his face full of mud and blood of Nikola.  
This is the Greater Serbia?

INT. OFFICE OF LIEUTENANT LOVIC - DAY

A cramped makeshift office in the inside of the headquarters of the Serbian militia in Srebrenica. In the office there are 2 characters: Lieutenant MIKI LOVIC, in military uniform, a senior official of the former Yugoslavia, and Mr. LAZAR, a former Secret Service agent who has come to Bosnia as an observer, dressed in gray as a businessman. This man is standing in a corner of the office, back against the wall, arms folded.

Lieutenant Lovic, sitting behind his desk, can remember the old soldier proud of his deeds. On the table rests a half-full bottle of red wine, two glasses and a box of cigars. Behind him, a large portrait of Milosevic.

Nikola opens the door and enters in the office.

NIKOLA

Did you sought me, Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT LOVIC

Sit down, Jovanov.

Nikola sits in front of the officer.

Lieutenant Lovic takes the bottle and fills a glass. Drinks slowly, savoring the red liquid.

LIEUTENANT LOVIC

Jovanov, this man is the agent Lazar.

Nikola turns to Lazar and does a nod of greeting, that isn't reciprocated.

LIEUTENANT LOVIC

The agent Lazar, here, came directly from Belgrade, but he works in...

(to Lazar)

Excuse me, I've a memory lapse. Where do you work?

LAZAR

Kosovska Mitrovica.

LIEUTENANT LOVIC

Oh yes. The agent Lazar works in Kosovska Mitrovica and has come so far, from Belgrade for...well, for

(MORE)

LIEUTENANT LOVIC (CONT'D)

see how is the situation and I would add that it's okay, right? However, Lazar doesn't bring so reassuring news from the region of Kosovo.

Finished the glass of wine, Lieutenant opens the box and choose a cigar. Extracts from the pocket of his uniform a particular lighter, engraved with a drawing of a tiger. Prepares the cigar and began to smoke.

LIEUTENANT LOVIC

Unlike here, where the situation is under control, there, however, things didn't go so well. In fact, I'd say go badly. Your people -our people, I mean- isn't safe. Not at all, as I just told Lazar. Eh, no, dear boy, it seems that the situation there is getting out of hand.

NIKOLA

And why I've been called?

LIEUTENANT LOVIC

Apart the fact that it affects all of us, boy. All, without exception. In some ways, though, let's say...you're more involved than many of your other compatriots.

NIKOLA

Excuse me, how am I involved?

LAZAR

You're Nikola Jovanov, son of Jovan Jovanov and Milja Delovic?

NIKOLA

Yes.

LAZAR

Have you a brother?

NIKOLA

Yes.

LAZAR

A brother named Josif?

Nikola is less and less quiet. His face tells us all his agitation. Nods.

LAZAR

Soldier Jovanov, a few days ago I was warned by my office that seventeen people in the municipality of Srbica were kidnapped. Among these seventeen people there's your brother.

Nikola is once again hit in heart. This time the day is ruin by not the sight of something horrible and inhuman, but something that most likely will jeopardize the lives of his loved ones.

Lieutenant Lovic looks at the soldier and smokes.

LAZAR

It saddens me to be the one who give you a dramatic ad, but unfortunately things have gone for this verse. If I hadn't been called here with extreme urgency, on your return home would be informed of everything. I know that what I'm about to tell you won't help, but you should know that today I notified of painful news to three other soldiers. As said Lieutenant Lovic, the situation in Kosovo isn't going as we had expected, and given the circumstances, I don't think it will improve.

Nikola refrains from not burst into tears in front of the two men who are watching him, but he's visually sad.

LAZAR

Now you must to listen to me very carefully. We don't know where the kidnappers are direct but we can only guess at the reasons that pushed them to that. The same day that Josif and the other sixteen were taken hostage, broke out a carnage in Srbica's countryside. Twenty-two dead, including three area's guards. Your mother, Mrs. Milka Delovic, was taken to hospital but...

Nikola, traumatized but ready to digest the end of the speech, doesn't detach his eyes from Lazar.

LAZAR

(continues)

...weren't able to save her. The government has now put his hands on the matter, they've opened an investigation and have ensured that they'll try to reach an agreement with the Albanian counterpart to ensure the safety of the serbian people in Kosovo.

Lazar takes a packet of cigarettes from his jacket pocket. Prepares to smoke, puts the cigarette in his mouth, lights it.

LAZAR

The situation, in a nutshell, is like I did just described.

(smokes)

All I had to say I said it.

Silence in the office of lieutenant. The sad stillness is interrupted by the military officer.

LIEUTENANT LOVIC

Now you can go.

Nikola gets up from his chair, greets the two men and goes out from the office.

EXT. NOT FAR FROM SREBRENICA - DAY

The team of Serbian soldiers, which is part Nikola Jovanov, passes next to a small agglomeration of peasant houses fallen to pieces. The soldiers walk with their rifles over their shoulder. Some conveyances follow them behind. They finished their work.

Nikola's absent, his eyes unfocused. His legs walk for hours but his thoughts were cooled on visions of corpses and bodies thrown into mass graves.

The team passes in front of a ruined church, destroyed by a fire started somewhere nearby that has incinerated the vegetation in the surrounding area. The main door's split in half.

We can't say exactly whether it's a Muslim temple or a place of Christian worship.

Nikola hears a CRY coming from inside. Looks around, checks to see if a colleague has heard. Evidently Nikola is the only one who heard that cry, more like a tears.

Nikola approaches the door of the church.

The team proceeds on his way.

Nikola enters the church, passing through the open doorway.

INT. RUINED CHURCH - DAY

Is very dark inside. The sunlight passes through the wounds and gashes that the bombs have done in the ceiling. The church is completely destroyed.

Again the CRY...

There are 2 distinct figures close to the altar, burned and reduced to ashes:

a YOUNG WOMAN lies on the ground, crying;

a SERBIAN SOLDIER, standing, fastens his belt and picks up his gun.

Nikola approaches.

The young woman is a Muslim girl of twenty, pinned to the ground, her legs pierced by the bullets of a repeating rifle. Pale as the moon, has a few bruises on her arms and the skirt's covered in blood. She was just raped.

The young injured girl sees Nikola...stops crying...

Nikola looks into her eyes.

The Serb soldier notices Nikola.

As if it were a matter of course, the Serbian soldier points the gun in the face of the girl. He's ready to pull the trigger.

Immediately, Nikola raises his gun and aims at the head of the soldier.

The soldier, the weapon always faces the woman, observes Nikola. He can't understand if he's in front of a friend or an enemy.

Nikola doesn't let go, continuing to points his weapon to the soldier. His look has a clear message: "If you kill her, I'll kill you. If you don't take away that gun off her, I'll shoot you in the head and I don't care if you're Serb or Muslim. You're dead anyway".

Nobody talks. Continue to look each other: the soldier has a confused expression, Nikola a menacing look.

Tense pause.

The soldier returns to the girl. Aims to the head of the woman who has just raped. He's about to pull the trigger when

BANG!

The soldier falls to the ground, dead.

Nikola still holds the weapon, the arm trembles, then lowers the gun and meets girl's eyes.

They look each other for a long time.

The young woman leaves a faint smile, then slowly closes the eyelids.

Suddenly, Nikola starts to cry, tears tear his face like an opened faucet. He can't really cry, though.

Something makes the ground tremble...

...the deafening CRASH of a military aircraft, a noise that breaks the sound barrier...

END OF THE FLASHBACK

BACK TO

NIKOLA'S APARTMENT (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

...the glass TREMBLES...wobbles quickly up to the edge of the table...

CRASH!

and...FALLS DOWN.

Nikola wakes up and realizes to be back to hell.

Outside, BOMBS crashed on BELGRADE.

A series of explosions unbearable, a noise that passes through the ear and doesn't disappear, like a tank that pierces the wall of the house and penetrates deep.

Nikola remains still.

Everything in the kitchen TREMBLES.

The light bulb hanging from the ceiling STAGGERS, crashes into the ceiling and BREAKS.

Dark.

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

The lime falls from the ceiling of the cellar, one straight and narrow closet used as a shelter, lit by a small lamp that works intermittently, alternating moments of light and suffocating moments of darkness.

Sofija and Marko, clinging to each other, are sitting on a bench in a corner of the cellar.

Sofija tightens the child with force, so as to inspire courage, but she's terrified. She doesn't know what to look for distracted by the noise that shakes the ground beneath her feet, and the building that rises above her head.

BOMBS OVER BELGRADE.

INT. STAIRS OF THE BUILDING - DAY

The semi-desert palace in which Sofija and Nikola live hasn't gone destroyed yet.

Nikola opens the door of his apartment and exits. Wears a big coat to traveling, reaches to the ankles, and carries a huge black bag over the shoulder and a heavy suitcase. He's about to close the door.

Sofija gets out of with her son Marko from the apartment. It is the same scene that repeats itself every morning. Despite the stormy night, Sofija smiles.

SOFIJA

Good morning, Professor Jovanov.

Nikola closes the door and sternly replies

NIKOLA

Goodbye.

Then comes down the stairs.

The cold response to the greeting leaves Sofija with a little shock. The woman closes the door of the house, takes son's hand and goes.

INT. PULLMANN (IN MOVEMENT) - DAY

The bus is full of passengers and the central corridor is blocked by a lot of luggage left on the ground.

Nikola is sitting next to an elderly man. Between the knees, the big black bag. He turns to the window:

the vehicle hurtling on the road leaving the countryside and

the hills which have hosted him for years.

Nikola is thoughtful and once again we've the opportunity to find out what he's remembering...

INT. CLESSIDRA CAFÈ - DAY - FLASHBACK

A little younger Nikola occupies a table in the Clessidra Café, a classy place.

There's a television in the corner and scroll the disturbing images of the Arkan's Tigers and their deeds in Bosnia.

Nikola hasn't ordered anything yet. It is clear that he's waiting for someone.

And that someone has just entered the room.

EDVARD (fifty years), a prominent businessman and prominent figure in the Yugoslav federal forces, reaches Nikola at the table and sits down. Edvard wears a designer dress and a pair of thick glasses.

Nikola is happy to meet the new arrival. Why he had waited so anxiously we'll find out soon.

NIKOLA

Mr. E.

EDVARD

Voice down.

NIKOLA

So you've your own office here in Belgrade. Compliments. You should be happy.

EDVARD

Voice down, I said.

NIKOLA

Thank you for coming.

EDVARD

What do we take?

(skims the menu)

Have you already ordered something or you waited for me?

NIKOLA

I waited for you.

EDVARD

You're so tender. Do you come often

(MORE)

EDVARD (CONT'D)

in this place?

NIKOLA

No more than a couple of times a week.

EDVARD

And what do you recommend to order? Didn't have breakfast this morning, just a quick coffee but I was left on my stomach. It seems that nobody is able to make a real coffee.

NIKOLA

The coffee here isn't bad, but the Clessidra's specialty are pies.

