

Postcard From Serbia

C.J. Cronin

FADE IN.

SUPER: "The word SLAVE comes from SLAV - the white peoples of Eastern Europe who were often raided and held in bondage by invaders."

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

Close on a TV screen with one of the typical 'and they all lived happily ever after' endings to an old animated fairy tale e.g. "Snow White", "Cinderella".

INT. JAKE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

With a jaundiced expression, JAKE, (40's to early 50's) watches the end of the show. The TV is the only light source in the room aside from a dim lamp in the far corner. Across him sprawls his two children, BILLY (9) and EMMA (6), asleep.

There is a knock at the door. Jake frees himself of children, finds the remote and turns off the TV.

The door opens, revealing MARIE, his estranged wife.

MARIE (perfunctory)

Hi.

Jake nods, sorry she has an attitude.

She pushes past, picks up Emma and heads for the door.

Jake watches downheartedly.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE JAKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jake opens a roadside car door and places Billy in the backseat. Emma is already in the back, asleep, with Marie buckling her in. As Marie gets in the driver's seat, Jake does up Billy's seatbelt. Billy stirs.

BILLY

Love you, dad.

JAKE

(kissing his forehead)
You too, son.

Marie starts the car.

MARIE

Bye.

Again Jake nods, regretting her attitude.

He watches her car drive away.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

With reading glasses resting on his forehead Jake enters. He carries a whisky bottle and half-filled glass. He sits at a computer and checks his email. The screen is the only illumination in the room.

He scrolls to an email with the subject line - 'Hi from Moldavia' and opens it.

MARTA (VO) (Moldavian accent)
Hello, Jake. I see your profile on Lovelink and I look to see you are the man alone and would like to meet lady such as me. I write only brief to you now as you may not wish to talk with me, but I say to you from my heart I like to look at you and see you write truly what is in your heart also. I wish that we may write each other and be friends and if so maybe one day meet and have pleasant chance at falling in love. This is all I write now, but if you write I promise always truth to you and warm feelings.

Regards, Marta

<http://www.Lovelink.com/women/~Marta75>

Jake clicks on the link and has a sip of whisky as he watches Marta's photo and profile appear onscreen. He is interested.

As Jake looks more closely there is specific information:

Age: 24
Children: No children.
Religion: Christian.
Education: Some University.

As he scrolls down Jake reveals a frame labeled: Respond to Marta75:

He clicks in the frame and types:

JAKE (VO)

Marta, Thanks for showing interest in me, it's very flattering. I see you are quite young, though, and that perhaps I am too old for you. Although separated, I have two children I see each fortnight and I pay alimony to my ex-wife. So you should consider these factors before replying to me.

Please don't take this the wrong way, but there are many warnings about the Russian mafia posing as women and writing to foreign men in order to get money from them. Perhaps if you tell me more about yourself and send me a phone number then I would feel more certain you are a real person looking for love.

Warm regards, Jake.

Jake clicks on the 'Send Reply' button.

He stares bleakly at the screen.

It now contains only one sentence: "Your email has been sent to Marta75."

SMASH CUT TO.

EXT. DEMOLITION SITE -- DAY

A large wall collapses, attacked by heavy machinery. Jake goes by wearing a hard hat and carrying building plans.

INT. MAKESHIFT SITE OFFICE -- DAY

A busy site. Jake, still in the hard hat, chews gum. He confers with CHRIS, his 2IC employee. Other DEMOLITION CREW work nearby.

JAKE

We'll have C4 here, here and here, then this central pillar, give me two sticks of Trinty right there, both sides and I want 'em bored not strapped.

CHRIS
That's only a five square pillar
What's the big deal? C4'll...

JAKE
(knocking on Chris' helmet)
That's why you check your buttresses.
See this? If this pillar doesn't snap
this buttress will hold, meaning it
counter-levers and...

CHRIS
(nodding, realizing his mistake)
...and both sidings fall out...

JAKE
And we want spiral implosion, no
collateral damage. Get on it.

Chris is departing.

JAKE
(checking his watch) I'll be round to
check charges by zero ten fifteen and
I want lock down by zero eleven
hundred!

Chris waves and hurries off, carrying the plans. Jake
immediately attracts the attention of a nearby, tough-
looking foreman, TOM.

JAKE
Tom, get the dozer over there and
clear that steel!

TOM
Where do you want it?!

JAKE
On the perimeter! Shake a leg!

Tom nods and hurries to the dozer driver.

EXT. IGNITION AREA -- DAY

Clear of the demolition zone, Jake briskly approaches the
ignition box. CALDER, the client, is nearby, looking
worried and out of place, wearing a hard hat with his
business suit. Chris and some of the Crew are also present.

JAKE
Mr. Calder, you have the honor of
bringing her down, sir.

CALDER
I do? Does that mean I'm liable if
you guys screw up?

JAKE
We never screw up, Mr. Calder. That
red button if you please, sir. (To
others) Okay final lock and check.

Chris comes forward and flicks some switches on an ignition
board and lifts a lever.

JAKE
(Into his walkie-talkie)
Sector final report.

WALKIE TALKIE VOICE 1
Sector 1 clear.

WALKIE TALKIE VOICE 2
Sector 2 clear.

WALKIE TALKIE VOICE 3
Sector 3 clear.

WALKIE TALKIE VOICE 4
Sector 4 clear.

CHRIS
System is armed and active!

JAKE
Locked and loaded, people! Siren,
please! Blast on ten.

There is a loud warning siren. When it finishes:

JAKE
On zero, Mr. Calder. (into his
walkie-talkie) Stand by, and, ten,
nine,

Some of his crew are mouthing the numbers.

JAKE
eight, seven, six, five, four, three,
two, one, and...

He nods to Calder.

Calder pushes the button.

FX or Stock Footage: The building explodes and comes down perfectly.

There is great whooping and clapping as the demolition is deemed a success. Calder pumps Jake's hand.

CALDER
I can't tell you what a relieved man
I am! Thank you, thank you, that
was...that was great!

He makes an explosive sound and laughs. Jake walks away and looks out on the pile of rubble.

JAKE
Yeah...It's what I do.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jake enters, weary, drops his hard hat on a sideboard. He rubs his forehead, deciding what to do. Collecting a whisky bottle he enters his bedroom.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake's emails load on the computer. Seeing one called Marta75, he opens it.

MARTA (VO)
"Dear Jake, Thank you for answer me.
It be great pleasure for me you
write. I know of your children from
profile and am very accepting of
this. I know also of your concern
that I be real. My phone number is
373 4 1156. Best warm wishes, Marta."

Jake Alt Tabs to his browser and clicks "World Time" in his Favorites menu. He moves a timeline to Moldavia and checking his watch picks up the phone.

INTERCUT:

INT. MARTA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN/DINING -- NIGHT

In a small, gloomy apartment a young, handsome but disheveled man, ALEKSIY, carries a Stilson wrench as he crosses to a heater. He is dressed very warmly, his breath steaming the air. As he passes an old baked-enamel phone, it rings. He picks up. MARTA is mildly alarmed.

ALEKSIY
(Moldovian) Yes? Shade residence.

Jake is slightly taken aback that a man has answered.

JAKE

Hello. Um, do you speak English?

OKSANA, Marta and Aleksiy's mother, appears behind Aleksiy.

ALEKSIY

Yes, little. Who is, please?

Marta immediately gets up to take the phone.

JAKE

Oh, my name is Jake Roberts and I'm...

MARTA

(Moldovian) It's for me, it's for me, give me...

She takes the phone. Her brother continues on to the heater.

MARTA

(English) Hello?

JAKE

Oh, is this Marta?

MARTA

Yes, I am me. I mean, I am I (she laughs slightly) I mean, Marta. Yes. Sorry, I am little too much excited you call me.

JAKE

Oh, so then you know it's me, Jake, in America?

MARTA

Yes, yes I know it. Your voice is like your photo, just like your photo.

Aleksiy and Oksana argue in Moldavian over the heater. Marta glances at them nervously.

JAKE

Oh, well, you have a lovely voice too, Marta. I mean, not that my voice is lovely. I mean, you know, you sound like your photo too.

MARTA

Yes, thank you.

The argument is reaching a peak.

JAKE
Is something wrong?

Marta cuffs her hand over the mouthpiece.

MARTA
(Moldavian) Will you two please be quiet! I am talking to America!

Surprised, they stop arguing.

MARTA
(Moldavian) For Heaven's sake.
(English into the phone) Sorry, is just my brother and mumma. Go on, please.

JAKE
Oh. So you live with your mother and brother?

MARTA
Yes, we have small apartment, here, in Tighina. At the moment here is very cold. Our breath, our breath make cloud in air, you know, like in ice box.

The wrench slips off the heater and Aleksiy hurts his hand. Oksana immediately begins yelling at him and he yells back at her, then starts kicking the heater.

MARTA
(not cuffing the phone)
(Moldavian) Will you stop! Will you two stop arguing!

Jake reacts to all the yelling on the end of the line.

They don't stop. Marta takes the phone and feeds the cord into her bedroom and shuts the door.

MARTA
(sitting on the floor)
(English) Oh, I am so sorry, Jake.

JAKE
I think I've called at a bad time.

MARTA

No, no, please, is just, heater not working and Aleksiy, my brother, he want fix it, and mumma afraid he break it and make trouble from landlord.

JAKE

They sound, ah...passionate.

MARTA

No is just...(she begins to laugh, shaking her head ironically) is just cold sometimes makes us crazy (she laughs more).

JAKE

(starting to smile, bemused)
What?

MARTA

I am sorry. (She laughs hard) I am sorry. (She can't stop laughing)

Jake is smiling.

MARTA

I'm sorry. No. (laughing) You know, this is exact opposite of what I want for us to happen. (she laughs hard) Is so embarrassing (she laughs hard).

Jake is smiling fully, starting to chuckle, now enjoying her.

JAKE

I can't begin to tell you how nice it is to hear a woman's laugh again. God, I have so missed that.

Marta sobers and smiles.

CROSSFADE TO:

MUSIC MONTAGE SEQUENCE.

CROSSFADE VOICE OVERS.

1] Different angle. Jake is still talking on the phone to Marta, but is now smiling and laughing. She is doing the same.

JAKE (VO)

Dear Marta, I enjoyed talking to you on the phone very much. We were so busy laughing and joking I didn't get time to ask you some of the questions I had in mind, like, what sort of job you have, or what sort of things you like to do...

2] Marta waits in a queue outside a store. The weather is cold and windy. The EMPLOYER appears from inside and waves them away. Everyone turns away disappointed and the queue breaks up. Marta pulls a folded newspaper from her handbag and looks for further job ads.

MARTA (VO)

...Jake, I do not have job. I study medicine at university, but mumma could not afford me both and Aleksiy, my brother. He is younger me, and she say only he can go university because he be man, so I must leave university. It make me sad, as I love the medicine and want be doctor very much. Now I look for job, any job, all the time every day. What job you do?...

3] Jake, drives his four-wheel-drive, passing through a demolition site, take-out coffee in hand. As he pulls up and gets out he nods and grins at some Crew, who are surprised to see him cheerful.

JAKE (VO)

... I'm a demolition expert in Chicago. That means I use explosives to bring down old buildings. I was getting tired of my job, but since I've met you... I guess I saw all that rubble as some kind of symbol for my life, like I'm only good at destroying things, but now I look forward to each new day...

4] Marta shops/barters in a marketplace. The weather is now warm and she wears a light frock, looking young, healthy and in a happy mood.

MARTA (VO)

...My Dearest Darling, Thank Heavens the summer is now full here and we no longer live in ice box. I still have no job yet but still try every day. I am excited. I am told there might be

MARTA (VO) (Cont'd)
 waitress job in cafe in Italy. I go
 ask today. Jake, I am thinking it
 would be so nice, so wonderful as in
 dream, if maybe we meet in Rome,
 there we could fall in love. I so
 want you kiss me, it is my thought
 all day long. I want be with you in
 your arms. Wish me luck with job,
 darling man.

5] FX or Stock Footage: After going through another
 countdown process, another building implodes and comes
 down. Jake and Chris give each other a high five while the
 rest of the Crew hoop, holler and embrace.

JAKE (VO)
 ... Yes, I'm the same way, I want to
 meet now, I want to kiss you and hold
 you and be with you, to touch your
 soft skin. Your job in Italy sounds
 great. If you get it I will do my
 best to get there. I'm pretty busy at
 the moment, we have a lot of
 contracts happening, but I'm sure
 there must be a way I can break free
 for at least a little while...

6] Marta runs up stairs. She enters her apartment and
 rushes to tell Oksana, who also becomes excited.

MARTA (VO)
 ...Jake, darling, is most wonderful
 news, I have job in Italy! They give
 me! Now all I must do is get passport
 and visa and this man say is no
 problem they arrange for me. I am so
 happy I want burst with smiles. Can
 you come? Can you come?

7] Same original angle on Jake on the phone in the bedroom,
 when he first called Marta. Jake is now at a crossroad and
 must make a serious decision.

JAKE
 Well...Yeah. I can come. I will come.

INTERCUT:

INT. MARTA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

She sits on the floor as she talks on the phone.

MARTA

They say job in Ancona, but also maybe Florence, I don't know this yet.

JAKE

Well, how come?

MARTA

Oh, they are, how you say, um, agent, I think.

JAKE

Oh, they're an employment agency.

MARTA

Yes, yes, they send me job where job is.

JAKE

Look, um, like I said in my email we have a lot of work on at the moment, so if I come it can only be for a few days. You understand...

MARTA

I know, I know, it doesn't matter...

