DAREMNO

by
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Part 1 of NEVER NOTHING

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1 EXT. RUINS OF A VILLAGE - TWILIGHT

FADING FROM BLACK:

A destroyed home huddles under a black sky, rendered in soft moonlight but evading clear definition. Wooden joinery stands alone. Burnt rubble climbs up fractured brick walls. A door leads nowhere. No one lives here anymore.

The sounds of a lively household fade in, clashing with the desolation of the image. Dishes ring against each other, a faucet hisses, a gameshow blares on the TV. The visual remains still, unchanging.

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
Poltergeist.

TV (UKRAINIAN)
Ah ... No idea, frankly! - Oh no! Sorry Yevgeny, the answer was ‘Poltergeist’. You’ll get the next one.

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
How do they find people this stupid?

YANA (UKRAINIAN)
It wouldn’t be fun if they were smart.

A kitchen timer goes off.

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
Opaaaa!

YANA (UKRAINIAN)
Kolya! .. Kolya, turn off the game.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
(Under his breath) You turn off the TV.

YANA (UKRAINIAN)
Come get di-

A distant explosion. Gunfire ensues with it. Yana sighs.

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
F###. Can’t they wait until morning?

YANA (UKRAINIAN)
Come eat! (To Artem, quietly) Go bring
(MORE)

YANA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
the bikes inside.

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
How would that help?

Shuffling is heard, a door opens and shuts as we hear Kolya leave his bedroom to enter the living room.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Uncle needs a curfew. He always wakes up the whole neighborhood.

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
...I agree. He'll be done soon. He's a good shot. Better than me.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
I'm not hungry.

YANA (UKRAINIAN)
Kolya, you need to eat.

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
Don't let them starve you.

A pause. Artem's attention returns to the TV, his coping mechanism. He vacantly chuckles.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Shouldn't it be over by now?

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
We can change the channel, Kolya. I thought you liked this show.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
I mean the war.

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
Ah.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
How much longer will it last?

ARTEM (UKRAINIAN)
Just a month or so, I hope...

YANA (UKRAINIAN)
How could anyone fight for longer than that?...

FADE TO BLACK.

Text fizzles onto the screen, sequentially:

‘In honest reckoning,

you could not fault the devil for hating you.

In sickness of your sin, he couldn’t stomach forgiveness.

In grief he destroyed the world.

-Kolya Muller, Callsign ‘DRUID’ - 2032’

Cut to:

2 EXT. EMPTY CITY BLOCK - AFTERNOON

The camera pushes in, revealing a young man who looks older than he should. He sits amidst a swelling heap of refuse and disorganized supplies. His face is dirty, his hair is long. He’s clearly homeless. This is KOLYA. He sits, eyes closed, legs crossed, swaying gently, as if lost in an internal rhythm. His movements are trance-like. He gently sings a hymn in Ukrainian. He brings his arm out and sways, his right hand limply drops a spent syringe-- its payload already delivered.

LAPSE, EXT. NIRVANA

Kolya is now in an endless expanse, swaying the same. Still water surrounds him. His hand fidgets by his shoulder, he sings towards it. His head is solemnly bowed, his hymn is translated:

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
'Please, let me stay. I wish nothing but to lay still, far away. I’ve given everything only to see your face, but you need not look at me. You need not feed me, hear me, see me, or love me. But please just let me stay. I want nothing but the worst place in your estate. To be with the discarded, call my hovel a grave. But please just let me stay.'

LAPSE, EXT. CITY BLOCK - EVENING

Kolya is now curled up on the ground, his body is limp, his breathing is shallow and stiff. His camp of supplies is destroyed. As if acting on its own, his hand is frozen in the

act of applying NALOXONE to his nose— to save his life from overdose.

Kolya clumsily claws it from his face, blowing raspberry at the taste.

He hears a faint voice.

WATER
Come closer.

LAPSE, EXT. NIRVANA

Involuntarily brought back, Kolya lays on the ground.

Kolya lowers his head, unsure where the voice is coming from.

WATER (CONT'D)
..Come closer.

It emanates from the water beside him. He hesitantly bends and submerges his head. It speaks clearly now:

WATER (CONT'D)
You came alone. But the price to enter Heaven is the soul of one more lost than yourself. What use is it to find salvation, if you brought no one with?

LAPSE, EXT. CITY BLOCK - EVENING

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I’m sorry.

Kolya lay splayed out on the concrete. He takes a breath in. He numbly fumbles through his coat pockets, producing a bag of pills.

A blinding light shines.

LAPSE, EXT. NIRVANA - VISION, LIMINAL

For a split second, a light is spectrally cast upon the eternal waters of nirvana. It radiates towards Kolya from out of his view. He feels warm.

LAPSE, EXT. BENCH - TWILIGHT

Now Kolya sits on a park bench. Inexplicably relocated. He’s asleep, More Naloxone dangles from his nose.

Suddenly, a concussive eruption--

LAPSE, EXT. WAR FLASHBACK - MIDDAY

Kolya tenses as a mortar goes off behind him, he huddles alone in a bunker, his left hand by his right shoulder, clutching his chest-mounted JTAC radio as he shouts into it.

LAPSE, EXT. BENCH - TWILIGHT

Back to the bench. Kolya is as tense as his intoxication will allow. His hand now clutches a phone, as if it was the JTAC radio. It calls an unknown contact (*outgoing*). The phone rings, and continues ringing. Kolya's head falls backward, limply. He watches the sky through the swaying trees. The same voice speaks.

TREE
You used to be such a lover. Remember when you'd see our faces and hear music? And the rest of the world moved to the same song. You couldn't fathom it, but you felt it perfectly.

Kolya tries to move his mouth to speak, but can't. His hand clicks his imaginary radio. His voice can be heard on a spiritual medium.