EDVARD

My ex-wife always made pies for me despite I always repeated that I sucked pies. At breakfast, lunch and dinner...pie. I say, if they were at least decent I would have been content -you know me, you know that I would be fine any cake- but Melania was a terrible cook. And a terrible wife, I might add.

NIKOLA

Then do one thing. Take a couple of baklava.

EDVARD

I just told you I don't like pies.

NIKOLA

They're like pastries, you know?

EDVARD

What do they put in? I mean, how are these pastries? Not that I'm picky. I'm asking because I'm intolerant to many things and I don't want to argue with the waiter, you know, that doesn't put it, that other doesn't like me...it's annoying.

NIKOLA

Well, they're made with puff pastry, almonds, pistachio nuts...In short, they then add honey syrup. And there's a bit of

(MORE)

NIKOLA (CONT'D)

cinnamon.

EDVARD

Interesting. Attract me, even if at this moment I don't remember whether I am or not allergic to cinnamon or whether I'm intolerant to almonds. But who cares. You only live once, right? And what do we drink?

NIKOLA

I always have a proper coffee.

EDVARD

And you correct your coffee with what?

NIKOLA

Brandy.

A young waitress approaches the table. Her label bears the inscription "MICHELLE".

MICHELLE

What do I bring you?

NIKOLA

A coffee with brandy. If is advanced I take even a slice of cream pie.

Michelle writes everything down on the notebook.

EDVARD

I'd like to taste these famous baklava, right? And then a coffee, that normal one, with nothing in it.

Michelle finishes writing and then leaves them alone and goes to the kitchen.

Edvard leans elbows on the table.

EDVARD

The work? How is going?

NIKOLA

(shrugs)

As always. It isn't so exciting to be a teacher. Repeat the same things, so...nothing of that. Rather tell me about you and your

(MORE)

NIKOLA (CONT'D)

new assignment. It seems an important thing.

EDVARD

Prefer not touch this button.

NIKOLA

Top secret?

EDVARD

Not exactly, but you're close.

(pause)

So, about our meeting...

NIKOLA

Edvard, you have to know that if you've got the information that I asked you, then I owe you a big favor.

EDVARD

Nonsense. And then, as I said at that time that we spoke by phone, what I'm about to tell you may also be a red herring.

NIKOLA

I don't care.

EDVARD

It may have been a mistake, an oversight, may have been just a coincidence that--

NIKOLA

I don't care. Is the only lead I have and don't care if it will be a hole in the water. I've nothing else to do but groped.

EDVARD

Okay. Josif was spotted a week ago in Prizren, Kosovo. My contact isn't able to say with certainty whether he was still being held captive. Was only seen on the streets.

In Nikola turns on a light of hope.

NIKOLA

He seemed to be okay?

EDVARD

Yes, but...Nikola, don't flatter yourself, now. May well be wrong. It may be that we're fall in an error. The Josif who was seen in Prizren could be an Albanian, do you understand? We don't know for sure.

NIKOLA

You're wrong. Since he was kidnapped, since my mother died, I always had...I've always felt this...this feeling like...I'm sure that Josif is still alive. And this feeling inside me tells me that I have to go take it back and bring him home.

EDVARD

Okay, okay. If you're glad. As a friend, I want to recommend you to not get in trouble. This isn't the time, this, for getting into trouble and I won't get you out of trouble. Do you agree on this? Answer.

NIKOLA

You've already done too much for me. I won't create trouble for you.

EDVARD

So you haven't understand, you haven't heard me. I'm not the one who will end up in trouble, no. That one will you if cast thee into some trouble and inconvenience, and there, of trouble and inconvenience, there are something for all tastes.

Michelle arrives with orders: serves a nice plate of backlava and a cup of steaming coffee in front of Edvard, then a laced coffee with a slice of cream pie for Nikola.

Leaves the bill and moves to another table.

Nikola takes the bill.

NIKOLA

At this I got it.

EDVARD

Than you must got it. It's  
different.

Edvard cuts in half the pastry and tastes a piece.

NIKOLA

How is it?

EDVARD

(mouth full)

Not bad. Really not bad.

END OF THE FLASHBACK

BACK TO

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

The bombastic noise of SIRENS.

Sofija drops fast down the stairs to the cellar. Behind her,  
Marko runs down the steps. Reach a door of material that  
seems iron.

Sofija opens the door and Marko goes inside. She follows the  
child and closes the massive door.

They shut themselves in the narrow basement that serves as a  
refuge to the bombing. Light up the bulb and embrace each  
other while outside NATO air raid breaks out.

BELGRADE IS ATTACKED BY NATO FIGHTER-BOMBERS AND DEMOLISHED.

EXT. BELGRADE STREET - NIGHT

We see the dark street, lit by the glows caused by gusts of  
grenades dropped from the sky. It's the street of Nikola and  
Sofija's palace.

The SIREN continues unabated to scream.

The building in which Nikola lived and which is still the  
home of Sofija is suddenly HIT BY A BOMB.

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

The light bulb, the walls, the ground...

...EVERYTHING TREMBLES.

A deafening uproar of noises (the siren, the bombs, the  
building that's about to sag and about to fall to the  
ground)...the whistle of a bomb in free fall and...

Sofija cries. Tightens Marko as she can in her arms, despair. Kisses his forehead several times.

...an ominous METALLIC SOUND, growing up, like a huge thing that folds to then crashing to the ground...

Suddenly, everything is DARK.

EXT. BELGRADE STREET - DAY

Sofija opens her eyes. Her head is wound in the forehead and neck has a big dark bruise. She's lying on the ground, in the midst of a heap of ruins, the back against a flat boulder. Her hair is filthy, torn, clothes in tatters and dirty with lime and ash.

Above her, the SUN.

She brings back the view in the real world.

A man in police uniform takes away the bricks from a pile of debris. Many other men help him in the work.

Sofija feels bad, has dizzy. Puts hand on his forehead and only after a few seconds realizes that her right hand is full of blood. Tries to get up, but is hard. Then she stands up.

The policeman, a kind man named GORAN, goes in aid immediately.

AGENT GORAN

No, you don't get up, ma'am. You've to stay where you was. Take my advice.

Sofija is confused, stammers something about what happened.

AGENT GORAN

You're safe and sound, doesn't have anything to worry about, I assure you, ma'am. Your head have bled for so long that we were afraid of losing you. You've been lucky. Now stay there where I said, we end up pulling out this poor man and then accompany you to the hospital.

The agent Goran backs to work, looking with his companions to pull out of the rubble an elderly wedged between the wall split in half that has collapsed.

Sofija not obey. Walking on the road, looks around: men and women carrying dead and wounded on either side of the road.

A huge mess, people who helps other people and people who go around aimlessly among what is left of their homes.

The road which Sofija knew so well and which crossed every day to go to work at Kristina is reduced to a pile of rubble and ruins. Many buildings are integers, but some are completely fallen to the ground, others were hit by bombs and are now uninhabitable.

What Sofija's looking at is a grotesque country reduced to ashes and dust.

Her gaze rests on an array of twelve bodies with the back at the sky on a white large tablecloth. Everyone has wounds to the legs, face and arms.

Sofija comes close to what seems to be a dozen corpses.

Marko's body lies like abandoned in the middle of the row. His eyes are closed, seems he's sleeping.

Sofija approaches to the child lying on the ground.

She takes him by the head, caressing his face and dirty with the blood of the wounded hand. Tears slip from her cheeks, the mouth trembles. Sofija cries and embraces Marko. Embraces the lost son in the ruins of their home. Here's how it feels when you lose everything.

INT. JOSIF'S HOME, PRIZREN (KOSOVO) - DAY

The home of the younger Jovanov is a hole that is falling apart, with the ruined plaster walls and windows with glasses absent. The house is bare, the furniture is poor and at first glance it would seem that the night before some thief has snuck to steal everything.

The daylight enters in the room through the holes of the window. There isn't electric current, it seems.

JOSIF (thirty-three years old) is sitting cross-legged on the bed, fully clothed with simple gray jacket. His bed consists in a mattress thrown on the floor. He's waiting for someone.

The door opens.

ARON (same age as Josif), the friend, beckons to follow him.

ARON

Let's go.

Josif gets up and follows Aron out the door.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD NEAR PRIZREN - DAY

This isn't the capital of the district, but a village near the city of Prizren whose name is unknown to us.

It's an extremely poor village and in the neighborhood live in poor conditions a hundred Kosovo Serbs. The majority of the population of the district, in fact, is an ethnic Albanian and often exploding violence acts that involve the two peoples.

Josif and Aron walk down the muddy road.

ARON

Don't take it anymore. I eat that gruel of cabbage every damn day. It's inedible. You know what does this means?

JOSIF

No. What does this means?

ARON

It means that you would rather skip the meal rather than swallow the slime. After a day of doing nothing or work up here and there without getting a dinar what do you do? You get home and hope to sit down at the table and eat...I don't know. What do you like?

JOSIF

Lasagne.

ARON

You get home and hope to eat lasagne. You also deserve your dish of lasagne but no. Instead of a nice dish of lasagne there's a tasteless gruel called cabbage soup. With that, you pass half of your day on the toilet.

JOSIF

After this work, the cabbage soup will be the last thing you'll eat.

ARON

Oh, I hope so. I hope so because it's inedible. Just the thought and my appetite goes away but you know, come home for one or two o'clock,

(MORE)

ARON (CONT'D)

they foist me the slop.

They arrive in front of a house, with a garden left in disrepair, full of weeds.

The gate is guarded by a tall and robust BIG MAN, with the eyes of a brigand.

Josif and Aron cross the gate without the big man stops them. They enter in the house.

INT. CAPTAIN ZOLTAN'S HOUSE, PRIZREN - DAY

A pretty lodging that differs from the other houses of the neighbors. It isn't the home of wealthy people, rather prominent and important in the community.

Josif and Aron are sitting next to each other on a comfortable sofa in the cozy living room.

KLARA, a good-looking middle-aged woman, brings them a tray with a grappa. Pours into two small glasses the liquid and gives the drink to the two young guests.

Josif and Aron thank and drink grappa.

In the living room, enters the landlord.

MIRKO ZOLTAN, said Voivode or simply Captain Zoltan, opens the front door. Wears a thick coat and a hat with a wide brim. Takes a look in the living room, then throws a quick peek at two young guests, then goes into the kitchen to undress.

KLARA

Can I offer you anything else? I should have some cookies in the kitchen, of good ones.

JOSIF

Thank you, ma'am, but we're okay.  
(raises his glass)  
This's enough to fill stomach.

Here comes ZOLTAN.

But who's this Captain Zoltan? Captain Zoltan is a man of sixty from strong and steadfast character. Is to him that the Serbs in the neighborhood ask when they have problems and is he, in the neighborhood, the most feared by the Albanians. His hair and beard greyish around the face (similar than a lion's mane) make him look like a fighter of the past, like Garibaldi, or perhaps it would be more correct to compare him to Stefan Lazar.

He's wearing a blue tracksuit and in his right hand has a big cigar lit.

