

Treason

By

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INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

The headquarters is spacious, busy, and would have been considered grand thirty years ago. Two dozen desks are spread out in a space that could fit twice as many. Dozens of people scurry around the room, talking to each other, answering phones, and typing away on 80s-era computers.

Everyone wears the same loose, monotonously gray outfit, though some have colored stripes on the sleeves.

A once-beautiful oak door sits on two opposing walls; on each of the adjacent walls hangs a picture of the FATHER: a middle-aged, smiling, rosy-cheeked man.

JAMES COOPER, 20, sits on a bench by one of the doors. He's tall and attractive, if a bit scrawny and bookish. His outfit has blue stripes.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, GREGORY'S OFFICE - DAY

The Gregory's office is large and gaudy. A picture of the Father sits on an aging desk that claims the middle of the room.

GREGORY JAKES, 55, examines a series of dossiers, and the photographs attached to them. His outfit has no stripes.

KIM FIKES, 36, stands at his desk. Her outfit has white stripes.

Gregory picks out a dossier with James' picture.

GREGORY

Him. James Cooper. That's the one.

KIM

James? Are you certain, sir?

GREGORY

Am I certain? I didn't even know it was possible for someone to score this high! He's the best I've ever seen!

KIM

And that's the problem. If you keep picking the best and the brightest to become chaperones, eventually people are going to catch on.

GREGORY

Nonsense. We've been doing it this way for years, and we're still doing fine.

KIM

Except that civilians are starting not to trust anyone who goes to universities.

GREGORY

Which makes university students - who need the most care and attention - more trusting of each other, and thus our chaperones.

KIM

Granted, but-

GREGORY

I've made my decision. Get him.

KIM

He's already waiting outside. I don't know why I bother asking you questions that I already know the answer to.

GREGORY

(humorous, but with an edge)

Because if you ever stop asking, I'll have you shot for insubordination. Bring him in.

FADE TO:

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

The main street is large and fancy. Tawdry streetlights line the extra-wide sidewalks. The streets are empty, and everyone wears the same loose gray outfits, though some have colored stripes along the sleeves, and a couple are in military-esque variations with epaulets, belts, and guns.

The majority of the storefronts are closed; large posters of the Father, many with inspirational aphorisms, block out their windows. The open shops have straightforward names printed in big black letters above them, such as "FOOD," "CLOTHING AND SHOES," and "BOOKS."

The road leads to a large, postmodern city hall. A massive painting of the Father, glowing like the sun over rolling green hills, fills the entire front surface of the building.

James walks down the street wearing a bookbag.

He stops at the bookstore and enters.

INT. BLISSTOWN BOOKSTORE - DAY

Huge shelves full of books line every wall up to the rather high ceiling, and more shelves fill the interior. Strangely, there isn't a huge selection. Copies of one book will take up entire rows of shelves; there aren't more than twenty different books. One wall in particular stocks only a single, large, blue book with no title on the spine.

The same photo of the father that was in the Chaperone HQ hangs on the wall, right next to a tiny staircase that leads upstairs.

HAL, 48, sits at the register with a book. He's a wiry man who looks old for his age.

As James opens the door, Hal hurriedly flips a nearby radio on; it plays the drum-heavy battle national anthem.

James approaches Hal.

JAMES

Hello again!

HAL

James! Back so soon? Was there something wrong with the book?

JAMES

No, not at all! I finished it. I was wondering if you had the second one?

HAL

Are you reading these things, or eating them for dinner?

JAMES

Reading them, honest! I just can't get enough of them.

HAL

I've got it, if you've got permission for it.

JAMES

Certainly.

James fishes around in his bookbag, pulls out a green slip of paper with a signature on it, along with some cash. He hands it all to Hal.

Hal walks into a back room, returning with a paperback novel.

HAL

I swear, James, you read so many foreign books, if I didn't know you better I'd peg you as a recusant.

Hal immediately bites his tongue.

James' gaze narrows.

HAL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I misspoke, it was meant to be a joke.

JAMES

It wasn't in very good taste.

HAL

I know. I'm sorry. Please don't...

Beat.

HAL (CONT'D)

...Be offended.

JAMES

I know you didn't mean any harm.

They stare at each other for a tense beat.

James' brow relaxes.

JAMES (CONT'D)

So I suppose there was no harm done.

Hal relaxes. James laughs and shakes his head.

JAMES (CONT'D)

But honestly, Hal.

HAL

I know, I know. I'm sorry.

JAMES

Whatever. Nothing to apologize for.

James holds up his newly purchased book.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I'll be back for the next one  
before you know it.

HAL  
I'm surprised it's taken you this  
long already!

James laughs and exits. Hal watches him leave, smiling.

As soon as the door closes, Hal leans on the wall, collapses to the floor, and sighs deeply.