KOLYA (ENGLISH, MENTAL VOICE)
For everyone I knew, there was the last time I saw them. All is lost, even what's still here.

Someone picks up the call.

??? (UKRAINIAN, PHONE)
How did you get this number?

LAPSE, EXT. NIRVANA - VISION, LIMINAL

The same light. Kolya weakly turns his head to see it.

LAPSE, EXT. REALITY - BENCH, TWILIGHT

Two masked men in boots, wearing civilian clothes but clearly military, lift Kolya off the ground and carry him towards an SUV. They wear medical gloves, checking his pulse and cradling his head with hidden expertise.

TREE
The only one who decides what is and
(MORE)

TREE (CONT'D)
isn’t lost--

LAPSE, EXT. NIRVANA - VISION, LIMINAL

Kolya turns his head to see a TREE is juxtaposed over the expanse, like a rift in purgatory. It is the light, Kolya feels drawn to it.

TREE (CONT'D)
--is Lyosha.

3 INT. SUV - TWILIGHT

Kolya is on a mattress, his body in a black garbage bag, an oxygen mask on his face. Wires and IV lines trail into the opening at the top of the bag and disappear therein. Consciousness is returning, his mouth is no longer numb. He hears the drivers conversing.

SOLDIER 1 (UKRAINIAN):
Piece of s##t won’t drive straight. What model year is this?

SOLDIER 2 (UKRAINIAN):
1998.

SOLDIER 1 (UKRAINIAN):
Older than my parents.

SOLDIER 2 (UKRAINIAN):
Can’t hack antiques.

Kolya musters to speak the question on his mind, almost rhetorically, to no one in particular.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Who...

He trails off for a moment, but finds himself again.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
...Who is Lyosha?

The soldiers glance at each other knowingly. They take that name seriously.

4 EXT. FOREST - LIMINAL

Kolya lays on his side in the middle of a wooded clearing.

Still wrapped in a garbage bag. The atmosphere drains him. The light is more like projected ether, as if underwater or trapped in the shade. He's in a forest with no greenery, the trees are stone-like and the leaves are like flakes of coal.

A voice emanates from a tree. Calm, paternal. But he doesn't know which tree. It answers the question he posed in the SUV.

TREE
The one who brought you here... Don't say his name.

Kolya half-startles at the voice. His attention is quickly retaken by the urge to drown. He pulls the oxygen mask off and releases a breath of frigid mist into the air. Kolya fishes around in his coat and produces a bottle of cheap alcohol, haphazardly unscrewing the top with frozen hands. He brings it to his gaping mouth but nothing comes out. It's frozen solid. Kolya lets out a pathetic groan.

He haphazardly tears his way out of the garbage bag. His attention returns to the voice. Kolya laboredly sits up, looks to where the voice came from.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Hello? So you're god?

A new voice responds, crackling out of Kolya's pocketed phone. It sounds younger, coarser.

??? (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
If God lives, his shame must be heavy. For fathering you.

Kolya fully startles, he panickedly pats his body to find the phone, then flings it of his pocket, far into the dark. Now he's standing.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
--F##k. F##k this.

He says with as much annoyance as there is fear.

TREE
Don't let him trouble you. He'll find you soon, but for now it's only us.

The voice comes from indiscernible directions. Kolya stands, looking for where it's coming from, turning different directions at every sentence. He sees nothing but frozen trees.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Who?

TREE
Again, don’t say his name.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Ok... Is Nirvana supposed to be this cold? Or is this a test?

TREE
You’re just numb. Your warmth is where you left it.

Kolya scoffs. His mind retreats to a plan of action founded more in denial than confidence. He starts looking for his phone after he launched it down a steep incline of tangled woods. He walks to the tree line and begins hesitantly making his way downwards. He sees faint traces of it's light.

Kolya arrives at his phone, the screen emits no light, it's grey and muted like parchment. Kolya looks out from the new precipice, he sees a river frozen in motion. His eyes wander up, and above the river there's a helicopter-- it's upside down and on fire, it's blades stationary, caught in a freezeframe of it's last moments before it hits the ground. It should be falling, but it isn't. Kolya stares at it for a moment.

Now we're back in the clearing, Kolya dumps a pile of gathered sticks onto a circle of flattened weeds. He kneels by it and starts the makings of a fire, placing his liquor atop the wooden pyramid.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I don’t get it. This has to be a test.

TREE
There are no tests, it was all real. You are where the outside follows the inside.

Kolya pulls a box of matches from his coat.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
So this is hell?

TREE
Up to you.

Kolya strikes the matches, they won't light. The sparks bloom

then die instantly, unnaturally.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I don’t - What did I do wrong?

TREE
Nothing wrong. You made a deal for peace. This is what you bought.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I let go, it was a good thing.

TREE
So you did.

Kolya sighs and gives up on the fire. He takes his coat of and spreads it on the ground, hoping it could be some kind of bed. He lays down on it, obviously uncomfortable. Then cold. Then he gives up on sleeping. He sits back up.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
...Is this all there is? I was looking for somewhere better.

TREE
There’s more. You can always take it back.

Kolya turns, his face is lit by flickering orange:

INT. CHILDHOOD, FIREPLACE - MEMORY

POV of a child’s hands, warming by a furnace. The silence is soft, the memory is gentle and pleasant. Kolya rips himself away, the light is extinguished.

KOLYA RETURNS TO THE FOREST

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Stop!... I hated that place.

He stands up and stomps his way back to the tree line.

TREE
Don’t say that. It breaks our hearts.

Kolya posts his hand on a tree and leans forward, hanging his head. He speaks into the dark.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I outgrew it. That’s not my problem
(MORE)

KOLYA (ENGLISH) (CONT'D)
anymore. I found enlightenment- that’s how I got here.