EXT. ITALIAN SQUARE WITH FOUNTAIN -- DAY

In dream-like scenario Jake and Marta meet by the fountain and hug and twirl in a lover's embrace.

MARTA (VO)

Jake, I want for us meet together, you and me and we be together for little while, no matter how short...I...

BACK TO:

JAKE

I know...I know.

MARTA

Yes...thank you for understand me.

They are both quiet.

JAKE

So you'll send me an email tomorrow, when you know where you're going?

MARTA

Yes, I tell you before I leave. I say, what you say, take to bank.

JAKE

...Oh, you can take it to the bank. Okay, and you'll let me know when you arrive, your address?

MARTA

Yes.

JAKE

And don't forget when you get your first paycheck to buy a cell phone, and let me know the number.

MARTA

Yes, I do, I promise you with all my heart, Jake.

JAKE

Are you sure you don't want me to wire you some money?

MARTA

No, like I say, banks here steal money. We all keep money with us in house. We hide, you see.

JAKE

I understand. I'm...I'm looking forward to seeing you, Marta.

MARTA

I hope you not be disappointed me.

JAKE

I don't think that's possible. I know you have a true heart. That's all that really matters.

MARTA

Thank you. I trust you, Jake.

JAKE

And I trust you, Marta...Bye.

MARTA

Goodbye.

Jake hangs up and stares at the phone. His eyes drift to a photo of his two kids.

EXT. MOLDAVIAN STREET -- DAY

Marta, along with several GIRLS around her age and appearance, boards an old bus. Each Girl carries a small suitcase. A man, MOLDAVIAN 1, from the employment agency, stands by the bus door. He is big, broad-shouldered, hard-faced, wearing a leather jacket.

MARTA (VO)

Jake, I write quick to you from internet café here. Bus leave soon. I ask where I go to again and they say they don't know because we are told this when reach agent in Italy.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS REGION -- DAY

The bus travels down a road. There is no other traffic. As the bus goes by Marta can be seen through the window toward the rear of the bus.

MARTA (VO)

So I write you when I know this. I am so excited, not just for job and see new place, but because each day pass I will near you, my darling, Jake.

EXT. SMALL BUS INT. IN MOTION -- DAY

Marta looks out the window. Her suitcase is on the seat beside her. Her eyes drift round and come to rest on the back of Moldavian 1 sitting in the front seat alone, smoking. Marta notices she is being watched. TRINKA, a young and innocent looking girl, watches her nervously from the seat opposite. Marta grins reassuringly. Trinkka grins back shyly, and looks away. Marta looks back at Moldavian 1, her grin drying on her face as misgivings take over.

EXT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

A pretty, isolated café in the mountains. The bus is parked out front. Some Girls mill about outside, while some come and go to an exterior toilet block. All the Girls have their suitcase with them.

INT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Marta looks at postcards on a rack. One of the girls, NATASHA, comes past and notices the Girls getting back on the bus.

NATASHA
 (Moldavian) Better hurry, they're
 getting on.

MARTA
 (Moldavian) Oh, thanks.

Marta selects a postcard with a picture of the café on it. She goes to the counter and pays the counter attendant, MILA. Camera stays on Mila, a medium-attractive woman in her late 30's, watching Marta leave.

EXT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Marta comes from the café and is surprised to see that Girls about to get on the bus are rummaging through their suitcases. Moldavian 1 stands by the bus door, an open plastic bag in his hand with passports already in it.

Marta slips the postcard into her coat pocket as she approaches Natasha.

MARTA (to Natasha)
 (Moldavian) What is this?

NATASHA
 (rummaging in her suitcase)
 (Moldavian) Passports for the border
 crossing.

Natasha has found her passport and crosses to Moldavian 1, dropping her passport into the bag as she boards.

Marta hurriedly opens her suitcase.

Marta, now the last one on, drops her passport into the plastic bag. Moldavian 1 coldly watches her go up the stairs then steps in behind her.

EXT. ROMANIAN BORDER ROADBLOCK -- DAY

The bus pulls up before the border gate and two BORDER GUARDS. They wear sub-machine guns. BORDER GUARD 1 boards the bus.

INT. BUS -- DAY

Border Guard 1 is only one seat away from Marta, checking the passport photo against the Girl in front. Moldavian 1 is behind him in the passageway. The Border Guard hands two passports back to Moldavian 1 and is handed two more. He moves on and checks Marta.

Marta is uncomfortable under his stare. Her eyes drift onto the sub-machine gun hanging from his shoulder.

Satisfied, Border Guard 1 turns to look at Trinka, opposite Marta. Marta looks at Moldavian 1's face. He is looking for two further passports in the bag. Marta's eyes drift down and she sees the corner of a pistol handle just inside his half-open jacket. She is alarmed.

EXT. ALLEYWAY/EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

The Girls, carrying suitcases, disembark from the bus and enter the Exchange Building through a steel door in the side of the alleyway. Moldavian 1, beside the door, watches them enter. Marta walks by, glances at him with misgivings, then enters the building.

INT. EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Under a dim light the girls find they are in a small, dank room with no windows. ROMANIAN 1, a guard, waits beside the door behind them. As the last Girl comes in and Moldavian 1 enters, Romanian 1 shuts the door, bolting it.

The Girls look around in alarm. As Moldavian 1 walks past them to a further doorway:

NATASHA (to Moldavian 1)
(Moldavian) Excuse me, what is this place?

Moldavian 1 turns, looks at her, then suddenly backhands her hard, knocking her down. The Girls gasp in shock. Moldavian 1 looks at them. Natasha, on the floor, recovers enough to be helped to her feet by Marta. Marta, like the others, is scared.

The sound of a handgun being cocked causes the Girls to look around. Romanian 1 has a large handgun. Moldavian 1 produces his handgun.

MOLDAVIAN 1
(Moldavian) Strip.

The Girls are frozen.

(Moldavian) All of you!! Now!!

The Girls slowly take off their clothes. Marta, slower than the rest, also begins to comply.

Moldavian 1 watches them, his features devoid of emotion.

INT. EXCHANGE BUILDING/SEPARATION ROOMS -- NIGHT

Guarded at the rear by ROMANIAN 2, the naked Girls queue in a dark passageway adjoining a lit room. They are cold, with

many of them sobbing. Marta is third in line. From the central room there are four doorways to four separate rooms, the doors removed. None of these rooms have windows or are lit.

In the central room Moldavian 1 and Romanian 1 stand behind ROMANIAN BOSS, an older, well dressed man with a tough face. In the middle of the room stands ROMANIAN WOMAN 1.

Romanian Woman 1, a hard-faced middle-aged woman, signals to the first Girl in line, Trinka, to come forward. Trinka crosses to the center of the room.

ROMANIAN WOMAN 1
(looking the Girl up and down)
(Romanian) Romania, whore.

She looks at Romanian Boss. He nods slightly. Romanian Woman 1 points to one of the four doorways and pushes Trinka toward it. She signals for the next Girl, who has large, well-formed breasts.

ROMANIAN WOMAN 1
(Romanian) Slovenia, stripper.

She looks at Romanian Boss. He does not react. Romanian Woman 1 looks mildly surprised. Romanian Boss makes a small gesture, a twirl of his finger. Romanian Woman 1 pushes the girl round, revealing her buttocks. The Girl has a flat backside.

ROMANIAN WOMAN 1
(Romanian) Whore? Slovenia?

Romanian Boss nods.

Romanian Woman 1 points and pushes the girl toward the second room. She immediately signals the third girl, Marta. Marta comes forward.

ROMANIAN WOMAN 1
(Romanian) Serb, stripper.

Romanian Boss twirls his finger again. Romanian Woman 1 makes Marta turn around. Marta's buttocks are well formed. Romanian Woman 1 looks at Romanian Boss in question. He nods. She turns Marta back around.

ROMANIAN WOMAN 1
(Romanian) Can you dance?

Marta stares at her, then at Moldavian 1.

MOLDAVIAN 1
(Moldavian) Can you dance?

Marta barely holds back her protest. Finally, she nods slightly. Romanian Woman 1 points to the third room and pushes her toward it. She signals to the next Girl, Natasha, to come forward.

Marta enters the unlit room. There is no seating and she looks back into the central room, her panic rising. Tears stream down her face.

Trinka, standing in the doorway of her room, looks across at Marta. She is terrified and crying. Their eyes meet.

As this happens, Romanian Woman 1 examines Natasha.

ROMANIAN WOMAN 1 (OS)
Serb, stripper.

Natasha comes into Marta's room and they immediately hug, Marta giving her comfort.

Trinka is watching them, scared, tears rolling down.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jake's kids, Billy and Emma, watch TV. Jake walks behind them on his way to his bedroom. Emma notices him go by.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake checks his email, the results just coming in: No New Messages.

Disappointed, slightly worried, his eyes drift to the scotch bottle. He puts his hand on it.

EMMA (OS)
Daddy.

Jake looks around. Emma stands in the doorway.

JAKE
Hi, honey.

He puts the bottle away in a lower drawer.

Emma comes in and sits on his lap.

EMMA
What are you doing?

JAKE
Oh, just checking emails, see if anyone loves me.

EMMA

I love you.

Jake hugs her.

JAKE

And I love you, more than anything in the whole world. Come on, what do you say we all go get some hot dogs?

They stand. Emma takes his hand as they leave the room.

EMMA

Mommy says hot dogs are junk food.

JAKE

And she's right, which is why I have to make sure you kids understand what junk food is.

As the door closes, the message on the screen is stark: No New Messages.

EXT. NEWSPAPER STAND, CITY STREET -- DAY

Jake pulls up in his four-wheel-drive and gets out.

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER.

Jake crosses to the news stand and picks up a paper. As he waits to pay his eyes stray onto a TIME Magazine. The bold heading is "The Slaves of Europe" and behind the title there is a picture of a pretty Caucasian girl looking scared. She is similar in appearance to Marta. Jake frowns. Just then he is served by the NEWSTAND OWNER.

NEWSTAND OWNER (deadpan)
(taking the money)
Hey, demolition man. Life still bringing you down?

JAKE (deadpan)
You crack me up, Walter.

NEWSTAND OWNER (deadpan)
(giving change)
Well don't go to pieces, now.

JAKE (deadpan)
(shrugs)
I'll try not to breakdown.

Jake begins to leave but hesitates, and picks up the Time magazine. He signals the Newstand Owner back and hands him more money.

NEWSTAND OWNER (deadpan)
So what's this? Mental
reconstruction?

JAKE (deadpan)
I'm building character.

NEWSTAND OWNER (deadpan)
(giving change)
Putting it all together, huh?

JAKE (deadpan)
(walking away looking at the magazine)
Well, just laying the foundations.

Newstand Owner finally chuckles and points at Jake, conceding he has won the day.

But Jake is not paying attention, frowning at the magazine as he gets into his car.

INT. JAKES'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Via the illumination of the computer screen, Jake, frowning, wearing reading glasses, studies the magazine. He has a scotch glass in his hand. He finishes reading, places the magazine to one side and finishes his drink. Thoughtful for a moment, he brings up his Address Book in 'Outlook' and double clicks on 'Marta Shade'. Her full details appear and he picks up the phone and dials the number on screen.

INTERCUT:

INT. MARTA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The old phone rings. Marta's mother, Oksana, picks up.

OKSANA
(Moldavian) Hello?

JAKE
Oh, ah, Mrs. Shade, this is Jake
Roberts, in America...

OKSANA
(Moldavian) What? I can't understand
you.

JAKE
This is Jake...

OKSANA
(looking round)
(Moldavian) Just a moment.

She hands the phone to Aleksiy.

ALEKSIY
(Moldavian) Hello, who is it?

JAKE
Um, Aleksiy? This is Jake Roberts.
You know, I'm Marta's friend in...

ALEKSIY
Yes, yes, I know you. Marta, say
about you. She not here. She go to
Italy...

JAKE
I know, I know that, that's why I'm
calling. I was just wondering if
you've heard from her at all?

ALEKSIY
No, no, not hear. Nothing. We worry
for her. We go to police and say we
not hear. They say nothing. Say go
home, wait. Marta say she call mumma
each day. Now nothing. Not hear.

JAKE
Did you go to the employment agency?

ALEKSIY
What is that?

JAKE
The place, um, the place where they
gave her the job. The place in
Tighina.

ALEKSIY
Yes, yes, my mother, she go where
Marta say shop is. Not there, nothing
now we can find.

JAKE
You can't find the agency?

ALEKSIY
No. Mumma say she find empty shop. I
go there too, and shop is nothing
inside. I think we have wrong place
or something like that.

Jake is thoughtful.

ALEKSIY

Hello?

JAKE

Yeah, um, well, if I don't hear from her in a week I'll call you back and let you know.

ALEKSIY

Alright, then, good.

JAKE

Goodbye, Aleksiy.

ALEKSIY

Goodbye.

Jake hangs up, concerned. He pours another drink and looks back at the magazine, worried.

EXT. PARTLY DESTROYED FACTORY -- NIGHT

It is a bombed out factory. Different aspects of the factory reveal rusted, twisted metal, puddles of water, rooms covered in debris...There is strange, sensual music echoing through the massive space.

SUPER: SERBIA

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE/FACTORY -- NIGHT

Under temporary lighting Marta is on a makeshift stage, performing a striptease. SERB GUARDS 1, 2, 3, watch from a distance, bored. There are six STRIPTEASE GIRLS, Natasha among them, dressed in overcoats, sitting glumly as Marta dances on the catwalk. A CHOREOGRAPHER, a hard-faced, formerly attractive woman, walks beside Marta as she performs. She carries a whipping cane.