The national anthem continues to play.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

James walks away from the bookstore, nose already buried in his new book.

ELLEN BANKS, 20 is down the sidewalk a short distance, skipping hurriedly down the sidewalk towards James, whistling the national anthem as she goes. She's young, vibrant, and beautiful. Her outfit has white stripes.

Neither she nor James pay much attention to where they're going, and they collide with one another and fall down.

JAMES  
I'm so sorry! I wasn't-

ELLEN  
I'm so sorry! I wasn't-

They laugh awkwardly.

James gets to his feet, then reaches down to help Ellen up, but she's already standing up on her own.

They nod politely and continue on, both of them now watching where they're going.

INT. JAMES' DORM - DAY

James' dorm is small, but comfortable. A full kitchen hides in the corner, separated by a low counter. A hideaway bed is currently out, blocking off the kitchen from the small, two-person table. A weekly planner hangs on the wall with times of classes marked in various colors. A decades-old television sits atop a dresser along one wall, as well as a beat-up radio. The radio plays the national anthem.

ROY KYLE, 22, lays on the bed reading a textbook.

James walks in the room, nose buried in his book.

He walks over to the wall opposite Roy's bed, pulls another hideaway bed down, and lays on it.

He and Roy both lay on their stomachs, with their feet on their pillows, so their faces are towards each other.

James stops reading.

JAMES

I ran into a girl today.

Roy doesn't look up.

ROY

Old friend?

JAMES

No. A stranger.

ROY

So...

JAMES

I ran into her.

ROY

Literally?

JAMES

Yeah...

Roy looks up. Beat.

ROY

Was she okay?

JAMES

She was fine.

James begins reading again.

ROY

...Is that... Is that the story?

James stops reading.

JAMES

I was just so into my book, I don't think I really noticed it when it happened. It's only just now occurring to me.

James shakes his head and Roy blinks.

They both go back to reading.

James looks up again.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Wow. She was gorgeous.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

The photograph of the Father hangs on the wall of a drab, run-down apartment. A wooden table sits in the middle of the room with four chairs evenly spaced around it. A large dresser nests in the corner, next to two ratty bunk beds along the wall.

MARY BANKS, 47, sits at the table, reading from a blue book like those at the bookstore. She wears her hair in a tight bun. Her outfit has no stripes.

Sitting across from Mary is LYLE BANKS, 50, who reads from an identical book. He's jaundiced, and has an irregular, wet cough. His outfit has orange stripes.

On one of the beds lies LYLE BANKS JUNIOR, 16, working on some homework. Junior's short for a 16 year old, and seems rather scrawny.

Ellen flies in through the front door, carrying a small green vegetable.

Mary looks up at Ellen as she runs in.

MARY

I guess she had-

Ellen runs across the room and through a door at the other end.

INT. BANKS KITCHEN - DAY

Ellen bursts into a small room, not much bigger than a walk-in closet, with a furnace and a small stove above it. A fire crackles in the furnace, and a bubbling pot sits on the stove.

Ellen grabs a knife and slices the vegetable into the pot, grabs a nearby spoon, and stirs.

She inhales the aroma and takes a sip of the soup from the spoon.

ELLEN

Perfect.

She grabs two potholders and takes the pot off the stove using one of them.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary sets her book down and laughs softly.

ELLEN (O.S.)

If this isn't the most delicious soup you've ever tasted, I'll cry.

Ellen backs out of the door with the pot.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Their garden is so nice! I wish we could-

MARY

Ellen! What happened to you?

ELLEN

What...

Lyle and Junior look up.

Ellen looks at her legs. One pant leg has been torn open revealing a bloody knee underneath it. There's a small red patch on her opposite hip.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Oh. Ow.

She throws the second potholder on the table and sets the pot on it, then examines herself more fully.

Mary runs into the kitchen, and runs out with a wet cloth.

MARY

Well?

She begins to dab and scrub at Ellen's bloody knee.

ELLEN

I guess it was when I ran into that man.

LYLE

What? Was he okay? Ellen, how many times have I told you-

ELLEN

Dad! He was fine! Ow! Mom, what are you doing?

MARY

And we had electricity yesterday! It'll be a week before I can use the sewing machine again. I'll have to fix this by hand. Tsk. I just hope you didn't hurt him this bad!

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

Kim walks busily. James walks up alongside her.

JAMES

Ma'am?

KIM

I'm busy, James.

JAMES

I just have one quick question.

Kim sighs, stops.

KIM

Let's hear it.

JAMES

There's this girl who works in town hall.

He gestures to the stripes on Kim's sleeves.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I was wondering if-

KIM

You're a chaperone and a full-time student.

She walks away. James follows her.

KIM (CONT'D)

You don't have time to court anyone.

JAMES

Yes, ma'am, but-

Kim stops, wheels around, and looks at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Yes, ma'am.

