

Beneath The Smoke

One hour pilot

"He plays the Game. We all do."

by

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FADE IN -

EXT. KENSINGTON COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION. DAY

To the side of a Brutalist concrete university building, a brass plaque sits above pristine sliding doors. It reads: "Kensington College of Communication". A CHINESE STUDENT brushes past the plaque and walks inside. Instead of following her we drift round to a black Mercedes perched on a double yellow opposite.

Inside the car is a suited, square jawed driver, DIMTRI, 40s. He smokes a cigarette and reads a Russian newspaper, flicking through the London property pages: Swanky Chelsea pads. Descriptions and pricetags in Russian...

Walking towards him he sees a TRAFFIC WARDEN. The Warden starts punching the Mercedes number plate into his handset. Dimtri gets out the car and walks right up close. They lock eyes. Dimtri STUBS his cigarette out. DIGS his boot into the ground ominously...

The Warden freezes. Watches as Dimtri cracks the knuckle of each one of his fingers with his thumb.

One. By. One.

This is way more than the Warden signed on for. He puts his head down and carries on his way to tend to other cars. Dimtri smirks in approval. Dead chuffed with himself.

His phone buzzes and he gets it out. Ensuing conversation in RUSSIAN - *as per all Russian to Russian character interactions from here on in.*

DIMTRI

Boss?

YAKOV (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)

Dimtri have you ever tried a Côte-Rôtie Shiraz, served just below room temperature?

Dimtri scoffs. *Yeah right.*

YAKOV (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)

You'd like it.

DIMTRI

I don't drink wine.

YAKOV (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)

Well. You should try it.

Dimtri grins and shakes his head.

YAKOV (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)
Stop smiling.

Dimtri's cocky-ness drops. He looks around to see where he's being watched from.

YAKOV (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)
Take the ticket. Apologise.

DIMTRI
Where are you?

YAKOV (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)
Just do it.

Dimtri pouts. Watches the warden as he tends to more cars at the end of the street.

DIMTRI
But, I, he...

INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. SAME TIME

YAKOV SADOVSKY, 50, a model of composure and carefully studied charm, sits at a table by the window, watching Dimtri on the road below. His headphones are in and he's talking hands free, whilst he pores over two big lever arch files.

YAKOV
He's done nothing wrong Dimtri.

DIMTRI (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)
He tried to give us a ticket!

Yakov puts on a pair of dad-like reading glasses and regards an inventory of wines with pictures next to them. He hovers over "10x crates of Côte-Rôtie Shiraz.

YAKOV
Let him do his job.

DIMTRI (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)
Or what?

Yakov flicks to a giant spreadsheet of numbers. Takes out a fountain pen and a large calculator. Starts punching in figures. Jotting down calculations in his Moleskine notebook.

DIMTRI (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)
(louder)
Or what?

Yakov stops making calculations. Rubs the bridge of his nose. Utterly fed up of Dimtri's nonsense.

YAKOV

Or I will place a Côte-Rôtie Shiraz
so far up your sphincter that
you'll need surgery to remove it.

A tense silence as that comment hangs...

DIMTRI (V.O. - PHONE FILTERED)

What am I supposed to-

YAKOV

-Thank you Dimtri. Goodbye.

Yakov hangs up. Mutters to himself and shakes his head.

His gaze drifts down the bookshelves and expensively paneled wooden walls to rest on

FAITH ROBERTS, 32. Self-dyed bright red hair and a healthy amount of puppy fat. She sits alone at a library computer, referencing from a precarious stack of textbooks. Her flurried movements and messiness belie an intelligence that's perhaps overshadowed by a distaste for social convention.

Yakov studies her for a while. Quite captivated.

Eventually becoming exhausted with work, Faith arches back into her chair, rubs her eyes and takes out a chocolate bar from her bag. A Crunchie. She unwraps it silently whilst gazing at a poster a few feet away: "PLEASE DON'T EAT IN THE LIBRARY"

She ponders the poster for a moment. Considers...

Then shrugs and takes a BITE.

Amused at this, Yakov writes down a note in his Moleskine.

TITLE -

Beneath The Smoke

INT. SEMINAR ROOM. DAY

Faith sits, paying close attention to her tutor - HELEN - a 40ish hippy with a textbook open on her lap.

HELEN

So, what did people think?

Silence amongst the DISENGAGED YOUNG STUDENTS, all of whom appear to be dressed for a Friday night with the cast of *Made in Chelsea*.

HELEN

What about the section on isolating language?

After observing the silence for a beat or so, Faith leans in.

FAITH

Well, er, I really liked all that Schleicher stuff. And the section on agglutinative language is really interesting too. You know the bit where he compares it to morpheme fusing in Ancient Greek?