TREE
Everyone comes here, in the end. Enlightenment is when what you carry with you keeps you warm.

Kolya sinks down to his knees, sitting on a log, holding his head in his hands.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I’m not going back.

TREE
Ok. Though, the way forward is the path you abandoned.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I can just stay here forever. I’d rather freeze.

He buries his head in his arms.

TREE
Unlikely. Minds change over eternity. Lots of time to think.

Kolya tilts his head up defiantly.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I’ve lived enough to come to my conclusions. I know who I am. Eternity or not. My decisions are final.

TREE
Then you wouldn’t be seeking God, you’d be one.

Kolya sits. Petulant, determined, in the snow. He tries to center himself and fight off the cold, but the memories offer respite and warmth, and he isn’t strong enough to resist. His head falls.

5 INT. CHILDHOOD, FIREPLACE - CLOUDY AFTERNOON

Kolya is a child, this was the last day his home felt safe. He enjoys the fireplace.

TREE (ENGLISH, V.O.)
Do you remember Sasha?

KOLYA (ENGLISH, V.O.)
No.

TREE (ENGLISH, V.O.)
That’s sad. In her last moments, you crossed her mind.

A knock on the front door, young Kolya turns his head to face the sound.

TREE (ENGLISH, V.O.) (CONT'D)
You were one of the few to learn her name.

Young Kolya walks to the door eagerly.

TREE (ENGLISH, V.O.) (CONT'D)
Do you remember how upset it made you when people called her stupid?

Kolya opens the front door, a woman stands to greet him. This is SASHA. Sasha is non-verbal autistic. Her face is aged but youthful in countenance, unwrinkled by stress. She radiates simple joy.

TREE (ENGLISH, V.O.) (CONT'D)
She was mute, and that meant she was honest. Not unlike the other strays. It wasn’t stupidity, it was innocence.

Young Kolya puts a hand over his lips, as if to say ‘be quiet, wait a moment’. Sasha puts her own finger to her lips, mirroring him, smiling with childlike mischief.

TREE (ENGLISH, V.O.) (CONT'D)
They said she couldn’t be helped. That’s how they excused themselves... When they all fled, there was no one left to take care of her.

Kolya sneaks away to the kitchen and grabs a handful of sliced bread and jam. He returns to the door and surreptitiously hands it to Sasha, who joyfully keeps her finger on her lips. He does the same, visibly uplifted along with her.

TREE (ENGLISH, V.O.) (CONT'D)
You liked the funny faces she made at
(MORE)

TREE (ENGLISH, V.O.) (CONT'D)
you.

KOLYA (ENGLISH, V.O.)
...No. I don’t remember her.

A familiar, hateful voice rips in, manifesting from ragged static:

??? (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
Coward.

EXT. FOREST - LIMINAL

The forest is darker, the trees are silent. Kolya falls to his knees, dizzy. He turns his head, his blurred eyes focus on a figure, crouched in the darkness. It wears a ghillie suit. It stares at him.

??? / GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
Cover your eyes. I won’t go away.

The Ghillie man suddenly reaches towards Kolya, ensnares him with memories he suppressed:

6 EXT. FRONT YARD, MEMORY - BLUE HOUR

Kolya is still a child, at that same house. A few hours, or a few weeks later. He now sits on a lawn chair, watching YouTube on a grimy Chromebook.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
Now no one remembers her.

An FPV drone whizzes past his head. Kolya looks up quizzically. The drone rounds a corner behind a building. The pop of a grenade, a flash of orange. Kolya stands up, tentatively approaches.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO) (CONT'D)
It’s only the trees who stand watch
for her ghost.

Kolya walks forward still, his dread growing. Wanting to run, but drawn still by something between empathy and morbid curiosity. A woman’s voice groans in pain.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO) (CONT'D)
I watched it happen.

Sasha rounds the corner, clutching her face, her neck. Her

raggedy clothes soaked black with blood. She turns her head to see Kolya. He freezes, then screeches and runs.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO) (CONT'D)
I thought to myself: "Why are you screaming?. You're not the one in pain!"

INT. CHILDHOOD HOME, BLUE HOUR.

Kolya bursts into his home, locks the front door behind him. Sasha groans. Kolya hyperventilates. She follows him to his house.

YOUNG KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

Sasha clumsily knocks on the door.

SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!

Kolya plugs his ears, shuts his eyes.

A vision invades his mind. A city street. A mound of cloth with feet protruding, leaking tepid blood into the gutter. It's cold.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
It would've brought her some comfort as she died if she knew someone would linger on her patch of asphalt, thinking 'Sasha bled her last here'.

Now Kolya is an adult again, still wedged against that same door. He looks forward to see someone familiar. Sitting at the dining table is UNCLE MAKSYM. In full uniform, rifle laying in his lap. The energy of the space is changed.

Another voice enters. Deeper, familiar.

UNCLE MAKSYM (UKRAINIAN)
Calm down. You're the loud one. -- Real fear is silent... You keep screaming, like you want the enemy to know you're not a threat... So this is about you, now?

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Uncle?

Uncle Maksym laughs with disgust.

UNCLE MAKSYM (ENGLISH)
You’re speaking the coward’s language, now?

KOLYA
...Coward’s language?

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH)
Any language that isn’t your mother tongue is the coward’s language...You’ve grown bigger, Kolya. But seeing you now, I think your manhood has shrunk.

Maksym laughs. Kolya scowls.

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH) (CONT'D)
That was your first chance to make your life worthwhile.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I’m sorry! What was I supposed to do? ... Let her in?

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH)
Would that have been so bad? Clean up some blood. So she could be warm for the rest of her life.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I’m sorry.

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH)
And after, you watched an old man like me, with knees like mine, sign up to kill the rats who did it. And still you were lukewarm. About your duty...I hear you left me in the city?