Kim walks away. James sighs.

EXT. BANKS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Ellen exits the run-down building limping slightly, the knee of her pants patched. She carries an apron, rolled up and tucked under her arm.

She pauses a moment, smiling in the sunlight, then walks towards the inner city.

INT. GOVERNOR'S KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is roomy, with plenty of stoves and racks of ingredients, though it's also a bit grungy. Four young women clean the kitchen and prepare for lunch. Their uniforms have white stripes, and they wear aprons.

Kim walks in, carrying a clipboard.

KIM

The mayor wants you to...

ALICE, 17, one of the cooks, pockets two pieces of bread.

Kim arrives just in time to see her do it.

Kim approaches Alice. Alice bursts into tears. The other cooks look.

Kim whispers sharply.

KIM (CONT'D)

Be quiet! Pull yourself together  
and you won't be in trouble.

Kim wipes Alice's tears with her sleeve and grabs her face, inspecting it.

ALICE

I'm sorry, I just, I haven't, I  
don't-

KIM

(sharp and stern)  
Be quiet.

Alice recovers, her face fading to a blank slate.

KIM (CONT'D)

Look. We all understand. But you have to be smart about it! One of us gets caught and they crack down-

A door opens. Everyone looks busy.

Ellen enters, puts on her apron.

Everyone sighs and turns back to Alice.

KIM (CONT'D)

Keep it this time, hun, I can cover for you. But I have to keep count of things. Work with me.

Ellen cocks her head.

ELLEN

What are you guys talking about?

They shuffle their feet. Beat.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Are you stealing food again? I swear, you guys, I'm starting to suspect you're unhappy with our Father's provision.

Alice snorts.

ALICE

What provision?

Shocked silence.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I go to bed hungry every night, while we feed the mayor and his friends as though they were the Father himself!

KIM

What?

ALICE

(backpedaling)  
I'm not saying it's the Father's fault. What if the mayor is stealing from us?

ELLEN

The Father directly appointed the mayor.

(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Questioning the mayor's authority  
is questioning the Father.

KIM  
(sad)  
You're such a stupid girl.

She turns to the other cooks.

KIM (CONT'D)  
Hold her while I get the peacemen.

Alice withers, and cries again.

EXT. SCHOOL PARK - DAY

A couple dozen school children play sports on a wide field surrounded by benches. Junior is among them.

A dozen metal poles stand in a row in the middle of the park.

James sits on one of the benches, reading a textbook. He pauses, looks up, shakes his head and mutters, then returns to reading.

Ellen walks next to the bench, scanning the children until she sees Junior.

She sits down, oblivious to James.

James notices her and blanches, frozen.

Ellen notices James, and jumps.

ELLEN  
Father, you scared me. I didn't see  
you when I sat down. Goodness.

JAMES  
Ah, well, it's, uh, hah, that's...  
Yes ma'am.

ELLEN  
Do I know you from somewhere?

JAMES  
P-probably? I mean, I know you. I  
mean, I think I recognize you.

Ellen looks down at his book, grabs it, and holds it in front of his face.

ELLEN

It's you! Oh no! I'm so sorry! I didn't hurt you, did I?

JAMES

Oh, oh! Yes! That is the locale that I recognize you from, I recall the event now.

James sneezes, turning away from Ellen. While his face is hidden from her, he makes a disgusted face and mouths, "What am I saying?"

ELLEN

So I did hurt you? I'm so sorry!

JAMES

No, no! I was merely...

He shakes his head.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I was just saying that yes, that's where I recognized you from. No, you didn't hurt me. Did I hurt you?

Ellen crosses her legs to hide her patched knee.

ELLEN

No, I'm fine. Wow, what are the odds?

James shrugs awkwardly.

JAMES

Shouldn't, uh... shouldn't you be at work?

Ellen turns away slightly.

ELLEN

No. I was granted the afternoon off for personal reasons.

JAMES

Oh.

Awkward beat.

James sighs deeply.

JAMES (CONT'D)

In that case... would you, like to go...

James coughs. Ellen turns back.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Go see a movie?

ELLEN  
Do you know what's playing?

JAMES  
I think right now... The, The  
Foreign Plot?

ELLEN  
Ooh, I love that one! Let's do it!

Ellen rises.

JAMES  
Alright! Let's go!

James rises too, and they walk in the direction of the theater.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MOVIE THEATER - DAY

The pair reaches the movie theater: a medium-sized, relatively well-kept building near the edge of the city.

They approach the box office, and James buys some tickets.

INT. BLISSTOWN MOVIE THEATER - MIDWAY THROUGH THE MOVIE

James and Ellen sit near the front of the theater; about half of the eighty seats are empty. James and Ellen sit with an empty seat in between them. Nobody in the theater is eating any snacks.

