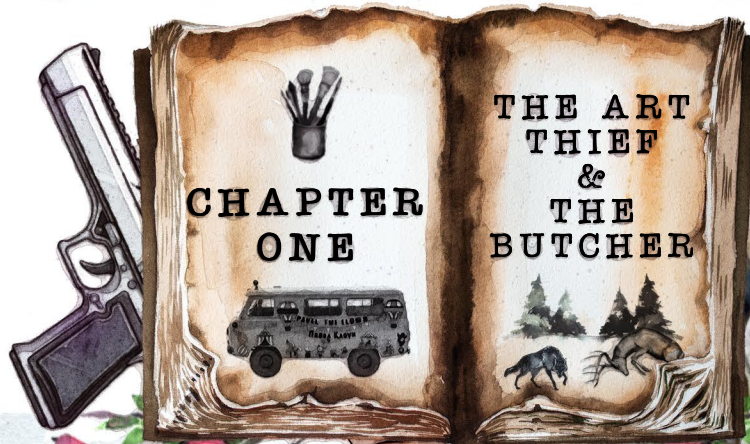




THE BUTCHER'S DAUGHTER



CHAPTER
ONE

THE ART
THIEF
&
THE
BUTCHER

a dark comedy

crime fable

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...TEASER...

INT. CLOWN VAN - DAY

PAVEL, 30s, with a scruffy beard, gets into his vehicle. It's a Soviet ambulance that has been repurposed into a clown van.

HE HEARS A NOISE BEHIND HIM and turns to see TOMMY, A BABOON, staring at him from the back of the van.

PAVEL (IN RUSSIAN)
What the fuck!

GEOFF (O.S. IN RUSSIAN)
Good day...

Pavel turns away from the primate and is knocked out by a PUNCH TO THE FACE FROM GEOFF, 30s, with a beard.

He shakes off his hand, feeling the pain of the hit. Geoff moves Pavel between the front seats and gets in.

THERE'S A KNOCK ON THE PASSENGER SIDE WINDOW. Geoff looks over at FRANK, early 50s, tall and muscular, with a shaved head. He's wearing a black and white mime costume.

Geoff unlocks the door and the big man joins him in the van.

A series of shots:

Pavel is undressed and tied up.

Geoff gets dressed in the clown attire.

The rearview mirror is adjusted as Geoff applies harlequin makeup to his face.

Frank puts earplugs and a blindfold on Pavel.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - A BIT LATER

The clown-mobile drives through the quiet neighborhood.

INT. CLOWN VAN - CONTINUOUS (MOVING)

Geoff rehearses as he drives the van.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)
Hello! My name is Pavel. I'm here
to bring cheer to the children!

Frank applies white makeup to his face to complete his mime costume. He looks at his reflection with disappointment.

FRANK
After today, we never speak of this
again...

GEOFF
Oh, come on. You look great, man.

The large mime adjusts a cartoon-like boutonnières on his costume and it squirts water on the windshield.

EXT. VASILIEV MANOR - DAY

An elegant mansion. THE SOUNDS OF A PARTY can be heard inside.

The clown van pulls up to the curb and parks near the impressive estate.

INT. CLOWN VAN - CONTINUOUS

Geoff checks his phone, then places it in the center console.

He looks at poor Pavel tied up in the back, and Tommy. The primate is happily eating a green apple.

GEOFF
Is it cool to leave him alone with Tommy?

Frank looks back at the baboon.

FRANK
Yeah, why wouldn't it be?

GEOFF
He's a monkey...

FRANK
He's a baboon, read a book. Think she'll show?

Geoff takes a deep breath.

GEOFF
I hope so...

FRANK
You ready for this, brother?

He answers him with an affirmative nod and opens the door.

EXT. VASILIEV MANOR - MOMENTS LATER

Geoff and Frank approach the house with balloons and a couple large bags.

They are joined by BECKY, late 20s, with long black hair. She's also in a clown costume. Geoff looks at her, relieved.

GEOFF
You had me worried.

BECKY
I'm always fashionably late.
Figured you'd know that by now...

He hands her some of his balloons.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

The doorbell RINGS. THE SOUND OF CHILDREN LAUGHING ECHOES THROUGH THE GIANT HOUSE.

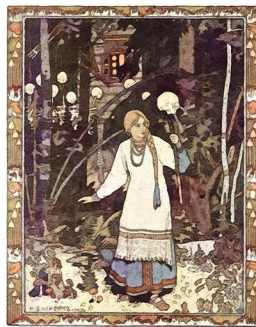
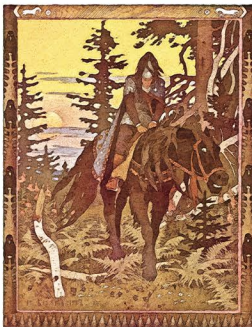
ANYA, 70s, the family housekeeper, opens the door to reveal Geoff, Becky, and Frank.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)
Hello. My name is Pavel! I'm-

ANYA (IN RUSSIAN)
-Right this way...

The three of them follow her into a decadent mansion, and the door shuts behind them.

Becky notices a triptych of tapestries depicting tales of Russian folklore:



INT. VASILIEV MANOR/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frank sets up a small stage with wooden puppets as Becky creates balloon arrangements.

A few kids approach, mesmerized by the giant mime. He notices and grins, then motions as if he's pulling on an imaginary rope.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

SARAH, 30s, slight build with long hair, enters carrying several boxes. She carefully places them near a display of cupcakes and a giant birthday cake.

Geoff sits nearby at the kitchen table. He's sketching a clown with a painting being carried away by balloons on a piece of paper.

Sarah walks over and looks at his drawing.

SARAH
A cautionary tale...

Geoff looks up and smiles at her.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Do you speak English?

He puts on a Russian accent.

GEOFF
I do.

SARAH
Seems like the entire world is bi-lingual except for Americans.

Geoff nods in agreement as she admires his sketch.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Your artwork is good, you should do that for a living, clowns are terrifying...

GEOFF
They're more frightening for adults. Perhaps a reminder that our youth is behind us.

SARAH
That's a decent analysis. But it's much simpler than all that... They're scary.

He laughs as he gets up and walks over to admire the beautiful spread of baked goods.

GEOFF
I wish I was a little kid right now.

Sarah offers him a cupcake with a smile.

SARAH

It'll be our secret.

GEOFF

The happiness of the children is compensation enough.

SARAH

Hey, a job is a job. But you shouldn't say you work for the happiness of children, it sounds creepy. Especially when you're dressed like that.

Geoff looks at his outfit.

GEOFF

Damn, you're right...

SARAH

That's ok I won't hold it against you... So why clowning?

GEOFF

It's performance art. An opportunity to tell stories and expand the minds of the next generation of-

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)

-Shit...

MRS. VASILIEV, late 50s, the homeowner, stands at the kitchen entrance, exhausted. She tries to scrape play-doh off one of her fancy shoes without spilling her martini.

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN) (CONT'D)

We're ready for you, Pavel.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

I'll be right there.

Mrs. Vasiliev exits as Becky walks by and stops to observe Geoff and Sarah as they chat.

SARAH

Good luck. You should try a cupcake later, I made them myself. Not to brag, but they're amazing.

She hands him a small box, and he puts it in his bag.

GEOFF

Thanks, you staying for the party?

SARAH

No, I rarely make it a habit to mix work and pleasure. These kids are going to be insane once they eat all this sugar.

Geoff gives Sarah his sketch with a grin.

INT. CLOWN VAN - DAY

Pavel is trying to break free. The scruffy Russian has shaken the blindfold off his head... Geoff's phone lights up with a call. Pavel squints to get a better look at it. The Call ID says: "RUSSELL CANDIDO"

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/LIVING ROOM - DAY

The clowns take their places in front of the kids and their parents. The small stage with puppets is right behind them.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

Who's ready for a puppet show!?

THE KIDS AND PARENTS CHEER as Geoff makes his way behind the stage, crouches down, and FLIPS A SWITCH... MUSIC PLAYS AND THE PUPPETS COME TO LIFE performing on their own from mechanical arms hidden beneath them.

Frank and Becky begin a routine in concert with the wooden marionettes. Meanwhile, Geoff sneaks away behind the stage.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Geoff creeps toward a beautiful oil painting that hangs next to a giant antique bookcase:



TATYANA (O.S. IN RUSSIAN)

I see you...

He tenses up as he brings his hands away from the elegantly framed artwork.

...END TEASER...

...ACT ONE...