Marta performs reluctantly, her face deadpan. Suddenly the Choreographer whips her buttocks with the cane.

CHOREOGRAPHER

(Serbian) Head up! Head up!

Marta gasps in pain and stops, glaring at the woman. The choreographer pats hard under her own chin with the back of her hand, explaining Marta has to keep her head up. Marta goes back to dancing, her face set grimly.

INT. DORMITORY -- NIGHT

There are 10 sheetless beds under a dim light. The windows have heavy security mesh. Marta, wearing the same coat as

on the bus, has her small suitcase open on her bed. The other girls ready for bed. Marta takes her small makeup kit and goes to leave the room.

A mean-looking guard, SERB 1, waits in the hall. He puts his hand on her chest, pushing her against the wall. He takes the makeup kit from her, opens it and searches inside. Satisfied, he hands it roughly to her and she continues down the hall and enters a large bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Marta enters a toilet cubicle, shuts the door and sits. She takes an eyebrow pencil from her makeup case and takes the postcard she purchased earlier from inside the lining of her coat, torn open at its base. She writes quickly on the postcard.

BACK TO:

Serb 1 looks up the hall toward the bathroom. He moves up the hall.

BACK TO:

Serb 1 appears in the doorway. Marta is at a handbasin, washing her hands. She looks round, noticing the Guard. He jerks his head and she obeys, walking past him into the hall. He checks the room, can see nothing unusual, and goes back down the hall.

INT. DORMITORY -- NIGHT

The lights are out as Marta finds her way to her bed. She lies down. Moonlight through a window splashes onto her sad face. She looks at the moon through the mesh on the dirty windows, tears in her eyes.

EXT. SERBIAN STREET -- DAY

A truck with a steel door at the rear makes its way through narrow backstreets in a Serbian town.

EXT TRUCK REAR INT -- DAY

The Striptease Girls sit either side of the truck. Serbs 1 & 2 are closest to the cab, sitting opposite each other, talking, while SERB 3 sits opposite Marta, nearest the rear door.

Marta checks his face, sees he is not watching, and puts her hand inside her coat, finding the postcard. Without removing her hand, she looks to Natasha, sitting midway on the opposite side. She catches her eye. Natasha nods slightly. She begins to groan, grimacing and holding her

stomach. Marta watches, waiting. Natasha finally collapses off her seat onto the floor. Serb 3 gets up and moves to her.

Not taking her eyes from the Guards. Marta quickly leans down and shoves the postcard out through a crack in the bottom of the door.

As Serb 3 pushes Natasha back into her chair and resumes his seat, Marta checks the door and to her horror sees a corner of the postcard is still jammed and showing. She quickly puts her shoe on it. Serb 3 sits and glances at her, then looks up at Serb 1. As they speak Marta urgently tries to push the corner of the postcard through the crack with the side of her shoe.

SERB 3

(Serbian) We might have to stop soon. I don't want that bitch shitting her pants.

SERB 1

(Serbian) She shits her pants she'll just have to sit in it.

SERB 3

(Serbian) Alright for you, I'm downwind.

They laugh.

To her great relief Marta sees she has successfully kicked the postcard out. Serb 3 looks at her.

SERB 3

(Serbian) What are you looking at you stupid whore?

Marta looks down.

EXT. SERBIAN -- DAY

An ELDERLY SERB MAN sits on a tiny porch, puffing a pipe. The narrow, cobblestone street is mere feet away. The truck drives right by his door. Something catches his eye. The postcard flutters to the cobblestones. He removes the pipe from his mouth and looks at it curiously.

INT. ELDERLY SERB MAN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Serb Man stands while his teenage grandson, MIKEL, sitting, examines the postcard.

MIKEL

(Serbian) Yes, this word is 'Help',
and this says, 'For Reward'.

ELDERLY SERB MAN

(Serbian) And what is this funny bit?

MIKEL

(Serbian) That's an internet address.

Serb Man looks bemused.

INT. INTERNET CAFÉ -- DAY

Mikel types very slowly in English on a keyboard.

INTERCUT:

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake reads the email the boy has sent.

MIKEL (VO)

Dear Sir, You not know me. I live
Valjevo, Serbia. My English bad.
Sorry. My grandfather find postcard
in street. Your address be on it. Say
'Help' on it and 'For Reward' on it.
So I send this.

Mikel.

Jake types a reply. It appears on the screen as...

JAKE (VO)

Mikel,

Thank you for telling me about the
postcard. I am interested. If you
send it to me I will send you a
reward of one hundred US dollars.
(Continues...)

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. FOYER, JAKE'S BUILDING -- DAY

Jake checks his mailbox, taking a letter out. He opens it
and reveals the postcard.

JAKE (VO)

My address is 400 South Eagle Street,
Apartment 6B, Naperville, Illinois
60540, USA. Don't forget to put your
return address on the envelope so I
can send you the reward.

Jake stares at the postcard, wondering what he should do.

INT. ELDERLY SERB MAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Elderly Serb Man watches Mikel open a letter. They are both overjoyed to see a one hundred dollar bill wrapped in a note. The note reads, "Thank You, Mikel".

INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE -- DAY

Jake waits in a sitting room. A SECRETARY approaches.

SECRETARY

Mr. Philips will see you now, Sir.

Jake gets up, heads toward the office she indicated.

INT. PHILIP'S OFFICE -- DAY

Philips, an American flag behind him, looks at Jake, sitting opposite. His expression is weary patience. He sighs.

PHILIPS

Mr. Roberts, as you know the US is not highly regarded in the former Yugoslavia. In fact they're often downright hostile to us, especially with all the war crime stuff still dragging on. We can of course make inquiries through the normal channels, but what you have outlined to me, this girl...

JAKE

Marta. Marta Shade.

PHILIPS

Yes. She is a Moldavian national, now perhaps somewhere in Serbia, where they have thousands of displaced persons of their own to deal with...I don't like your chances of any action being taken on your behalf. My advice, difficult as it will be to swallow, is to forget the matter.

JAKE

I don't think you understand. I have a personal relationship with this woman. She has written directly to me for help. I'm probably the only person on the planet who even knows she needs help.

PHILIPS

But what can you do? She's somewhere in Serbia, you don't know where. You don't speak Serbian. You're an American, and aside from the danger, I guarantee the authorities there won't help you. Unless of course you know how to bribe them. She's probably caught up in the people-trafficking. It's rampant in those parts. It's even bigger than drugs.

JAKE

I know about it.

PHILIPS

Do you? I don't think you have any comprehension of the scale of what's going on. There are thousands of young, former Soviet bloc women smuggled into Italy alone each year, and that's a Western Country. They literally ship them by the truckload all throughout Europe and the Middle East. There are thousands in Israel, Spain, Portugal, and they are slaves. They have to service something like thirty to forty men a day. Think about that. Would a young woman, even if you could find her and rescue her, be anything but a basket case after she's been through something like that?

JAKE

All the more reason to act quickly.

PHILIPS

Have you considered the other alternative? That this might be a setup?

JAKE

Yes.

PHILIPS

You wouldn't be the first American to be lured over there and then kidnapped. She could even be in on it for all you know.

JAKE

I know this girl.

PHILIPS

Trust me, I see cases like this every day. You are just one of many. Take my advice, don't become a statistic, go home and be glad you're American.

Philips realizes that he is not getting through to Jake.

PHILIPS

Mr. Roberts, I've seen that look before. Please, stop and think. You've never even met this girl. Loyalty is one thing, but risking everything on a stranger on the other side of the planet...Please, just stop and think.

Jake can only stare at him, knowing there is truth in what he's saying. Finally he nods, thankful.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake is on the phone.

INTERCUT:

INT. MARTA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

JAKE

So you haven't heard from her yet?

ALEKSIY

No. We hear nothing. Nothing. Mumma, she cry all the time. She can no sleep. I give her pills, make sleep. Why? You have heard something, please?

Jake hesitates.

Oksana tries to take the phone off Aleksi, but he resists.

OKSANA

(Moldavian) Let me speak to him. Let me speak.

ALEKSIY
 (Moldavian) No, mumma, there's no
 point.

She slaps his hand, taking the phone.

OKSANA
 (Moldavian) Give me the phone, give
 it to me!

She now has the phone. She has to think, composing what
 little English she knows.

OKSANA
 Jake.

JAKE
 Yes?

OKSANA (tearful)
 Jake, is, Marta mumma. Jake, please,
 help my little Marta.

She breaks down crying, and Aleksiy takes the phone from
 her.

ALEKSIY
 (Moldavian) It's alright, mumma, it's
 alright, sit down. (English into
 phone) Ah, Jake, sorry, mumma is cry
 all the time. She think bad thing
 happen Marta. We very afraid for
 Marta.

JAKE
 Yes, yes I understand.

ALEKSIY
 You know something her?

JAKE (hesitating)
 No. No, I don't...I mean, there's
 been no word. I'm sorry, Aleksiy.
 Please tell your mother I'm sorry.
 Listen, ah, you have enough money?

ALEKSIY
 Money? Yes, we have. I doctor, get
 better pay than most people live
 here.

JAKE
 Oh, okay. Well, I'll...I'll call back
 later, okay. Bye.

ALEKSIY
Goodbye, Jake.

Aleksiy hangs up and looks disparagingly at the phone.

ALEKSIY
(Moldavian) Money. (snorts)
Americans.

He hugs his mother as she sobs.

Jake stares toward the computer screen. His eyes stray onto the photo of his kids. He picks it up, and his thumb touches the image of his daughter.

INT. OFFICE, DEMOLITION SITE -- DAY

Jake looks over plans. Chris is also in the office. Jake rubs his forehead, distracted. A Spanish looking worker wearing a hardhat, JUAN, comes to the door.

JUAN
You want me, Boss?

JAKE
Yeah, come in, Juan. Chris, give us a minute?

Chris is surprised by the request.

CHRIS
Sure.

He leaves.

JUAN
Something wrong, boss?

JAKE
Yeah.

He takes a green card from his jacket and throws it on top of the plans. He looks at Juan. Juan's face has gone tight.

JAKE
Well?

JUAN
I was told you couldn't pick it.

JAKE

You know how many of these things I see? I can spot a forgery two blocks away. Got to admit, though, this is damned good work.

JUAN

What are you going to do?

Jake stares at him.

EXT. SITE OFFICE -- DAY

Chris sits on rubble, smoking a cigarette. He notices Juan exits the office and stubs out the cigarette.

INT. SITE OFFICE -- DAY

Jake examines the plans as Chris enters.

CHRIS

Mind if I ask what that was about?

JAKE

Oh, he's got some family problems, you know, personal. Listen, ah, I know it's a bad time, but I'm going to have to go away for a while. I'm going to leave you in charge.

CHRIS

What? Jesus, Jake, we're already behind schedule.

JAKE

I know. And I really hate laying this on you.

CHRIS

Well, where you going? Can I contact you?

JAKE

No. It's, ah, it's of a personal nature. Not sure how long I'll be.

CHRIS (incredulous)

What? Jesus, man, you, you can't do this. I, I...

JAKE

You'll be alright. You're a good engineer, Chris, and I'm sure whatever pops up you'll deal with it.

CHRIS

Well, can't you at least tell me where you're going?

JAKE

Rather not.

CHRIS

Well, that, you know, that is just... it's not good enough, you know. I mean, this is your business. I just work for you. What if I screw up and we have collateral damage. I don't even know how to handle the insurance claims. I'm...

JAKE

I'm going to give you all the files and forms before I leave, presigned, and we're all paid up, and anyway you're not going to screw up. This is an opportunity, Chris. Use it.

CHRIS

But the men, they don't, Christ, at least tell me why. Why's it a secret? I mean, I'm also your friend, aren't I? We've been a team for ten years now.

JAKE

Okay...I got a tumor. I have to go away to a hospital and have chemo. And I'd appreciate it if you'd keep this under your hat.

Chris can only stare at him.

EXT. DIM ROAD UNDER BRIDGE -- NIGHT

It rains. Jake arrives in his four-wheel-drive. There is a cheap car parked a small distance away. Jake parks and turns off his headlights. Juan gets out of the other car, crosses to Jake's car, gets in.

EXT. JAKE'S CAR INT -- NIGHT

Juan hands Jake a passport.

JUAN

It's just like you said, and you got an Irish driver's license and a National Insurance card.

Jake turns on an overhead reading light and looks at his photo in the passport. The passport is marked 'Ireland'.

JUAN

It's good work. My man said you won't get pulled with that. So where you headed, Ireland?

Jake ignores the question and hands him an envelope full of money.

JAKE

That's the balance, plus five for you.

Juan looks at the envelope in surprise. He takes the money out and counts.

JAKE

You don't trust me?

Juan hands him back five hundred.

JUAN

Yeah, I trust you. You're my boss. Now we trust each other.

Jake nods, understanding. Juan gets out of the car.

JUAN

Have a good trip, boss.

Juan closes the door and walks to his car. Jake starts up and drives away.

INT. SERBIAN STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

There are numerous naked and semi-naked STRIPPERS dancing on the stage/catwalk, and pole dancing, Marta among them.

A large, overweight SERBIAN ARMY OFFICER, late middle age, watches the girls, and in particular, Marta. He signals to a JUNIOR OFFICER near him and the man leans closer. The Army Officer indicates Marta, and the Junior Officer nods.

INT. BACKROOM. SERBIAN STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

The Serbian Army Officer undresses. Marta, wearing a light gown, is escorted in by the Junior Officer, who then pulls curtains shut behind them. The Serbian Army Officer jerks his head at a small bed and continues undressing. Marta, her face blank, takes off her robe and lies on the bed.