James leans over and whispers to Ellen.

JAMES  
You know, my uncle was almost in  
this movie.

ELLEN  
(also whispering)  
No way! Which part?

JAMES  
He was almost the Criminal Boss,  
but they decided he didn't look  
foreign enough.

ELLEN

There are worse reasons to not get a role.

JAMES

That's exactly what he said! But, if you look closely on the left... now! That's him! They let him be an extra.

ELLEN

Him? With the funny hat?

JAMES

Yes! Man, did we make fun of him for that hat.

Ellen laughs, and a nearby moviegoer shushes them. They hush.

James leans back over and whispers again.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I need to use the facilities. I'll be right back.

Ellen nods without looking away from the screen, and James exits.

Beat.

James quickly reappears and walks back to his seat. Instead of sitting with a gap between him and Ellen, he sits right next to her.

His face belies his nerves, and he watches her for a reaction.

Ellen glances sideways at him, but pretends not to notice.

Beat.

James sighs and relaxes. They both smile.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MOVIE THEATER - DAY

James and Ellen exit the movie theater with the rest of the moviegoers.

JAMES

So he says - completely deadpan, no emotion at all - "Sir, not even if it were a fish."

James and Ellen laugh.

James checks his watch.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It's getting pretty late, but I  
have time to walk you home.

Ellen stops and her demeanor wanes.

ELLEN  
I, uh... live pretty far away. It's  
about a... thirty minute walk.

JAMES  
Still, if it's at least partly on  
the way...

ELLEN  
Which way are you going?

James points.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Yeah, sorry, I'm that way.

She points in the opposite direction and pouts.

JAMES  
Oh. Well, be careful. This is a  
lower-class neighborhood, you know.

Ellen nods curtly.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Can we do something again sometime?

ELLEN  
I'd really like that. Me and my  
friends spend time at the park  
Saturday afternoons... maybe you  
could bump into us there?

JAMES  
I'll try not to actually bump into  
you this time, though.

They laugh.

ELLEN  
Goodbye, I guess.

JAMES  
Goodbye!

James walks off, but Ellen just stands and watches him go.  
Once he turns a corner, she walks the same direction as him.

EXT. BANKS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Ellen walks a single block, reaches her building, and enters.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary sobs into Lyle's shoulder. Lyle looks more sickly than normal. Junior kneels before the picture of the Father.

Ellen enters.

Mary cries in relief and runs to her.

Junior rises and joins his mother. They hug Ellen tightly.

LYLE

Where have you been? What have you  
been doing? Why were there Peacemen  
looking for you?

ELLEN

I don't... I thought...

INT. JAMES' DORM - DAY

Roy reads on his bed.

James enters and walks to the weekly planner on the wall of the kitchen. A magnet marks the day as Thursday.

He grabs a marker and writes "PARK" on Saturday.

He lowers his bed from the wall, lies down, and reads.

Roy looks up.

ROY

Plans?

James continues reading.

JAMES

Yup.

ROY

Busy day?

JAMES  
Not really.

ROY  
Oh.

Roy goes back to reading. Beat.

JAMES  
I met a girl.

Neither of them look up.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Can I ask you something?

ROY  
Shoot.

James looks up.

JAMES  
Why would a girl lie about where  
she lives?

Roy looks at him, bemused, but full of pity.

ROY  
Because she lives in the slums.  
She's low. You poor sap. You think  
your parents didn't like Marta, who  
was only a little beneath-

JAMES  
(very quickly)  
Yeah-okay-thanks-Roy.

ROY  
Really, James? Really?

James gets up, raises his bed, and grabs a bookbag.

JAMES  
I have to go to class.

ROY  
You just got here, and your class  
isn't for at least an hour.

JAMES  
Well... I'm... going, anyway...  
now. So there!

Roy gets up and grabs a bookbag, but leaves his bed down.

ROY  
 Don't be a child, I'll shut up  
 about it. And hang on, I'll come  
 too.

JAMES  
 Yeah, fine.

ROY  
 Can I say one last thing on the  
 subject?

JAMES  
 No!

ROY  
 Fine, fine, whatever.

They exit the room, close the door behind themselves.

ROY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 I was only gonna say-

JAMES (O.S.)  
 Enough!

CAMERA ZOOMS on Saturday on the calendar.

FADE TO:

EXT. SCHOOL PARK - DAY

A small military procession leads a bound man to the poles in  
 the middle of the park.

James strolls along the side of the park, scanning the area.

Ellen, eyes red from crying, sits in a group with the girls  
 from the kitchen. Kim is among them. Alice isn't.

Ellen sees James and ducks behind a tree.

James sees Kim, stares at her for a moment, thinking.

He walks to her.

Ellen flattens herself against the tree.

JAMES  
 ...Excuse me? Are you Ellen's  
 friend?