EXT. ART GALLERY/PARKING LOT - MORNING - 2 DAYS AGO

A 1994 Ford Aspire pulls into the parking area of the gallery...

The building stands out with striking contemporary architecture amongst the ocean of corporate buildings that loom over and around it.

INT. GEOFF'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Geoff sits behind the wheel and looks at his watch: 9:57

He reaches into his backpack, pulls out a sketchbook, and starts flipping through the pages, looking at his work... He stops on a specific sketch and looks at it fondly:



After a moment, he puts the book away, clips a name tag to his black polo shirt, and exits his vehicle.

INT. ART GALLERY/SHOW ROOM - DAY

Geoff stares at the painting we saw earlier in the Vasiliev house as it hangs on display in the gallery. It has a plaque beneath it: *"The Drums of War" Boris Konstantinov (1834)*

Mrs. Vasiliev joins him in admiring the piece. She speaks with a strong Russian accent.

MRS. VASILIEV

It's beautiful...

GEOFF

Sure is.

Mrs. Vasiliev steps forward to admire it closer.

MRS. VASILIEV

This is the Battle of Ostrołęka,
right?

GEOFF

That's right. You're well informed
on your Russian conflicts.

She looks at him suspiciously.

MRS. VASILIEV

You're not going to push a sale?

GEOFF

I have a no intervention policy...

MRS. VASILIEV

...Like on safari?

GEOFF

What?

MRS. VASILIEV

On safari in Africa, they tell you
no matter what, you cannot disrupt
the natural order of things. A
wounded gazelle could jump in your
jeep but you cannot save it from
its fate...

Geoff takes in her grim explanation.

GEOFF

I'm not here to tell you *why*
something is a masterpiece... The
art should speak for itself.

MRS. VASILIEV

I'll take it. You deliver, yes?

GEOFF

Uh, yeah.

MRS. VASILIEV

Can you bring it by tomorrow?

GEOFF

Sure. Let's go take care of the
financials.

Geoff takes the "AVAILABLE" sign off the wall beneath the
painting and flips it to the other side, which reads: "SOLD"

EXT. HUMMINGBIRD CREEK ASSISTED LIVING - NIGHT

A herculean structure stands tall in the star speckled night sky. A sign reads: **Hummingbird Creek**

A comfortable home for loved ones

**INT. HUMMINGBIRD CREEK/HEALTH OFFICE - NIGHT**

Geoff sits with NURSE SANTOS, 30s.

GEOFF

I thought she was improving...

NURSE SANTOS

Her cognitive skills have been on a course of steady improvement, but her body is in decline. We'll know the full extent of where she's at next week when we take her to the hospital.

GEOFF

She's going to a hospital now?

NURSE SANTOS

It's just a precaution. We take all our residents off site for most health care needs... And just a heads up, if things progress negatively, it's going to be expensive.

GEOFF

Won't her insurance cover it?

NURSE SANTOS

Unfortunately, the treatment she needs is outside of her medical coverage.

Geoff sinks into his chair in despair.

NURSE SANTOS (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to overwhelm you. I just want to be clear on the path forward. Are you free to join us? Your mother will most likely need a translator.

GEOFF

Yeah, I'll be there.

NURSE SANTOS

Good, then we'll see you next week.

He nods warily as he struggles to keep his emotions in check.

INT. HUMMINGBIRD CREEK/MILA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Geoff sits with his mother MILA, a frail woman in her 70s with short dark hair and pale skin.

He notices her unfinished glass of water on the end table.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

You need to finish that, mom.

She looks at it and scowls.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)

I drink when I'm thirsty... And it makes me cold.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

I know, but do it for me, please.

He brings it to her, and she reluctantly takes a sip.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)

...How's the art business? You making enough money?

Geoff puts the glass back on the end table and looks at her.

INT. FANCY HOUSE - DAY - A FEW WEEKS AGO

Geoff is putting the last touches on an oil painting of a very regal-looking doberman pinscher seated near a fireplace.

INT. HUMMINGBIRD CREEK/MILA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We're back with Geoff and Mila in her apartment.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

It's good.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)

Just good? And what about that girlfriend of yours?

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

Also...Good.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - A FEW DAYS AGO

Geoff is working on a beautiful oil painting. It depicts a lush forest with an enormous cell tower in the middle of it, disturbing the animals.

Becky enters the room and looks at his latest piece of art.

BECKY

So... What is this exactly?

GEOFF

It's called "*The Uninvited Guest.*"

BECKY

I don't get it...

He looks at her wounded, and she laughs.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Sorry, I'll keep my opinions to myself.

INT. HUMMINGBIRD CREEK/MILA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mila takes ahold of Geoff's hand softly.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)

Don't settle for less.

He thinks about her words. She's not wrong.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

...I came here to check on you.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)

I'm great, never been better.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

Well, you won't be if you don't stay hydrated.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)

Don't worry about me, I can take care of myself.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)

We're going to get through this together. It will be fine.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)

I don't like hospitals...

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)
I know, which is why I'm coming
with you.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)
And who is going to pay for it?

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)
I am, don't worry about it.

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)
You don't have that kind of money.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)
I'm working on it... Same time next
week?

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)
Of course.

Geoff leans in and kisses her on the forehead.

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)
I love you, now drink your water!

MILA (IN RUSSIAN)
I love you, too.

She smiles at him as he gets up and exits her room.

INT. ART GALLERY/OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

Geoff enters the office of his boss CLARENCE, 50s, overweight
with glasses. He's seated at his neatly organized desk. He
addresses his employee without looking at him.

CLARENCE
What's up?

GEOFF
I'd like to hand deliver the
Konstantinov painting myself, sir.

CLARENCE
We have a delivery guy for that. I
need you on the floor.

GEOFF
I know, it's just the buyer
specifically requested that I come
by with it today. It was part of
the sales pitch.

Clarence finally looks up at Geoff.

CLARENCE
Fine, do it on your lunch...

EXT. VASILIEV MANOR - DAY

Geoff approaches the front door with "*The Drums of War*" painting. It's been packed and wrapped for delivery.

Before he can ring the bell, Anya opens the door.

ANYA (IN RUSSIAN)
How can I help you?

GEOFF
I'm looking for Mrs. Vasiliev?

Anya narrows her eyes at him as Mrs. Vasiliev steps in front of her and joins Geoff outside the door.

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)
It's fine, Anya.

GEOFF
Good afternoon, I wanted to bring your painting over here myself.

He hands it to her.

MRS. VASILIEV
Thank you, this will look lovely for tomorrow.

GEOFF
You want me to hang it for you?
It's complimentary.

She looks at him and shrugs.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/STUDY - LATER

Geoff makes one last adjustment to the painting and looks back at Mrs. Vasiliev.

GEOFF
Does that look straight?

MRS. VASILIEV
Yes, that will do.

He steps away from the painting and gathers his things. He notices a few bags of party favors nearby.

GEOFF
What's the occasion?

MRS. VASILIEV
It's my daughter's birthday party tomorrow.

GEOFF
How nice! Are you doing anything special?

MRS. VASILIEV
I spent a fortune on sweets, and we have a clown performing.

GEOFF
Well, tell her happy birthday for me.

She nods as Geoff picks up his bag of tools.

EXT. FRANK'S HOUSE - DAY

The ultimate Zen oasis tucked into the hills. It has both indoor and outdoor structures that look as if they were flown over from a monastery in the Far East...

Geoff pulls up in his shit-kicker car and disrupts the tranquillity.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Geoff paces excitedly as Frank sits comfortably on his couch.

FRANK
No...

GEOFF
I really need your help with this man. It's for my mom's treatment.

FRANK
You going to jail isn't going to make her feel any better.

GEOFF
That's assuming we get caught, which we won't.

FRANK
We? What do you mean we?

GEOFF
I have a plan that's foolproof.

Frank sighs as he takes a swig of a protein shake.

FRANK
Alright, fuck it... Let's hear it.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE/OFFICE - EVENING

A series of shots:

Frank sits at his computer scanning various clown websites while Geoff looks over his shoulder. Geoff calls numbers for various performers and crosses names off the list as he goes. He's only got a couple more left as he dials the next one: "PAVEL THE CLOWN"

GEOFF
Hi, is this Pavel?

He responds with a thick Russian accent and broken English.

PAVEL (ON THE PHONE)
Yes, what you need?

GEOFF
I was wondering if you were free for a last-minute party tomorrow?

PAVEL (ON THE PHONE)
I'm sorry, I already booked.