The Serbian Army Officer, a less than interesting sight without his clothes, runs his hands over her body, cooing with lust. He gets onto her and begins having sex.

Marta stares blankly at the ceiling, trying to feel nothing, but barely holding back tears.

EXT. JAKE'S FAMILY HOME -- DAY

Jake gets out of his car in front of the house. He is dressed as though for a business trip. Billy and Emma come from the house and run to him excitedly.

EMMA
Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!

JAKE
Hi, sweetheart.

Jake scoops her up in his arms, kissing her. As he stops to hug Billy, he looks up and sees Marie waiting in the doorway. She turns and goes inside.

JAKE
Come on, let's go see mommy.

INT. KITCHEN, JAKE'S FAMILY HOME -- DAY

Jake sips coffee, watching Emma and Billy through the kitchen window as they play in the back yard.

MARIE (OS)
So where you headed?

JAKE
Oh, just business. (looking round) Be away a while. Hope you don't mind. I'll take the kids extra when I get back.

MARIE
Thought there was a lot of work on.

JAKE
Oh, Chris can manage. He's a good man.

MARIE
How's he feel about that?

JAKE
(shrugs)
Gotta learn sometime.

Marie stares.

JAKE

Well, it's not as though he doesn't have back up. That's a handpicked crew.

Marie lowers her head sadly.

MARIE

I know about the cancer.

Jake is stunned.

MARIE

Something you should know.

Jake waits.

MARIE

I've been seeing Chris.

JAKE

What?...How long?

MARIE

A year. He never comes here. I only go to his place.

JAKE

Jesus...Chris?

MARIE

(shrugs)

I already knew him. He knows my situation. We've always been friends. Like you said, he's a good man.

JAKE

Do the kids...?

Marie shakes her head.

MARIE

You weren't even going to tell me about the cancer?

Jake ponders what to say.

JAKE

He shouldn't have told you.

MARIE

He thought I should know. It was the decent thing. (getting upset) Jake, I'm your wife. I still...What about the kids? Don't you think they should know?

JAKE

No, no, no, please, no.

MARIE

We have to tell them. What if this kills you, or later you die? You want them to just find out one day their daddy's dead?

JAKE

No, no, no, look, look, look, it's, it's nothing. It's just a small tumor, and if the chemo fails they said they could probably cut it out anyway. Really, there's nothing to worry about. Really. It's minor.

MARIE

Well, where are you going?

JAKE

Oh, private hospital, down in The Keys. Look, really, please, don't. This stays just between you and me. Okay? If it doesn't work, if they can't cut it out, then yes, of course, we can tell the kids, but, don't tell them now.

Marie goes silent, nodding slightly.

MARIE

Wish you still thought enough of me to confide.

Jake hugs her.

JAKE

You know I never wanted to leave you. I always wanted us to be together.

MARIE (beginning to cry)

Huh, together. What a joke. You were never here, always at work. Your family came second.

JAKE

I know, I know, I know, and you're right. I was blind. I was so blind. It was my fault and you did the right thing. (Lifting her face) Making me leave was the right thing.

She looks into his eyes. She kisses him, long and tenderly. They hug. Jake's face over her shoulder reveals that her kiss has increased his indecision.

INT. BOARDING LOUNGE, AIRPORT -- DAY

Jake sits in the lounge, watching the tail end of the PASSENGERS going through the gate onto the plane. Finally he is left alone in the lounge. He looks at a flashing light on the Departures Board "Q132 Italy - Boarding". He stands, picks up his attaché case, and with great indecision finally goes through the gate.

INT. DINING AREA, OLD BUILDING -- DAY

There is unsavory slop in a hot food canister. Marta, wearing a light robe and looking drawn and tired, scoops some of the slop onto her plate and picks up some unbuttered toast. She crosses to a table where other Strippers are eating their breakfast. Along the way she glances at SERB 2, sitting in the corner, smoking, rubbing his eyes, tired. Marta sits opposite Natasha. As they eat Natasha drops her spoon in disgust.

NATASHA (quietly)

(Moldavian) How do they expect us to dance half the night, fuck the other half, and eat this slop.

MARTA (quietly)

(Moldavian) Are you ill?

NATASHA

(Moldavian) I'm pregnant. And some Serbian pig gave me herpes. My vagina is red raw. Yes, I am ill.

A Girl, sitting close by, shushes them, and indicates Serb 2 with her eyes. Marta looks round and sees he is not looking. Even so, she lowers her voice more.

MARTA

(Moldavian) They give us condoms.

NATASHA

(Moldavian) And if a man hits you in the face and rapes you?

MARTA
(Moldavian) What are you going to do?

NATASHA
(Moldavian) What would you do?

Marta stares.

Natasha begins to cry.

Marta presses her hand, gets up, and crosses to Serb 2.

MARTA
(Serb) Please.

He looks at her.

MARTA
(Serb) She...sick. Um...

She mimes a round belly, growing to pregnancy.

Serb 2 looks at Natasha.

MARTA
(Serb) Help...Help, please.

Serb 2, a big man, crosses to the table. Natasha is scared. He looks at her dispassionately. Finally he jerks his head toward the door. Natasha starts to shake her head, afraid. Serb 2 is tired and impatient. He rounds the table and grabs her by the hair, dragging her screaming from the room. Marta attempts to intervene, but he slaps her down. She gets up and continues attacking him into the hall, but he ignores her and takes Natasha through a steel door, slamming it shut.

When they are gone, Marta sits on the floor, crying, afraid for her friend.

INT. STRIPTEASE CLUB -- NIGHT

It is the wee hours. The club is all but deserted. A DRUNK at a table tries to take another drink, but collapses across it. The GIRLS, on the catwalk, exhausted, are still attempting to dance, barely shuffling, Marta among them. Finally the music stops and some of the lights go out. The Girls on stage all but collapse.

MALE STAFF in the club begin escorting\carrying the last CUSTOMERS to the door. As this happens the girls climb down from the stage and exit backstage, shepherded by Serb 3.

INT. DORMITORY -- NIGHT

Natasha is on her bed, covered in a sheet which is blood stained. The Girls, wearing gowns, enter the dorm and stagger to their beds, collapsing onto them. Marta enters and sees Natasha. She hurries to her and kneels, stroking her hair. Natasha is very pale and fevered.

MARTA (whispering)
(Moldavian) My God, I thought they...

Natasha puts her fingers to Marta's lips.

NATASHA (whispering)
(Moldavian) The baby is gone.

Marta squeezes her eyes shut with compassion. She gets into the bed beside her, cradling her head on her shoulder, stroking her hair, cooing softly, and rocking her. She kisses Natasha's forehead.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. DORMITORY -- DAY

Sunlight streams through the meshed window, but no one stirs. Marta and Natasha have not moved. Marta wakes. She becomes aware that Natasha is cold. She feels her forehead, finds it icy, and leans back to look at her face. The realization that Natasha is dead comes to her. Marta's hand comes up, covered in blood, and she sees the bed is wet with blood. She suddenly wails with grief, crying fully and rocking Natasha.

Serb 3 enters and pulls Marta away from Natasha.

MARTA
(Moldavian) No! No! No!

Serb 3 throws her to the ground, but Marta clings to his leg. He eventually kicks her off and picks up Natasha, throwing her over his shoulder. As he attempts to leave the room, Marta flies at him, beating him with her fists. He backhands her hard, sending her flying. He exits through a steel door. Marta is left on the floor, covered in blood, crying with total grief.

EXT. CHURCH SANCTUARY, ITALY -- DAY

A taxi pulls up and Jake gets out, carrying his attaché case.

SUPER: Italy.

He approaches an armed POLICEMAN who stands behind a large, barred gate. He hands his passport through the gate.

JAKE

Father Vacetti is expecting me.

INT. FATHER VACETTI'S OFFICE -- DAY

FATHER VACETTI (40's) looks at Jake's passport.

VACETTI

An American will not be welcome in Serbia, my friend.

Jake sits opposite the desk.

JAKE

Actually, Father, I'd appreciate it if you'd hang onto that for me until I return. I'll be travelling on an Irish passport.

VACETTI

(placing the passport on his desk)
Very well. You said on the phone this girl was Moldavian.

Jake hands him a color printout of Marta's Lovelink photo.

JAKE

Yes, sir, her name is Marta Shade. She comes from Tighina. She has a mother and brother there who are both very worried about her.

VACETTI

And what makes you sure she has been kidnapped?

JAKE

I've corresponded with her and I feel I know her. She said she was offered a job as a waitress in Ancona or maybe Florence. Anyway, she never arrived. And then some weeks later this came.

He hands Vacetti the postcard.

JAKE

That was found in a street in Valjevo, Serbia. That's my internet address.

VACETTI

Come with me.

INT. OPEN UPPER WALK WAY, SANCTUARY -- DAY

Jake and Father Vacetti stroll along a walkway, overlooking a large courtyard.

VACETTI

I admire you greatly for coming so far in order to save this woman, Mr. Roberts, but I'm afraid you don't realize the difficulty of your task.

He brings Jake to the banister overlooking the courtyard. There are some fifty YOUNG WOMEN below, sitting quietly, talking. Some walk round in a daze.

VACETTI

I have three hundred women in my care. They come from all lands, Hungary, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldavia, Slovenia, Croatia, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, even as far as Kazakstan or even Nigeria. Your Moldavian girl, this, Marta, she is one of ten thousand this year from that country alone.

JAKE

Ten thousand?!

VACETTI

Yes. Mr. Roberts, in the world today there are some 27 million slaves, more so than at any other time in history. We exist in an era of the greatest humanity, and the greatest inhumanity. You see that one there.

He points to a YOUNG WOMAN walking in a daze.

VACETTI

She has not spoken yet, so we don't know where she's from. Some don't want to ever return home. They fear they are now ruined and will be ridiculed in their community. They think no man will marry them now. They are children without a home. That one there...

There is a VERY YOUNG GIRL.

VACETTI

She has just turned twelve years old.

INT. ANOTHER WALKWAY -- DAY

Jake and Vacetti stroll.

VACETTI

I myself have narrowly escaped death three times. Two car bombs and once I was kidnapped, but the police chased and killed the criminals trying to abduct me. Albanians.

JAKE

(nods)

I was surprised to see the policeman at the gate.

VACETTI

How do you think I can have such protection, Mr. Roberts? The local police chief was an alter boy in my church, and all of the police who protect me I have known since they were little boys.

JAKE

That's handy.

VACETTI

Ah, but... How can fifty thousand women a year be brought into Europe as sex slaves without the cooperation of authorities? Without my dear friends in the police here what I am doing would be impossible.

(Continued)

INT. TAXI -- DAY

Jake is in a taxi alone, traveling through dirty streets.

VARCETTI (VO)

There are vast networks of criminal gangs. You think the Serbs hate the Croats and the Albanians and vice versa? No. Wherever there is war there is disorder, and in disorder some see opportunity. So the criminals cooperate. And they have an almost foolproof system against the women escaping. If one gets free, the gangs immediately contact their

VARCETTI (VO) (Cont'd)

counterparts in her home town, and the woman's family is killed. So women rarely try to escape. They are traded between gangs just the same as guns and drugs. The Russian Mafia trades with the Romanians or the Croats, they trade with the Serbs or the Hungarians, who trade with the Bosnians, who trade with the Italian Mafia. (Continued)

Jake sees a prostitute soliciting customers on a street corner.

VACETTI (VO)

One prostitute is worth 20,000 American dollars a month. I'll leave you to do the math. (Continued)

EXT. CHEAP HOTEL, ITALY -- LATE DAY

Jake gets out of the taxi and enters the hotel.

VARCETTI (VO)

You see, I receive faxes, emails, letters, phone calls everyday from those just like you, people searching for their loved ones. (Continued)

INT. JAKE'S ROOM, CHEAP HOTEL -- NIGHT

Wearing only trousers and undershirt, Jake drinks from a scotch bottle, not bothering with a glass.

VARCETTI (VO)

All I can do is hope that you find the child you seek, and pray for your safe return.

Jake hangs his head in despair.

He sits up, checks his watch, and looks at the room phone.

INTERCUT:

INT. JAKE'S FAMILY HOME, KITCHEN -- DAY

Marie gets breakfast for Billy and Emma. The phone rings. Marie picks up.

MARIE

Hello.

JAKE

Oh, hi, honey. It's me. Have the kids gone to school yet?

MARIE

No, they're just having breakfast. What's wrong? You okay?

JAKE

Oh, nothing's wrong. Just thought it would be nice to speak to Emma.

MARIE

Why? Is everything alright?

JAKE

Yeah, it's fine, fine.

MARIE

Jake you sound funny. Have you been drinking?

JAKE

Oh, no, they gave me a sedative. But I'm fine, really.

MARIE

Okay. (to Emma) Emma, it's daddy.

Emma rushes to the phone.

EMMA

Hello, daddy!

JAKE

Hi, precious! How's my little girl?

EMMA

I'm good. We're having breakfast.

JAKE

And then you're off to school?

EMMA

Yeah, we have show-and-tell and I'm going to show them a big balloon with a picture of me on it, and I did it with a pen.

JAKE

Oh? What color is it?

CROSSFADE SOUND TO MUSIC.

As Jake rocks back and forth, feeding off the sounds of his daughter's voice...

