

THE ART OF LIES "PILOT"

Written by

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FADE IN:

TEASER

EXT. KYIV NATIONAL MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ART - NIGHT

A two-story, pre-Revolutionary mansion, robin-egg blue with vertical picture windows and framed posters.

SOUNDS of war and death hang in the air. The HOWL of incoming missiles. Shuddering BLASTS at impact.

Above the entrance, a banner in Ukrainian, Russian and English: 'The Russian/Soviet Avant-Garde Movement 1890-1950.'

**SUPER: KYIV NATIONAL MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ART - KYIV, UKRAINE -
FEBRUARY 2022**

INT. MUSEUM - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Four figures wearing black duck-walk in silence along a darkened corridor toward a lighted hall.

This is a fully-equipped infiltration team: assault weapons, sidearms, ballistic vests, night vision gear.

INT. MUSEUM - ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - NIGHT

A cramped, windowless room. A monitor displays multiple security camera images.

SVETLANA, 60, stern and no-nonsense, dressed in a museum worker uniform, stares at a portable TV showing images of an invasion: Soldiers. Tanks. Destruction.

MURMURS of anxious commentators.

A gloved hand CLAMPS down on Svetlana's face and silences her muffled SCREAMS.

FEDYA, 30-ish, lean and hungry-looking, leans in. An angry scar runs diagonally across his right cheek. Same gear as the infiltration team.

He and Svetlana speak in Ukrainian, subtitled.

FEDYA
(quietly)
Scream again, you die.

Svetlana nods. Fedya moves forward to face her.

FEDYA (CONT'D)
Shishkin - Brook in a Forest.
Zhukovskiy - Spring Festival II.
Where are they?

Svetlana isn't built for this.

SVETLANA
(confused)
We have other paintings that are
far more valuable. The Repins, for
example....

Fedya shakes his head.

FEDYA
Shishkin. Zhukovskiy. Don't make me
ask again.

INT. MUSEUM - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ahead of the infiltration team, where the corridor meets the
lighted hall, a lone uniformed GUARD appears.

GUARD
(in Ukrainian)
Hey! What are you doing?

The infiltration team POINT MAN raises his long gun. THWIP. A
silenced shot finds its target.

The guard staggers backward and falls to the ground.

INT. MUSEUM - ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - NIGHT

The security monitor shows the uniformed guard motionless on
the floor. The point man stands over him.

Fedya's radio CRACKLES. He and the point man speak in
Russian, subtitled.

POINT MAN
(on radio)
Where to?

FEDYA
Stand by.

Svetlana stares in horror and crosses herself three times.

SVETLANA
(voice shaking)
Poor Vanya.

Fedya points at the monitor.

FEDYA
Those people are getting impatient.
You don't want that.

SVETLANA
They killed Vanya for nothing. The
pieces you're asking about aren't
even here.

Fedya grabs Svetlana's face with a gloved hand.

FEDYA
Then where are they?

EXT. LA METRO AREA - NIGHT

The sprawling LA freeway system. A dull incessant ROAR of
countless engines.

A sleek black Audi zig-zags between lanes.

SUPER: LOS ANGELES - PRESENT DAY

INT. AUDI - NIGHT

Behind the wheel is DEZ COOPER, late 20s, an African-American
woman who radiates confidence and boundless energy. The sound
of a RINGING TELEPHONE fills the car.

DEZ
(muttering)
Come on, Winter.

INT. ART DEALER'S HOME - ART ROOM - NIGHT

A lived-in space: multiple tables, easels, paintings framed
and unframed.

DAN WINTER, late 40s, calm but laser-focused, ignores the
phone BUZZING in his pocket. He sits across a table from a 30-
something male ART DEALER, antsy and obnoxious.

An art auction catalogue rests between them, open to a
stunning Albrecht Durer woodcut print: The Four Horsemen of
the Apocalypse, estimated price \$700,000.