Zoltan sits in his armchair, taking the cigar to his mouth and very slowly, studying the two young guests, Josif and Aron, smokes and then throws out smoke from nostrils.

ZOLTAN  
(to his wife Klara)  
You can leave us alone.

That's an order, not a question. So Klara obeys and disappears into the kitchen.

Now the focus of Zoltan is completely turned to his young guests. Indicates the two with the cigar.

ZOLTAN  
To you who sent you here?

JOSIF  
Branko, Captain.

ZOLTAN  
He told me about you two.

He studies them while smoking the big cigar. His little eyes go from Josif to Aron and investigate every detail. With the cigar, indicates Aron.

ZOLTAN  
What's your name?

ARON  
Aron Milorad.

ZOLTAN  
(indicates Josif)  
And you?

ZOLTAN  
Josif Jovanov.

ZOLTAN  
Mmmm...

He studies them again.

ZOLTAN  
It takes time to figure if you can trust someone. It takes me much, much less time than most to tell if a man is really a man or not, if he's a man or if he's only a

(MORE)

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

traitor.

(pause)

In my house I don't accept deserters or cowards. That that's out there, that big man in the garden who guards my home, he'll never put foot in my house because he behaved like a coward, once, and although has asked me forgiveness and has offered to defend my fortress, I still don't trust him.

Silence.

Zoltan quietly smokes his cigar, moves eyes from one guest to another. His long pauses make it even more solemn his words.

ZOLTAN

To get here, to be allowed to stay in my house, to sit on my couch in my living room, you have to be aware of the risks involved. But who enters through that door, can walk head-on be proud of himself because he knows he's serving his country and there's nothing, nothing more important than your country.

Zoltan seems to have finished his speech of welcome.

ZOLTAN

Tell me, what do you think?

JOSIF

That's right. You have to be...proud of your country.

ZOLTAN

It's not only the country, is something stronger, deeper. The lands, the roots...A nation is nothing without its people. Only a place whichever.

He takes a pause and thinks about what he just said. The white smoke, dense, gets out of the nose.

ZOLTAN

I remember reading something like that, once, but I can't tell who is who said these things. Definitely a

(MORE)

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

poet.

Pause. A few moments of silence.

ZOLTAN

If you are here, is to serve the nation. Are you ready to do anything for our nation?

JOSIF

Sure, Captain.

ARON

Anything necessary.

ZOLTAN

Mind you that I take your words seriously, then don't say you'll do anything when you already know that you'll scared in front of danger.

JOSIF

Captain Zoltan, me and my friend Aron, here, we're willing to do anything. We wouldn't come to you today if we were two cowards.

ZOLTAN

It remains to me to judge whether or not you guys are cowards, however the fact remains that you have been presented as two people who do not consider themselves cowards. Good. Immediately after the traitors, there's another category of people I can't stand: the dishonest.

JOSIF

We're at your orders.

ZOLTAN

There's a bus station, down in the city. At night, all the buses are parked right there and remain there until the next morning. This evening will come to you my son Divan. He will give you a bomb. Ye shall do so on that on the front page of the newspaper of Prizren there will written about the death of a large number of Albanians, killed because the bus was blown

(MORE)

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

up. I want to read the newspaper tomorrow.

Josif and Aron are shaken by the words of the captain Zoltan. They don't know how to respond.

ZOLTAN

You will have your reward, and most importantly...you will be patriots.

This doesn't reassure the two guests.

ZOLTAN

Now you can go.

Josif and Aron get up from the couch.

INT. MILORAD'S HOME - DAY

The house in which Aron lives is a tiny lodging situated right in the middle of the Serb community. There's some inhospitable rooms, with walls full of mold and cracks, old furniture and appliances at least twenty years.

Seated around a table, Josif and Aron.

Aron holds in his hand a chicken bone that a elderly mestizo dog gnaws.

In the same room, which serves as kitchen and living room, a little old lady is cooking for the two young men. The woman is the GRANDMOTHER of Aron and she's what is left of his family.

ARON

I didn't say "I don't want to do that."

JOSIF

But you're thinking.

ARON

What does it mean? Thinking about doing one thing and doing something are two different concepts.

JOSIF

I haven't doubt but if you want to do this thing, if you really want to do this, Aron, then you have to seem one who thinks doing this thing is the right thing.

GRANDMA

For heaven's sake, Aron! Take away  
from the kitchen that dog.

Aron gets up and opens the door. Throws the bone and the dog  
gets out. He returns inside.

JOSIF

You have to seem convinced, you  
understand? When we were in the  
house of the Captain Zoltan you  
didn't seem at all convinced.

ARON

It may be that I was nervous.

JOSIF

Me too I was, but I looked damn  
convincing and in fact offered us  
the job. If he sensed only a little  
agitation would unsuspected and  
would have given the work to  
someone else and someone else would  
take the money.

Grandma comes with ready meals. Of course, cabbage soup.

GRANDMA

If you continue to talk don't fill  
the stomach. Use the mouth to eat,  
instead.

ARON

Thanks, grandma.

JOSIF

Thanks.

The woman continues with the household chores, leaving them  
alone to have lunch.

JOSIF

The fact is that the captain Zoltan  
has entrusted us with a mission and  
when this happens it means that  
mission must be completed. If you  
don't want to do it--

ARON

I've never said.

JOSIF

Don't warm you up so much, we're

(MORE)

JOSIF (CONT'D)

just talking. I said that it may be that you don't you feel it. I'm not scolding you, so don't be angry.

ARON

I'm not angry but you're giving me the coward.

JOSIF

Have you heard me tell you "Aron, you're a coward?". No. I just wanted to get to the point and the point is that if once the son of Captain Zoltan comes to my house and brings us to the bus depot...well, at that point we can't go back.

ARON

I know that. It's just that...well, I haven't the slightest desire to kill someone.

JOSIF

Me neither.

ARON

And if the opportunity presents itself tonight? Type someone points a gun at you and what do you do? Josif, I never shot anyone and I don't want certainly start now.

JOSIF

You'll not have to kill none. Divan said he checked several times the bus station and hasn't never seen a guard.

ARON

The fact is that I'm not able to use a gun.

JOSIF

Have you exercised as I told you?

ARON

But yes.

JOSIF

You take your gun and points the guy in the face. You'll see that he shits in his pants for fear and

(MORE)

JOSIF (CONT'D)

leaves you in peace. Nobody wants to die in this world, so relax yourself.

Aron takes a deep breath. Try to calm down, try not to think about the coming night.

JOSIF

When we get there, you think to the after. Think about where you'll be in a month, maybe less. At home. We'll be at home. We won't need other jobs like this because we've enough dinars for pay us the trip and there's my brother.

ARON

How long you don't see your brother?

JOSIF

Oh, very long time. In practice, since our parents split.

ARON

Let me understand, you were born here in Kosovo, while your brother was born in...

JOSIF

Now I explain. Both my brother and I, we were born in Kosovo, in Pristina. When our parents decided to separate, my father took his eldest son, my brother, and to my mother touched take care of me. My father moved to Belgrade and my mother moved to the grandparents, to Srbica, and there she lived until a short time ago, as long as there was the shooting and as long as I and others sixteen are been kidnapped by Serbet Kunder. Now do you understand?

ARON

Yes. And you think your brother will help you once you get home?

JOSIF

What do you want he to do? Of course he will help us. Will have passed years, but Nikola hasn't

(MORE)

JOSIF (CONT'D)

certainly forgotten his brother who lives in Kosovo.

Stop talking and eat the soup.

INT. JOSIF'S HOME - NIGHT

The small Josif's lodging is half in the dark. Given that electric lighting in the home is missing, the only light comes from the street lamp, whose gleam through the broken window and illuminates the worried Josif and Aron.

The two friends are standing opposite each other, on opposite sides, with their backs against the wall.

Josif, his chin touching the sternum, is waiting and this type of wait can be classified as one of those in which the suspension of events causes an unbearable tension.

Aron is in worse shape: his hands shake and is clear that he's tense and nervous. His anxiety is palpable.

The weak door is opened:

a man of the same age as Josif, a young man who has just passed the thirty, whose face is disfigured, with a deep scar that starts from the front, crosses the right eye, curves in the nose and ends in the left cheek. Wears dark clothing, a black jacket with a hood. Under the armpit, holds a large parcel. He is DIVAN, the son of the Captain Zoltan, a guy who makes a living by performing acts of terrorism in Kosovo Albanian. However ugly his face can be, with that mask he has earned the respect of the district and aspires to sit where sits the Voivode.

JOSIF

Are you Divan?

DIVAN

If I had been another, I'd thrown a molotov against this hut. There's a big hole in that window that could groped someone in the area.

JOSIF

Have you come to accompany us?

Divan nods.

DIVAN

You two will come with me, guys.  
Have you ever done such a thing?

JOSIF

More or less.

DIVAN

Well, if you have already soiled hands then you have no reason to scare but if not...

Aron is nervous. Continues to tighten his hands into fists. The eyes go from one side to another of the room.

Divan realizes it.

DIVAN

You feel good, you?

ARON

Y-yes, yes, of course. Why?

DIVAN

You look nervous. Are you nervous?

ARON

Nervous? Nooo. I'm not nervous. I'm just--

DIVAN

You're nervous.

ARON

I said no. I said I'm not nervous. I should know, right? if I'm nervous. I...don't tell me that I'm nervous.

DIVAN

If you're nervous you won't be a lot of help tonight. Actually, maybe it would be better if you remain here this time.

ARON

No! I won't remain here. From thirty-two days...are thirty-two days that appearance tonight, I don't pull back now that we are one step away from...no. I won't remain here.

DIVAN

(to Josif)

Do you think your friend feels good? I think not. Give him a hand.

Josif approaches Aron. Puts his hand on the shoulder of his companion, tries to inspire courage. Whispers something.

JOSIF

Aron, after tonight, we can go. Do you realize that? No more fear, no more deaths. No more sleeping on the floor, no more cold houses in winter and hot as ovens in the summer. No more cabbage soup. Huh?

They smile.

JOSIF

No more of this. We're going home, Aron, in Belgrade.

DIVAN

If I were you, I won't go there. Did you know that was bombed? Nato has razed that city. There's nothing left now.

Josif ignores him and changes the subject.

JOSIF

I think I've calmed. Are you calmer, Aron?

Aron nods. In fact, he still shocked.

JOSIF

He feels better now.

DIVAN

Good. We can't do bullshits. If someone is agitated, is the end for a mission as our of tonight. You might as well give up.

ARON

We don't give up.

Josif approaches the bed, takes the pillow, he snatches the cover and pulls out a semiautomatic pistol. Hides the gun behind his back, against the belt.

JOSIF

So, are we ready?

DIVAN

The real question is: are ready you?

EXT. PRIZREN'S BUS STATION - NIGHT

The bus station is in an establishment open, under the sheds where there are parked dozens of public vehicles. The bus station is surrounded by a wire mesh. The gate that allows to enter without climb over the fence is closed.

Behind the wall of a ruined house just a few meters from the fence,

JOSIF - ARON - DIVAN observe.