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. BUILDING CORRIDOR -- DAY

Continue music. Jake approaches an office door which bears a sign: L'INVESTIGATORE PRIVATO. He enters.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Continue Music. A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR shows him how to use a homing device. He mimes placing the bug under a vehicle and then reading the homing device, while scanning back and forth. Jake nods, understanding. He produces his wallet and pulls out a credit card. The Detective makes a typical Italian hand gesture, not understanding why he pays by card. Jake shrugs and re-offers it. The Detective rolls his eyes and concedes, and hands the credit card on to his SECRETARY.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. CAR YARD -- DAY

Music continues. Jake, wearing dark glasses, inspects a vehicle while an Italian CAR SALESMAN 'sells' it.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT/EXT. NEWSAGENCY -- DAY

Continue music. Jake buys a map of South Eastern Europe. He exits to his car (the one from the car yard) where he spreads the map on the bonnet. He traces the road he must take through Slovenia, Croatia and into Serbia.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD -- DAY

Music continues. Jake drives down a winding road through snow-capped mountains.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. DISUSED INDUSTRIAL SITE -- DAY

Music continues. Drugs and armaments are spread out on the ground. Two heavily armed Gangs, (SERBS and CROATS) make an exchange, their vehicles either side. Serbs 1, 2, 3 are among the Serb contingent. Being led between the Serb gang

to the Croat gang are five GIRLS. Among them is Marta. She looks toward the guns and drugs.

The Girls are being loaded into the back of a truck on the Croat Gang's side.

Both Gangs separate, backing away, not taking their eyes from each other. Camera notes Marta's truck as it leaves.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. BORDER CHECKPOINT -- LATE DAY

Music continues. Jake has his passport and papers checked by a SLOVENIAN GUARD. He is waved through and proceeds.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. JAKE'S CAR, MOUNTAIN ROAD INT -- NIGHT.

Music continues. Jake drives, tired, trying to stay awake.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. MARTA'S TRUCK INT -- NIGHT

Music continues. Marta looks out a small window, her face lit by moonlight. Cars occasionally go by in the other direction.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. JAKE'S CAR INT -- NIGHT

Music continues. Looking over Jake's shoulder and through the windscreen, the small convoy of cars and Marta's truck approaches.

Jake squints at the glare of their headlights.

They pass.

INT. MARTA'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

Music continues. Marta's eyes follow Jake's car as it goes by, but register nothing.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD -- NIGHT

Music continues. Jake drives past, as the truck continues on its way.

MUSIC ENDS as...

SMASH CUT:

INT. JAKE'S CAR, REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Jake's hand jerks the handbrake.

He is parked in front of the café, as seen earlier when Marta was there.

He looks at the postcard, comparing the location.

EXT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Jake enters.

INT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Jake stops just inside the door. There is no one at the counter. He looks round, discovers the postcard stand and notes a postcard identical to the one Marta sent him. He is surprised to suddenly see Mila now at the counter and staring at him. He crosses to her.

JAKE

Hello.

Mila nods.

JAKE

Speak English?

Mila nods.

JAKE

Oh, that's good. Not too many people do in these parts. Um, you have hamburgers?

Mila nods.

JAKE

May I have one?

INT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

A hamburger pattie is squashed onto a grill by Mila. The grill is directly behind the counter. As Mila works, Jake sips a soft drink and looks around the café, pretending to examine some of the tourist paraphernalia. He comes back to the counter.

JAKE

Nice and quiet here.

Mila looks round.

JAKE
Must be hard to sell enough burgers.

MILA
Buses come. Tourists.

JAKE
You sound French.

MILA
And you are American.

JAKE
No...often get that. Irish. County
Kerry. Spent ten years in the States,
though. Suppose I picked up a bit of
a twang.

Mila looks disbelieving.

JAKE
Say, um, you wouldn't know where I
could stay round here. Hotel or
something?

Mila looks at him, curious.

INT. CAFÉ LIVING QUARTERS, BEDROOM -- DAY

Mila opens a door to the small room, Jake behind her,
carrying an overnight bag.

JAKE
Well, this is very nice, nice.

MILA
(pointing along the hall)
Bathroom is down there.

JAKE
Oh... Thank you.

MILA
Not much to do around here, the
nearest village is forty kilometres.

JAKE
That's okay. I just need a break from
driving for a while.

Mila leaves the room. Jake looks at the little space,
sighs, and begins to unpack his bag.

INT. DORMITORY -- DAY

Looking tired and drawn, Marta puts her bag on a bed in the new dorm. CROAT GUARDS 1,2,3, enter, and begin handing out dresses. Marta looks at the one she has been handed. There is no material where the breasts should be.

MARTA (to Guard 1)
(Moldavian) Excuse me, I am a dancer.

He merely glances at her as he and the other Guards leave the room.

Marta looks at the dress and discards it onto the bed. She sits, deeply depressed.

INT. STRIPTEASE CLUB -- NIGHT

The club is full of MALE PATRONS, mostly drunk, very noisy and active. As STRIPPERS dance on stage, topless WAITRESSES, (wearing the dresses) one of which is Marta, carry drinks from the bar to the customers. These girls are often groped by the men and have to fight them off.

Marta makes it to the bar and places her tray down. Three stein-seized, glass mugs of beer are placed on the tray, and she heads back to the tables.

Marta is about to place the beers on the table, ignoring the ribald commentary of those sitting there. Suddenly she is slapped hard on the backside by a DRUNKEN MAN and the beers on her tray spill into CROAT CUSTOMER'S lap. Outraged, he backhands her, sending her sprawling.

There is uproar in the bar as GUARDS and BOUNCERS pounce on the Customers and an all-out brawl ensues.

Marta, on the floor, raises her head, her mouth bloodied. She lies still, as the fight rages about her.

INT. A BATHROOM -- NIGHT

In the dimly-lit room, Marta rinses her mouth with water, and blood fills the basin. Eventually she straightens up and looks at herself in the mirror. Her face is badly swollen on one side, and her eye is beginning to go black. She stares at the horror-reflection of herself.

Suddenly she grabs a metal waste paper bin and smashes the mirror. She picks up a shard of the mirror and begins to cut her wrist.

Croat Guard 1 bursts into the bathroom, quickly wrestles the glass from her hand and knocks her to the floor.

Marta's head hits the tiles and she is knocked unconscious. She is dragged by the feet out of frame, her bloodied wrist trailing blood on the floor.

EXT. REST STOP CAFE -- DAY

Jake sits at a small table outside, reading the TIME magazine on slavery. Mila appears and places a coffee on the table.

JAKE

Well, hey, thanks.

She begins to go back inside.

JAKE

Say, ah...like to join me?

Mila pauses, but without registering his invitation either way, goes inside. Jake raises his eyebrows to himself, then sips his coffee. He is surprised how good it tastes. Mila comes out with a coffee of her own and stands in the doorway. She doesn't offer a word. Eventually...

MILA

What town you come from in Ireland?

JAKE

Oh, Killarney.

MILA

Oh, yes. I've been there. Tell me, that beautiful post office you have, they were going to pull it down but there was a big protest. Did they pull it down?

JAKE

Really don't know. We lived about five miles out. Anyway, haven't been back in twenty years. But there's more than one post office in Killarney, you know.

Mila looks at him momentarily, then sips her coffee.

JAKE

This is about the best coffee I've ever had.

MILA

It's my blend of Mocha.

Jake studies her a moment.

JAKE
Excuse me asking, but you don't have
a man, Mila?

She looks at him a bit sharply.

JAKE
You know, to help out.

MILA
I manage.

Jake nods respectfully. Eventually...

MILA
I used to live in Belgrade, but my
husband was killed in the war. An
American bomb.

JAKE
Sorry to hear that.

MILA
You married?

JAKE
Separated.

MILA
You have children?

JAKE
Yeah, two. Boy and a girl.

MILA
What you do?

JAKE
Demolition. So, just as well I never
went back to Killarney.

She looks at him in question.

JAKE
I'd be torn between saving the post
office or bidding for the job.

Mila grins slightly, and goes inside.

Jake is thoughtful, then goes back to reading his magazine.

INT. DORMITORY -- DAY

Marta lies on a bed, alone in the dormitory. Her jaw is badly swollen and there is a bandage on her wrist. She looks round as she hears the sounds of approaching footsteps. CROAT BOSS, a DOCTOR, and Croat Guard 1 enter. The Doctor examines Marta, feeling her jaw, examining her wrist. Eventually he looks at the Croat Boss.

DOCTOR

(Croatian) The jaw is not broken, but
it'll take a week or two to heal.
Same as the wrist.

The Croat Boss considers. He comes to a decision and addresses Croat Guard 1.

CROAT BOSS

(Croatian) She's trouble. Sell her to
the Hungarians.

Croat Guard 1 nods. The three men leave the room.

Marta stares at the ceiling, bereft of emotion.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM, REST STOP CAFÉ -- NIGHT

The ceiling in Jake's room. Jake lies awake, staring at the ceiling. He hears a sound and looks at the door. It opens and Mila enters. She wears a light negligee. Jake watches her in surprise as she stops beside the bed. Mila drops the negligee and gets into bed. Jake is unsure if he wants the same thing. Mila kisses him tenderly, and Jake succumbs.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM, REST STOP CAFÉ -- NIGHT

Jake makes love to Mila.

Closer, Jake stops, breathing hard.

JAKE

Is it safe to...?

MILA

Yes. (wanting him to) Yes.

He starts again, and shortly climaxes inside her, Mila also climaxing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM, REST STOP CAFÉ -- NIGHT

Jake lies still, while Mila rests her head on his chest/shoulder, looking away from him.

MILA
What's your real name?

JAKE
As it says on my passport, Tony
O'Brien.

MILA
I was hoping you wouldn't be a liar.

JAKE
I won't be staying much longer.

MILA
I know. Who are you looking for?

JAKE
A girl. I lost contact with her.

Mila gets up and picks up her negligee. She looks back at Jake.

MILA
You're a good lover.

She crosses to the door, but looks back.

MILA
For an American.

She leaves.

INT. LARGE DISUSED FACTORY -- DAY

In a similar, drugs, weapons and GIRLS exchange, Croat Guards 1,2,3 supervise an exchange with HUNGARIAN CRIMINALS. As Marta is led from the Croatian truck to the Hungarian truck, the HUNGARIAN BOSS, a tough-looking, middle-aged man, notices the bandage on Marta's wrist. He crosses to her, accompanied by a Guard.

They intercept Marta, making her and Croat Guard 1 stop.

HUNGARIAN BOSS
(Hungarian) What's this?

He cups Marta's chin, roughly examines her face which is still partially bruised, and lifts her wrist. He produces a flick knife and activates it.

Croat Boss sees what is happening and crosses with Croat Guard 2.

Hungarian Boss cuts through Marta's bandage, revealing her infected wrist. He looks at Croat Boss, arriving.

HUNGARIAN BOSS
(Hungarian) What's this shit.

The Croat Boss produces some pills and hands them to him.

CROAT BOSS
(Hungarian) The doctor said that'll clear up in another week. Don't worry, she's a good worker.

HUNGARIAN BOSS
(Hungarian) I don't take mental cases. You keep her.

CROAT BOSS
(Hungarian) A deals a deal.

HUNGARIAN BOSS (threatening)
(Hungarian) You keep her, or there's no deal.

Croat Boss sees he is serious, and concedes.

CROAT BOSS
(Hungarian) Alright, keep a half-kilo.

He waits to see if the offer will be accepted. Finally Hungarian Boss nods.

CROAT BOSS
(to Croat Guard 3, kneeling over the drugs)
(Croatian) Give them back a bag!

Croat Guard 3 nods and drops a half-kilo bag of white powder at the feet of his counterpart.

Hungarian Boss begins to leave, but pauses and points a threatening finger at Marta.

HUNGARIAN BOSS (vicious)
 (Hungarian) I better not have trouble
 with you, or you'll get your
 deathwish sooner than you think.

He walks away, as does Croat Boss 1. Marta lowers her head,
 beyond caring. She is pushed along by Croat Guard 1.

INT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

A burger pattie is thrown onto the hot plate and squashed
 down as before, but this time it is Jake doing the cooking.

The café is full of JAPANESE TOURISTS and Mila serves them.
 There is a large bus parked outside.

TOURIST 1
 (Japanese) Two hamburgers and three
 cups of coffee, please.

MILA
 (writing the order down)
 (Japanese) And are they white
 coffees?

Jake is impressed she can speak Japanese.

TOURIST 1
 Hai.

Mila places the order sheet on a clip above Jake,
 intimately close as she does so. As she goes back to the
 counter, he looks at her, fighting his attraction.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM, REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Mila makes Jake's bed. She notices the TIME magazine on his
 bedside table and picks it up, looking at the cover. She
 looks toward the door, in the direction of Jake somewhere
 in the building. She replaces the magazine and leaves the
 room.

INT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Jake sweeps the café. Mila comes to the counter, watching
 him.

MILA
 Was the girl you are looking for
 taken by smugglers?

Jake stops sweeping.

JAKE
You know about them?

MILA
Their bus stops here.

JAKE
You know all those girls are going to be kidnapped and you don't warn them?

MILA
You don't live here.

She comes closer.

MILA
What would I do? Tell them? The man with them, he would walk inside, pull out a pistol and shoot me. So should I tell the police? They would tell the criminals, and again, I die. What would you do, Jake?...Go back to America, you have no place here.

She begins to go back inside.

JAKE
When the bus comes, will you tell me?

Mila is thoughtful.

MILA
(shaking her head)
They'll kill you. Probably torture you first.

JAKE
Will you tell me?

MILA
What's your name?

JAKE
Jake. Jake Roberts.

MILA
Do you love this girl?

JAKE
Never met her. I don't even know why I'm here.

Mila pauses, pleased with that answer.

MILA
That's a good reply.

She goes inside.