GEOFF
Is it for the Vasiliev family?

PAVEL (ON THE PHONE)
...How you know that?

GEOFF
I'm taking over the party planning and wanted to make sure I had a backup. I wasn't sure who was performing, but now I know, thank you! Is the address on your website correct for payment?

PAVEL (ON THE PHONE)
Yes, that's my place.

GEOFF
Great, we'll see you tomorrow!

He hangs up before the clown can respond and looks at Frank with a smile.

FRANK
If we're doing this, we'll need an actual performer...

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Geoff looks at a printout of *The Drums of War* as he paints a replica version. Becky watches in the distance.

BECKY
What if they notice it's different?

GEOFF
She won't, she's a tourist.

BECKY
A tourist?

He stops painting and looks back at her.

GEOFF
She wants to visit and take in the sites, but she'll never be a native.

Becky looks at him, confused.

GEOFF (CONT'D)
An art poser...

BECKY
You know this from meeting her once?

He returns to painting.

GEOFF
I met her twice, and yeah, I do.

BECKY
And if we get caught, I'm not on the hook?

GEOFF
Yup, you and Frank are just part of my clown troupe and had no idea I was a thief.

BECKY

So how much money do you think you'll get for this little robbery?

GEOFF

Well, the original sold for 1.1 million, so maybe half that?

BECKY

You can make a replica of something worth a million dollars! How are you not doing this for a living?

GEOFF

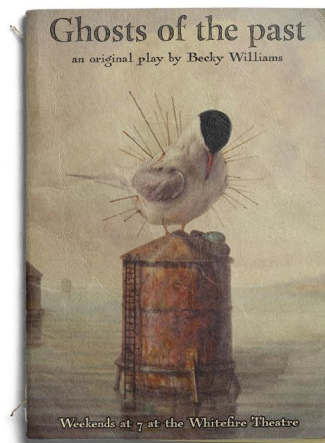
Because I'm trying to make it with my original works-

BECKY

-Yeah, but you're not, so shouldn't you go where the money is?

He holds back his response and continues painting.

Becky grabs a playbill for her next theatre production from a stack on her desk. It reads:



She takes a moment to admire the artwork on the front, then sifts through the rest of the brochure.

Becky stops on the cast list page and reads the bios of her fellow actors. Her joyous energy catches Geoff's eye.

GEOFF

What'd the director think of the artwork?

BECKY

He really liked it.

Geoff stops painting and turns toward her.

GEOFF
Really?! What did he say?

BECKY
...That he liked your work?

He sighs and returns to his work as Becky puts the playbill in the outer pocket of his backpack.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/STUDY - THE NEXT DAY

We pick up where we left off in the teaser as Geoff cautiously makes his way to "*The Drums of War*" painting.

TATYANA (O.S. IN RUSSIAN)
I see you...

He tenses up as he looks back at TATYANA, 6, the birthday girl. She holds a creepy doll with one eye and has frosting all over her face from one of Sarah's cupcakes.

TATYANA (IN RUSSIAN) (CONT'D)
You're a bad guy...

GEOFF (IN RUSSIAN)
Why can't I be a good guy?

TATYANA (IN RUSSIAN)
Because I'm the hero.

She points her finger at him like a pistol and makes a GUN-SHOT NOISE. Geoff stumbles back and "*dies*," she giggles at his theatrics.

MRS. VASILIEV (O.S. IN RUSSIAN)
Tatyana? Where are you?

The little girl looks to the hallway nearby.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Becky and Frank are still performing for the kids. They notice Mrs. Vasiliev walking toward the study.

Frank quickly POPS A FEW BALLOONS, frightening some of the kids and causing a scene of TEARS AND SCREAMING...

Mrs. Vasiliev marches back toward the chaos in a huff.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Tatyana runs off to see what all the fuss is about.

Geoff returns to the painting. This time, he notices a tiny alarm on the back of it.

He looks in his clown bag and removes a small leather satchel. He opens it to reveal an array of tools.

Geoff takes a blade and carefully begins cutting the painting loose right where the edges meet the frame.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

The parents and kids watch Becky and the puppets in the living room while Mrs. Vasiliev has a stern word with Frank.

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)
Is making children cry part of your
usual routine?

Frank looks back at her, lost.

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN) (CONT'D)
I want some answers now!

He mimes like he's crying. Her eyes narrow with anger.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Geoff finishes cutting the painting free and carefully places it inside his clown bag.

He removes his replica from the bag and looks back at the empty frame on the wall. He scans the room and notices a stapler.

Geoff walks toward the small office accessory but stops when he hears a couple of party guests approaching the room. He quickly hides behind a curtain just as the TWO GUESTS, women, 40s, enter the decadent study.

PARTY GUEST 1 (IN RUSSIAN)
Yet another room to show off their
wealth...

Her companion notices the frame with the missing painting.

PARTY GUEST 2 (IN RUSSIAN)
What's that about?

Geoff holds his breath in anticipation behind the curtains as the women approach his robbery in progress.

Becky enters the room behind them.

BECKY
Hello, ladies! I need a couple of
volunteers...

The two women look back at Becky and shrug. They join her and return to the party.

Geoff carefully exits his hiding place and grabs the stapler off the desk.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Frank makes cryptic mime gestures toward Mrs. Vasiliev.

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)
Where is Pavel!

She turns to leave. He panics and squeezes the flower on his shirt, which shoots water all over the back of her dress. She turns around, filled with rage...

INT. CLOWN VAN - EVENING (MOVING)

Frank, now with a black eye, sits shotgun. Geoff drives the van while inspecting his bruised right hand.

FRANK
It's safe to say they won't be
hiring Pavel the clown again.

GEOFF
I fucked up my hand on his face.

FRANK
Don't talk to me about job-related
injuries right now.

GEOFF
Look, I know you're angry, but
you'll see things clearer in the
morning.

Frank looks at him with his squinty injured eye.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

Poor choice of words, sorry...
There's a small box in my bag. Can
you grab it for me?

Frank looks through the clown bag and finds the box Sarah gave him. He opens it and finds a cupcake with a note:

Make time for the sweet things in life.

He shows it to Geoff.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

The baker at the party gave me
that. She was cool, man...

FRANK

You were flirting while we robbed a
kid's birthday party?

GEOFF

No, and we didn't rob the kids.

FRANK

You always make shitty behavior
sound poetic...

GEOFF

What took place tonight was for a
noble cause.

FRANK

So why were you trying to score
with the baker? Are things rocky
with Becky?

GEOFF

She's so wrapped up in her play
that it's like I don't exist...

FRANK

So be up front with her and talk it
out, brother.

Geoff notices a sun bleached air freshener hanging from the rearview mirror with an illustration of Frank, about 20 years ago:



GEOFF
Do you miss it?

FRANK
On nights like tonight,
absolutely...

EXT. PAVEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The clown van pulls up and parks in the driveway.

INT. CLOWN VAN - CONTINUOUS

Frank makes his way to the back and grabs Pavel.

He takes the earplugs out of his ears, unties him, and picks the blindfold up off the floor.

FRANK
Can we trust you won't talk about
what went on here tonight?

The frightened Russian looks at Frank, then to "*The Big Dirty*" air freshener behind him.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Hey, you hearing me?

Pavel confidently shakes his head yes.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Good, you wouldn't want Tommy to
get mad. Baboons are twice as
strong as humans and have teeth
longer than a leopard.

The Russian looks at Tommy, petrified...

As the guys gather their belongings, Becky's playbill falls out of Geoff's backpack and into the center console of the clown van...

...END OF ACT ONE...

...ACT TWO...**EXT. BAKERY - NIGHT**

A quaint bakery with a rustic sign that reads:

BAKERY

ANTHONY, 60s, well dressed with a dapper appearance, approaches the door to the establishment and KNOCKS. He holds a folder in his hand.

After a moment, Sarah answers. She doesn't look pleased...

SARAH

What do you want now?

ANTHONY

It was my intention to call-

SARAH

-But you did something selfish instead...

ANTHONY

...I wanted to give you this. It's my latest manuscript.

He offers her the folder, and she doesn't take it.

SARAH

I'm good, thanks.

ANTHONY

I was hoping to hear your take on it. You've always had a brilliant eye for structure and-

SARAH

-Do you realize how crazy this is? You just show up out of nowhere and expect feedback on a book?

ANTHONY

Can't argue with that, but let me make it up to you. How about dinner tomorrow night?