Divan indicates towards the entrance:

a guard with a flashlight makes the tour of inspection; another nearby smokes a cigarette under a streetlight. They would seem the only two guards on duty.

Divan picks the package.

DIVAN

No good. It had to be unattended.  
Why the fuck there are those  
guards?

JOSIF

You said it had to be unattended.

DIVAN

In fact. I spied this place for  
weeks and never once I saw one of  
those fucking cops. Holy shit! This  
is not good. This is not good for  
nothing!

ARON

We postpone?

DIVAN

What? We not postpone a cock. If  
you just don't feel, get out now.  
You'd better, because if when we're  
there and you do only a little  
bullshit, I soon to get you off.

JOSIF

Hey, hey, calm.

DIVAN

Tell your friend to keep quiet,  
you.

JOSIF

He hasn't said he wants to give up.  
 (to Aron)  
 Want to go back? Look, if you want  
 to go home you can. Divan and I  
 finish the job here.

ARON

I'm staying. No turning back.

JOSIF

Want to go back? Yes or no, Aron?

Aron shakes his head: no.

JOSIF

See? He isn't a cowardly. The one  
 who has done nothing but complain  
 until now are you, Divan, not him.

The guard finishes the tour of inspection. Seems to change  
 direction. Moves towards the rear of the station.

DIVAN

Now.

Divan runs to the fence, jumps, climbs, fast as a fugitive  
 with the guards at his heels. Comes on top of the fence,  
 drops and arrives at the other side, inside the bus station.  
 He motions for the others to follow him.

JOSIF

Courage, Aron. You go. I'll be  
 behind you, don't fear. Nothing  
 will happen.

Aron takes a deep breath, runs, jumps into the net, climbs  
 over, gets to the top and throws himself on the other side.

Josif, left alone, sees Divan and Aron run to the buses. Now  
 is his turn. He runs toward the fence, clings, begins to  
 climb over it as if it were a mountain and reach the top,  
 then drops the other side.

The first part of the mission is accomplished, too bad it's  
 the easiest.

Josif runs to the buses. Reaches his comrades, stationed  
 behind a bus, in the midst of two vehicles that almost crush  
 them.

The buses are parked in rows, one behind the other, thus  
 forming narrow corridors.

Divan is with his back to the ground, under a bus. Tries to attach the bomb at the base of the vehicle, so that it's invisible.

Josif looks Aron: he's restless, constantly looking around.

Josif lays his hand on his friend's shoulder.

Divan has almost finished.

Josif looks around:

a LIGHT comes to meet them. The GUARD walks among the narrow corridor formed by the bus parked adjacent to one another. He's close.

Josif touches Divan's leg.

The light is just a few steps from them...

Josif ago to pull out Divan. Divan hasn't finished the job yet. Crawls out from under the vehicle with the bomb still in his hand.

Josif pulls him by the shoulders and indicates him the guard.

Is approaching...

JOSIF - ARON - DIVAN run towards the side opposite to the light. They've to be careful because the corridor is very narrow and there's the risk of getting stuck or slow down the run.

GUARD

Hey!

He realized something and starts running. Is getting closer to catch them...

Josif, the last in line, runs. He almost feels suffocated by the bottleneck. The last bus is almost attacked one another.

Divan managed to get out, Aron follows him...

Behind Josif, the light that is ever more close...

Aron comes out and runs to the fence.

Josif passes between the two bus...

...and exits.

The SECOND GUARD rushes to stop the bombers. The guard goes to the fence and fires a SHOT.

Divan pulls out the gun and FIRES THREE SHOTS into the chest of the guard.

Josif, in the run, realizes that Divan was able to climb over the fence and Aron still climbs.

Josif runs towards the netting but...

...stumbles and falls to the ground.

THREE GUARDS are upon him, a few meters.

Aron lets himself fall from the fence and runs to his friend.

ARON

Josif, up!

Aron helps the companion to stand up. Josif resumes the race towards the fence. Clings: he's ready to climb. Begins the climb.

BANG!

The guards SHOOT to the bombers.

Josif drops on the other side. He's safe.

Aron climbs on the fence when...

...a SERIES OF GUNSHOTS pierce his back. Aron falls.

Josif, on the other side of the fence, has saw the whole thing. Looks at the body of the friend who rescued him in a pool of blood. The guards run towards the netting.

Divan pulls Josif by the collar.

DIVAN

What the fuck are you doing! Run!

Josif looks for the last time the corpse of Aron, then turns and starts running. Is swallowed by darkness.

INT. HOTEL JOLIET (DINING ROOM), PRIZREN - DAY

The Joliet is a shabby hostel that in addition to offering its customers small rooms and uncomfortable beds, is also a simple restaurant of Kosovo's typical dishes.

In the room there are only four tables occupied: there's Nikola, an elderly couple, an obese man and a little girl dressed in skimpy and low-cut clothes, a lonely old man.

Nikola is alone, sitting at a small table in the middle of the dining room. Eats quietly and occasionally sips mineral water in the glass or chew a piece of pita.

OBESE MAN (O.S.)

Don't be a bitch now.

Nikola raises his head to the table a few feet from him.

The FAT MAN, German accent, pulls the arm of the GIRL sitting next to him. The female can't have more than eighteen. She's beautiful, blond haired bob, provocative lips and blue eyes, a face full of makeup.

The man snatches away from her mouth a bottle of wine, that the girl was draining all in one go.

OBESE MAN

Stop being stupid. Now you will do that for which I've paid you, understand me?

The girl laughs. She's drunk.

OBESE MAN

You drank too much of that crap. Is best if you give yourself a regulated, because I'm not so good with a woman when I'm angry and now I'm there to get angry in earnest. Come on in the room.

The man takes the girl by the arm and lifts her up from the chair. Make their way to the stairs leading to the first floor, where there are bedrooms.

Nikola returns on his lunch.

INT. FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR HOTEL JOLIET - DAY

Nikola takes the keys of his room, the number 7. Puts the key in the lock of the door when...

...a CRY.

It comes from the number 5, right in front of the number 7.

Voices, noises. The little girl cries and gets angry with the fat man.

OBESE MAN (O.S.)

You're not able to do nothing, you! Nothing! If you claim money, well, you can forget them, woman. You're

(MORE)

OBESE MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

not worth a fuck, you. Piss off and get me something to drink...Don't sit there crying as an infant, get a move on, shake that ass and bring me something to drink!

The handle of number 5 moves. Exits the girl, her face covered with tears. Wears a light tank top and a pair of men's beach shorts.

Nikola and the girl cross their eyes for a moment.

The girl lowers her head, looks at the floor, and goes to the stairs, to the bar. Doesn't seem the same amused girl of a little while ago, drunk and attached to the bottle. Now she's a little sad and unhappy child.

Nikola observes the poor girl until leaves the corridor. Then he opens the door number 7 and returns inside.

INT. DINING ROOM HOTEL JOLIET - EVENING

The dining room is actually a multi-purpose room, for lunch, dinner, breakfast or afternoon buffets. This evening the place is almost completely full.

Nikola, always sitting at his usual table, cuts the steak and pours himself a glass of water. Again, his gaze rises...

The little girl is sitting at the same table of the lunch BUT this time, instead obese man, is in company of a MAN of forty, no hair with funny mustaches under the nose, saucy behavior. The girl laughs. The two are spoken in Albanian.

Nikola focuses on the meal but the girl laughs and returns to distract him so his eyes returns on the table in front of him.

"Whisker" touches her leg, grinning, and she doesn't seem upset by the gesture. She looks at him with a provocative smile and he seems to take advantage of the fact that the young girl is dazed by alcohol. He pours to her another glass of wine and drinks. Drinks another glass, and then another and he always with one hand on the bottle and the other on her thigh.

INT. FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR HOTEL JOLIET - EVENING

As after lunch, Nikola is about to open the door of the bedroom when he realizes that, in front of him, the girl opens the door of the chamber number 5 to his new guest.

He stands motionless watching them.

The Whisker and the girl continue to laugh and laugh together until the door is closed.

INT. CHAMBER NUMBER 7 HOTEL JOLIET - NIGHT

We hear some LAMENTS beyond the door, in the corridor.

Nikola sleeps in his bed when he's woken up by a SHOT that resonates outside his room.

Heavy FOOTSTEPS move away.

Still half asleep, he gets up from the bed and goes to the door. Opens it just a little to see what happens.

The Whisker, in work clothes, runs away down the corridor and down the stairs as fast as a splinter.

The girl, in a skimpy pajama, cries with hands on face standing in the doorway of the room. Closes the door behind her.

Nikola remains for a few seconds to think about the scene, then takes the decision to go back to sleep.

INT. DINING ROOM HOTEL JOLIET - DAY

Early in the morning, breakfast is served at the hotel, which consists of a cup of heated milk and yogurt.

Nikola is finishing the broth made from yogurt, the trahana, classic albanian recipe, when he realizes that...

...the girl sits in the usual table in front of him.

She seems melancholy and heavy makeup under the eyes is mixed with tears which ruin her pretty face. Orders the breakfast from the waiter and waits, rummaging in her bag. Extracts a mirror, straightens hair and tries to make up on eyes.

Nikola remains steadfast to her.

Suddenly, the girl crosses the gaze with Nikola.

Nikola continues to observe her and so do she. He motions to join him at the table.

The girl stays still, undecided for a few seconds, then puts the mirror in her purse, gets up from the table and sits in front of Nikola in his table.

The elbows on the tablecloth, defiantly, reveal a rudeness able to attract vulgar men. She speaks fluent in Serbian.

GIRL

I noticed that you haven't removed your eyes from me last night. And even yesterday at dinner and at lunch.

Nikola observes and listens in silence.

GIRL

(continues)

Why do you keep watching me? What, you like me? Usually, in these cases, ie when someone likes me, well...things normally work so: that man comes to me, pays me and offers dinner, we exchange small talk, perhaps with a bottle of wine on the table and then we go upstairs to my room, number five, as you know, and then...I guess you get the idea. That's it. Instead you remain silent and stand there looking at me and look at me hoping that sooner or later something will happen but that's not how it works. You're supposed to come to me, not the other way, but for a quiet man as you are, I can also make an exception. I'm tired of men who talk talk talk without ever saying something sensible. Sometimes it's better to remain silent, as you do, and let things go forward. So, tell me, how much you have in your wallet?

NIKOLA

What's your name?

GIRL

And what do you care?

NIKOLA

What's your name?

GIRL

Honey, I tell you, and to you what do cares? You can call me whatever you want, you can call me as your wife or as one of your ex, if really makes you much pleasure. My name is not important.

NIKOLA

It so happens that I want to know your name, your real name, not the one with that guy called you last night.

GIRL

He hadn't so much imagination, however. Melita called me, like his mother, he said.

NIKOLA

But I want to know your real name.

GIRL

Listen. It makes no difference what my name is or what my name is not, you know? Is not that if you know my name you like it more. I can assure you. You have an older girl who dumped you for another asshole and you hate her so much that you want to hurt her? Vent on her because her did make you the figure of the nerd with that piece of shit? So let me give you a tip: call me like that girl.