Helen shoots Faith a knowing smile.

LATER...

The students file out rapidly. Faith hangs back with Helen.

FAITH

Sent you my essay earlier. I'm sorry it's a bit late. Just difficult with work you know?

HELEN

It's fine. I'll look at it this afternoon.

FAITH

I still can't believe you liked the last one.

(no response)

Yeah I got really into this one. Really liked it.

HELEN

I'm glad.

An awkward pause as Faith looks for encouragement.

HELEN

Faith. Relax. You're doing well.

Helen slings her bag over her shoulder. Shoots Faith a wink and leaves. Faith allows herself a smile.

O.S. the clop clop clops of shoes on hard flooring...

EXT. UNIVERSITY CORRIDOR. DAY

Those clop clops belong to Faith's shoes. Still smiling, she strides through the pine panelled hallway and into the

QUAD

...walking past a brash modern art sculpture and round into the back of the university, over to three uninspiring

PORTAKABINS

She walks up the walkway and into the

E.A.P CLASSROOM

Faith bustles in and sets her rucksack down at the front. 15 or so FOREIGN STUDENTS, mostly 18-24, sit with laptops.

VOICE O.S.
Why you late teacher?

Faith takes out a coursebook. On the front: "E.A.P BEGIN! English for Academic Purposes"

FAITH
(not looking up)
I had a seminar didn't I.

Faith thumbs through her book.

ANOTHER VOICE O.S.
You study at the university?

FAITH
(still not looking up)
Yeah you're not the only ones
who're allowed Omri.

ANOTHER VOICE O.S.
You too old teacher.

A collective snigger from the class.

FAITH
Michael McIntyre over here. Right
come on let's start. Turn to your
books. Page one hundred and thirty
seven.

They get out their books and Faith scans the room, meeting the eye of the one older student. Yakov. He sits with his back rod straight. Moleskine at the ready. He smiles with his eyes and she holds his gaze for a beat, before finally turning back to the class.

FAITH
Discursive essay writing skills.

INT. E.A.P STAFF ROOM. DAY

The staff room - a grand name for just another portakabin - is a rush of fevered activity. 12 or so teachers look for books, make notes, hurriedly photocopy. Faith sits in the corner, leafing through a text book, bookmarking pages.

ROB, 30s, permanently hungover, hovers nearby.

ROB
That going to be on your test then?

FAITH
You don't have tests when you're
doin an MA Rob.

Rob nods, impressed. *It's easy to impress Rob.* He opens a bag of crisps. Starts crunching away...

ROB
Are you busy?

FAITH
Yes.

ROB
I need a speaking game with
environment vocab.

FAITH
E.A.P 5's got something good
towards the end.

ROB
Environment quiz-

FAITH
-No that's in 2. I mean the
environmental *role play*.

Rob nods. Doesn't bother to thank her. Just continues eating crisps. Faith ignores him and buries her head in her work...

But he's eating too loudly. Plus he's just staring into space aimlessly. It's weird.

FAITH
Rob, I do love the sound of you
eating three hundred gram bags of
Kettle chips, but do ya think-

ROB
-Do you teach some Russian guy
called Yakov?

Faith stops and looks up at him, confused.

EXT. STAFF PORTAKABIN. DAY

Faith closes the door, clocks Yakov, sat on a bench in the

QUAD

He's staring up at the modern art sculpture that Faith passed before. Faith walks over to him.

FAITH

You wanted to see me Yakov?

Yakov beams at her. Nods to the sculpture.

YAKOV

You like this Miss Roberts?

FAITH

Call me Faith, Yakov. What's this about?

YAKOV

Faith.

(savours the moment before
returning to sculpture)

I prefer direct carve. It has...how
do you say? Texture.

FAITH

Right.

YAKOV

This is smooth. Is a model. It's
from er...what's the er...the white-

FAITH

-Yeah. Plaster.

YAKOV

-Yes! Plaster. Then is put finally
in metal. It's not as
(gestures "tactile")

FAITH

Yakov I'm quite busy so can we-

YAKOV

-Yes of course. My apologies.

He gets up. Looks her in the eye.

YAKOV

Faith I leave English classes. I no
come more.

FAITH

That's a shame Yakov.

YAKOV

I know. But is OK. I get money back.

FAITH

Jolly good.

YAKOV

Exactly.

They stare at each other for a moment.

YAKOV

Faith, my English...I have lot of improvements over last week. I think I...I like tutor.

FAITH

Well I'd be happy to recommend someone-

YAKOV

-Er, no. No no. I leave course because I want you as tutor.

FAITH

The last teacher who did that got sacked Yakov.