She looks at him; he means it... Her icy demeanor melts.

SARAH

Fine. One dinner. But this doesn't mean that everything is back to normal... What time and where?

He has a thought.

ANTHONY

Actually, it will have to be the night after next. I forgot I have a work thing-

SARAH

-Forget it!

She SLAMS THE DOOR IN HIS FACE.

ANTHONY

Sweetheart, please! I promise we can do it on Wednesday night! You have my word!

Silence from the other side of the door.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Sarah, please...

Nothing... He gives it another moment, then walks away.

INT. THE CANDIDO RESIDENCE - NIGHT

THE DOORBELL CHIMES. RUSSELL, 30s, bookish, answers. Geoff pops out of the shadows and scares him.

RUSSELL

Whoa! You're lucky Vicky didn't answer... She hates clowns.

VICKY, 30s, perfectly put together and pregnant, enters and SCREAMS when she spots Geoff in his smudged clown makeup.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

What did I say?

VICKY

What the hell are you doing? Ugh, clowns are gross...

Geoff laughs as he enters the house. Vicky stops him.

VICKY (CONT'D)

You know better.

She nods to a basket near the door that reads: "Phones"
Geoff puts his phone in the container.

EXT. THE CANDIDO RESIDENCE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

Geoff, Russell, and Vicky sit around a fire pit. The guys drink craft beer, Vicky has coconut water.

VICKY

Should I even ask why you came home wearing makeup?

GEOFF

I was part of a live action performance art piece at the 4th street gallery.

VICKY

I don't know what to say to that...

Geoff takes out his phone and shows Russell a new painting:



GEOFF

I just finished it, what do you think?

RUSSELL

I love it!

Vicky looks at the picture, worried.

VICKY

This is for Russell's new record?

GEOFF

Yeah! The working title is *Fresh Catch...*

VICKY

He hasn't even written a song yet...

RUSSELL

Hey! I have a few demos...

She looks at the picture of the painting again.

VICKY

It's a bit violent, don't you think?

GEOFF

Don't worry, no animals were harmed in the creation of this artwork.

The guys share a laugh. Vicky can't comprehend Geoff's humor.

RUSSELL

I appreciate your work so far, man. I'll figure it out, eventually.

Russell takes a swig of his beer.

VICKY

He's paralyzed and afraid of his own success...

RUSSELL

What?

VICKY

I'm just being honest sweetheart. My therapist says I shouldn't encourage behavior that impedes our goals.

RUSSELL

Okay. I'd love to move on to another topic...

VICKY

(to Geoff)

How are things going with Betsy?

GEOFF

Her name is Becky, and it's been challenging... I did, however, meet someone new at the thing tonight. She's a baker.

VICKY

That's great! Did you get her number?

GEOFF

No. I'm still dating Becky and I was dressed like a clown.

RUSSELL

Maybe she's into clowns.

GEOFF

She told me they terrify her.

VICKY

I like her already. I'll be back. This kid pushes on my bladder and I have to pee every 5 minutes.

RUSSELL

Too much information, hun...

She gets up and waddles back to the house.

The guys drink their beer while they wait a moment until the coast is clear.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

So what were you really up to?

GEOFF

...The art thing I told you.

RUSSELL

I can tell when you're lying.

GEOFF

...My mom isn't doing great, and her treatments gonna cost a lot...

RUSSELL

I don't know what to say man, I'm sorry...

GEOFF

Yeah... So I saw an opportunity to swap out a valuable painting with a replica... Just to pay for mom's treatment.

RUSSELL

You stole a painting from your work?!

GEOFF

I wouldn't call it stealing, and I didn't do it at work-

RUSSELL

-You can't do this, if you get caught-

GEOFF

-It's done. And because of that, I met the baker tonight. We really hit it off. She gave me a cupcake.

RUSSELL

She gave you a cupcake? What are you, six?

GEOFF

She wants to see me again!

RUSSELL

OR, she was just being nice and trying to get a future customer.

GEOFF

I'm thinking I could go to her bakery and meet her again. She doesn't know what I look like or who I really am.

RUSSELL

And would you tell her about your new life of crime on your first date?

GEOFF

This was a onetime deal. And it was for a good cause.

Vicky re-joins them with an angry expression on her face.

VICKY

You stole a painting?!

She looks at Russell.

VICKY (CONT'D)

And you knew about this?

RUSSELL

He just told me!

VICKY

(to Geoff)

You better not have a stolen painting in our house.

GEOFF
I don't. I wouldn't do that.

She sits down and takes a breath.

VICKY
(to Geoff)
Geoff... you know how much we love
having you here... you know that,
right?!

GEOFF
...Sure?

VICKY
But I am completely uncomfortable
having a criminal inside my home. I
know you and Russell go way back...
but I want you out of here by the
end of tonight...

RUSSELL
Honey, isn't that a bit harsh?

Vicky shoots him a look that says: *"Don't you dare."*

VICKY
I'm sorry but we can't be
accessories to your illegal
activities.

RUSSELL
I know how it reads on paper, but
he was doing it for his-

GEOFF
It's ok, Russell. It's fine. I
understand...

VICKY
Great. I'm going to bed.

She heads back inside as the two sit in silence.

RUSSELL
I'm sorry, man.

GEOFF
Don't worry about it...

Geoff inspects his bruised hand.

RUSSELL
What happened?

GEOFF
I punched a clown...

The two of them take a swig of beer.

EXT. EVELYN'S ESTATE - NIGHT

A massive pink mansion stands alone amongst the beautiful gardens and looming palm trees.

A classic black challenger in mint condition pulls up. Anthony exits and walks around the side of the house and down a long, narrow staircase.

Anthony stops at a heavy wooden door with a small window that light seeps through.

He knocks, and a few moments later, the window darkens and the door is opened...

INT. EVELYN'S ESTATE/DUEL CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The large door is opened by TAITO, 30s, a big muscular man with dreadlocks and tribal tattoos. He smiles at Anthony.

TAITO
Long time no see.

ANTHONY
I'm back, indefinitely...

Anthony lifts his sleeve to reveal a tattoo:



We see Taito has the same marking. This is the symbol for the international crime syndicate known as "*The Monarchy*."

Taito steps aside to let Anthony in.

The two men walk through the dark chamber. The air is musty and smells of gunpowder.

They walk past a laboratory where ERIK, 30s, covered with tattoos, and sporting a mohawk, works diligently with a respirator on his face in front of an array of chemicals and glassware.

They continue on past another room where BYRON, 40s, with shaggy hair, carefully works on assembling an explosive device. Burns and scars are littered all over his face and arms - the price of being a bomb maker...

Next, they pass a medical room where WENDY, 20s, with tattoos and short hair, tends to a wounded comrade.

They move on to the next room where KRISTJAN, 40s, a man as tall as a tree with blonde hair and a giant blonde beard, beats a man with a club.

Kristjan notices Anthony as he passes, and gives him a respectful nod...

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

It's nice to see the work continues...

TAITO

We wouldn't have it any other way.

They move further down the hallway and pass a room covered in taxidermy, antlers, and rare tusks. FARAJI, 40s, with a chinstrap beard, cleans a massive hunting rifle and nods at Anthony as he passes.

They stop at the next room where GABRIELA, 30s, with long dark hair, sorts stacks of money in every currency imaginable at a desk. Behind her is a large vault.

She rises from her seat and approaches Anthony. She speaks with a Chilean accent.

GABRIELA

I heard you were back in town. Need any per diem while you're here?

ANTHONY

I'm straight, but thank you for asking.

She smiles at him and returns to her work as the two men move on to their next stop.

They arrive at an armory that houses anything and everything that inflicts pain, from bowie knives to machine guns. OMAR, 40s, with short hair and a big bushy beard, greets them.

OMAR

Can I get you anything? Some ammunition perhaps?

ANTHONY

Hmmmm... I could use a couple cases for the birds.

OMAR

Glad to hear they're still flying.

Omar heads to a shelf and removes two boxes of bullets for a desert eagle.

Anthony removes his billfold from his suit jacket, but Omar stops him.

OMAR (CONT'D)

Please... It's on the house.

Anthony accepts the ammo and gives him a nod of appreciation as he and Taito continue on.

They finally arrive in a large open chamber with grand archways and a large guillotine. Anthony stops to admire the instrument of death.

ANTHONY

A recent addition for the oath breakers?

Taito grins.

TAITO

That was my idea... A little fear goes a long way.