NIKOLA

I insist.

GIRL

We see that you're not used to these things, huh? Nadia.

NIKOLA

Nadia is your real name?

NADIA

What, you don't like?

NIKOLA

No, no, indeed, is a nice name. Now listen, Nadia, how old are you?

NADIA

This is beautiful. I don't know if you know, daddy, but the years to a woman you don't ever wonder.

NIKOLA

Yes, you're right, but you're not a woman.

NADIA

And what am I, then?

NIKOLA

A little girl.

NADIA

You're wrong. Let's do this, guess you how old I am.

NIKOLA

Mmmm. I would say fifteen. Maybe sixteen.

NADIA

Wrong. I've twenty-four.

NIKOLA

Nah, don't tease me. You're much closer to the ten than to the twenty, I'm sure.

NADIA

Okay. You like those young little girls, it's true? To me is fine if you want me as one of fifteen years. It doesn't change anything.

NIKOLA

Changes everything, instead.

NADIA

I'm twenty years old, happy?

Nadia takes the mirror from her purse. Tries to straighten the hair as best she can.

NIKOLA

Look, I'm not like those idiots that you brought in your chamber. First, because I've no intention of going to bed with a minor. Second, I won't pay ever for lock myself in a room with a girl and pretend that she is like a woman of the streets.

NADIA

So what do you want from me?

NIKOLA

Do you know? You have quite a temper, really.

NADIA

You don't seem very at ease,  
though. Maybe prefer shy, or are  
you one of those who likes  
subjugating women, huh? There I saw  
right?

NIKOLA

You can't see nothing, Nadia.

Nikola takes his wallet and pulls out a banknote. Lays the  
money on the table.

NIKOLA

How old are you?

Nadia watches the money.

NIKOLA

Hey, I asked you a question. How  
old are you?

Nadia looks Nikola straight in the eye. Only now you can  
really realize that Nadia is just a little girl, not yet a  
woman grown.

NADIA

Sixteen.

NIKOLA

And where're your parents?

NADIA

I don't know. I never meet them.

NIKOLA

And who raised you?

NADIA

I was in an orphanage.

NIKOLA

And where's this orphanage?

NADIA

Tirana.

NIKOLA

You're Albanian, then.

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA

But you can speak Serbian. Can you  
(MORE)

NIKOLA (CONT'D)

tell me why?

NADIA

Do I look stupid? I learned both languages and if you don't believe enough, I also know French. Qu'en pensez-vous?

NIKOLA

So you can speak Albanian and Serbian. And why are you here in Prizren, in Kosovo?

Nadia is on the verge of tears.

NADIA

I not came alone.

NIKOLA

We hear, and who brought you here?

NADIA

None of your business.

NIKOLA

Yes instead are my business.

NADIA

No, they aren't.

NIKOLA

It's okay. Rephrase. Who brought you here, is to that adopted you?

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA

And he's also the one who gets the money that you give the men that go up in the room with you?

Nadia nods. She looks around, nervous.

NIKOLA

I bet he's also who pay for your room.

NADIA

Stop it.

NIKOLA

But I've got it right, isn't it? Tell me if isn't true. I may be wrong.

NADIA  
I told you to stop.

NIKOLA  
At what age did you start?

NADIA  
I...don't want to say.

NIKOLA  
He taught you?

Nadia remains silent. She bites lower lip, not to burst into tears. Her eyes are moist.

NIKOLA  
What's his name?

Nadia collects the mirror and puts it back in the bag.

NIKOLA  
What's his name?

Nadia closes the bag. She runs a hand over her eyes, dragging the tears and makeup on the cheek. The cheek is now dirty of a strip of dark makeup, that ruin even more her pretty face.

NADIA  
How long have you want to humiliate me?

NIKOLA  
Tell me what's his name.

Nadia takes offence. Nikola has crossed the line. She gets up from the chair and hurried briskly leaves the dining room, crying. The banknote still lies on the table.

Nikola follows her with his eyes until she disappears. He lost his appetite. His hand goes to rummage in his pocket and pulls out a note. Nikola watches it.

INT. CLESSIDRA CAFÈ - DAY - FLASHBACK

Let's go back to the conversation between Nikola and Edvard about the kidnapping of Josif at the elegant Clessidra Café.

Edvard has finished eating the baklava. He wipes his mouth with a napkin. Resumes the discussion.

EDVARD  
Now...where were we? Ah, yes. I said, what you're going to do I  
(MORE)

EDVARD (CONT'D)

don't recommend it. In fact, if I have to be honest, I'd prohibit you to enter in Kosovo, seriously, but since I'm not your mother, and since you're an adult and mature -well, up to a certain point...- I can't stop you. Probably I'll have you on my conscience all my life, my sleep will ruin for the next two years at least, I can do nothing but think of my friend in trouble in that piece of damn land...Your brother was kidnapped by a group of subversives, if we want to define them in some way, who bear the name of Serbet Kunder. We know they are at Malisevo, although in recent times have often changed area. Lately, they seem to be interested to the Kosovo Serbs of the south. As I was explaining earlier, before that...what are they called? backlava had attracted my attention, it may be that your brother is still prisoner, or has been vacated or, more likely, is escaped and came to Prizren, I don't know...but the fact is that I can't make sure whether he is your brother.

(pause)

Nikola, it may also be that Josif was killed and who has been seen in Prizren is a goddamn son of a bitch who look like him. You can't grab and go there so easily. Is not the just way to make this thing.

NIKOLA

But is the only way to bring home my brother. And I'll do it, whatever the cost.

Edvard shakes his head. Drinks the coffee. From his pocket, pulls out the wallet and pulls out a NOTE. Passes it to Nikola.

EDVARD

This is the address of the head of the clan, the one that controls the Serbet Kunder. He's at Prizren,

(MORE)

EDVARD (CONT'D)

too. Well, at this point I can only say good-bye in advance because I don't think that I'll have another chance.

NIKOLA

You helped me, Edvard. I'm grateful. Thank you.

Edvard gets up from the table. He adjusts his dress and gives a pat on the back of Nikola.

EDVARD

Good luck.

He turns and exits from the Clessidra Café.

END OF THE FLASHBACK

BACK TO

INT. CHAMBER NUMBER 7 HOTEL JOLIET - NIGHT

A SUDDEN SCREAM and Nikola wakes up from sleep.

A man with the deep voice and the girl are quarrelling in the number 5, the room opposite to that of Nikola, the number 7.

The argument proceeds for a while, between various insults and vulgarities launched mainly by the man, whose voice dominates that of the young. The girl starts to cry while the other continues to shout against her, accusing her of "failing to comply with the terms previously agreed".

It would seem that they litigate in Serbian.

Nikola comes to the door and opens it.

The man, a tall, bald, dressed in nice clothes, yells to the girl in the number 5, the door's open. He's BORIS, the owner of Joliet and protector of Nadia.

BORIS

(yelling to Nadia)

It will be better for you that you pay me the next time or will be the end. Your end, you understand, slutty? I can break you when I want. Make no mistakes.

The man runs down the stairs and disappears from the hallway.

Other customers seem to continue to sleep in their rooms, don't care about the situation that took place outside their rooms.

Nikola enters in the number 5.

INT. CHAMBER NUMBER 5 - NIGHT

The room is turned upside down: the bed is spoiled with cuts, with the sheets thrown on the floor, on which are scattered shards of glass bottles and some female clothes. A great chaos.

Nadia is sitting on the ground, her back against the wall, crying, tearing hair with hands. From the runny nose and from the lip get off blood and has a large bruise around her right eye. She wears a white pajama, dirt of some red spot, which makes her sensual but at the same time more vulnerable and defenseless.

Nikola approaches the girl.

NIKOLA  
Hey, what the hell happened?

NADIA  
(crying)  
Go away...

NIKOLA  
What you have in the nose?

NADIA  
I said go away!

Nikola bends his knees and looks into her eyes.

Nadia looks up to him. Her face is red, her eyes swollen from the beating and the crying. The pretty face is ruined by split lip and nose from which gutter the blood.

Nikola takes her arm, she doesn't react.

In Nadia's arm there are small holes, about a dozen, which run through the blood vessels.

Nikola takes the girl in his arms. Nadia clings to Nikola and she's carried away by him. Brings the girl to his room, crossing the empty corridor.

INT. CHAMBER NUMBER 7 HOTEL JOLIET - NIGHT

Nikola lays the girl on the edge of the bed. Nadia's still weeping, she's ashamed.

Nikola heads in the bathroom. Takes a plastic cup and fills it to the brim with water from the sink, then takes a cloth and wets it. Returns to Nadia. Hands her the glass of water.

NIKOLA

Drink.

Nadia grabs the glass and slowly drinks the water.

Nikola sits next to her and gently dabs the wounds of eye, nose and mouth with the soaked cloth.

Nadia is recovering. She takes big breaths, which means that the bulk of the crying is gone. Remains stationary while Nikola cleans wounds.

NIKOLA

Stay calm. It's all over. Now you know you need to do? You lie down on this bed and you take a nice nap. You'll see that with a good dose of sleep everything changes.

Nadia touches his hand.

NADIA

Thank you...

NIKOLA

Don't mention it.

Nikola turns away toward the door.

Nadia lies down on the bed. She notes the Smith & Wesson resting on the bedside table. Says nothing, remains silent, thoughtful. She's too tired to ask for explanations on the weapon. She's captured from sleep and closes her eyes.

The light of the camera is turned off.

Nikola leaves the room. When he's in the hallway, before closing the door of number 7, still gives a peek inside:

Nadia's sleeping under the covers of his bed, safe.

Nikola nudges open the door without turning the key and enters in the number 5.

INT. CHAMBER NUMBER 5 - NIGHT

It seems that in the room has been unleashed an orgy gone mad, a riot.

Nikola goes to the bathroom.

On the floor of the sink, just in front of a big mirror, there are some of a women's personal wares: lipstick, cosmetics and various make up, brushes, perfume bottles, briefs, and above an hand mirror...

...a syringe.

Nikola takes the empty syringe, studies it for a few seconds, then puts it in his pocket.

INT. DINING ROOM HOTEL JOLIET - DAY

Nadia eats at the table of Nikola, just opposite to him. She's better, even if the mouth and the eye are swollen. The girl eats breakfast with yoghurt. Nikola doesn't order anything. Continues to observe her.

NIKOLA

Once I had to interrogate a student for an examination. By the way, I'm a professor. However, it was an important interrogation for that guy that had about twenty or maybe twenty-two years. I began to do my questions and he didn't even respond to one. The thing that struck me is that he hadn't even tried to answer. He stood there staring at me without saying a word. At this point I want to be clear about one thing: it's not that my questions are difficult. Just study a little and that guy, let's face it, hadn't opened the book even once. To the question "tell me about Josip Broz" he said to me "eh, what?" And I said "I told you to tell me about Josip Broz", to which he repeated what he said earlier, that is, "what?". Again, I said "I asked you to tell me about Josip Broz" and he nothing, as before, in fact. Now, I'm one of those teachers who don't like to embarrass the student, you know? If I see that one is cornered often I help him with simple questions, but this here -the one I was talking about to you- didn't deserve at all an help. The fact is also that I had decided to give him a hand and I said "So tell me about

(MORE)

NIKOLA (CONT'D)

Tito" and you know what he did? He threw a couple of dinars on the desk, a big bunch of money, and told me "just crap. We come to serious things".