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
It was necessary.

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH)
Was the rest necessary? Did you forget Alexei too?.. Then you snuck with your girlfriend on a bus to Austria. As the rest of us bled in the mud.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I’m sorry! You saw what it was like! You want me to die like you did? What
(MORE)

KOLYA (ENGLISH) (CONT'D)
was I supposed to do?

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH)
You knew what you were supposed to do. Always. Every time. You just didn’t do it... But you’re lucky. The same man who died by my side is now by yours. You need to make your peace with him.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
...I’ve already gone to confession, Uncle. As if God was a man. And he keeps a ledger of all wrongs done. As if a sin against the peasant can be absolved by kneeling to the king.

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH)
You’re the one who keeps the ledger, Kolya. Why not throw it away then? Say all this is no different to animals eating each other? And you were just hungry, like your faceless God made you to be... Only man absolves, because only man cares.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Ok. So where is he? Bring him to absolve me... Is he from the stories your men told as they went insane from fatigue?... Is it Saint Lyosha?

Uncle Maksym’s casual antagonism turns coldly serious.

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH)
...When you say that name, you say it with respect. Do you hear me?

Koyla is silent.

UNCLE MASKYM (ENGLISH) (CONT'D)
He won’t come to you. Like a slave. The onus is on you. Find him yourself.

7 INT. REALITY, APARTMENT - MORNING

Kolya wakes up, his head on a desk. His arms are bandaged, he’s wearing a dress shirt. His hair is clean, cut short and proper. The hateful voice speaks, now serene.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
If heaven was built, and Sasha was left behind, could you still call it heaven?

Kolya sits up in his chair. The desk is barren, except for an e-frame and a stack of papers. The e-frame currently displays a symbol. It then switches to display a photo of a happy couple: Kolya and Katya. He looks at the papers, they're invoices for rent and car payments-- all paid. Kolya stands, confused. He briefly walks around his room, everything is as it was. He opens a drawer to find car keys, exactly as they were. Kolya walks out the front door.

8 EXT. REALITY, DRIVEWAY - DULL EVENING

Kolya walks to his car, an old BMW. Musty but clean. He gets in, starts the engine, and drives away.

9 EXT. REALITY, HOUSE - DULL EVENING

Kolya hesitantly walks to the freshly painted white door of a cheap but well-maintained apartment. He doesn't feel right being there. Still, he rings the doorbell. A woman answers, Katya's old roommate. She wears an N-95 facemask.

EMMA (ENGLISH)
--Hey- Kolya... I'll go get Katya.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
No- don't. Nevermind. This was a bad idea.

EMMA (ENGLISH)
...I'll go get Katya.

Emma, clearly taken off guard, disappears into the apartment. Another woman comes to the door, solemnly. This is KATYA. She lazily secures an N-95 to her face as she approaches. Kolya's shame is evident, he blades his shoulders, hides his face like a dog in shame and starts to walk away.

KATYA (UKRAINIAN)
So you're leaving again?

Kolya stops. He turns.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I shouldn't be here. I might get you sick. Been on the streets for a while.

KATYA (UKRAINIAN)
You’re not puking and sh#tting yourself to death. You look healthy. For someone who’s been on the streets.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
...Yeah— I don’t know.

KATYA (UKRAINIAN)
You don’t know?..

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Can we speak English?

Katya stares daggers at him.

KATYA (ENGLISH)
...You really don’t know, do you?

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I don’t. But I didn’t come here for help. You don’t need to worry about it.

KATYA (ENGLISH)
I see. What are you here for, then? Since you’re doing so well.

Kolya is silent. He sighs.

KATYA (ENGLISH) (CONT'D)
It’s almost curfew, Kolya. I don’t want to get fined for letting a plague vector loiter on my doorstep.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Ok. Just. This whole conversation was a mistake. But, I want you to know, and I know you won’t believe me— when I left, I was trying to do the right thing.

KATYA (ENGLISH)
No you weren’t. You ran away. We were doing good.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I wasn’t doing good. I had problems, Katya. I don’t like what I did, it was hard for me too, but we’re both better off.

KATYA (ENGLISH)
Everyone has problems, Kolya. You think I haven't seen problems before? ... You have PTSD-- I get it. My Dad did too, my brother does, we all do now. We could've handled it. What made you think I wouldn't have done everything I could for you?

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
You were always good to me. I never doubted that, ever, and I'm thankful for that. But I'm not your problem.

KATYA (ENGLISH)
You don't decide my problems. I sat for years with this. Alone. You're not the only person the war happened to. And I had to sit here imagining you OD'ing on some street every night. Turning blue. I had to help myself through that, you weren't there, and I knew I couldn't help you. You denied me that.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Katya.

KATYA (ENGLISH)
And now you're here again. So what am I supposed to do now? I know I sound selfish-- but f##k. It took me years to realize I'm here too. I processed everything. I moved past it. And clearly you haven't, and you brought it all back here with you. What am I supposed to do with this?

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I'm sorry- Look. You're over it now! Just stay like that. I don't know why I came here... Maybe something wants me to tell you that I'm doing better... I don't understand any of it, but something good is happening. I think I found what I've been looking for.

KATYA (UKRAINIAN)
--Oh, f##k off--

Katya slams the door. The instant before it shuts fully--

EXT. FOREST - LIMINAL

Kolya stands, frustrated, he turns to the hateful figure, who sits with its back to a tree.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Stop helping me. I don't want it back. You see how I mess things up.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
It's not about you. You have a duty.

10 INT. REALITY, HOUSE - NIGHT

Kolya awakes on a couch. Now Katya is asleep next to him. His tie is loosened. They are inexplicably reconciled. He looks deeply disturbed.

KOLYA (ENGLISH, V.O.)
What have you done? What demon convinced her to forgive me?