A BUZZING sound is heard. The two men follow the noise to a tattoo station where HANNA, 30s, covered with body art and piercings, works on a new tatt:



The man in her chair is KLAUS, 30s, with short blonde hair. Hanna stops her work and addresses Anthony. She speaks with a French accent.

HANNA

Do you have an appointment?

ANTHONY

You already know the answer to that question, my dear.

HANNA

Magnus will take you up.

Anthony turns to see MAGNUS, 40s, another enormous specimen of a man with a beard and a short mohawk.

INT. EVELYN'S ESTATE/DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Magnus leads Anthony into an indulgent room decorated with lavish candlesticks and fine art.

EVELYN, an elegant older woman dressed to the nines, sits at the table having a drink from a lavish cup.

Anthony takes a seat across from her as Magnus brings him a tumbler and a bottle of fine whiskey. He speaks with an Australian accent.

MAGNUS

The usual?

ANTHONY

That would be wonderful, thank you.

The big man pours him a drink, leaves the bottle, and exits the room. Evelyn looks at him with a smirk on her face.

EVELYN

Shall we?

ANTHONY

Before we begin...

Anthony takes a sip of his whiskey, then reaches into his inner jacket pocket to pull out a patterned gold ring with a green tourmaline stone in the center.

EXT. BECKY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Geoff knocks on the door. Moments later, Becky answers.

BECKY

Maybe call first?

GEOFF

Sorry. It's been a crazy day.

BECKY

Yeah, you're tellin' me!

GEOFF

Long story short - I need a place to crash tonight.

Becky furrows her eyebrow at him.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

Just for tonight...

BECKY

Geoff... I don't think that's a good idea right now.

GEOFF

What? Why?

BECKY

I saw you flirting with that little baker chick earlier...

Becky attempts to close the door, but Geoff holds it open.

GEOFF

Honey, c'mon. I wasn't flirting. I-

BECKY

-I'm tired. We can talk about this later.

GEOFF

But I'm here now? Look, I promise-

She SHUTS THE DOOR IN HIS FACE.

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/STUDY - NIGHT

A glass is filled with expensive booze. MR. VASILIEV, late 50s, in a shirt and tie, puts the bottle down and takes a much needed drink. He scans the room and stops at *The Drums of War* replica. His eyes narrow and he gets up to inspect it.

MR. VASILIEV

Olga!

After a moment, Mrs. Vasiliev enters the room.

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)

What's wrong?

He motions to the painting on the wall.

MR. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)

Where did you get this?

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)

The gallery. Like we talked about...

MR. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)

-Konstantinov was an exceptional artist...

He would - along with his contemporaries - demand what he called - "*a higher stream of brilliance.*"

Mrs. Vasiliev walks closer to the painting to see what her husband admires in it.

MR. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN) (CONT'D)
That mindset, those demands...
They'd creep into every creation he expressed. But how...? How might an artist blend his own brilliance, with clear originality? How might an artist... Mix orange, with blue?

MRS. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)
Get to the fucking point...

MR. VASILIEV (IN RUSSIAN)
Tell me you didn't buy it like that...

He points to the edges of the frame and she notices the staples and is filled with rage.

...END OF ACT TWO...

...ACT THREE...**INT. EVELYN'S ESTATE/DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Evelyn and Anthony are still seated at the table. She notices he's lost in his thoughts, looking at his phone. We see he's checking his past text messages from Sarah.

EVELYN

Are you feeling alright? I would prefer to have you involved, but you have no obligation to take part in this.

He snaps out of his fog and puts his phone away.

ANTHONY

Of course, just pondering the details. Will the Brit and the Irishman be joining me?

She smiles at him.

EXT. MEDITERRANEAN MANSION - NIGHT - A FEW MONTHS AGO

We see a beautiful mansion on top of a hill. The entire property is illuminated with the orange glow of lamps that outline the large home and the many pathways around it.

THE SOUND OF A MAN SCREAMING can be heard.

EXT. MEDITERRANEAN MANSION/PUTTING GREEN - CONTINUOUS

A few bodies of security personnel are scattered near several of the cups of a fancy private putting green.

The last guard alive is being held to the ground near the final cup by DESMOND, 40s, with a big red beard and a flat cap. He speaks with a Belfast accent.

DESMOND

I'm gonna need ya to quit yer hollerin' so my associate can ask ya some questions without needin' to shout.

A golf ball rolls toward the man and into the cup in front of his face.

We see LIONEL, 40s, well dressed, with tattoos on his hands and neck holding the golf club.

He approaches the restrained man and kneels down next to him. Lionel speaks with a London accent.

LIONEL

Never did like golf, but I'm not half bad at it. My speciality is... well, you know what it is.

The man looks at him, terrified. Desmond chuckles... Lionel looks down and peers at his pocket watch.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

So, I'll make this quick. If you don't give us the information we need, in the time we need it, you have my word - my next shot...

Lionel points the club right in between the man's eyes.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Will be a hole in one...

INT. EVELYN'S ESTATE/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

We're back with Evelyn and Anthony in the gorgeous room.

EVELYN

They were enthusiastic about the prospect of working with you again.

ANTHONY

Good. Then it's settled. You can consider me back under contract. But on a job to job basis.

EVELYN

I understand. We can re-visit this subject after you've had a chance to re-acclimatize to your old environment.

He takes a sip of his drink.

ANTHONY

Agreed.

EVELYN

Let's meet again in a few days to discuss the current business and our path forward for future endeavors.

ANTHONY
That will suffice.

INT. ANTHONY'S CAR - NIGHT

Anthony returns to his classic car and gets in.

He reaches under his seat and removes a wooden box with ornate markings carved into it.

Anthony opens it to reveal two desert eagle hand guns. One is silver, the other is black. Both weapons have "*The Butcher*" engraved on the handle.

INT. GEOFF'S CAR - NIGHT

Geoff sits in his car drawing in his sketchbook as he talks on speaker phone.

GEOFF
I have something I need your help
with. Something proper...

INT. AIRSTREAM TRAILER PARK - SAME TIME

LUDWIG, 50s, scruffy, with long messy hair, sits up in his bed and smiles.

LUDWIG
Proper? As in something that would
turn a few high priced heads?

GEOFF (ON THE PHONE)
Yes, it's part of the classical
canvas variety.

LUDWIG
Say no more. Let's rendezvous
tomorrow to discuss the
particulars.

INT. GEOFF'S CAR - SAME TIME

Geoff is fine tuning a drawing of a seagull hovering over an endless ocean.

GEOFF
Sounds good to me. Should I bring-

LUDWIG (ON THE PHONE)
 -Mums the word! A few ill-advised
 phrases could be the end of us...

GEOFF
 What time?

INT. AIRSTREAM TRAILER PARK - SAME TIME

Ludwig is now pouring himself a glass of milk as he holds his phone.

LUDWIG
 The feedings begin at first light.
 Shall we say 10?

GEOFF (ON THE PHONE)
 10 is perfect. I'll see you then.

LUDWIG
 I'll be waiting my bearded
 companion. In the meantime, I'll
 check in with some prospects.

He hangs up and drinks his glass of milk in one big gulp.

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank opens a couple beers and brings them to SPENCER, 50s, lean, and TIMOTHY, late 40s, well built with salt and pepper scruff on his face.

TIMOTHY
 Thanks, buddy.

SPENCER
 Cheers.

Tim looks at Frank's black eye.

TIMOTHY
 You gonna enlighten us on how you
 got that shiner?

FRANK
 That's a story for another time,
 boys. Let's get back to the show.

Frank picks up his bottle, the three men CLINK THEIR DRINKS, and take a swig.

Tim picks up a remote, points it at the television and presses play. A VHS player GROANS AS IT STARTS UP AGAIN. They're watching an old wrestling match from 15 years ago.

Timothy is on the tape as his wrestling alter ego "*The Burglar*." He's dressed in a black and gray striped shirt with a knit mask over his head and black stretchy pants. He climbs the corner turnbuckle and leaps onto his opponent.

SPENCER

You never could stick the landing on those.

TIMOTHY

Fuck off, that's perfect form.

Frank laughs as they watch *The Burglar* battle with "*The Blacksmith*," Spencer's old wrestling persona, dressed in a brown shirt, leather welding apron, gray pants, and a mask that covers the top half of his head.

FRANK

You guys are both holding back.

TIMOTHY

Holding back? I nearly broke a rib during this match.

SPENCER

Which means you were doing it all wrong.