Kim glares at him. The other girls ignore him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You're a... you work at town hall,  
right?

Kim says nothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

S-sorry to bother you, ma'am.

James walks away.

The military procession hides the man behind some curtains.

A TRUTH-TELLER takes out a paper and reads from it through a megaphone.

TRUTH-TELLER

All glory be to our merciful  
Father, bringer of peace and  
justice. His court is now in  
session. The defendant stands  
accused of maligning our wonderful  
Father's name, by attempting to  
leave the paradise of a country our  
blessed Father has created for us.  
His sentence is death.

The procession drops the curtains, revealing the man has been gagged. They tie him to one of the poles.

Three riflemen line up and aim at the man.

Kim stares after James. Once he's gone, Ellen comes out from hiding.

KIM

Arrogant bastard.

Kim spits, then turns to Ellen.

KIM (CONT'D)

It was definitely him. You can  
smell it. Always trust a college  
student to be a gossip. Half of  
them are training to be chaperones.

ELLEN

He was so nice, though.

KIM

They always are, Ellen! Use your  
head! I love you, hun, but  
sometimes you can be a little slow.

ELLEN

And I love you, "hun," but  
sometimes you can be a little...

She leans in closer.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(quiet)

Bitch!

Kim howls with laughter, and everyone else joins in.

REPORTS ring through the park as the gagged man is shot three times.

Everyone looks over at the noise for a second before turning back to their conversation.

KIM

What have I done to you? You were  
such a good girl when I met you.  
Now you're such a... hoodlum!

Ellen starts laughing, but it turns into crying.

KIM (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, I was just messing with  
you. Relax, hun, it's okay.

Ellen recovers herself.

More REPORTS as the gagged man, now slumped on the ground, is shot again.

KIM (CONT'D)

Everyone needs to blow off steam  
sometimes, you just... you have to  
be more careful about who you  
trust. You got lucky; they let you  
off easy this time. Just don't do  
it again, you know?

Ellen nods.

KIM (CONT'D)

Out of... curiosity. Did they say  
why they only gave you a warning?

ELLEN

(cautious)

They... they said it was because it  
was out of character for me. They  
trusted I wouldn't do it again.

Kim nods slowly, thinking.

Still more REPORTs as the gagged man is shot a third time.

KIM

See? They're good people, Ellen.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

James walks down the street, and crosses it. He sits on a bench that gives him a view of the Mayor's villa.

He pulls out his book and reads, looking up occasionally.

Kim and Ellen walk up.

Kim notices James and shifts her position to obscure Ellen from his view.

James looks up and sees Kim, but not Ellen.

Kim and Ellen enter the Mayor's villa.

Kim exits and walks directly to James. James notices and buries his face in his book.

Kim sits next to him. Her voice is oddly calm and cheery.

KIM

What the hell do you think you're doing?

JAMES

I'm sorry, ma'am, I don't-

Kim scowls.

KIM

(hissing, through her teeth)

Quiet! Don't look so uptight. We're just two people having a conversation.

JAMES

Yes ma'am.

James slouches nonchalantly.

KIM

I seem to remember giving you a very clear course of action with regards to this girl.

James winces.

The door to the Mayor's villa opens.

Kim rises, turns her back to the door, and calmly walks into a doorway to hide.

Ellen exits the villa, scanning the area.

She sees James. James hides behind his book.

Ellen walks to him.

ELLEN

Why did you do it?

James still hides behind his book.

JAMES

Why did I do what?

ELLEN

Report me for skipping work.

James lowers his book.

JAMES

But... you said you were granted the day off.

ELLEN

Yeah, well, I lied. Was the entire day just some sort of ruse? Trying to sniff out just how bad I was?

JAMES

What? No! I had no idea! I believed you! Why do you assume it was me that reported you? You were walking around the city in broad daylight! Maybe someone just happened to see you?

Ellen rolls her eyes.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I swear, it wasn't me! I was too nervous just talking to someone as pretty as you to even think about something like that.

Ellen's eyes narrow.

She thinks for a moment, then abruptly softens and sits.

ELLEN  
I believe you.

JAMES  
Do you maybe want to do something  
sometime? When you don't have work?

ELLEN  
I... guess so. Yes. I think I would  
like that.

Ellen jumps to her feet.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Oh! Work! I came out here to look  
for Ms. Kim!

She looks around.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Ms. Kim? Kim Fikes! Ms. Kim?

She looks back at James.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
I'm free tomorrow evening? Around  
seven?

JAMES  
I'll see you then!

They smile. Ellen runs back to work.

Kim comes out from hiding and sits next to James. She still  
looks calm, but she lets her anger out in her voice.

KIM  
You knew I didn't want you spending  
time with her, and you just...  
Forget it. I don't have time for  
this.

She rises.