His own voice interrupts him, echoing from the dark:

KOLYA (ENGLISH, V.O.) (CONT'D)
W-Wh-Whe-When-..When she sleeps, I can tell what she's dreaming about. Deep and steady breaths for good dreams. Sharp and shallow when she's having flashbacks. I brought her all the way here, but every night she goes back. Still looking for answers. There are none.

Kolya sits forward, puts his head in his hands. For a split second, he sits as a silhouette, alone in a land of infinite dark.

KOLYA (ENGLISH, V.O.) (CONT'D)
I loved her. It changed nothing. She needs something impossible. Only God can give her that. That's why I go looking for him.

Kolya's tick returns, his hand fidgets by his shoulder. He stands up from the couch. Another flash of a darker nirvana, he's there again for a split second. He starts walking.

TREE (V.O.)
You were never really there, because you never intended to stay. God is everything but her soulmate, that’s your title alone. You neglect your estate...

Kolya quietly makes his way to the bathroom. He closes himself inside and locks the door.

TREE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
There are no landmarks on this journey, only waves. It requires faith to believe you’re actually moving.

A flash of the waves, lapping at his feet. Then he opens the cabinet, revealing rows of prescription meds. Trazodone, Adderall, etc. Katya’s daily medication. The fuzz of a radio fades in, Kolya instinctively puts his hand to his shoulder.

TREE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Often the fatigue leads men to doubt the reality of any destination at all. So their vessel becomes a prison, and in a delusional pursuit of movement--
The voice morphs. It buzzes through an immaterial JTAC speaker.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
--you seek enlightenment by jumping from your boat. To find oneness with the sea.

He picks up a bottle, pours its entire contents into his hand, then crams them into his mouth. He chews and swallows with water. He does the same for more bottles.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO) (CONT'D)
As if drowning will get you anywhere. As if disappearing will make you infinite.

He takes a step back, leans on the wall, slides down into a sitting position. His hand pantomimes clicking the invisible JTAC, somehow we hear the click and fizz. Then we see him in the ocean again, the water is pure black, he’s submerged up to his shoulder. He struggles to keep his head upright. Then back to the bathroom.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO) (CONT'D)
Why do you think you can understand
(MORE)

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO) (CONT'D)
life by leaving it? Do you expect things to make sense on their own? Then why would god give you abstract thought? Don’t you have a f##king brain?

Kolya’s hand clicks the radio again, readying it for his response. He speaks into his shoulder:

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN, V.O.)
Fuck my brain. All is lost. Even what’s still here. I don’t want to go anywhere. I want to be nowhere.

He stares up at a lightbulb. It pops, trapping him in darkness.

Inexplicably, a light drifts over Kolya’s face, glints in his eyes.

11 EXT. CITY - NIGHT

Kolya feels concrete jabbing into his back, gravel beneath him. He's back in the city where Maksym died. It’s more tactile, this is less of a dream. His head drifts up, he sees glittering orbs falling from the sky, bouncing off the shingled roofs. He enjoys the show. Something pops behind his head, scattering fragments of sparkling fire. Another orb smashes into the ground in front of him-

UNKNOWN SOLDIER (UKRAINIAN)
WHITE PHOSPHORUS!

(Note: It’s like napalm but way worse.)

A voice screams in the distance. It multiplies. A firefight begins afar.

Kolya knows exactly what white phosphorus is. He springs to his feet. The sounds of war and civilian casualties grow. An echo of Sasha’s groans.

Kolya is thrown into fight or flight. He chooses the latter, stumbling into a sprint.

UNKNOWN SOLDIER (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
Druid! Where are you going?!

He keeps running, though alleyways, dodging bullets and phosphorous, crossing ditches, topography that twists his

feet as he runs.

UNKNOWN SOLDIER 2 (UKRAINIAN)
Kolya!

A voice rips through the radio. Kolya has made it to the mouth of the forest.

UNKNOWN SOLDIER 3 (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
Civilian casualties! We need transport now!

A less mature, less honed voice speaks-- it's as if the warfare quiets around his words. It freezes Kolya. This is a memory:

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
Where are you going?

12 EXT. CITY, OUTSKIRTS - BLUE HOUR

Kolya now wears his old uniform, his old plate carrier, his old helmet. A younger man stands behind him, in the same gear. Kolya turns to face him. White phosphorus falls around them.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
This position is lost. I'm leaving. Not my problem anymore.

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
What about your Uncle? We left him there!

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
He's dead, Alexei.

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
We can't leave him to rot!

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
It's meat, Alexei. Let the vultures eat.

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
We have orders. We need to hold the line.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
I've been holding the line since it was on the other side of the city! Too
(MORE)

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
many dead kids. Either side. I’m done. The orders won’t save us.

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
Reinforcements are coming!

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Will reinforcements bring back the dead?! They act like after we win, they can return what we lost!... It’s a lie anyway. No one is coming.

Alexei’s hardness breaks. He acts like the teenager he is.

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
...I’ll die if it’s just me here. I’m not good at this.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Come with me then.

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
Deserters die, Kolya!

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Don’t yell, Alexei - they’ll know where we are.

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
You’re going to die if you go. And so am I.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Look up. Staying is death too.

A beat. Light from the falling phosphorous fractalizes through the trees around them.

Alexei speaks without fully grasping what he’s saying. His resolve is performative, but deep down true:

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
...I’d rather die loyal, then.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
So you will. Goodbye.

Kolya turns and walks again. Alexei tries one last time to convince his friend, he catches up.

ALEXEI (UKRAINIAN)
Kolya please—

Kolya whips around, his fist smashing into Alexei's face. Alexei fumbles for his gun, Kolya struggles to wrestle it away. Kolya speaks in a pressured mutter as they fight.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
MIND YOUR OWN F##KING BUSINESS, ALEXEI.