ART DEALER
That's a lot of money, Mr. Somers.

WINTER
With respect, we're talking about
an authenticated Durer. "A lot?"
It's all relative, I suppose.

He taps a finger on the catalogue page.

WINTER (CONT'D)
This print has undergone numerous
repairs. Mine, on the other hand,
is in excellent condition. I have
five other collectors lined up if
you step aside.

ART DEALER
I don't know, man.

WINTER
Sometimes no decision is the best
decision.

Winter collects the catalogue and stands.

WINTER (CONT'D)
Not always, of course.

ART DEALER
Do you have the piece?

WINTER
I wouldn't be here if I didn't.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - SUNSET STRIP - NIGHT

The fabled Sunset Strip. Not the glittery part. The black
Audi pulls up in front of a squat, non-descript warehouse.

INT. ABANDONED HOLLYWOOD WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A cavernous, poorly-lit space. Overhead, a few fluorescent
lights flicker and BUZZ.

No indication that legitimate business is conducted here.

DODGER FAN, early 20s, hyper and slightly unhinged, stands
next to a work table. He's decked out in an LA Dodgers jersey
and ballcap.

Dez approaches.

DODGER FAN
(in accented English)
You're late.

DEZ
No kidding. I just spent the last
hour behind a jack-knifed semi on
the 101.

Dodger Fan dumps a stack of brightly-colored unframed prints
onto a workbench.

DODGER FAN
So...your dope for the prints.

DEZ
Assuming they're the real deal.
Which I'm about to find out.

DODGER FAN
Guess you better get to it.

Dez places her backpack on the floor and begins to sort
through the prints. The overhead lights abruptly go out.

Dodger Fan aims his flashlight at Dez and illuminates her in
a blinding strobe light. At that moment, she is violently
attacked from behind.

Anguished CRIES and the thud of LANDING BLOWS. Dez falls to
the floor. Muttered COMMENTS in Russian.

INT. WINTER'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Winter is at an open safe in his closet, inside of which are
neat stacks of phones, wallets, passports, and a Glock 9mm
handgun. He removes the light disguise (mustache, tinted
glasses) he wore for the art dealer meeting.

He takes another phone from his pocket and plays a message.

DEZ
(recorded message)
I'm on my way to meet one of the
Armavir crew. Remember that
warehouse on Sunset? Hit me up.

The phone RINGS. Winter squints at the screen and answers.

WINTER
Hey.

We can see he's hearing some bad news.

ACT ONE

INT. LA GENERAL MEDICAL CENTER - PATIENT WARD - NIGHT

Winter exits a hospital room and heads down a hallway. He's intercepted by an angry African-American woman who blocks his way. This is MARION, 50s, fierce and protective.

MARION
You must be Winter.

WINTER
I don't think we've met.

MARION
(drops her voice)
The FBI man who convinced my baby
that undercover work was a good
idea. She described you to a T.

WINTER
You're Dez's mom.
(pause)
Her doctor just told me she's going
to be okay.

Marion waves that comment away. She's just getting warmed up.

MARION
Tell me the damn sense of
investigating stolen paintings and
such. Like we don't have enough
real crime going on in this world.

WINTER
I'd be happy to, but this might not
be the best time.

Marion pokes a finger in his chest.

MARION
Find out who did this to my little
girl. Go on - promise me.

WINTER
Count on it.

Marion pushes past him toward Dez's hospital room.

EXT. LA GENERAL MEDICAL CENTER - PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Winter exits the parking garage elevator and encounters FBI LA Special Agent in Charge RJ NORTH, mid-40s, built like a linebacker with a demeanor to match.

NORTH

LAPD Robbery Homicide Division is working the case. Do me a favor and steer clear.

WINTER

Fuck RHD - we should handle this ourselves. And you're the last person I owe a favor, RJ.

NORTH

I almost forgot what a pain in the ass you are.

(glances at his watch)

We need to talk. Let's say my office at nine a.m.