Yakov doesn't understand. *Or at least pretends not to.*

FAITH

Look I can't teach any student privately till six months after their finish date.

YAKOV

My MBA finish in 8 month. I need help now.

He pulls out a business card and places it in her hand.

YAKOV

Also, I very busy with work.

Faith looks down: "Yakov Sadovsky - Business Consultant". Embossed lettering. 500gsm of pure business bling...

FAITH

It'd be unprofessional of me.

YAKOV

You come after work. I pay as many hours you can do.

FAITH

There's really no point Yakov.

YAKOV
How much cost? Fifty per hour?
Seventy five maybe?

FAITH
Nah that's way too-

YAKOV
-One hundred?

Faith stares at him, trying to figure him out. He stares back, deadly serious...

Finally she hands the card back.

FAITH
I'm sorry Yakov. I can't.

Yakov doesn't take the card. Instead he offers his hand.

YAKOV
A pleasure knowing you Faith.

Faith shakes his hand back and watches as he walks away.

EXT. KENSINGTON COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION. DAY

Yakov strides out towards his Mercedes. Dimtri gets out and opens the door for him.

INT. YAKOV'S MERCEDES - MOVING. DAY

Yakov smokes out the window and stares down at Dimtri's newly-received parking penalty charge notice. Rubs it up and down in his hand.

YAKOV
Put on the playlist.

DIMTRI
Which one?

YAKOV
You know which one.

Dimtri fiddles with the stereo whilst Yakov dips into a brown food bag beside him on the backseat. Chicago's "If you Leave Me Now" starts up. Yakov bobs his head up and down in time to the intro. Opens up a sleek bento box with immaculately presented sashimi rolls and crisp golden tempura...

INT. UNIVERSITY CANTINE. DAY

Faith stares at the sorry looking sandwiches on display. A BLT for 4.50, a tuna salad for 4.65.

She reaches into her pocket and gathers her change in her palm. A couple 50p's. Not much more...

Faith moves to the CASHIER. Hands her a pack of CRISPS.

CASHIER

That all you're having Faith?

Faith stares at the Cashier. Thinks for a beat.

INT. YAKOV'S MERCEDES - MOVING. DAY

As the music BLASTS out Yakov holds up a piece of raw tuna to the light, studies its blood red hues and sings along.

YAKOV

Oo oo oooo, no, baby please don't
go.

INT. E.A.P STAFF ROOM. DAY

Faith holds up her lonely bag of crisps. Empties the last few shards into her mouth.

Then she notices Rob sitting opposite, GORGING on the BLT that she'd been eyeing up in the canteen.

Faith mutters to herself.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE. DAY

A large expanse of land on the outskirts of town. Yakov's Mercedes drives towards a large WAREHOUSE.

INT. YAKOV'S MERCEDES - MOVING. DAY

Yakov leans over to the two lever-arch files we saw in the library. One says "The Vine Company", the other "Laurent's". He picks up "Laurent's", flicks to the back and pores over another long list of spreadsheet numbers.

DIMITRI

I have Kirill's surveillance
photos.

Yakov doesn't reply.

DIMITRI

His wife just bought him a new
camera for his birthday. 24
megapixel.

YAKOV
 (re: the car)
 This is close enough.

Dimtri pulls over and Yakov gets out. He opens the boot and takes out a large combination locked, reinforced plastic briefcase. Places it on the ground with care.

Just before shutting the boot he stares back at something inside. Something buried in the back...

DIMTRI
 Titanium X12 Alloy. D Fusion FT
 Handle.

Dimtri's referring to a new BASEBALL BAT. Price tag still dangling. Yakov nods in approval.

YAKOV
 Make sure you expense it.

INT. WAREHOUSE. DAY

Yakov walks onto the mid-sized warehouse floor. Forklifts zip about carrying wooden crates. WORKERS load the crates off and onto pallet trucks.

Yakov rests his hand on one of the crates and studies the labelling. "LAURENT'S WINE MERCHANTS". He looks over to the corner and catches the eye of the owner, AGATHE LAURENT, 40s. She stands, cross armed, staring at him.

INT. WAREHOUSE - AGATHE'S OFFICE. MOMENTS LATER

Agathe sits on her leather desk chair. Yakov sits opposite on hard plastic, low down. He keeps his briefcase by his side.

AGATHE
 You didn't need to come all the way
 down here Mr Sadovsky.

YAKOV
 (his English much more
 fluent - clearly he was
 putting it on when
 talking to Faith)
 Well, I had to meet the woman whose
 favourite word was "no".

AGATHE
 I can't be the first woman who's
 said it to you.

Yakov raises an eye brow.