The struggle continues. Alexei screams.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
SHUT UP. SHUT THE F##K UP. THEY'LL FIND US. SHUT UP SHUT UP.

Kolya manages to throw the rifle away— he throws Alexei to the ground and rains down fists and feet. As he beats Alexei, he loses composure. The sound dulls and blurs, the screams of war fade in with every punch.

13 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Kolya is back in the present, looking the same as he did. He kneels, his fists covered in dirt and blood. The ground before him battered. He pants, eyes glazed over.

The firefight still rages in the background. Occasionally, a woman's screams are heard.

From the darkness, apparitions of soldiers slowly approach. They're made of jagged greenery and dark black metal, armed with esoteric and futuristic weaponry.

Kolya screams to the ground.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
WHY DID YOU MAKE ME DO THIS?

He notices the soldiers around him.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
DON'T LOOK AT ME! MIND YOUR FUCKING BUSINESS... I MADE IT, DIDN'T I? THE ONLY ONE OF US. I MADE IT! ONLY ME! . . . STOP LOOKING AT ME.

Kolya breaks further. The soldiers silently close in. A coyote howls.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
...How is this my fault? When did I agree to any of this?.. At every chance, I said no! Shouldn’t the crime be on whoever gave it to someone who can’t even take care of himself? Give life to someone who asked for it! And I’m fucked if I embrace it, what of my life will I ever get to keep? In the end, it’ll be only me! Again!

Kolya catches his breath. Looks forward, closes his eyes. He finds serenity.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
But, I get it. This life can’t cover its costs. All involved are destitute, so the only thing left to do is fight over the debt. And who better to take the fall than me?...

A soldier walks up to Kolya and kicks him in the back, sending him forward. Kolya fumbles in his coat. Another soldier kicks him in the stomach.

UNKNOWN SOLDIER (UKRAINIAN)
They're are calling for help, Kolya. Why are you scared?

Kolya pulls a pack of cigarettes from his coat. A soldier rests his boot on his head. They take the cigarettes from his hand. The soldiers grab Kolya by the shoulders and hoist him up. Kolya takes a punch to the face, blood drips from his mouth.

UNKNOWN SOLDIER (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
Are you afraid of what will happen to you if you do the right thing?

The soldier with his cigarettes removes one from the package and puts it between Kolya’s teeth. Another lights it. Kolya takes one puff and then takes a punch to the gut, the cigarette ejects from his mouth.

The screams get louder, Kolya screams and tries to cover his ears, the soldiers restrain his arms and force him to listen. The gunshots get louder, the artillery gets louder.

A familiar voice breaks the terror. One of the soldiers pulls his mask down and grips Kolya’s skull with both hands, slamming their foreheads together, locking eyes.

UNCLE MAKSYM (UKRAINIAN)
My boy! I still see you in there! Are you afraid you'll die? YOU WILL! YOU WILL SUFFER AND DIE, KOLYA. EVERYONE DOES. EVEN COWARDS. SO DIE WELL.

It gets quieter.

UNCLE MAKSYM (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
This is your last chance, Kolya. Can’t you hear them?

A coyote howls. A soldier screams into Kolya’s face. Tribal calls and howls start to swarm. Maksym throws Kolya forward, another soldier catches him and throws him the same.

UNKLE MAKSYM (UKRAINIAN)
Go!

The soldiers yell the same, swarming and pushing Kolya.

Kolya picks up the pace. The screams of pain get louder. Suddenly he’s forgotten himself. A woman’s voice buzzes through Kolya’s imaginary radio:

UNKNOWN WOMAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
KOLYA!

There’s a light, a burning clump of phosphorus just out of sight. He sprints at it, fighting his dizziness.

UNKNOWN WOMAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO) (CONT'D)
HELP!

Kolya clumsily makes it to where the burning light should’ve been. Instead, he finds a sobbing woman, pacing listlessly. It’s Sasha. He stumbles towards her, quickly losing balance, leaning on trees.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Sasha! Sasha, are you ok?

He haphazardly runs to Sasha and trips on the way. When he looks up, she’s farther. Despite her muteness, her voice is heard through his radio. Her mouth doesn’t move as she speaks.

SASHA (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
Kolya! Help! Please, Kolya, he’s gone blind!

Sasha urgently points upwards behind her, where a light burns on the crest of a mountain. White phosphorus. Kolya struggles forward.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
I'm so sorry, Sasha. I locked you out!

Sasha turns, tears streaming, her face softens.

Kolya continues to struggle toward her. He can't keep his eyes focused.

SASHA (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
It's ok, Kolya. I wasn't alone, he was with me. But he's gone blind! He's gone blind and insane! I don't know what he'll do!

She reappears even farther away.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Saint Lyosha?

SASHA (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
You need to find him! I don't know what he'll do. Our angel is blind!-- you've always been kind, Kolya-- please try to reason with him. Maybe he'll trust you!

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
OK.

He barely manages the word. Sasha disappears.

Kolya takes a few more lurching steps, then suddenly spews vomit onto the forest floor. He collapses and falls down the hill.

INT. REALITY, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Kolya wretches over a toilet, then falls limply to the side, barely able to stay conscious.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
That's most of the pills; good, but too late. You need to yell for help.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN, V.O.)
No air.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Kolya is drowning. Sinking lower and lower into the ocean.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
Listen. Go inward. Find that tiny place that's still real. Where you still trust yourself. And breathe. Don't breathe because you're scared, don't breathe because you want to feel better, don't make it selfish. Breathe because you love it, breathe like each breath is your child, and it deserves a life.