KIM (CONT'D)  
Mr. Jakes is going to hear about  
this. If you don't have some  
semblance of an explanation  
prepared...

JAMES  
Yes ma'am.

Kim walks away and into the villa. James puts his head in his hands.

INT. GOVERNOR'S KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is busy cooking a large meal. Ellen peels potatoes in a large sink.

Kim enters and stands next to her.

KIM  
Did I see you talking to that guy?

ELLEN  
Yes...

KIM  
(humored)  
You're ridiculous, hun.

ELLEN  
It's not what you think!

KIM  
Then what is it?

ELLEN  
I'm going out with him again  
tomorrow.

Ellen drops a potato and reaches for it. Kim rolls her eyes.

KIM  
I thought you said it wasn't what I  
thought?

Ellen recovers the potato and continues peeling.

ELLEN  
Let me finish!

Beat.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
I guess I was finished. It's just I  
think it's a good idea!

Kim laughs loudly.

KIM  
The guy reports you, so you date  
him. Makes sense.

ELLEN

I mean it! He was right to turn me in; what I did was stupid. I just wanted...

Beat.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Nevermind. I think it'd be good. I'd have to make sure I'm always on my best behavior.

KIM

You're not getting out of an explanation that easily!

ELLEN

What? I did explain. I think he'd be-

KIM

Not that. Why did you skip work?

ELLEN

(quiet)

When Alice... I'd never seen someone taken away before. It was scary. That's all.

Kim pats her on the back and chuckles.

KIM

You, hun, are a saint. If anything, it'll be you reporting him for misbehavior.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, GREGORY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gregory sits at his desk, counting a small stack of money.

A KNOCK at the door.

He slides the money into a desk drawer.

GREGORY

Come in!

James and Kim enter. James nervously approaches the desk.

Kim stands at his shoulder.

JAMES

Sir.

James and Kim salute. Gregory salutes back.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
You wanted to see me, sir?

GREGORY  
You're a good chaperone, Cooper.  
I've had my eye on you, and I like  
what I've seen.

James relaxes slightly.

JAMES  
Th-thank you, sir.

GREGORY  
(growing anger)  
Imagine my surprise, then, when I  
hear you went directly against your  
superior's wishes, to pursue a  
relationship with some girl!

KIM  
Not even 'Some girl;' she's a known  
errant!

Gregory glances at the drawer he put the money in.

GREGORY  
The issue here is his disobedience.  
There's no need to mention any  
criminal status the girl may or may  
not have.

Kim cocks her head at Gregory.

Gregory glares at her in a "My word is law" manner.

Kim recovers herself.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
The fact is, you disobeyed and  
disrespected your superior! You  
wanna explain yourself, Cooper?

JAMES  
Yes sir. I... I'm digging for dirt.  
S-something seems off about her. I,  
um, I think she's hiding something,  
and I need her to, to trust me.  
Sir.

Kim groans.

KIM

Bullshit. This is a blatant power play, sir. He's trying to get close to the girl so he can watch me, and I won't have it.

Gregory laughs.

GREGORY

I think you overestimate how much self-control young men have when young women are involved. Besides, even if it is to keep an eye on you, he's a chaperone. Keeping an eye on people is his job.

KIM

Sir, if we can't trust each other, who can we trust?

GREGORY

Yes, yes, relax, I'm still on your side. Cooper, your actions were out of line. If you were willing to go against the orders of your superior just because this girl was pretty, well, maybe you're not cut out to be a chaperone.

JAMES

I'm sorry, sir, I'll-

GREGORY

If, however, you were telling the truth about your motivation, and you really are just digging for dirt on the girl? Well, you went about it the wrong way, but your heart's in the right place. I'll need something on her, son, something that makes this worth it.

JAMES

Yes sir, absolutely sir.

GREGORY

A chaperone is a chaperone for life, James. If I have to decide you aren't qualified for the position, I can't simply fire you. Understand?

JAMES

Yes, sir.

GREGORY

Dismissed.

James salutes and exits.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

James paces in front of the mayor's villa with a small package under his arms. He checks the time.

The door to the villa opens, and the cooks all exit.

He scans their faces, but Ellen is not among them.

He walks towards them. Kim shoots him a quick glare.

He stops, nervous.

She separates from the group, walking towards him as the other cooks walk away.

KIM

Cooper.

JAMES

Ma'am.

Kim glances at his package. He shifts his grip on it.

KIM

The girl asked me to tell you she wasn't going to be here.

JAMES

What? Why not? Where is she?

KIM

I don't care what sort of emergency it was, if it was up to me, there's no way I'd let her-

JAMES

Emergency? What happened?

KIM

Interrupt me again, Cooper. Go on, see what happens.

JAMES

I'm sorry, ma'am, it won't happen again.

KIM

I should hope not. Now, she didn't want you to know where she lived, so don't let her know you do.