Nadia smiles.

NIKOLA

Now I tell you, just crap. We come to serious things. Who was the man who hit you very well yesterday night?

NADIA

I don't know if I can answer.

NIKOLA

Oh yes you can answer. On the contrary, you have to answer.

NADIA

Okay. His name is Boris and...

NIKOLA

Courage, finish the sentence.

NADIA

Well, it was him...was him the one who got me out from the orphanage.

NIKOLA

But I don't think that makes you as a father, or I'm wrong?

NADIA

No, in fact. He...he says he's my protector.

NIKOLA

Your protector?

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA

And it's always him, this Boris, who dragged you here and taught you the job?

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA

Is he, this Albanian, who put you in the...prostitution?

Nadia nods.

NADIA  
Yes, but Boris isn't Albanian.

NIKOLA  
No?

NADIA  
No. He's Serb.

NIKOLA  
Serb?

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA  
You've never tried to get out? I mean if you've ever tried to escape from this country.

NADIA  
Even if I want, I can't.

NIKOLA  
For what reason?

NADIA  
I don't have documents. Nothing.

NIKOLA  
Boris owns your documents?

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA  
I understand. Good. Now you can answer to that famous question that I had done the last time you sat here in front of me and that offended you so much. How long do you do this job?

Nadia is shaking. Trembles and her eyes are moist.

NADIA  
Since I was thirteen.

NIKOLA  
Is he who pays you the room of the hotel and all the amenities it offers? If this were true, I'd assume that Boris is the owner of this place. Is it true or not?

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA

And you repay him with...your services to customers.

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA

And listen. Why last night he hit you and you yelled at him? I guess he was angry, not to say furious or worse still enraged. What did you do for get him so angry?

NADIA

(crying)

I don't...don't...I haven't paid him this week.

NIKOLA

And now what do you owe him?

Nadia shakes head: no.

NIKOLA

Don't you owe him nothing?

NADIA

He wants to be repaid in another way.

NIKOLA

Oh. Why didn't you paid him?

Nadia doesn't respond this time.

NIKOLA

Nadia, come on.

NADIA

Can I skip this question?

NIKOLA

This isn't a game show. No, you can't skip the question. You must answer, instead.

Nadia is confused but must respond. She finds courage and speaks. Nadia never said to anyone about this things.

NADIA

The money I needed for the syringes. I...I use this stuff. I

(MORE)

NADIA (CONT'D)

don't know what name it has. I don't know what it is. It makes me feel good, that's all. At first, I used it one or two times a week. Now, however, I can't live without for...ten hours. Perhaps less.

(pause)

I...yes, well, I'm better. It was him...Boris...got me to try this stuff. It was...three years ago. I didn't like what he made me do...do you understand? The work, I didn't...I didn't like it so much...I hated it...I hated it...so he made me try these things. He linked my arm with a piece of string, then he stung with needle and all...vanished...all started again. I was fine. For some time he of these things doesn't give me more, so I have to fend for myself, to find that stuff. I took what I earned...what I have earned this week. I went to a place and there I bought the syringes. That's it.

Nikola remains in silence. Only after a while, after a long pause, makes one last question.

NIKOLA

You know where is Boris?

Nadia nods.

NIKOLA

Good. Now do this: you go above, you lie down on the bed in my room and you take a long sleep. When you get up, you tell me where Boris lives. I'll go to the police and I'll sue him and he will spend the rest of his life behind bars. Then come back here and we'll decide what to do.

Nadia doesn't seem satisfied. She seems scared.

NADIA

Is it really so easy?

NIKOLA

What? Whisk in jail Boris? Yes,

(MORE)

NIKOLA (CONT'D)

it's easy.

NADIA

I don't think. In short, you're a Serb and he's a Serb. Around here, in the south, not all are treated the same way. Here justice isn't the same for everyone.

NIKOLA

And who are the favorites?

NADIA

All but not the Serbs.

NIKOLA

Don't worry about it, okay? I will.

NADIA

Okay.

NIKOLA

I'll take another coffee. I'll catch up later. Go on in the room. Don't wait me.

NADIA

Okay. See you later.

NIKOLA

See you later.

Nadia takes the bag, rises from the table and goes out of the dining room, heading for the stairs.

Nikola watches her go.

INT. CAPTAIN ZOLTAN'S HOUSE, PRIZREN - DAY

Josif is sitting on the couch in the living room of Captain Zoltan's house. This time, he's alone. From pale face we see the signs of a sleepless night. He's agitated and unlike the last time seems to be frightened by the encounter.

In the living room there's another MAN, probably a bodyguard of the Captain, who's standing in the corner of the living room, arms crossed, observes Josif without taking his eyes off him.

The front door opens.

Josif lowers his head. He assumes that Zoltan will angry so much to oust him from the Serbian community in Prizren.

From the kitchen, we can hear the VOICES of Zoltan and Divan. They're having a discussion.

Zoltan makes his entrance into the living room. Always in a suit, always with a cigar in his mouth like a Fidel Castro from Balkans. Behind him, Divan remains near the entrance to the living room, as if the guest can't escape from the room. From the way of his position, would seem to block any exit.

Josif starts to get up but

ZOLTAN  
Stay there.

Obeys.

Zoltan remains standing for a few seconds, his eyes on the young. Indicates him with the cigar in an accuser way.

ZOLTAN  
How you should feel?

JOSIF  
Bad.

ZOLTAN  
And you really feel all that bad or say it just for saying?

JOSIF  
I feel very bad.

ZOLTAN  
What is the reason because you feel bad?

JOSIF  
My friend, Aron, is no more.

ZOLTAN  
And...

JOSIF  
And we couldn't plant the bomb.

ZOLTAN  
And you couldn't plant the bomb. Is true.

Zoltan sits down.

ZOLTAN  
Let's see how things are. It's a fact that you and that other one  
(MORE)

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

don't be pulled back when I proposed you the mission and it's a fact that the mission wasn't ones of easiest, and all this goes in your favor, but there's another fact and that's that you have failed. When things happen like that, usually, I get angry. I get angry because these things don't have to happen. There's no man more angry than a father whose son has disobeyed him. Here, son, I feel something like this.

Smokes the cigar while his eyes searched those of Josif.

ZOLTAN

I'll tell you one thing. Some time ago, I had five children. They were strong men, brave, loyal, righteous. I grew them as they should, like my father did with me, not as rabbits, but as fearless soldiers. I'm one of those who grew up with the myth of St. Stefan Lazar. You know, having studied, that in ancient times kings and emperors in war sent their children to prove to the people that they risked their offspring to defend the nation. We can say that I did the same with my boys. I haven't turned back when there was no need. If the children of my neighbors and my friends's kids jeopardize their lives for the country, so must do my boys. For this they were men, and for this every night before I fell asleep, I tell them that I'm proud to have been the father of soldiers so brave.

(pause)

This was just to explain what I think about courage. Now we come to you.

JOSIF

Captain, I'm so sorry for what happened. Believe me, I'm so sorry.

ZOLTAN

Sorry? You feel just sorry?

JOSIF  
I lost a friend. A great friend.

ZOLTAN  
(severe)  
I was talking.

Josif nods and shuts up immediately.

Zoltan glares at him.

ZOLTAN  
What makes me more...angry about  
this whole thing is the fact that,  
if things would have taken a turn  
for the worse, I would have found  
myself burying my sixth child.

Lets that his words do have an effect on Josif.

ZOLTAN  
How many sons has your father  
buried in our country, eh? How many  
has he buried for Yugoslavia?  
Anyone? And you? How many? How many  
children of your, of your own  
blood, you've buried here, in enemy  
territory, not at home but here in  
Kosovo? That's why I'm angry.  
Because if things had gone  
differently, out there, behind the  
house, there would be another  
tombstone and on there would be  
written the name of my last  
remained son. Do you understand  
that? Can you understand how I  
feel? No. You can't, because you  
haven't children. You haven't  
children who have died for the  
cause, our cause. What went wrong  
down there?

Josif doesn't respond.

Zoltan begins to calm.

ZOLTAN  
Sorry? Are you sorry? But you know  
how I really feel? I feel  
disappointed. I thought I could  
trust you, son, but...if you was  
truly interested in our mission,  
you would have blown up in the air

(MORE)

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

bringing with you those guards. Now you're sad about your friend and you're upset, you see. You must be wondering "why him instead of I". So let me ask you something: how do you feel being sitting there in front of me? How do you feel sitting on that couch? Are you still feeling sorry or something...you feel a little coward to stay in my house right now?

Josif nods.

ZOLTAN

Don't worry, son. When tonight you'll go to bed and won't be able to get to sleep, you'll feel a coward. It's your cross, and will stay with you for life, like a sword of Damocles hanging over your head. And that same sword will afflict Divan, here, because he behaved like a coward. Remember what I said last time, when you and the other one...what was his name?

JOSIF

Aron.

ZOLTAN

When you came into my house and when you sat right there, where are you now, in front of me? Do you remember what I told you? I told you that in my house I don't accept men of whom I don't trust.

(pause)

And now, I can't trust you.

Silence in the living room.

Josif feels the only targeted, a scapegoat, but what makes him so sad isn't remotely the anger of Voivode since the lack of Aron.

ZOLTAN

Boy, how can I trust you?

DIVAN

Josif, my father decided to give you a second chance. You can redeem

(MORE)

DIVAN (CONT'D)

yourself from last time. We put a lid on it, as if nothing had happened.

Josif is thinking "And then Aron? Even on him put a lid on it?" but knows that he can't say certain things, especially in a place like this.

DIVAN

But if you want to join us, you must do one thing.

ZOLTAN

An extremely important thing.

DIVAN

Oh yes. You can prove how much you're worth, Josif.

ZOLTAN

Being a patriot. There's no better satisfaction than being patriots of a great country. But to be a patriot, you have to fulfill this mission, the most important mission of your life.

DIVAN

The goal is always the same, like the last time, remember?

ZOLTAN

If you participate or not, that bus anyway will burst how provides the mission. If you don't you, it will be another of our. One of the most courageous, a real man, and he will deserve the reward. Will become a rich man, in all senses.

DIVAN

So what? What have you decided? Do you want or not to join us?

Josif lowers his gaze for a few seconds and keeps his eyes closed. This's the most important decision of his life. Raise his head, ready to respond.

E/I. BORIS'S HOUSE, PRIZREN - DAY

Nikola knocks on the door of a house, the house of Boris.

A WOMAN'S VOICE cries (in Albanian) that is coming. Someone

turns the key in the lock.