INT. REALITY, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Kolya is on his back, paralyzed. His eyes keep tracing the same path. Across, then back. Then across, then back. As if stuck in a loop. The Ghillie Man is in the house, crouching in the doorway, emanating light. Its face has sprouted flowers.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN)
To begin and end. Born again every second. You sustain it, and it sustains you. If you notice, you'll find that every little aspect of existence is trying to make you happy.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Kolya is even deeper.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
But you need to give love to feel it. This is what carried something from nothing, that two things felt the other needed to exist. We all need you to exist, Kolya.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN, V.O.)
But I've taken my beating. Wouldn't it be easier if I stayed here? I feel at peace, for the first time in decades.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN, RADIO)
Come morning, your 'peace' will be found dead on the bathroom floor. She'll see it under her eyelids for the rest of her life.

INT. REALITY, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Kolya takes in a panicked breath as he lays on the floor. --

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

-- As he's snatched up from the water by the soldiers. They toss his limp body onto the lakeside. The Ghillie Man strolls up, standing above Kolya's head, he says:

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN)
If you think you're a bad person, then everything is a punishment. But if you know you're good, then even pain is a gift.

And then fires a full magazine into Kolya's chest.

INT. REALITY, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Kolya seizes on the floor and lets out a scream of shock with his gathered air.

Flashes of the door busting down, paramedics, oxygen masks, Naloxone. Interspersed with a shot of the camera slowly floating up the hill to where the White phosphorus burned.

EXT. FOREST - LIMINAL

Kolya is covered in blood, being carried uphill by the soldiers. They arrive at the top, the light is blinding.

14 INT. REALITY, KITCHEN - MORNING

Kolya now sits at a table, a plate with nothing but crumbs to his right. Junk mail to his left, on which his hand draws a SYMBOL. He doesn't remember drawing it. Katya takes his dish and starts washing it.

KATYA (UKRAINIAN)
Do you want the same brand?

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
...What?

KATYA (ENGLISH)
Why English?

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
What do you mean?

KATYA (ENGLISH)
You were speaking Ukrainian.

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
I was speaking?

KATYA (ENGLISH)
Yeah? You were talking about how you need a new gym bag. It’s getting old. Do you want the same brand?

KOLYA (ENGLISH)
Ok...

KATYA (ENGLISH)
...We need to go to the Doctor.

EXT. FOREST, ENCAMPMENT - LIMINAL

Kolya stumbles toward the light, gunshot wounds scattered over his chest, his white shirt stained red. His eyes adjust. It’s a campfire.

Kolya sees a solitary man at the campfire, hunched over. He wears the familiar ghillie suit.

GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN)
If I don’t kill it, this fire will burn down the whole world.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
... Saint Lyosha?

Lyosha turns to look back at Kolya. His skin is unnaturally grey, his eyes peer out from caked blood. His hair reaches down to his shoulders. His appearance is ghoulish, like a Skinwalker. Yet there’s a good-naturedness about him. There’s a feeling of serenity. Mist slowly pours from his nostrils. He holds a vape in his hand.

LYOSHA / GHILLIE MAN (UKRAINIAN)
I’m not a saint. Come sit down, don’t waste the heat. It’s for you.

Kolya walks over and sits.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
You’re not cold too?

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Just never warm. Fire or not. How’s
(MORE)

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
the wounds?'

Kolya looks down, the bullet holes are gone.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Better.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Yeah. Nothing is much of an issue here unless you make it one.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
I guess, yeah. Look.. I need to talk to you. I shouldn't be alive.

Lyosha raises his eyebrows and nods, tokes on his vape, releasing a large puff in Kolya's direction.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Cheers to that.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
If I were a better man, I'd be dead.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Interesting. Say more if you want.

Lyosha says through a cloud. Kolya sighs, readies himself to talk. Visuals accompany his monologue.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Ok... I just can't get rid of it. I have this constant feeling of sickness... After the war ended, it was like it never even happened. And all of us were defiled for nothing.

Politicians shake hands. A woman sits alone in a field.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
And there's something in me, a word, or a voice, that screams in a place that doesn't exist anymore.

Pan from the woman, we see a tank overgrown with greenery. Flashes of archival footage of soldiers walking, smiling, playing cards.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
The person I was, before I did what I
(MORE)

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
did, is still in here somewhere. And if he knew me now, he would kill me.

Cut to black. Radiation fizzes and abstractions of grief stain the camera.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
And it would be justice. But I’m still alive. Like a man who was pardoned from execution. Yet still knows that he’s guilty.

Fade from black, we look out a window at night. Windchimes hang.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
And I lay awake, praying that a ghost of martyrdom will come in the night and kill me for what I did. Because then I would know that the same way justice found me, it would find whoever started the whole f##king war...

Another angle of the destroyed home from the introduction. Deserted as ever. More shots of the same home cycle as Kolya talks.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
All those kids I saw die would be avenged. But then I wake up the next morning. No one killed me. I’m still alive. No one will be punished for what was done to us. Because I live, I know justice is dead. The ghost never came.

We return to Kolya at the campfire.

A pause.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
No. Here I am... And here you are.

Another pause.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
If I could tell you what happened to Alexei, after you left him for dead, would you want to know?

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
I’m not sure.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Would it make a difference if he lived?

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
...I don’t think so.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Yeah. He could have died, so you're a murderer. Judgment should be based on character, not outcomes. There are too many rats who qualified for heaven only because they weren't given the chance to do evil. And I know criminals who were beaten down but didn't sink as far as they could've. I know everyone perfectly, and what they become if you twist them too far or love them too much.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
I was never too hurt or too loved. What made me a failure, then?

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
...The best soldier I knew-- he killed like it was a joke and died like it was a game. Is that a hero?... But you, Kolya, are a coward because you feel too much... And the more I hurt you, the better you become-- if I keep you alive. So I agree, you should be dead. But there are bigger things that ought to be.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
Thank you... Really. But I’m tired. And I’m not who I used to be.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Does that change anything?