Frank's wrestling character joins the video tape melee and we see him as "*The Big Dirty*." Shirtless with a yellow and black mask, black pants, and combat boots. His character RAGE SCREAMS to the heavens...

ANNOUNCER (ON THE TV)

*It's "The Call of the Unwashed."
These guys are in trouble now...*

FRANK

Time to take some notes...

The three men are interrupted by the RINGING OF A SOOTHING DOOR BELL...

SPENCER

You expecting company?

EXT. FRANK'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Frank opens the front door to reveal Geoff standing there with several suitcases and a foldable canvas stand.

FRANK

I wish I could say I didn't see this coming.

GEOFF

I just need a few nights to figure out my next move.

FRANK

It's fine brother, you're always-

Geoff quickly pushes past him with some of his belongings.

FRANK (CONT'D)

-welcome here...

The big man grabs the few remaining items, brings them inside, and shuts the door.

EXT. ANCIENT RUSSIAN CHAPEL/COURTYARD - MORNING

An ancient holy place of stone. The sun glistens off the many stained glass windows depicting biblical scenes of grace and divinity...

VIKTOR, an intimidating and large man in his 40s, walks through the courtyard past pillars that have stood for a couple of centuries. THE FAINT SOUND OF AN AGED CHURCH ORGAN can be heard within the old edifice.

INT. ANCIENT RUSSIAN CHAPEL - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

We follow the pipes of the old organ down from the ceiling to reveal THE BISHOP, 70s, with a long white beard. He plays the tired keys of the instrument to an empty church with a sense of defeat...

The space is a long thin rectangle that holds several rows of pews. Light beams through the many stained glass windows that span the length of the room.

Viktor enters the church through a massive steel door and makes the sign of the cross. He creeps towards the Bishop... The elderly priest stops playing but doesn't turn around.

THE BISHOP (IN RUSSIAN)
 So...you finally put the pieces
 together...

VIKTOR (IN RUSSIAN)
 You were smart to divert me, old
 man-

THE BISHOP (IN RUSSIAN)
 -The book does not belong to you.

VIKTOR (IN RUSSIAN)
 The book never belonged to *anyone*.
 That is its purpose.

THE BISHOP (IN RUSSIAN)
 If your group ruins the current
 stasis, it will bring you nothing
 but pain and agony.

Viktor smirks at the old man's warning. He pulls out his
 hammer of truth and STRIKES THE BISHOP'S KNEE CAP WITH IT. HE
 LET'S OUT A PAINFUL CRY TO THE HEAVENS...

VIKTOR (IN RUSSIAN)
 You will soon learn the true
 meaning of pain and agony...

As Viktor rears up for another blow, his PHONE RINGS in his
 pocket, he answers it.

VIKTOR (IN RUSSIAN) (CONT'D)
 Yeah?!

MR. VASILIEV (ON THE PHONE IN RUSSIAN)
 We have a situation that requires a
 response from the family.

VIKTOR (IN RUSSIAN)
 You know where we are, right?

MR. VASILIEV (ON THE PHONE IN RUSSIAN)
 ...Did I stutter?

Viktor considers his uncle's serious tone.

VIKTOR (IN RUSSIAN)
 We will bring the book back
 swiftly...

INT. VASILIEV MANOR/MASTER BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Mr. Vasiliev hangs up and takes a seat on his bed. He removes his shirt... Beneath his fancy attire, we see he is covered in Russian criminal tattoos. On his chest is the Vasiliev family crest:



The tattoo on his chest takes us to...

INT. ANCIENT RUSSIAN CHAPEL - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

...The Vasiliev family crest tattoo on Viktor's hand as he holds his hammer.

The Bishop whimpers in pain...

THE BISHOP (IN RUSSIAN)
The book won't bring you power...
Only death.

VIKTOR (IN RUSSIAN)
We're counting on it.

Viktor smiles as MUFFLED CRIES ARE HEARD BENEATH THEM.

INT. ANCIENT RUSSIAN CHAPEL/CRYPT - SAME TIME

We pass by a collection of religious relics and lit candles to reveal the ARCHDEACON, 40s, as he MOANS IN AGONY...

HIS HAND IS HELD AGAINST THE HOT COALS OF A CENSER by KIRIL, 20s, clean shaven with short black hair. He is covered in Russian criminal tattoos, including the ink of the Vasiliev family on his neck.

KIRIL (IN RUSSIAN)
Your bravery is commendable... But
it will get you and your friends
killed...

...We move past them to reveal DARYA, 30s, with long brown hair, and tattoos as SHE USES A LITURGICAL FAN TO BEAT A DEACON INTO SUBMISSION...

...A few feet away, we see IGOR, 30s, with a beard and tattoos USES A DIVINE SPEAR TO IMPALE ANOTHER DEACON as he pleads on the floor of the crypt...

...Across from them, SVETLANA, 20s, with long dark hair, DETACHES A HOLY MAN'S KNEE CAP WITH A HARD KICK AND SMASHES HIS FACE AGAINST THE STONE WALL...

...We Finally arrive at YAROSLAV, 40s, a bear of a man, with a long beard and long hair, and TIMUR, 40s, clean cut, and well built at the end of the chamber. These two gentlemen are known as "*The Bear & The Wolf.*"

THEY USE A COUPLE SILK CLOTHS TO STRANGLE THE LAST DEACONS IN THE CRYPT...

We re-join Kiril and the Archdeacon. The man of God accepts defeat and gives Kiril a skeleton key hanging around his neck on a chain beneath his clerical robe.

ARCHDEACON (IN RUSSIAN)
Take your darkness and leave us in
peace...

Kiril smiles as he takes the key AND KNOCKS THE ARCHDEACON OUT WITH THE METAL CENSER...

We follow Kiril past his comrades and the fallen deacons to an iron-barred door that looks like it belongs in a dungeon.

The Key enters the lock and THE METAL DOOR CREAKS OPEN...

EXT. ANIMAL SANCTUARY - THE NEXT MORNING

A golf cart drives along a dirt road past beautiful scenic hills and animal enclosures.

EXT. ANIMAL SANCTUARY/BEAR ENCLOSURE - DAY

Ludwig feeds DOUGLASS, a giant grizzly bear. He is interrupted by Geoff as he arrives in the golf cart.

LUDWIG
A pleasant morning to you, sir!

He sets down his feeding pole and approaches Geoff.

GEOFF
Good morning, how'd you make out?

Ludwig reaches into his pocket, pulls out a piece of paper, and hands it to Geoff. It reads: *3399 Arroyo canyon*

LUDWIG

Be there at noon today. His name is Anthony... So what's the origin of this new found acquisition?

GEOFF

An original Boris Konstantinov.

LUDWIG

Are you certain?

GEOFF

Yup, it's remarkable.

LUDWIG

Which piece is it?

GEOFF

The drums of war...

Ludwig looks to the sky with glee.

LUDWIG

His insanity pieces are worth double! This is a wonderful attainment, my friend! Bravo!

GEOFF

Thanks, I'll be back to give you your cut after I meet with the buyer.

He gives Geoff a bear hug.

LUDWIG

Well done, I'll see you soon.

INT. BAKERY/KITCHEN - MORNING

Sarah is working on a batch of cupcakes. She's listening to music through ear buds and is in a peaceful trance as she prepares the baked treats.

Moments later, ALEXIS, 20s, one of her employees, enters the large baking area and approaches her.

ALEXIS

Hey! Whatchu doing tonight??

Sarah doesn't hear her.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

Hello?? Sarah?

Alexis waves her hand. Sarah notices and takes out her headphones.

SARAH
Sorry, what's up?

ALEXIS
Just gauging your agenda for this evening?

SARAH
I'll be here late. I have a lot to finish for the pickups tomorrow and if the packaging isn't perfect, then-

ALEXIS
-I know, but with both of us working, like, all day, we should totally have it covered. Right?!

SARAH
Right...

ALEXIS
Come on, one night out won't kill you.

SARAH
I just don't see myself feeling up to it. I really appreciate the offer, but not this time.

Alexis acknowledges her and heads over to one of the large fridges nearby. Sarah can feel her disappointment...

SARAH (CONT'D)
...It's not that I don't want to hang out, I just know my mind would be somewhere else.

ALEXIS
Yup... I know...

SARAH
You say that like it's a bad thing, I've built a successful business. How many people can say that??

ALEXIS
Very few...

SARAH

Right! So I want to keep feeding my baby and let it grow... sue me.