Jakes stares at the doorway, wondering about her.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM, REST STOP CAFÉ -- NIGHT

Music/Sex montage. Jake makes love to Mila, behind her on the bed. They are in a state of sexual frenzy.

INTERCUT:

INT. WHOREHOUSE, WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT

Sitting in a room with several other PROSTITUTES, Marta, now fully recovered, waits solemnly. A DRUNKEN CLIENT comes into the room with a MADAM. He looks over the girls, and finally selects Marta. Moving perfunctorily, Marta gets up and walks into a passageway, the Drunken Client following her.

INTERCUT:

INT. WHOREHOUSE, PASSAGEWAY -- NIGHT

Marta leads the Drunken Client down a narrow, dimly lit passageway. Half open curtains along the way reveal small booths, with other CLIENTS having sex with PROSTITUTES.

Marta enters a small booth, and the Drunken Client follows her in.

INTERCUT:

INT. WHOREHOUSE, SEX BOOTH -- NIGHT

The Drunken Client has sex with Marta on a narrow bed. As with Jake and Mila, he is behind her. As he thrusts hard into her she, unlike Mila, experiences pain and revulsion.

BACK TO:

Jake and Mila reach climax together.

BACK TO:

The Drunken Client climaxes.

BACK TO:

Mila, sitting on the side of the bed, kisses Jake tenderly. She gets up and leaves his room, Jake watching her go.

BACK TO:

The Drunken Client pulls up his pants, and now dressed, leaves the booth without so much as a glance toward Marta.

Marta lies on the bed, her face forlorn.

End Montage.

EXT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Mila sweeps the front porch. Jake's car is parked to one side. Mila hears a bus approaching and stops sweeping. Presently the bus Marta was on approaches the café.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM, REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Jake sits on the bed, doing up his shoelace. Mila appears at the door.

MILA

It's here.

She leaves. Jake looks at his overnight bag in the corner of the room.

EXT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Moldavian 1 stands by the bus door, smoking. GIRLS go into the café and use the toilet block outside. Jake comes from the café, carrying his bag. He hesitates on the porch, Moldavian 1 noticing him. Jake crosses toward his car, having to walk around the end of the bus to get to it.

As he goes round the bus, Jake takes the homing device from his bag and places it under the bus.

At his car, he puts the bag in, and crosses back to the café.

Moldavian 1 watches him enter the café.

EXT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

The last of the Girls get on the bus, dropping their passports into the plastic bag Moldavian 1 holds. He also gets into the bus and it pulls out.

Presently Jake comes from the café, accompanied soon after by Mila. He turns to her. They kiss.

MILA
I hope you find her.

Jake nods, grateful. He squeezes her hand, and crosses to his car.

As Mila watches him drive away, she looks down at her stomach. She places her hand on it, as a woman would when feeling for the baby inside her. She grins fondly, and without moving her hand, looks once more toward Jake's now retreating car.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Jake's car follows the bus, which goes slowly up a rise. Although Jake has the opportunity to pass he does not.

INT. JAKE'S CAR -- DAY

Jake, concentrating on the bus, has to change down.

INT. BUS -- DAY

The BUS DRIVER notices Jake's car in his side mirror, and becomes suspicious, watching him.

He turns to Moldavian 1 and indicates the car with a jerk of his head. Moldavian 1 gets up and moves to the back of the bus.

He stops before the rear window, looking down on Jake.

EXT. ROMANIAN BORDER ROADBLOCK CROSSING -- DAY

Romanian Border Guard 1 comes from the bus. As he steps down onto the road, he looks back at Moldavian 1, standing above on the stairs. Moldavian 1 jerks his head toward Jake's car behind. Border Guard 1 nods, and as the bus goes through the border gate, Border Guard 1 has Jake step out of his car.

Jake hands Border Guard 1 his passport. As Border Guard 1 examines them, Jake looks toward the bus moving off in the distance. He sees Moldavian 1 standing at the rear window, watching him.

Border Guard 1 moves to the back of Jake's car and motions he wants the boot opened. Jake takes a suitcase out and puts it down. Border Guard 1 impatiently gestures that he should open it. Jake obliges. As he stands he notices the bus has now disappeared.

INT. JAKE'S CAR, ROMANIAN CITY -- DAY

Searching montage. Jake drives through various streets. As he goes he checks the homing receiver on the passenger seat beside him.

INT. JAKE'S CAR, ROMANIAN CITY -- NIGHT

Jake drives. Suddenly the homing receiver starts to beep. He picks it up. The signal increases in volume. As he drives past an alleyway the signal begins to fade. He stops the car, backs up, and stops opposite the alleyway.

The bus is parked next to the Exchange Building in the alleyway.

INT. ALLEYWAY/EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jake comes up the alleyway. He moves round the back of the bus and removes the homing device. He crosses to the steel door and finds it locked. He stands back and looks up at the Exchange Building, trying to find a way in. There are no windows on the ground floor, and above the windows are barred. He sighs, perplexed.

INT. JAKE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Jake waits in his car, not far from the Exchange Building. It is late, no traffic or pedestrians about. Uncomfortable, he grabs an empty bottle and unzips his fly, peeing into the bottle. As he does so, feeling relief, Moldavian 1 comes from the alleyway. As Jake sees him, the sound of his peeing stops. Moldavian 1 smokes a cigarette. He pauses at the head of the alley, stubs out the cigarette, and walks away. Jake hurries to put away the bottle, spilling it.

JAKE

Ah, shit!

EXT. RED LIGHT DISTRICT -- NIGHT

Moldavian 1 walks down the street. A good distance back, Jake shadows him.

Moldavian 1 enters a strip club. BOUNCER 1, outside, nods respectfully, but Moldavian 1 ignores him.

Jake pauses in the street, taking in the situation.

INT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jake approaches the bar, wary. A topless BAR WAITRESS approaches.

BAR WAITRESS
(Romanian) Yes?

JAKE
Beer.

BAR WAITRESS
Heineken?

Jake nods. Jake looks round, checking out the strippers.
The Waitress comes back with the drink.

JAKE
Speak English?

BAR WAITRESS
Of course.

JAKE
What do you do if you want to meet
one of the girls?

BAR WAITRESS
You want for sex?

JAKE
Maybe.

BAR WAITRESS
Which one?

She indicates several PROSTITUTES sitting along a far wall.
Jake looks at them, then back at the Bar Waitress.

JAKE
Got any Moldavian girls?

BAR WAITRESS (joking)
What's wrong with good Romanian girl?

JAKE
Nothing. Just I once had a Moldavian
girl...she was goo-ood.

BAR WAITRESS
Ah, you never loved 'til you loved
Romanian woman. That one, the blond,
she is Moldavian.

Jake looks at the blond. Her head is turned away.

JAKE
How much?

BAR WAITRESS

Talk first. You like, you pay me
fifty American dollars.

Jake nods and gets up.

Jake approaches Prostitutes. The blond still looks away.
She finally looks round. It is Trinka. Jake jerks his head,
moves away, and Trinka follows.

INT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jake and Trinka slide into a booth.

JAKE

Want a drink or something?

TRINKA

Pepsi.

Jake signals to a nearby TOPLESS WAITRESS, who approaches.

JAKE

Pepsi.

Waitress leaves. Jake looks at Trinka.

JAKE

You Moldavian?

Trinka nods.

JAKE

How old are you?

TRINKA

Nineteen...You American?

JAKE

Irish. So where do we go for sex?

Trinka indicates a door.

JAKE

What if I want to take you back to my
hotel, that possible?

Trinka snorts mirthlessly and shakes her head.

JAKE

You're very pretty.

Trinka sighs, bored.

TRINKA

You got cigarette?

JAKE

No, sorry.

Trinka sighs, barely concealing irritation.

JAKE

I was wondering if you might know a friend of mine, girl called Marta.

Trinka looks at him. Jake reaches into his coat pocket.

JAKE

Got a picture here...

Trinka makes an urgent noise, stopping him. She has noticed the Waitress approaching. The Waitress places the Pepsi before her and leaves.

TRINKA

No show picture.

She draws her finger surreptitiously across her throat. She looks toward the doorway to the sex rooms and nods. Jake gets her inference and gets up.

INT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jake approaches the Bar Waitress and hands across fifty dollars.

BAR WAITRESS

Enjoy.

Jake and Trinka go through the doorway.

INT. SEX BOOTH -- NIGHT

Jake enters and Trinka pulls the curtain closed behind them. She crosses to Jake and undoes his fly.

JAKE

Hey, but I don't want to...

TRINKA

Shh.

She indicates with her eyes a camera mounted in an upper corner of the booth. Jake glances at it and understands. His facial expression shows his discomfort at what she is doing. As she gives him head her other hand comes up inside his jacket and removes the picture of Marta. She holds it

against his stomach as she looks at it, then replaces it in his jacket.

She undoes her dress and slips out of it, naked below. She lies down on the bed.

TRINKA
Take off clothes.

JAKE
But I'm not...

TRINKA
Pretend. Quick.

Reluctantly, Jake begins to remove his clothes.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE, STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Romanian 1 watches a series of monitors, MEN having sex with PROSTITUTES in some of the booths, Jake undressing on one of the monitors. Some monitors also cover the main strip club area i.e. the booths. Elsewhere in the room, Moldavian 1 sits on a couch, smoking, talking in Romanian to Romanian Boss, who sits behind a desk.

The monitor for Jake's room shows him naked and getting on top of Trinkka. She wraps her legs around him.

INT. SEX BOOTH -- NIGHT

Jake pretends to have sex with Trinkka.

ECU's of their mouths beside the other's ear as they talk.

TRINKA
I know her. She come on bus with me.

JAKE
You sure?

TRINKA
She come from Tighina like me.

JAKE
So is she here? In this club?

TRINKA
No.

They continue, Jake waiting for more.

TRINKA
You help me escape, I tell you where she is.

Jake pauses and looks at her.

EXT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jake exits the club. He stands for a moment in the street and runs his hand through his hair in agitation. Finally he walks away.

INT. POOR HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Jake, carrying his overnight bag, is shown to the room by a HOTEL NIGHT CLERK. Jake nods and the Night Clerk leaves. Jake falls exhausted onto the bed and lies staring at the ceiling.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. POOR HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Same angle and in the same position, Jake awakens. Traffic noise is loud and lighting suggests it is late in the morning. He sits up, then gets up, crosses to a dirty window where he looks out on dismal buildings.

EXT. STREET OPPOSITE ALLEY -- DAY

Jake, showered, changed and clean shaven, looks across the street at the Exchange Building next to the alleyway. It is dark and foreboding and all the windows are barred. He looks at the nearby buildings then finally at the building behind him. He looks back across the street. The building behind him is taller than the exchange building.

INT. LIFT/PASSAGEWAY, OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

The floor indicator stops at the seventh floor, the top floor. The doors open and Jake alights. He moves into the hall until he comes to a window. Through the window the roof of the exchange building across the street can be seen. There's a skylight.

INT. HARDWARE STORE -- DAY

Jake buys tools - a set of socket spanners, large shifter, a pinch bar, bolt cutters.

INT. POOR HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Jake shakes the belongings out of his overnight bag. He places the tools inside.

EXT. ALLEYWAY/EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jake, his overnight bag on his back, climbs halfway up the building and across some rickety guttering. He tries to reach a downpipe. Suddenly the guttering gives way and Jake almost falls, one hand catching the downpipe. As he struggles, trying not to fall, he hears the steel door open below. Moldavian 1 and Romanian 2 come from the building, shutting the door. But they pause beyond the bus, Moldavian 1 requesting a light for his cigarette. Jake, forced to keep still, can barely hang on, his fingers slipping. Finally the two below walk up the alleyway and round the corner. Jake loses his grip and plummets, only to catch hold of a ledge a few feet below. He relaxes at full arm stretch, squeezes his eyes shut and shakes his head, lucky to be alive.

EXT. ROOF, EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jake climbs over the roof ledge and collapses onto the roof, puffing. He makes his way over to the skylight. He checks the fittings with a flashlight and reaches into his bag, pulling out a socket set.

INT. EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jake has the skylight open. His bag in his hand, he squeezes through and drops to the floor. As he does so a spanner falls from the bag and clatters noisily on the floor. Jake freezes.

INT. SEPARATION ROOMS -- NIGHT

Romanian 3 sits, reading a newspaper. The faint, distant noise of the spanner can be heard, but Romanian 3 does not react. He sits on a chair in the central, lit room. There are SEVERAL GIRLS sitting in the four rooms adjoining that one. They are clothed, but cradle each other, scared, sobbing.

ECU: Romanian 3's ear reveals an earpiece, music playing.

INT. EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Using the flashlight, Jake makes his way through a passageway. He comes to a flight of stairs and looks down cautiously. Beside the stairs there is a door, heavily padlocked. He shines the flashlight on it.

INT. DRUGS AND MUNITIONS ROOM -- NIGHT

The door comes open. Jake places a set of bolt cutters back in his bag, and enters. He finds a light switch and turns it on. He looks around and his eyes grow wide.

Surrounding him there are dozens of weapons and explosives. He picks up a bundle of dynamite sticks, amazed and pleased.

INT. EXCHANGE BUILDING, STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

His bag stuffed with explosives, Jake moves cautiously down stairs. He now has a handgun. He moves down to a door, which he cautiously opens.

INT. EXCHANGE BUILDING, GROUND FLOOR -- NIGHT

Jake comes into a passageway. He looks round and notices a distant light.