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
...Why do you need me?... I’ve prayed. Thousands of times. Offering my life to God, so I could leave and he could step in. Here you are.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
You never gave your life to God, you rotted with apathy in his name... Salvation isn’t to escape, Kolya. Salvation is victory.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
But it’s happening! I lose time, I trip out here and when I go back it’s like someone's been living my life better than I would! It's you! I don't want my life back, why can’t you just keep it?

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
That wasn't me. Omnipotence is only useful for puppet shows. Your weakness has been mapping itself while your strength acts free of it. Your better self wants your life back. He sees the bigger picture, he knows what he needs to do.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
What? What do you mean?

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
You’re a strong person, if you let go of the weight you carry.

Kolya sighs, looks down.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
How?

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Carry someone else’s.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
F##king trite.

Lyosha chuckles through a cloud.

EXT. REALITY, BALCONY - EARLY MORNING

Kolya stands on his balcony, looking indoors. He watches Katya work on her MacBook. Reading glasses on her head. Notepad to her side.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN, V.O.)
I think you’d carry it all, if you
(MORE)

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN, V.O.) (CONT'D)
knew you'd never lose it.

EXT. FOREST, ENCAMPMENT - LIMINAL

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
The loss is part of the deal.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Maybe not. But that's a conversation beyond language.

A pause. The energy shifts, hairs stand on end.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
I’m tired too, Kolya. The last time I slept, I had a dream. It's been keeping me up since... Can I tell you about it?

A ripping shout of urgent warning is heard from the tree line. Kolya looks to see it. When he turns to look back at Lyosha, he's engulfed in a vision:

INT - GROUP THERAPY - VISION

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
I dreamt I was at a support group. For the families of those killed in the war. Even after it’s over, war kills people. By trauma and destroyed social fabric.

A circle of chairs, people of all ages, all aggrieved. The people speak solemnly, wiping tears from their eyes. Lyosha sits among them. Head in his hands.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
They were sharing stories of how their kids and siblings died. I saw each death in perfect detail. I wanted to close my eyes but I couldn’t. How dare I look away. Then they’d be alone.

Among the aggrieved we see Katya, tears run down her face.

Lyosha's eyes are glazed over. Tired. Flashes of gore. His eyelids shudder. He keeps them open. The people share stories, Lyosha twitches.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - LIMINAL

That same circle of chairs now orbits a massive pit. All aggrieved wear black now. In the pit are hundreds of corpses. Alexei sits in the crowd.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
Then we were at a mass grave. A group funeral. And the grieving people around me were talking. Then they started arguing. In dreadful whispers. I couldn’t get them to stop.

Young men glare, old men bicker, women hiss. Lyosha watches, disturbed.

EXT. FOREST, ENCAMPMENT - LIMINAL

Lyosha’s face hardens, takes upon an ominous quality as he speaks. There are no visions on screen, only him.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
Then they started fighting. They came to blows. I tried to get in the middle and they hit me too. It was a blur.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - VISION

Alexei approaches the pit amidst the chaos, his face twisted into something between a grimace and a laughing smile. He looks down and sees Kolya among the dead, face frozen in serenity as his unmoving eyes gaze up at the sky.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
And then all the fighting went quiet.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - VISION

A solitary figure stands amidst a field of bodies with bloodied hands.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
In my efforts to pacify them, I had beaten them all to death...

A moment as the choir burns.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN) (CONT'D)
But then I woke up--

15 EXT. REALITY, SUBURBAN STREETS - NIGHT/TWILIGHT

Kolya stands in the middle of the street, phone in hand. It

shows directions on a map. He’s following them.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN, V.O.)
--And remembered that those kids are not yet dead. Maybe that funeral doesn't need to happen.

Kolya continues on the path. Down the street. Around a corner. He spots an outcropping of trees. He walks to them and enters their shade. There, he finds a GYM BAG. He opens it to reveal assault rifles tightly packed next to plastic explosives and computer parts.

A LAPSE.

Now he's surrounded by familiar soldiers who crouch around him, all of whom bear the SYMBOL on their hands or foreheads. He wears body armor and a gun lays in his lap. Kolya freezes at the deep pavlovian dread of being in combat gear again.

Where Lyosha sat there now sits a soldier: eyes covered, headphones over his ears, electrodes swarming his head, his feet and hands are bound, he sways and incessantly mutters indiscernible incantations. He holds a speaker, from which Lyosha's voice now emanates. Kolya is overcome with dread.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN, SPEAKER)
All a eulogy for those not yet dead. Of an accident in the middle of nowhere. Unless we stop it. You want to die, Kolya? I’ll show you how to do it right.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
...You think your dream was real?

A soldier snaps at Kolya, speaking zealously:

SOLDIER (UKRAINIAN)
You were nothing until God dreamed of you!

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN,SPEAKER)
I know it was real. I’ve memorized the souls of all responsible for what's about to happen. I love them. They love me. Maybe one day they’ll forgive us.

Kolya takes in an unsteady breath.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN, SPEAKER)
We will not be loved. Or known. And we will be punished. But that punishment will be a gift.

Kolya is overwhelmed. He lowers his head.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
I can’t speak... I don't know if I want this.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
You already said yes. This is your redemption.

KOLYA (UKRAINIAN)
...Ok. Ok good.

LYOSHA (UKRAINIAN)
Take upon yourself our name.

16 INT. REALITY, BEDROOM. MORNING.

Katya sleeps next to Kolya. All is well. He takes it in, but something’s off. Kolya feels an itch on his hand under the covers. He looks at it, revealing a wedding ring on his finger. He takes the wedding ring off, revealing the SYMBOL is branded underneath.

CUT TO BLACK, TEXT APPEARS

‘YOU ARE LYOSHA.‘

To be continued.