A skinny woman, about thirty-five, bored-looking, with hair half reddish and half gray, stands in front of the door. In her right hand has a brush for hair dye. She's called ZORA and is the wife of Boris.

NIKOLA

I was looking for Boris.

ZORA

Boris who?

Nikola takes a few steps back to see the house number attached to the wall of the dwelling.

ZORA

This is the home of Boris. Who seek him?

NIKOLA

But I seek him.

ZORA

And you are?

NIKOLA

Nikola Jovanov.

ZORA

Ah...wait here.

Zora closes the door in face to Nikola.

Nikola remains alone in front of the house. He looks around: it's a residential area where the houses all look the same. There seems to be a few movement in the surrounding area.

There is an old lady who hangs the clothes and a boy riding a bicycle...

The door opens again.

Nikola has in front of him Boris, the protector of Nadia, the one who the last night hit the girl. He's serious and doesn't seem enjoy the presence of a stranger. He's wearing a simple white sleeveless shirt and a pair of shorts. Boris remains shut up and looks Nikola.

NIKOLA

I presented myself to the lady a little while ago. I'm Nikola Jovanov and I'd like to discuss about a matter that requires a

(MORE)

NIKOLA (CONT'D)

private conversation between you  
and me.

BORIS

I don't know what you're talking  
about, but I don't care.

NIKOLA

It should, instead. You're the  
owner of the hotel Joliet?

BORIS

Yes, so what?

NIKOLA

You know, it's about the number  
five.

In Boris will light a glare of curiosity.

BORIS

The number five?

NIKOLA

Yes. Hotel Joliet, first floor,  
room number five. I would be  
interested in who is in it.

BORIS

Oh. Now I get it. Come on inside.

Boris opens the door to Nikola, who passes inside the  
lodging, then Boris closes the door.

It's a pretty home, with luxurious furnishings and wooden  
floors. It would be suitable for an owner with tastes better  
educated than Boris and his wife, who welcome guests and  
dress as cavemen.

A long thread on which there are lying rags and damp clothes  
divides the living room and in a antique wood table bear the  
remains of a rough breakfast.

BORIS

Follow me in my office.

Boris and Nikola crosses the corridor then the landlord  
opens a door.

INT. BORIS'S HOUSE (BORIS'S OFFICE)

The office is that of a doctor or a lawyer any, with a  
beautiful wooden desk and a chair in dark skin.

BORIS

Sit down, if you like.

Nikola sits in one of the guest's chair, in front of the landlord.

BORIS

What did you say your name was?

NIKOLA

Nikola. Nikola Jovanov.

BORIS

Mmmm...Jovanov...never heard.  
You're not from here?

NIKOLA

No. I'm just passing through.

BORIS

Passing through, yep. Say, don't  
you thirsty? I'm thirsty with all  
this heat.

Boris, before closing the office door, yells at his wife,  
hidden in some room to dye her hair.

BORIS

(yelling)

Zora! When you're done, bring to  
Niko here something to drink. You  
grabbed, woman?

ZORA (O.S.)

Give me a few minutes or this stuff  
will dry up and goodbye to my  
hairstyle.

BORIS

(yelling)

I don't give a damn of your hair! I  
want you to bring something to  
drink to Niko and hurry to do so or  
else I'll do it, and after we do  
reckon, you and me, understand?

Boris closes the office door. He sits on the chair, smiling  
at the guest.

BORIS

What you said just now, about the  
number five?

NIKOLA

You see, I stay at your hotel for a few days and I saw something that immediately caught my attention.

BORIS

And what did you see?

NIKOLA

In fact, the girl who stays in the number five.

BORIS

Ah! Doesn't go unnoticed that beautiful woman, eh?

NIKOLA

Absolutely.

NIKOLA

But why you've taken the trouble to come here? You could get agree with the girl without the need to come up to here--

(screams)

Zora! Bring something to drink, now!

(to Nikola)

Without coming to my house, you could easily have fun with the girl and pay her on the spot. Why did you come here?

Zora opens the door and comes into the office with hair tanned in a disastrous way. She puts a beer bottle on the desk in front of Nikola, and goes away defiantly.

BORIS

(to Zora)

Zora! And don't say anything to my guest here?

ZORA

What I supposed to say to your guest?

BORIS

If a beer is fine.

ZORA

But if I did just brought it.

BORIS

In fact you should ask before you bring the beer. Before, not after. But now there's nothing left to do then it would be nice if you ask him if a beer is fine. And if the beer isn't fine?

ZORA

Well, he must be satisfied because there's nothing else in the kitchen. The sink is clogged.

NIKOLA

The beer is fine for me.

BORIS

(to Zora)

What does the sink with beer, can you tell?

ZORA

If the sink isn't clogged I would have brought a glass of water since in the fridge there's nothing else apart from your beer.

BORIS

It's your task to stock up the fridge, not mine.

ZORA

And it's not my job fix the sink.

BORIS

What the fuck are you saying? You call someone to fix it, right?

ZORA

If you know fix it, we could do without to call someone and spare to restock the fridge.

BORIS

But do you listen when you speak? You're saying bullshit.

ZORA

Hey, it's not my fault if in our house nobody ever comes. That's why I don't ever fill the fridge, because there are just you and me in here and you know that's apart

(MORE)

ZORA (CONT'D)

the beer we don't drink nothing.

BORIS

Don't act so when I have guests.

ZORA

So how?

BORIS

So like a bitch. Now bring that ass out of my office and do it quickly.

Zora goes out of the office.

Boris returns to his guest.

BORIS

You were saying?

NIKOLA

I was saying that I would be interested to stay with the girl for more than one night. I thought then that, for that sort of thing, I should have come to you to come to an agreement on price.

BORIS

Natural. You thought right. How many days?

NIKOLA

Oh, I don't know. How many, in your opinion?

BORIS

It depends. It depends on what you want to do with the girl, what you like do to her.

NIKOLA

And if I like take her away?

BORIS

Away where?

NIKOLA

Take a ride, just that I need her documents. I spoke with her but she said that hasn't her documents.

BORIS

In fact, I have them.

NIKOLA

Here's another reason that explains why I came here. So why don't you give me the documents of the girl so I pay and leave?

Boris opens a desk drawer...

Inside, we detect a plastic bag that contains some documents and a STOCK OF A REVOLVER.

...but then closes it. Narrows his eyes suspiciously.

BORIS

Wait a second. Away where? Be precise.

NIKOLA

Away from Prizren. And out of Kosovo.

BORIS

No. At best, you can take a ride out of town, to the market or at some clothing store. You don't need her documents. Take her to the great warehouses, for a walk in the center but...no more.

NIKOLA

Yet I would have liked.

BORIS

Yet you can't.

NIKOLA

And if I do so?

Nikola pulls his Smith & Wesson 686. Points the gun in the face of Boris, who doesn't move.

BORIS

What the fuck--

NIKOLA

Now you still have the nerve to tell me that I can't do it?

BORIS

You and that little bitch--

NIKOLA

Her name is Nadia.

BORIS

Do you know that you got yourself  
in big trouble? The Serbs like you  
around here don't make a good end.

NIKOLA

And what kind of Serbs are you?

Boris looks Nikola defiantly then jumps to take the revolver  
in his desk drawer and...

BANG!

A bullet pierces the neck of Boris. Stunned, the Neanderthal  
gets up from his chair and with both hands try to plug the  
blood gushing from the wound. The white sleeveless shirt  
gets dirty than red.

Nikola pulls the trigger.

BANG!

Boris falls backwards, slamming his bloody head on the wall.  
His heavy body slumps to the ground with a loud thud.

Fast, Nikola climbs over the corpse and looks through the  
drawers of the desk with his free hand from the gun. In a  
hurry, looking through sachets of drugs and dinars left to  
gather dust. Then, he sees...

...the plastic bag which contained the documents.

Nikola rips open the envelope and takes a look at the cards:  
are the documents of Nadia. He puts everything in the hidden  
pocket of his jacket. Then goes to the door and finds  
himself in the corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR

The house is quiet, can't hear anything.

Nikola passes to the hallway when...

Zora emerges from the corner of the kitchen, with a sawn-off  
shotgun in her arms. FIRE, but the recoil damages the target  
and the shot is discharged on the wall, breaking it.

Nikola has made a leap forward, putting belly to the ground.  
Points the woman with his gun and SHOOTS THREE SHOTS.

Zora falls dead on the kitchen floor.

Nikola gets to his feet and, very quickly, hides into the  
inside pocket of his jacket the gun. Quick, opens the door

and exits.

EST. BORIS'S HOUSE, PRIZREN - DAY

Nikola leaves the house. Walks fast past the garden.

Some of the neighbors look at him, motionless.

Nikola, head down, walks briskly and leaves the house of Boris behind him.

INT. DINING ROOM HOTEL JOLIET - NIGHT

There's no one in the room half dark, except Nikola and a WAITER that acts as a barman.

Nikola, sitting alone at a table, at his feet the black bag he brought from Belgrade.

He writes something on a sheet of paper. While writes, we hear his voice-over that reads the contents of the letter.

NIKOLA (V.O.)

As soon as you wake up, you will  
not find me in number seven, nor in  
the dining room and even in  
Prizren.

INT. CHAMBER NUMBER 7 HOTEL JOLIET - DAY

Nadia, in the big bed, wakes up...

NIKOLA (V.O.)

(continues)

I left Kosovo...

We follow the movements of the girl as she follows the V.O. of Nikola.

Nadia finds the letter on the bed. Rips the envelope and begins to read, still half asleep, the letter of Nikola. Slowly, her eyes are opened more and more and become more worried.

NIKOLA (V.O.)

(continues)

...but I haven't forgot you. Before  
leaving the room, take the jacket  
that I left in the closet...

Nadia opens the closet door and finds hanging the dark jacket of Nikola.

NIKOLA (V.O.)

(continues)

...and look in the pocket, the hidden pocket. Now I don't know exactly how many there are, but if not remember correctly should be a lot of money...

Nadia look at the hidden pocket and pulls out a wallet. Opens it and inside, to her amazement, there's a bundle of dinars.

NIKOLA (V.O.)

(continues)

...so be careful. There should be also your documents and with those, my dear, go wherever you like...

Nadia dresses quickly, wearing above her clothes for girls the jacket of Nikola. Prepares with hurry a suitcase, the kind with wheels.

NIKOLA (V.O.)

(continues)

...I suggest you to get out of the Joliet as soon as possible and to leave Prizren...

Nadia stops in front of the exit door of the hotel. She never left that place, alone. And now she's going to do her big step. Out and away from Joliet.

She's in Prizren, in front of the TRAIN STATION. The girl drags behind her a suitcase with wheels.

NIKOLA (V.O.)

(continues)

...and never come back. Go to Tirana or if you like, take a plane to wherever you want, the money aren't a problem now. If you really don't want to disappoint me and if you really love me, then promise to not use the money to buy drugs or to return back because now you're off...

Nadia, at the chek-in, asks for a ticket to some country in Albania after showing documents.