ALEXIS

It's not that, as much as it is-

SARAH

Hey. What did I tell you? Heaven helps those-

ALEXIS

-who help themselves... Yes Sarah, that's true.

SARAH

...Thanks for understanding.

Alexis gives her a SARCASTIC ROUND OF APPLAUSE, and Sarah throws an unfinished cupcake at her. She catches it and they smile at each other.

EXT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE - DAY

Anthony opens the front door of his beautiful home to find Geoff standing there with a duffle bag over his shoulder.

GEOFF

Hey, I'm Geoff, Ludwig's friend.

The dapper gentlemen presents his hand and Geoff shakes it.

ANTHONY

Anthony, come on in.

Geoff follows him inside and the door shuts behind them.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Geoff sits on the couch. He takes in the exquisite home and the many priceless paintings that adorn the walls.

Anthony fixes himself an alcoholic beverage at the bar nearby.

They are joined by CATHERINE, late 20s, with short hair. She has the monarchy tattoo on her neck.

ANTHONY

This is my associate Catherine.
She's what you might call an expert
in the arts.

Geoff waves at her.

GEOFF
Nice to meet you.

CATHERINE
Likewise, may I see what you've brought?

GEOFF
Of course.

He picks up his bag and unzips it.

ANTHONY
(to Geoff)
Drink?

GEOFF
No thanks, it's a bit early for me.

ANTHONY
You let the hands of a clock dictate what you want?

GEOFF
No, I... I guess I was making excuses. I'm not much of a drinker, is the thing.

ANTHONY
Please... Say what you mean. We'll need to be straight with each other if we're to do business.

Geoff acknowledges his comment as he carefully removes the painting from the large bag and sets it on the coffee table.

CATHERINE
Exquisite... And you can guarantee the authenticity?

GEOFF
Yes.

She looks at it closely.

CATHERINE
If it's a fake, we'll-

GEOFF
I know.

Catherine glares at Geoff with intense eyes.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

Sorry... I, I was just trying to...
say what I mean.

Anthony comes over with his beverage and gives Geoff a pat on the back. He nearly shits himself.

ANTHONY

That's good, Geoff.

The buyer looks back at Catherine.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Konstantinov, yes?

CATHERINE

Yes, indeed.

Catherine reaches under the table and grabs her UVA lamp. She waves it over the crevices of the painting and gets extremely close to the center.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

(while examining)

Brush marks look good... Milky...
Yes. Luminous... Mhmm.

She stays in her own little world with the fine piece of oil on canvas while Anthony peels away.

ANTHONY

So, where'd you grab it?

GEOFF

Sorry... I'm not supposed to
divulge that information, right?

ANTHONY

Right...

Anthony smirks as Catherine finishes her examination with a grin of approval.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Current value?

CATHERINE

Market price is currently around
one million.

ANTHONY

Terrific. Then that will be all, my
dear. I'll be in touch.

She smiles, gathers the tools back in her bag, and heads for the door. Anthony is about to take another sip of his drink, but the cup lingers close to his mouth.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I'll take the painting off your hands, but first - what's your take on the art in this room?

GEOFF

Well... You have extraordinary taste.

ANTHONY

And why is that?

GEOFF

Why is what?

ANTHONY

Don't be glib. If you're going to pay someone anything, especially a compliment - be specific... You wouldn't appreciate it if I gave you a general amount of money for the Konstantinov piece. You would want to be paid in full, right? Down to the last penny?

GEOFF

Right...

ANTHONY

So wouldn't it only be fair for me to ask the same of you in a conversational sense?

Geoff realizes he can't bullshit his way out of this one. He takes a genuine moment to think about his answer.

GEOFF

Okay...

He takes stock of the art filled room.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

You have several distinct pieces, all from the 19th century - Arguably one of the best time periods for artists ever... And not only that, your selections hold conviction. They tell a story.

ANTHONY

And what story is that?

GEOFF

Take that Von Crouch piece for example - Most people would say there are better artists from his time and maybe that's true, but I would argue that no other artist of his generation sacrificed what he did to paint what he felt like the world needed to see. That took guts, man...

Geoff and Anthony share a look.

GEOFF (CONT'D)

I can only presume that Crouch's inner conviction resonates with you in a similar form or fashion... Consciously or subconsciously.

ANTHONY

...Are you an artist yourself, or just a lover of art history?

GEOFF

Both, sir.

ANTHONY

May I see some of your work?

GEOFF

Sure. Actually, my sketchbook is in the car. I could go grab it?

ANTHONY

That would be wonderful.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

We follow Geoff as he walks to his car.

We continue past his vehicle down the street where Catherine's car is parked. She sits motionless inside.

As we move closer to her window, we see she is dead...

A dagger protrudes from her chest. On her lap is a children's book by author J.B. Hunter, titled:

THE SHIPWRECK & THE GULLS

...END OF ACT THREE...

...ACT FOUR...

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Geoff and Anthony sit on the couch and look through his sketchbook.

GEOFF

This is an idea for a painting I want to do called "*Self Destruct.*"

He shows Anthony the sketch we saw him looking at in his car.

ANTHONY

Well done... I'm an artist myself. I write children's literature, tales of adventure. I might have some commission work for you, if you're interested. Cover artwork for my next release.

Geoff smiles warmly at him.

GEOFF

Maybe I will have that drink.

ANTHONY

There's a good man.

Anthony gets up and walks back to the bar.

GEOFF

So what's the title of your book?

ANTHONY

There's more than one. The manuscripts are under the table, have a look.

Geoff spots them neatly stacked under the coffee table and picks one up. The cover reads:

THE REINDEER & THE WOLVES OF WINTER

He opens the book...

EXT. FOREST IN THE SNOW - EVENING (ANIMATION)

...An abstract watercolor world takes shape from the pages of the story. A lone REINDEER BULL with massive antlers moves quietly through the enchanted tree-filled landscape of white and gray.

Snow falls lightly as the beast keeps his eyes and ears open.

We race through the trees and falling snow to reveal...

EXT. FOREST IN THE SNOW/CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

...A PACK OF WOLVES are gathered together on the hunt for a meal. Their eyes dark with intent as they sniff the cold air for the scent of prey.

The leader of the pack catches the smell of the large reindeer and his eyes narrow. We move back through the trees to...

EXT. FOREST IN THE SNOW - CONTINUOUS

...The bull spots the wolves lying in wait and continues forward.

In a flash of color, the woods and bull morph from the watercolor fable to...

EXT. ICELANDIC COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING - 10 YEARS AGO

...Anthony walks alone amongst the scenic backdrop.

He carries his silver desert eagle as he wades through the thick snow in the wilderness.

He sees a cabin in the distance as the sun is setting over the picturesque landscape.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Anthony returns to Geoff and hands him his drink.

ANTHONY

Have you ever traveled to Iceland?

GEOFF

No, but I hear it's beautiful.

Geoff continues to peruse the pages...

EXT. ICELAND CABIN - NIGHT

...The northern lights are in full effect in the night sky.

A handful of mercenaries patrol the cabin. Two of the heathens notice Anthony and advance toward him.

They are swiftly dispatched with perfectly placed HEAD SHOTS FROM HIS ENORMOUS WEAPON.

In a flash, Anthony and the two fallen enemies change to...

EXT. FOREST IN THE SNOW/CLEARING - NIGHT (ANIMATION)

...The bull stands over two dead wolves with blood dripping from his antlers.

Another wolf approaches and leaps at the reindeer as the watercolor world changes back to...

EXT. ICELAND CABIN - NIGHT

...Anthony catches a charging mercenary WITH A HARD PUNCH TO THE JAW.

The man tries to counter but Anthony evades it, takes a hold of his arm, AND BREAKS IT AS THE MAN SCREAMS.

The last two mercenaries join the fray with their pistols at the ready. Anthony uses the one armed man as a shield.

They FIRE, killing their comrade, and Anthony delivers another HEAD SHOT.

Just one man left... He shoves the lifeless body at him and knocks him over.

INT. ICELAND CABIN - NIGHT

We move closer to a man that is bound with chains that are shackled to the floor.

He lifts his head and we see its Kristjan, the giant that was beating a man with a club at Evelyn's estate earlier.

He pulls at the chains and THE WOODEN FLOOR BENEATH HIM CREAKS.

The bear of a man leans forward with all his might and ROARS AS HE RIPS HIS RESTRAINTS FROM THE GROUND.

We move past the splintered pieces of wood which become...

EXT. FOREST IN THE SNOW/CLEARING - NIGHT (ANIMATION)

...Broken tree branches in the snow are stepped on by the large and powerful bull.