INT. SEPARATION ROOMS -- NIGHT

Looking over Romanian 3's shoulder, the newspaper is open and held up in front of him. He lowers it to turn the page, but in doing so reveals Jake standing right on top of him, aiming the gun in his face. Romanian 3 stands slowly, his face tight. He is a big man, considerably bigger and younger than Jake, and very intimidating. He notices the gun shaking in Jake's hand and Jake notices him notice. Romanian 3 grins slightly. Jake motions for him to put his hands up. Romanian 3 does so slowly. Jake motions for him to turn around. Romanian 3 does so slowly. Jake is about to slug him, but hesitates. Romanian 3 hears the hesitation and is quicker, knocking the gun from Jake's hand.

INT. SEPARATION ROOMS -- NIGHT

FIGHT SEQUENCE: It is a long, desperate battle which Jake barely wins. With a bit of luck he knocks Romanian 3 out.

INT. SEPARATION ROOMS -- NIGHT

Post fight, Jake can barely stand as he looks around at the Girls. They watch him, wide-eyed.

Jake tries to explain, indicating the Guard, but nothing comes out.

EXT. EXCHANGE BUILDING, ALLEYWAY/ BUS INT -- NIGHT

The Girls, carrying their bags, come through the steel door and get onto the bus. Last out, Jake carries bound and gagged Romanian 3 over his shoulder, and climbs onto the bus.

Jake drops Romanian 3 onto the aisle floor, and bends over, gasping.

JAKE (to himself)
Jesus. He could be a linebacker.

He looks up at the Girls.

JAKE
Anyone here drive a bus?

They look blankly back at him. He points to the driver's seat and mimes driving.

JAKE
Drive bus? Anyone, drive bus?

A Girl timidly holds up her hand. Jake motions her forward and assists her into the driver's seat. She looks at him for direction.

JAKE
Drive. You drive. Just drive, go.

She nods and starts the bus. Jake takes the handgun from his belt and places it into a Girl's hand closest to Romanian 3 and aims it at him. Jake looks at all of them.

JAKE
Okay. I hope you all make it home.
Good luck. Goodbye.

He steps down out of the bus and nods to the Girl driving. She crunches the gears. Jake grimaces, but the bus moves forward.

Jake watches the bus reach the head of the alleyway but it does not halt. There is a loud screech of tires from another car braking hard and Jake reacts in anticipation of the crash. But it doesn't happen and the bus moves safely away. Nerve-wracked, Jake re-enters the building, and shuts the steel door.

INT. EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jake tapes sticks of dynamite with timers to a supporting pillar. He moves on and taps along a wall with his knuckle, trying to locate another supporting pillar.

EXT. RED LIGHT DISTRICT -- NIGHT

Jake comes from his car, parked across the street from the strip club. It is late with few people about. Checking his watch, he enters the club, watched by Bouncer 1.

INT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jake approaches the bar. He looks around for Trinkka, but cannot see her.

BAR WAITRESS
Back again?

JAKE
Yeah, thought I might try a Romanian girl tonight.

BAR WAITRESS
Now you've come to your senses.

JAKE
So what time you get off?

BAR WAITRESS (smiling)
My husband is an Olympic wrestler.

JAKE
Nah, just tried one. They're over-rated.

BAR WAITRESS (laughs)
Heineken?

JAKE
Ah, beauty and brains.

As she gets the beer, Jake looks at his watch.

JAKE
Haven't seen that little Moldavian number I tried last night?

BAR WAITRESS
Oh, probably with a customer.
Have I turned you off Romanians?

JAKE
No, no. But if they're as good as you say, I should warm up with a Moldavian first.

Bar Waitress laughs and moves to another CUSTOMER.

EXT. BUS INT, COUNTRYSIDE -- NIGHT

The bus makes its way through countryside. Romanian 3 comes to and sits up. He bellows through his gag. Unsure of what to do, the Girl Jake gave the handgun to reverses it and

clobbers him. He falls back, unconscious. The Girl smiles at the others and they cheer.

INT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jake looks at his watch, frowning. He looks impatiently toward the door to the sex booths and wipes perspiration from his forehead.

INTERCUT:

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Romanian 1 watches the monitors as before. Moldavian 1 passes by, on his way from the office. He glances at the screens but stops as he notices the camera sweep by Jake, sitting at the bar.

MOLDAVIAN 1
(Romanian) Wait. Make this one go back.

Romanian 1 makes the camera track back. Jake appears once more.

ROMANIAN 1
Know him?

Moldavian 1 is uncertain.

Back in the bar, Jake checks his watch once more. He looks round as Trinkka comes through the sex booth doorway, followed by her CLIENT. She makes her way back across to the other Prostitutes. Jake gets up and crosses to her.

MOLDAVIAN 1
(Romanian) Follow him.

The camera in the club tracks Jake.

In the club, Jake approaches Trinkka.

JAKE
Hi.

Trinka is surprised to see him.

JAKE
Still want to get out of here?

Trinka nods. Jake signals her to a booth with his eyes.

The camera tracks them as they cross to a booth.

Moldavian 1 watches the screen, frowning.

In the club, Jake slides into a booth and checks his watch.

JAKE

Okay, what I have to know is, are you aware that if you escape they might kill your family back in Moldavia?

TRINKA

(nodding)

But I am single woman. My people live out of the city, in mountains.

JAKE

(checking his watch)

So the address on your passport is your Tighina address? They won't know where your family is?

TRINKA

(nodding)

What you doing?

JAKE

In about ten seconds you're going to hear an explosion. Then we leave.

Trinka's face goes tight.

Moldavian 1 taps his lips with his finger, trying to remember. Suddenly there is a loud explosion some distance away. The whole building shakes.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Romanian Boss grabs his desk as the building shakes.

ROMANIAN BOSS

(Romanian) What the fuck was that?!

ROMANIAN 1

(Romanian) The explosives!

They stand and rush from the office.

INT. CLUB -- NIGHT

There is rising panic in the main club area. Jake places his hand on Trinkka, forcing her to remain still. CLIENTS begin to leave the club. Jake scans the room, searching for something.

Suddenly from a rear door Romanian Boss, Romanian 1 and Moldavian 1 burst through and into the main room. They are

brandishing handguns and pushing people out of the way as they quickly make their way from the club.

JAKE

Okay. Now.

They slide out of the booth and Jake takes Trinkka by the hand.

JAKE

Stay right behind me.

Trinka does as he asks.

INT. STRIP CLUB FRONT PASSAGEWAY -- NIGHT

Jake escorts Trinkka. Ahead he can see Bouncer 2, midway up the passageway, checking to see none of the Strippers or Prostitutes try to escape.

As Jake walks he lets a large shifting spanner slip from his jacket sleeve into his hand. As Bouncer 2 comes forward to intercept Trinkka, Jake clobbers him, knocking him out.

EXT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Bouncer 1 also scans the crowd coming from within the club. He spots Jake and Trinkka and rushes forward. This time Jake throws the spanner, hitting Bouncer 1 fully in the face and knocking him down.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Moldavian 1 runs behind Romanian Boss and Romanian 1. He slows and comes to a halt, then looks back toward the club.

Flash FX: Moldavian 1's POV - Jake on the porch of the Rest Stop café.

Flash FX: Moldavian 1's POV from bus - Jake by his car with Border Guard 1, Jake looking his way.

Flash FX: As seen on the monitor, Jake at the bar, quickly crossing to Trinkka.

Back to Moldavian 1. He looks back toward the club.

EXT. STREET OPPOSITE STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jake gets into the old car and unlocks the passenger door for Trinkka. She gets in.

EXT. JAKE'S CAR INT -- NIGHT

JAKE
 Alright, where did they take Marta?

TRINKA
 Quick we go, we must go!

JAKE
 I'm not starting this car 'til you
 tell me where she is.

TRINKA
 Serbia! They say Serbia!

JAKE
 Where in Serbia!

TRINKA
 I don't know! Please! We go! Please!

EXT. EXCHANGE BUILDING -- NIGHT

FX or different site. Romanian Boss and Romanian 1 come to
 a halt, shocked.

Romanian Boss has a look of growing horror/devastation on
 his face.

The exchange building is nothing but smoking rubble.

EXT. STREET OPPOSITE STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Moldavian 1 runs up the street and comes to a halt. He sees
 something.

Bouncer 1 is unconscious on the ground.

Moldavian 1 looks across the road.

Jake and Trinka are in a car, arguing.

He runs closer and aims his gun.

Just then Jake starts the car and drives quickly away. He
 turns a corner.

Moldavian 1 rushes across the street and through an
 alleyway.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Jake drives down the street.

INTERCUT:

EXT. ALLEYWAY -- NIGHT

Moldavian 1 races down the alleyway.

Jake pulls up at a set of lights.

Moldavian 1 rounds the corner of the alleyway. He sees Jake's car at the next corner, and races toward it.

The lights turn green.

Jake begins to drive off.

Moldavian 1 plants his feet and takes aim. He fires several times.

SMASH CUT:

EXT. JAKE'S CAR INT-- NIGHT

A bullet hits Trinkka in the head, killing her, and spraying Jake with blood.

Jake brakes in shock. He looks at Trinkka, and sees she is dead.

Moldavian 1 continues to fire.

Fury overcoming him, Jake plants his foot. But instead of turning away he turns the car toward Moldavian 1.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Jake drives the car full speed at Moldavian 1, who continues to fire. Jake's car mounts the footpath and hits him, knocking him over the car. The car continues on and hits a building, coming to a halt.

Moldavian 1 is on the ground, injured, but still alive. His handgun is nearby, and he tries to reach for it.

Jake climbs from the car and staggers to him.

Jake reaches the gun before Moldavian 1, picks it up, and in a growing rage beats him to death with it.

JAKE

You fucking animal! You fucking animal!

Finally, knowing Moldavian 1 is dead, Jake stands, looks back at the car, but can do nothing. He drops the gun and staggers away.

EXT. ROMANIAN/MOLDOVIAN BORDER -- DAY

Border Guards 1 and 2 are in the booth. Border Guard 1 recognizes the bus used to smuggle the girls coming from the Romanian side. He nods to Border Guard 2 and Border Guard 2 raises the gate.

As the bus nears them, however, it is going fast and a Girl is driving. Too late Border Guard 1 takes his rifle from his shoulder and tries to aim it.

The bus races through the gate, the Girls inside hang their naked backsides out of the windows, mooning them.

Border Guards 1 and 2 exchange a stunned look.

EXT. TRAIN INT -- DAY

Jake sits alone, staring out the window at bleak countryside. His face is vacant, drained of emotion.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. CHURCH SANCTUARY, ITALY -- DAY

Jake, looking the worse for wear, approaches the gate once more. He hands his passport through to the Policeman. The Policeman opens the gate.

INT. FATHER VACETTI'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jake, depressed, sits opposite Father Vacetti.

JAKE

Because of what I did a young girl died. I promised her freedom, and for that she was killed...And then I beat a man to death.

VACETTI

A bad man?

JAKE

He killed the girl.

VACETTI

Was this man smuggling the girls?

Jake nods.

JAKE

I'm just an ordinary man, with a family. It was stupid of me to come here. I'm no hero.

VACETTI

The Bible teaches an eye for an eye. You know, Jake, the women you freed will warn many others. You didn't just save a dozen lives, you may have saved hundreds. In this case I do not think our Father will frown upon you. Tell me, what is in your heart, now, what do you really want to do at this time?

JAKE

I'm so ashamed, but all I want to do is go home...and I want to protect my little girl, and make sure that something as evil as this never happens to her.

VACETTI

Then you should go home, my son. Go home and see to your family.

JAKE

I feel such...failure. I...

He cannot express himself.

VACETTI

We can only try our best, and that is all anyone can ask. Very few would have even tried such an impossible and dangerous task. A wise man once said, 'Compassion is commendable, but if not acted upon it is weakness'.

Jake studies him, needing the reassurance. He nods, stands, and shakes Vacetti's hand.

VACETTI

Go with God, my son.

Jake nods and begins to leave.

VACETTI

Oh.

He takes Jake's passport from his desk drawer.

VACETTI

You'll need this.

JAKE

Thanks.

Jake takes Marta's photograph from his pocket.

JAKE
Will you keep this? I'd like you to
let me know if...

VACETTI
Of course.

Jake nods, and leaves.

EXT. JAKE'S FAMILY HOME -- DAY

Jake gets out of his four-wheel-drive and approaches the house. Emma and Billy burst from inside and rush to him.

EMMA
Daddy! Daddy!

BILLY
Dad!

He rushes to his children and kneels, hugging them. Tears are in his eyes as he looks up and sees Marie, standing in the doorway, tears of compassion also in her eyes.

INT. JAKE'S FAMILY HOME, DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Music over: Jake, Marie, Emma and Billy have a candle-lit dinner. The kids laugh and Jake and Marie are smiling. It is a beautiful, peaceful setting.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAKE'S FAMILY HOME, BILLY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake tucks Billy in.

BILLY
Hey dad, you think I can have a bike
for my birthday?

JAKE
Well, you know what your mom and I
said. When you're twelve.

BILLY
But why?

JAKE
'Cause we love you more than anything
in the world and we think by that age
you'll be more responsible.

BILLY

But I'm responsible now, aren't I?

JAKE

Well, there is that time you painted your crib with crap.

BILLY (smiling)

Oh, you had to bring that up!

JAKE

Hey, I'm still getting over it. I was traumatised.

BILLY

I was only one!

JAKE

Billy, I was in therapy for two years. I still have nightmares. Look, (pointing at his hair) there's grey here.

BILLY

Dad!

JAKE

Alright, I'll talk it over with mom, but no promises.

BILLY

Okay.

Billy extends his hand.

BILLY

Thanks.

Jake looks at his hand and points at it.

JAKE

What the hell's that?

BILLY

Well...Don't you think I'm a bit old now, dad.