She hands him a piece of paper with an address on it.

KIM (CONT'D)

You're to keep an eye on her and her family. They're low to begin with, and now that her papa's dead, there's no telling what they'll get up to.

Kim strides away.

James opens his mouth to speak, but thinks better of it.

He looks at the paper.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lyle lies unmoving on the bottom bunk bed. Mary sits at his head, crying. She runs her fingers through his hair.

Junior kneels at his feet, stoic.

Ellen paces nervously around the room.

ELLEN

Why would he say that? Why would he even say that? He couldn't have meant it!

JUNIOR

Why not? He was dying. What's it to him what happens to us?

ELLEN

He was delirious! He had a fever! He was feverish!

JUNIOR

He knew exactly what he was saying, and you know it!

MARY

(screaming)

Be QUIET!

EXT. BANKS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

James loiters just inside an alleyway across the street from the apartment building.

A 12-year-old boy approaches a wall outside the alleyway. He wears an oversized coat and hat, and pulls out a small, pale carrot.

Junior exits the apartment building and walks away.

James follows him.

The boy sees James, jumps, and runs. James ignores him.

Ellen exits the apartment building.

James hurries back into the alley.

Ellen looks around, then walks the opposite direction as Junior.

James follows her.

EXT. SCHOOL PARK - DAY

A man stands, tied to one of the poles in the middle of the park. A TRUTH-TELLER shouts through a megaphone. Three riflemen stand by.

Ellen sits on nearby a bench and closes her eyes. A tear materializes, but she wipes it away.

TRUTH-TELLER

...accused of blaspheming against  
our glorious Father, and of  
conspiring to convince others to  
leave our bountiful nation of  
wealth for the squalor of our  
bastard enemies. His sentence is  
death.

Ellen idly watches the proceedings.

The riflemen take aim.

James arrives and sits next to Ellen.

The riflemen fire.

Ellen puts on a happy face.

JAMES

Are you ever going to show up when we have plans, or am I just going to have to randomly bump into you every time I want to see you?

Ellen laughs.

ELLEN

I'm so sorry! Did Kim give you my message?

JAMES

She did, but... she didn't say why you weren't there.

Ellen's attitude chills.

The riflemen fire again.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You don't have to tell me if you don't want to.

ELLEN

Do you mind? It's not that I don't trust you, because I do! It's just... personal.

James pats her hand. She smiles bashfully.

The riflemen fire again. The truth-speaker grabs his megaphone.

TRUTH-TELLER

You have witnessed how miserable fools end up! Traitors who betray the Father and his nation end up like this!

James looks at where his hand is, takes it away, and blushes.

James and Ellen both laugh awkwardly.

He puts his hand back on hers. They smile at each other.

INT. JAMES' DORM - NIGHT

Roy fiddles with the radio, which blares static. James enters.

ROY  
Oh, hi. Stupid radio's acting up  
again.

James sits on Roy's bed.

JAMES  
Did you move the antenna? You know  
how it gets when you move the  
antenna.

ROY  
I didn't move the stupid antenna.

James gets up and walks to the radio.

He hits it. Classical music begins issuing forth.

JAMES  
Ta-da!

James lowers his bed from the wall.

ROY  
Of course. Hitting the delicate  
piece of machinery while it's  
already malfunctioning. Why didn't  
I think of that? Makes perfect  
sense.

James takes off his shoes and gets into bed.

JAMES  
Good night, Roy.

ROY  
Long day?

JAMES  
Maybe. Bad day, though, definitely  
bad.

Roy turns the radio off and sits on his bed.

ROY  
Want to talk about it?

JAMES  
No.

James sits up.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Have you ever wanted to not do your duty?

ROY

I've never wanted to not do my duty, but I have not wanted to do my duty. That's what you meant, right?

JAMES

Yeah, yeah, of course, yeah.

ROY

I think that happens to everyone. Everyone has to do unpleasant things sometimes.

JAMES

But... nevermind.

James lies back down.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Goodnight, Roy.

Roy turns the lights off.

ROY

Goodnight, James.

INT. JAMES' DORM - NIGHT

James awakens to some shuffles and hushed tones.

He sits up and turns on a light to see Roy and PETER OLSON, 20, pressing their ears to the radio's speakers.

They shoot to a standing position.

James stares at Peter.

Peter looks at James and holds a finger up to his mouth.

James nods. Roy doesn't notice.

ROY

Geez, James, you startled us.

JAMES

What's going on? Who is that?

ROY

This is Peter, he's a couple rooms down. He doesn't have a radio and wanted to listen to ours. We tried to have it quiet so it wouldn't wake you.

JAMES

What time is it?

ROY

I don't know. Go back to sleep.

James turns off the lights, and goes back to sleep.

EXT. BANKS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

James lounges in an alley across the street from the apartment building.