WINTER

Banker's hours? I can do that.

He steps around North and moves forward.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

High-end homes. Fancy cars. Immaculate landscaping. Incredible views of the nighttime LA skyline.

INT. STACK'S MANSION STUDIO - HOLLYWOOD HILLS - NIGHT

A home recording studio. Cameras, lighting sources, control board, speakers, various boom and table microphones.

Walls covered with photos of military units in far-flung locations. Stickers - "The Warrior Caste," "The Warrior PodCaste," and stylized "TWC" logos - on every surface.

EVAN STACK, early 40s, military-fit and smooth-talking, is at the mike. Beside him is his partner TASHA, a Russian/Armenian woman in her mid-30s, striking and self-assured.

STACK

Yet another example of globalism's cancerous effects on America's economy. I could go on, but let's take a call.

Tasha studies the control board and presses a button.

MYSTERY CALLER
(Eastern European accent)
Evan Stack. Truly an honor.

STACK
Thank you, brother.

MYSTERY CALLER
You're a former Army Ranger, right?

STACK
That's correct.

MYSTERY CALLER
Maybe it's time to admit what
happened in Afghanistan.

Stack glances at Tasha.

STACK
(laughs)
Afghanistan's a big country. Afraid
you'll have to be a little more
specific than that.

MYSTERY CALLER
Nuristan Province. May 2014. You
managed to get your entire unit
wiped out. That specific enough?

Stack makes a subtle gesture. Tasha ends the call.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - MARINA DEL REY - NIGHT

A Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office patrol car pulls up in front of a high-end, palm tree-lined apartment complex.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

LARSON, 40, in uniform, puts the car in PARK and shuts off the engine. He remains seated for a moment and listens to Stack's podcast on his car's radio.

TASHA
(on radio, in accented
English)
Lots of haters out there.

STACK

(on radio)

There you go, Warrior Caste Nation.
More proof that it's not easy being
a true American patriot.

LARSON

(to himself)

Amen to that.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - MARINA DEL REY - NIGHT

LARSON drags himself out of the patrol car. He's logged some hard miles and it shows.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Larson and the MANAGER, a 60-ish man dressed in safari gear, walk along a well-maintained hallway.

MANAGER

Won't answer the door or her phone.
I'm concerned for her welfare.

LARSON

Maybe that's why they call it a
welfare check.

They stop mid-hallway. Larson KNOCKS on a door.

LARSON (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Sheriff's Office. Open up.

Larson nods at the manager, who produces a pass-key and cracks the door open. Larson takes a step inside and raises an arm to block the manager from following.

LARSON (CONT'D)

(to the manager)

Probably be a few minutes.

INT. APARTMENT - FOYER - NIGHT

Larson shuts the door behind him. The apartment is dimly-lit.

He takes a tentative sniff and grimaces.

LARSON
(loudly)
Ms. Reed? Sheriff's Office. Sound
off if you're here.

He moves easily from room to room - flashlight in one hand,
the handle of his holstered service weapon in the other.

The walls and flat surfaces of the apartment are covered with
paintings and sculptures.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Larson steps into the bedroom and sees:

A haunting, motionless figure in bed, tangled up in sheets.
Skeletal features. Disheveled white hair. Mottled skin.

Larson spies a purse on top of a dresser. He holsters his
sidearm and slips on a pair of black tactical gloves.

From the purse, he removes a wallet, opens it, and transfers
the paper money into his vest.

On a shelf: a well-hidden "nanny cam" that Larson has failed
to spot is watching.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Larson looks around as he places a call on his cellphone.

LARSON
(on phone)
I just caught a DB in the marina.
Place is full of art, in case
you're interested.

He spies an intricate miniature sculpture on the dresser and
stuffs it into his vest.

LARSON (CONT'D)
(listens)
I'll get photos. And hey - we need
to talk.
(listens)
I'll head your way soon as I'm off
shift. Adios.