Jake grins, takes his hand, shakes it, but as he stands quickly plants a kiss on Billy's lips.

JAKE

You're never too old to kiss those you love. Remember that.

BILLY

'Night, dad.

Jake leaves.

INT. JAKE'S FAMILY HOME UPSTAIRS HALL -- NIGHT

Jake closes Billy's door. Marie is just coming from Emma's room. She grins at Jake.

MARIE

She wants you. Suddenly you're Mr. Popularity.

Jake grins and Marie goes down the hall. Jake enters Emma's bedroom.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake crosses and sits on her bed.

EMMA

Hi, daddy.

JAKE

Hi, I bumped into some lady in the hall, said you wanted to see me?

EMMA

Where did you go when you went away?

JAKE

Oh, I went to fight a dragon.

EMMA

Did you?

Jake nods.

EMMA

Did you win?

JAKE

No, but then the dragon didn't win either. We sort of agreed we should leave each other alone.

EMMA

You're not going to fight the dragon anymore are you?

JAKE

No, but I'm going to watch out for him from now on, and make sure he never bothers us again.

EMMA

But how will you know he's here if you live over at your place?

JAKE

Well, that's a tough one, but I'm going to talk to mommy and see if we can't work something out.

Emma is silent a moment.

EMMA

You love mommy, don't you?

JAKE

Yeah, very much.

EMMA

I wish you lived with us again.

Jake grins, watching her.

INT. SITTING ROOM -- NIGHT

Jake comes downstairs and sees Marie sitting on a sofa. She smiles. He grins back and crosses to sit with her. She hands him a glass of wine.

MARIE

Thought you might like a toast. To your safe return.

JAKE

Well, can't argue with that.

They toast glasses and drink.

JAKE

You're looking particularly beautiful.

MARIE

And you look worn out. The chemo really knocked you about, huh?

JAKE

Marie, there's something I need to tell you.

MARIE

Well there's something I want to tell you first.

Jake waits.

MARIE

I finished it with Chris. When I realized you really had cancer, when you left to be treated, I...I just fell to pieces...

JAKE

Sweetheart, I...

MARIE

No, please, let me... (starting to cry, half laughing) God knows I've rehearsed it enough. The thought that you might die, and not be here, well it, it made me realize how much I truly love you, and what a totally selfish, thoughtless...jerk I was... Jake, I...I want us to be...to be a family again.

JAKE

Oh, sweetheart.

MARIE

Oh!

They embrace, kissing deeply.

EXT. JAKE'S FAMILY HOME -- MORNING

Establishing. There is dew on the grass, the neighborhood is quiet, and birds twitter. Jake's car is still in the street.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- MORNING

Marie sleeps on Jake's shoulder.

The door to the room is slightly ajar, and Emma comes by, peeping in. She sees her father and pushes the door open.

EMMA

Daddy!

She rushes to him and jumps on the bed.

JAKE

Oh, hi, honey.

EMMA

Daddy, you're still here! You're still here!

Billy appears at the door.

BILLY

...Dad!

He rushes in and jumps on the bed, hugging his father.

MARIE

Hey, do I get a kiss too?

Both kids kiss Marie.

MARIE

Kids, there's something you should know. Daddy's coming home to live with us again.

The kids whoop with joy and kiss both parents. Jake is laughing.

EXT. DEMOLITION SITE/OFFICE -- DAY

Jake, wearing a hard hat, crosses to the demolition office and enters.

INT. SITE OFFICE -- DAY

Chris works on plans as Jake enters. Chris has not yet noticed him.

JAKE

Seems congratulations are in order.

Chris looks round, not sure how to take Jake's arrival. Jake crosses to him and offers his hand. Chris looks at it and takes it.

JAKE

Not a single insurance claim while I was gone.

CHRIS

Yeah...lucky.

JAKE

No such thing as luck in this business. You came through, Chris. You delivered.

They fall silent.

CHRIS

Look, ah, Jake, there's something you ought to know.

JAKE

Before you go on, there's something I want to tell you. I'm taking you on as a partner. Twenty-five percent. That also means I want you to manage at least a quarter of the sites. You up for that?

CHRIS

Oh, Jesus, Jake.

JAKE

Chris...Some things are better left unsaid.

He offers his hand.

JAKE

Deal?

Chris accepts it and nods.

JAKE

Okay. Gonna take the rest of the week off. I'll drop by Friday, watch this baby come down.

He grins and crosses to the door.

CHRIS

I won't let you down, Jake.

JAKE

At this point in my life, you couldn't if you tried.

He leaves. Chris snorts at the irony of it all, grins and shakes his head.

INT JAKE'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jake packs his bags. His computer has a plastic cover over it. Jake checks his watch and crosses to the phone. He takes a deep breath, preparing himself, and dials a long number.

INTERCUT:

INT. MARTA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The old phone rings. Aleksiy picks up.

ALEKSIY

(Moldavian) Hello.

JAKE

Aleksiy. This is Jake, in America.

ALEKSIY

Ah, Jake. Have you heard from Marta?
We still have hear nothing.

JAKE

No, I haven't heard, but, ah, I do
know what's happened to her.

Aleksiy waits.

JAKE

She's been kidnapped, Aleksiy, and
she's been forced into prostitution.

ALEKSIY

Oh, no...No...Are you sure?

JAKE

Yeah. The last I found out she was
sent to Serbia, but I don't know
where, and I don't even know if she's
still in Serbia.

ALEKSIY

Oh, God, this, this will kill mumma.

JAKE

Is she there?

ALEKSIY

No. She visit with my uncle.

JAKE

It may be better she doesn't know,
Aleksiy, but that's for you to
decide...Listen.

ALEKSIY

Yes?

JAKE

I sent you some money today. These
gangs, these criminals, mafia,
they're very dangerous. They stop the
girls from escaping by threatening to
kill their relatives back home. In
Marta's case that's you and your
mother. Now listen carefully to me,
this is what I want you to do.

JAKE (Cont'd)

You need to legally change your name and I want you to move to a different address, and then I want you to send that address to a Father Vacetti in Italy. I've sent you his details in my letter. Will you do all that?

ALEKSIY

Yes. I understand. But mumma will have to know why.

JAKE

Yeah. Guess there's no getting round that. But if Marta is ever to have a chance to come home, then your mother and you will have to take these precautions. Understand?

ALEKSIY

Yes, Jake, we do. We do just as you say. My heart, my heart is so sore for my sister. Is, is very shocking news for me.

JAKE

Yes. But, I want you to know, and I promise you this, I have a private detective in Italy searching for her. He has agents all over Europe. I won't give up, Aleksiy. It's not much, but it's the best I can do.

ALEKSIY

Yes. Well, we are grateful, Jake. Thank you. Goodbye.

JAKE

Goodbye, Aleksiy. Good luck.

Jake hangs up, and stares at the phone. He lowers his head, shamed.

INT. PI'S CAR. INDUSTRIAL AREA -- NIGHT

The Private Investigator seen with Jake earlier drives through a depressed, bleak area. He sees an INFORMER standing by the roadside and pulls over.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA -- NIGHT

As the PI gets out of his car and crosses the street.

SUPER: Ravenna, Northern Italy. Three years later.

The PI crosses the street and consults with the Informer. The Informer indicates a woman standing alone under a streetlight on a further corner. The PI hands him some money and the Informer departs. The PI studies the woman.

She is a lonely figure against an ugly backdrop of industry.

EXT. STREET CORNER, INDUSTRIAL AREA -- NIGHT

The PI approaches the woman. Her dead eyes swing round slowly and look at him. It is Marta, now a wasted figure, looking haggard and sickly.

MARTA

(Italian) You want a woman?

The PI takes her left arm and pulls up her sleeve. Marta does not resist. There are track marks along her arm.

PI

(Italian) You are Marta Shade?

She looks at him, barely registering.

PI

(Italian) I have come to take you home, Marta.

MARTA

(Italian) I have no home.

PI

(Italian) Yes, you do. Your mother, Oksana, and your brother, Aleksiy, are waiting for you.

Tears well in Marta's eyes. They grow and spill onto her cheeks.

MARTA

(Italian) I cannot!

She cries.

PI

(Italian) They are safe. Your friend, Jake, Jake Roberts in America, has made them safe. Come. Come with me.

He takes her hand, but waits for her to come of her own accord. Marta takes a step, then slowly comes with him.

They cross the road, the PI leading Marta as one would the elderly.

EXT. CHURCH SANCTUARY -- DAY

Jake (aged) approaches the gate and hands his passport to the Policeman. The Policeman opens the gate.

INT. PASSAGEWAY -- DAY

Jake walks with Father Vacetti.

VACETTI

She is over the worst of her addiction now and we've managed to get some weight on her, but she is still quite weak. She has a strong mind, though, and I believe she may yet live a full life.

They stop outside a room. The door is partially open.

JAKE

Thank you for all you've done, Father.

VACETTI

Thank you for finding her, my son.

He departs.

Jake looks at the room, apprehensive. He approaches the door slowly.

INT. MARTA'S ROOM -- DAY

Jake appears in the doorway. Marta, sitting on the bed, looks slowly round. Jake crosses to her, and kneels. He looks up into her face. Tears are in his eyes.

JAKE

I'm so sorry.

He lowers his head and weeps. Marta touches his hair softly. She cups his chin and makes him look up into her eyes.

MARTA

Jake...I am alive...I am alive.

Tears come to her eyes. Jake tries to thank her, but the words will not come. He nods his thanks.

EXT. OKSANA AND ALEKSIY'S HOME -- DAY

It is a pretty house in the country. Jake and Marta arrive in a car and get out.

Oksana comes from the house. She cries out with joy and rushes to the gate, kissing Marta all over.

Aleksiy comes from the house, and he too kisses his sister and the three of them hug, crying.

Jake, standing by the car, sees their happiness, and grins, tears in his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, MOLDAVIA -- DAY

Music. Various shots of Jake driving through the beautiful countryside.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JAKE'S CAR INT, REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Music continues. Jake arrives and parks his car in the same place he did when he first arrived there. He looks at the café, wondering about it. Music ends.

INT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

Jake enters the café and stops in the doorway. Mila looks up from what she is doing behind the counter. She grins slightly.

After meeting her eyes, Jake looks at the Postcard stand, and pulls down a postcard of the café, the same one Marta sent him. He crosses to the counter.

JAKE

Thought I'd like a souvenir.

MILA

Sure you don't want a coffee? I make a very nice Mocha.

Jake grins.

EXT. REST STOP CAFÉ -- DAY

They sit at the little table on the porch, drinking coffee.

JAKE

Well, it was worth coming back this way just to taste your coffee.

MILA

Tell me, are you divorced yet?

JAKE

Believe it or not I went back to my wife.

MILA

Are you are happy now?

JAKE

Well...The truth? I don't think I could be happier. Not this side of the grave.

MILA

That's happy.

JAKE

How about you?

MILA

Better than happy. I am content.

JAKE

Ah, you've got a twinkle in your eye. You have a man now.

MILA

Yes.

JAKE

Is he a nice man?

MILA

He is gentle, decent, brave and strong. You can't have more in a man.

JAKE

No. Guess not...Well...

He stands.

JAKE

I'm glad things turned out well for you, Mila.

He leans down and kisses her cheek gently.

MILA

Goodbye, Jake. Have a good life.

JAKE

You too.

He begins to cross to his car.

MILA

Jake.

He stops.

MILA

Not long after you left, that bus came back, and it was full of girls who told me about a big strong American who set them free.

JAKE

...Huh?

Mila nods.

JAKE

Did spend some time in the US...but I'm Irish meself.

Mila grins. Jake grins. He crosses to his car, gets in, and drives away.

JACQUES, Mila's three year old son, appears at the door to the café.

JACQUES

(French) Who was that, mumma?

MILA

(French) He is a man...gentle, decent, brave and strong.

She looks at him.

(French) Just like you.

She grins at him. He grins back.

EXT. JAKE'S CAR INT -- DAY

Jake drives.

Flashback: The Girls as they moon the Border Guards as the bus escapes into Moldavia.

Jake shakes his head and grins, finally pleased with himself. He allows himself a proud laugh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AIRLINER -- DAY

Jake looks at a golden burst of sunlight through clouds, and is taken with its beauty.

MARTA (VO)

My dearest Jake, This week is the best week of my life. I am so proud. Please send no more money, and now I tell you why. (Continued)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

Making her rounds, smiling, checking on PATIENTS, Marta, older in appearance, is now a doctor.

MARTA (VO)

Thanks to you I now am doctor, and I have been given a position in the same hospital as my brother. (Continued)

DISSOLVE TO:

Jake grins as he looks out the window.

MARTA (VO)

It is so wonderful I think my heart is to burst and throw rose petals across the world. (Continued)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AIRPORT -- DAY

Jake walks from the plane. He sees his family, Marie, Billy, Emma. They rush to him and all embrace.

MARTA (VO)

It is for you I do this as much for me, for to know you loved me so much to try so hard for me, then it is to you I owe my success, and thank you for my life. (Continued)

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JAKE'S FAMILY HOME -- DAY

It is winter. Jake, now mostly grey-haired and wearing warm, casual clothes, comes to his mailbox, takes out the

letter we are now hearing. He puts on his glasses and reads.

MARTA (VO)

With much love in this world we can be better people to each other, and I thank you for teaching me so. Thank you forever, Jake, and I hope that you and your family are well and always strong. The love from my heart flies to you like bird. Always, Marta.

Jake looks up at the doorway. His wife, MARIE, now older, grins at him. He grins back, walks back up his pathway, and into his house.

FADE OUT.