He drives the last wolf into the snow with his antlers until the beast disappears beneath the thick sheet of powder, which takes us to...

EXT. ICELAND CABIN - NIGHT

...Snow shoveling onto the last mercenary as he lays badly beaten but still breathing in a hole in the ground.

Anthony watches as Kristjan continues to bury him beneath the cosmic green of the Icelandic night sky.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

We're back in the living room with Anthony and Geoff.

ANTHONY

It's quite a lovely place. You should visit sometime.

Geoff notices the name on the manuscript:

J.B. Hunter

GEOFF

You're J.B. Hunter?

ANTHONY

In the flesh.

GEOFF

I've actually heard of you!

ANTHONY

So can I count on you for the job?

GEOFF

Absolutely. I'm in.

Geoff takes a drink. It's stronger than he expected.

ANTHONY

So why are you selling masterpieces through men like Ludwig when you could create them all on your own?

GEOFF

Just trying to pay the bills...

ANTHONY

Would you mind if I held onto this?

Anthony RIPS his "Self Destruct" sketch out of the book.

GEOFF

I mean... Yeah. You already ripped it out.

ANTHONY

Think of it as our unofficially official contract.

Anthony extends his right hand to offer a shake, Geoff obliges.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Don't get lost in that pursuit. Make sure your original works don't get buried by what others hire you for... Except me, of course. You will need to make time for my work.

Geoff laughs as Anthony's PHONE BUZZES in his pocket.

He removes it to see a text from Lionel. It reads: *"We're all set for tonight, heading to your place now."*

Anthony puts his phone away, finishes his drink, and gets up.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I need to prepare for another meeting. You finish your drink and I'll see you next week. Good?

GEOFF

But we didn't discuss the sale or what you want for your book-

ANTHONY

-It's the man that holds the paintbrush that guides the work. I'll have the money for you next week. You keep the painting until then.

GEOFF

Alright.

ANTHONY

Some of my previously released books are on the shelf there. Take a few so you know what I've done before.

Anthony exits the room down a nearby hallway.

Geoff stands up with his drink and approaches the book shelf as he tries to muscle through finishing it.

He grabs a couple more J.B. Hunter books and continues looking around the room.

He admires the paintings on the wall, then stumbles across a picture of Anthony with someone.

He looks at it closely and nearly drops his beverage when he realizes it's Sarah, the baker he met at the birthday party.

Geoff puts the picture down and finishes his drink. He then carefully re-packs "*The Drums of War*" in his duffle bag.

EXT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE - DAY

Geoff comes back outside with the large bag, the books, and the collection of Anthony's manuscripts under his arm.

He opens his car and loads them inside. He's about to get in when he realizes he forgot something...

GEOFF

Shit...

Geoff locks his car again and heads back to the house.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Geoff enters the living room and calls out to Anthony.

GEOFF

Sorry for the back and forth, I left my sketchbook.

He waits for an answer but doesn't get one. He walks toward his sketchbook and stops as the picture of Sarah catches his eye, he can't help but look at it one more time.

He's startled by a NOISE FROM DOWN THE HALL...

GEOFF (CONT'D)

Anthony?

No response...

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Geoff approaches the closed bedroom door and KNOCKS.

GEOFF

You all right in there?

Still nothing...

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He opens the door to discover Anthony seated in a chair in the distance.

GEOFF

You good?

Geoff approaches. As he gets closer, his body becomes paralyzed. He sees a dagger has entered through Anthony's chest, and blood is dripping to create a puddle on the polished wooden floors. A blood-soaked J.B. Hunter book rests in his hands...

Geoff's face goes pale as he looks around to see if the killer is still present. Luckily, he's all alone...

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Geoff heads toward his sketchbook, then looks at the priceless paintings on the walls and has a thought.

A series of shots:

Geoff grabs a couple of gigantic suit bags out of a closet. The Von Crouch is carefully taken off the wall. A suit bag is ZIPPED UP with the Von Crouch inside. Geoff takes another priceless painting off the wall. Then puts the second painting in a bag.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Geoff briskly walks toward his car with the painting filled suit bags in his arms.

He carefully sets them down, unlocks his back door, and puts them inside.

Geoff makes his way to the driver's seat of the car, opens the door and gets inside. Just as he's about to put the keys in the ignition...

GEOFF

The fucking sketchbook!!!

He gets back out of the car and looks around... The coast is clear, so he heads back toward Anthony's house.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

GEOFF HEARS A DISTANT VIBRATION as he enters the room. He follows the sound down the hallway.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He traces the VIBRATIONS to Anthony's phone on the nightstand next to him. It stops, then displays: *"Missed Call From Sarah."*

He looks at it for a moment, turns to leave, and it TREMORS again. This time the display reads: *"New Voicemail."*

He grabs a sock from a drawer and picks up the phone. It's locked. He scans Anthony's face to open it and hear the message.

SARAH (ON THE PHONE)

Hey dad, it's me... So I thought about it and decided that if you really can commit to dinner tomorrow night, I'll give it another try. Don't make me regret this... Let me know, bye.

Geoff carefully puts the phone back.

He notices a gun in a holster under Anthony's jacket and pulls it out with the sock over his hand. It's the silver desert eagle.

THE DOORBELL RINGS and he nearly shits himself.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Geoff runs into the room holding the gun.

As he grabs his sketchbook, the front door opens. He drops it, spilling documents and drawings everywhere.

Geoff tries to gather everything but inevitably, a couple of sheets are left on the ground. He doesn't have time. He has to go...

Seconds later, Lionel and Desmond enter the living room.

LIONEL

Oi Anthony!

Desmond notices the papers on the floor and Geoff's empty glass on the coffee table.

DESMOND
It's a bit untidy, eh?

Lionel looks at the mess and then notices the white spaces on the walls where the paintings used to hang.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Geoff is carefully trying to open a window to escape. It won't budge... He notices it's locked at the top and can't quite reach the latch.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Desmond and Lionel enter and discover Anthony in the chair.

LIONEL
You havin' a laugh, mate?

Lionel gets closer and discovers the dagger... Desmond joins him as they look at their fallen friend.

DESMOND
He's dead...

LIONEL
Yes, I'd say that's rather obvious.
Don't touch anythin', I'll ring the cleaners, but let's have a look around first.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Brit and the Irishman investigate the room.

Desmond picks up a brightly colored "Pavel the Clown" flyer from Geoff's papers on the floor... The text is in both English and Russian. It reads:



DESMOND

What in the name of christ is this supposed to mean? Who the fuck is Pavel the clown?

Lionel looks at the flyer.

LIONEL

Maybe the Russians did this. Those crazy chaps, Alexei and Vlad?

DESMOND

They've been dead for months. This is someone new. Or, so experienced, they know how to appear green as the fuckin' grass.

Lionel picks up another drawing from the ground. It shows a giant bear in an open field surrounded by butterflies with its eyes closed. The sketch is titled: "*Contemplation.*"

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/SPARE ROOM - DAY

Geoff is now trying another window. He opens it, BUT NOT WITHOUT MAKING A NOISE...

He panics, removes the screen, and jumps out the window just as Lionel and Desmond walk by.

EXT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Geoff crawls out of the bushes with the butcher gun and sprints toward his car.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE/SPARE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Desmond and Lionel look out the open window and spot Geoff clumsily getting in his car with his sketchbook in one hand, and the gun in his sock covered hand in the distance.

LIONEL

The bastard was still here...

DESMOND

Was that a fuckin' sock on his hand?

He starts the vehicle and SCREECHES AWAY FROM THE CURB.

LIONEL

We should probably leave this bit out when we recount the day's events to Evelyn.

DESMOND

Agreed. It doesn't exactly paint us in the best light.

Lionel angrily SLAMS THE OPEN WINDOW SHUT...

INT. CLASSIC CAR - MOMENTS LATER

We see ATTICUS, 40s, clean cut, in a black suit and fedora. He is known as "*The Executioner*." He watches as Geoff's car accelerates down the road.

He reaches under his seat and removes a well-worn leather-bound book. He looks at it fondly for a moment before he opens it.

Atticus flips through the worn and torn pages that contain illustrations of various animals.

He stops on a page with a seagull that has "*Catherine*" written on it. He writes "*Extinct*" beneath the drawing of the bird.

Atticus then turns the page to a drawing of a cougar that has "*Anthony*" written on it. He adds "*Extinct*" to the page below the beast.