NIKOLA (V.O.)

(continues)

...and this means that you can stop

(MORE)

NIKOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 to pretend to be a woman. Now you  
 can return to growth...

The train begins to move...

NIKOLA (V.O.)  
 (continues)  
 ...I trust you and I know you'll do  
 the right thing because you're  
 always been a good girl and as such  
 you'll have to behave for the rest  
 of your life...

...and leaves the station.

NIKOLA (V.O.)  
 (continues)  
 ...without another word, Nadia, I  
 say hello and I wish you well.

BACK TO

DINING ROOM HOTEL JOLIET - EVENING

Nikola writes the last words, without leaving any signature.  
 Folds the letter and places it in the envelope, sealing it.

INT. KRISTINA RESTAURANT, BELGRADE - DAY

The saloon is half full. There will be twenty seats  
 occupied. To serve costumers, only Sofija and Dragan, the  
 senior manager of the restaurant.

Several months have passed since we last left our female  
 protagonist.

Sofija bustles and works tirelessly but looks depressed and  
 seems to want to burst into tears at any moment. Her  
 emotional, psychological and physical states are in bad  
 shape and doesn't think of anything but only to her lost  
 son.

Sofija pours wine into the glass of an ELDERLY COSTUMER  
 well-dressed who talks with some of his colleagues. She  
 stares on the TV:

scroll through the images of Vojvodina attacked by air  
 strikes and through a meticulous editing we see Milosevic  
 intent to assert his ridiculous nationalist ideas.

ELDERLY COSTUMER (O.S.)  
 Hey!

Sofija removes eyes from the TV. She has poured wine on the tablecloth and has spoiled her apron.

SOFIJA

Oh! I'm sorry.

The costumer's jacket has a few stains, but isn't so serious.

Dragan has seen it all.

Sofija takes a handkerchief from the pocket and begins to wipe the table.

SOFIJA

Really, sir, I'm sorry.

Dragan reaches the table.

DRAGAN

Go to the kitchen and lead to the sirs another bottle of wine.

Sofija obeys. Passes through the dining room.

INT. KRISTINA RESTAURANT (KITCHEN) - EVENING

Matej, the cook, is doing a great effort behind the pots and the stove lit. In the kitchen there's only him.

Now we can realize that there's no trace of Jana.

Sofija comes into the kitchen. Looks like doesn't sleep for months.

MATEJ

What happened?

SOFIJA

Nothing. I just spilled wine.

She opens the fridge and pulls out a new bottle.

MATEJ

Look, you go home, there's not so many people. Me and the boss are sufficient to finish the dinner.

SOFIJA

No way.

MATEJ

I do it with pleasure. How long don't you sleep?

SOFIJA

I don't know.

MATEJ

You should be resting.

SOFIJA

Yes, I know.

Takes the bottle and goes to the dining room.

INT. SOFIJA'S NEW HOME (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

We are in the new lodging of Sofija, not far from Belgrade.

The dynamics of the situation is as follows: Sofija, after the collapse of the building and the death of her son, lives in her parents's house, which they prepared the guest room for their daughter.

The door opens and enters Sofija, just got back from work. In fact, wears clothes for waitress at Kristina Restaurant. She's tired and her eyes reveal her desperation.

Through the open window, we can see that it's night, after midnight.

She puts her bag in the bedside and, somewhat strangely, goes to lock the bedroom door.

She turns on the radio. Airs a piece of POP-FOLK music.

Opens the drawer and pulls out a box of medicines. While performing this action, we can see that there are two framed photographs on the bedside: one (in black and white) is reduced pretty bad but we recognize it because we had already seen it in the first scene in which Sofija reflected herself in the mirror, ie the half-length of a man looking serious; the other is always a half-length but is in color and we easily distinguish the smiling face of Marko.

She opens the box and takes out some sachets.

DETAIL: on the sachets there's the written "SLEEPING PILL". We read this particular with clearly.

Sofija takes the sachets (will be half a dozen) and sits on the edge of the bed. Opens the first sachet and swallows all the content. Finished, takes a breath while the music is about to end. After a few seconds, rips the second sachet and lets slip the powder in her mouth.

Sofija begins to tremble, her face becomes pale, the eyes hollowed, cold sweats. Ingests also the third sachet. The

tremor becomes more and more evident, and in the meantime...  
 ...on the radio the music is BRUSQUELY INTERRUPTED.

A FEMALE VOICE, as a journalist expert, spreads through the room.

VOICE ON THE RADIO

(filtered)

The bombing ends. The missions of attack on the country ended after seventy-eight days. A few hours ago, the Chiefs signed in harmony with Nato a military agreement: the Yugoslav forces withdrew from Kosovo. Repeat, ends the bombing started seventy-eight days ago. Tomorrow night the bombs won't fall more on the country...

With trembling hands as infected by the disease, rips the fourth sachet. Slowly raises her arm trembling to ingest the sleeping pill...

VOICE ON THE RADIO

(filtered, continues)

...the General Staff has come to an agreement with Nato, signed in Kumanovo, to put an end to bombing...

...just open your mouth for just enough to get it over with...

VOICE ON THE RADIO

(filtered, continues)

...from tomorrow night Belgrade will no longer be under attack.

...and stops.

Lowers the arm and stays to listen. She seems even more confused than before. Now she has made her decision.

EXT. PRIZREN - DAY

We are in the heart of the city. In the square, is taking place the market and therefore there's a CROWD in front of the stalls and a lot of traffic.

Nikola walks passing through the people.

One particular extremely important: has with himself a big black bag over his shoulder. Inside there are the guns

purchased in Belgrade.

Arrives at a phone booth and enters.

We can't hear the conversation because there's too much NOISE. We can't know who has contacted nor why he's calling.

Dials a number, waits while his hand is looking for something in the wallet. Extracts a NOTE, precisely the one given to him by Edvard at the Clessidra Café and above there's written to the address of the head of Serbet Kunder. Nikola talks with who is on the other side. Reads aloud the address and waits...listens closely...raises his eyebrows. From the look on his face we can understand that at that moment becomes aware of a very important information, unknown to us. Thanks and hangs up. Comes out of the cabin, plunges again into confusion.

INT. A BAR IN PRIZREN - DAY

The local, a bar in anywhere in the city, is full of people, so it's hard to move towards the counter for order a coffee. They're all glued to the TV.

There's a lot of CLAMOR: the Albanians are discussing in groups about a historical event to say the least unique.

On television,

ORIGINAL MOVIES of women crying in front of destroyed buildings, corpses left in the mud, groups of men digging through the ruins of collapsed houses to save the survivors, all images that show us what left the war unleashed by the nationalism of Milosevic;

ORIGINAL FILMING on the arrival of NATO troops (including the Italian soldiers) in Kosovo, greeted with cheers and joy by the people, both Serb and Albanian.

EXT. BUS STOP, PRIZREN - DAY

Now Nikola is located away from the crowds but still in the city center. With him still has the famous black bag. In the distance, he sees a BUS.

The vehicle stops next to a bus stop where a dozen people are waiting.

Nikola walks more briskly. Should try to get to that bus or he will arrive late.

INT. BUS

The doors are closing when...

...Nikola passes in between doors and board rooms.

The bus is full, there's no place to sit. Nikola remains standing, tries to stand in some way.

P.O.V. TERRACE OF THE THIRD FLOOR

We observe the bus in the distance from the outside, from a high point, like the point of view of someone who watch the street from the terrace of the third floor:

The doors are closed, the engine roars and the vehicle is about to leave and...

KABOOM!

The bus EXPLODES and the people around there (the ones still alive) throw to the ground.

SCREAMING, YELLING, TERROR, SMOKE, FIRE...

EXT. BELGRADE STREET - DAY

Is no longer summer. It's been a bit of time by last events.

A well-dressed young man with a suitcase in one hand and a note in the other, walks in a street that we know well: the one that leads to the palace of Nikola and Sofija. The young man dressed nicely is JOSIF. He seems lost, he feels lost. He looks around: people go their own way, without pay attention on the stranger from Kosovo.

Some buildings in the street are torn apart by the ravages of bombing, others are fallen, and even though most of the debris has been moved, the signs of catastrophe remain.

Josif looks at the note and reads the address carefully.

He carries on and ends up in front of a destroyed building, looking grotesque: the ground floor is intact but the upper floors are like disappeared into thin air. We acknowledge the palace of Nikola.

While Josif observes the palace,

a woman walks with her head down, dressed for work (waitress), in his direction.

Josif stops the woman.

JOSIF

Excuse me.

The woman lifts her head: she's our Sofija. Her eyes miss a moment of wonder: will be for the similarity between Josif and his brother Nikola or for being stopped suddenly by a stranger?

JOSIF

Um...can you tell me, please,  
where...

He shows her the note and repeats the address.

JOSIF

This should be that palace.

Sofija reads.

JOSIF

I went around twice and it should  
be here, but--

SOFIJA

There's no longer this place.

JOSIF

In fact. Are you from here?

Sofija nods with a gentle smile.

JOSIF

Maybe you can help me once again.  
Do you know Nikola Jovanov? Some  
people told me that he's teacher  
and works at the university. I went  
down there and they told me to try  
to find him at this address. They  
don't see him for months.

SOFIJA

Oh...I was her neighbor. He lived  
right there  
(indicates the palace)  
in the apartment next to mine.

JOSIF

I understand.

SOFIJA

And if I'm honest, I asked myself  
several times why he's gone.

JOSIF

Gone?

SOFIJA

Yes. A few months ago, while still bombing here, Mr. Jovanov is gone away. I don't know why, but I can understand him.

JOSIF

He didn't tell where?

SOFIJA

Oh, no. Don't told me. I was hoping in his return, but so far I haven't heard anything.

Josif is sad.

SOFIJA

Did you know him?

JOSIF

Nikola is my brother.

Sofija smiles.

SOFIJA

Really? He talked about a brother who wasn't from here.

JOSIF

Well, I should be.

SOFIJA

Now that I look at you very well...in fact, a bit of similarity there's. Where you come from?

JOSIF

Prizren.

SOFIJA

Come from Kosovo?

Josif nods.

SOFIJA

And how is the situation there now?

JOSIF

Not much different from before. The arrival of the Nato army is a salvation for some, for others a nuisance. Points of view.

SOFIJA

I've seen pictures on the news. My heart stopped when I saw the soldiers enter in Pristina. It didn't seem real at first. Maybe can change something.

JOSIF

Maybe. Could be.

Josif takes the note and hides it into his pocket.

JOSIF

Waitress?

Sofija looks at her dress and starts laughing, nodding.

JOSIF

And you're going to work?

Sofija nods.

SOFIJA

From now until tonight.

JOSIF

Since I've nothing to do at the moment, would you mind if I accompany you?

Sofija smiles. Walks and Joseph follows her, next to her.

The road that now they cross together has in a side a row of buildings intact and inhabited, in the other side a long line of rubble and buildings that bear the indelible results of the bombing.

Josif and Sofija move away.

FADE OUT