Junior exits the building with a small crate. He surveys the area.

James hides. Junior doesn't see him.

Junior walks away.

James follows him.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

Junior walks around behind city hall.

James follows him.

EXT. BEHIND CITY HALL - DAY

The back of the building is unpainted, dirty, and cheerless.

It faces a thicket of dead trees, stripped of all bark that's within reach of the ground.

A young woman with white stripes on her sleeves sits on a crate against the wall.

Junior walks around the corner and approaches her.

James pokes his head around, but quickly retreats. He hugs the corner of the wall and listens carefully.

Junior and the woman speak, but James can't make out what they say.

The woman picks up her crate. She and Junior walk through the trees.

James follows.

EXT. FREIGHT STATION - DAY

Junior and the woman emerge from the woods alongside railroad tracks. They walk down the tracks a short way to a dilapidated freight station and the warehouse alongside it.

James follows them, staying within the trees.

Junior and the woman enter the warehouse.

James waits, watching.

An old woman and a man young enough to be her son exit the warehouse and walk along the train tracks.

Once they've past, James exits the trees and walks to the warehouse.

INT. BLACK MARKET - DAY

Inside the warehouse are dozens of makeshift tents and stalls. On display are pale vegetables, hand-made quilts, and a sparse collection of battered old radios, cell phones, and one or two televisions.

A handful of people wander around, haggling. A pregnant woman with a toddler begs for food, crying softly.

Junior crouches next to his crate, near the entrance. A blanket is spread out in front of him.

James enters. He looks around.

Junior carefully removes a dozen old glass bottles filled with moonshine.

James watches as Junior sets the bottles on the blanket and sits on the crate.

James approaches Junior.

JUNIOR

Potato moonshine. I've got the last still in the entire prefecture; you want some alcohol, I'm your only bet.

JAMES

How'd you pull that off? Did you make the still yourself?

JUNIOR

I'm not here to chat, friend. I'm trading for food. Or foreign money.

JAMES

Foreign money? Are you planning on leaving?

JUNIOR

Mind yours. Make an offer or leave.

James thinks for a moment. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a small green card.

JAMES

I have this.

Junior takes the card.

JUNIOR

If the grocer had enough food to meet all the rations, I wouldn't need to be here, would I?

Junior examines the card, laughs.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

Hell, man, they haven't given milk rations for years. What do you take me for?

James scoffs.

JAMES

Maybe you haven't. They still give them out if you're important enough.

JUNIOR

Screw you. You think you're better than me?

James rips the card from Junior's hand.

JAMES

Then I guess I'll just keep it.

JUNIOR

I guess you will. Get out of here.

James leaves. Junior watches him.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

Kim sits at a desk, signing papers. James stands in front of her.

KIM

The old freight station? Don't be ridiculous. That was one of the first places we looked.

JAMES

And when was that? How long ago did you look?

KIM

We looked for the black market for years, James.

JAMES

I understand, ma'am, but I'm not just going off of a hunch. I was there.

KIM

I personally oversaw the search, James. Do you realize what you're implying with all this?

JAMES

I'm sorry, ma'am. But it was there. I saw it.

KIM

I'll look into it. Personally. But I can't bring this to Jakes without being absolutely certain.

JAMES

I understand.

KIM

Good. You can go now.

James salutes and walks to Gregory's office.

KIM (CONT'D)  
 Wait! Cooper! What do you think  
 you're-

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, GREGORY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gregory talks on the phone while sitting at his desk.

James barges in. Gregory looks up.

JAMES  
 Sir, I found the black market. It's  
 in the freight station.

Kim runs inside.

GREGORY  
 (to the phone)  
 I have to go.

He hangs up the phone.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
 What the hell is going on here?

KIM  
 Sir, I can explain. He-

GREGORY  
 Don't defend him, Fikes. Let the  
 boy speak for himself.

KIM  
 I wasn't-

GREGORY  
 Fikes.

Kim bows her head.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
 (to James)  
 Well?

JAMES  
 Sir, like I said. There's a black  
 market meeting in the freight  
 station.

GREGORY  
 I heard what you said when you came  
 in here, boy.  
 (MORE)

GREGORY (CONT'D)

I want to know why that piece of information necessitated barging into my office uninvited, circumventing the normal chain of command. Why are you telling me this, and not Kim?

JAMES

Sir, I tried to tell her, but she didn't believe me.

Kim opens her mouth to speak, but says nothing.

Gregory thinks.

GREGORY

I'll look into it. But if you're wrong, Cooper, you know you're going to burn for this.

KIM

Sir, I believe him, and I was going to look into it. Please, let me handle this.

GREGORY

I know you were, Fikes, because you're a good chaperone. But I'd prefer he's wrong if I were you; if this rookie did in two months what you couldn't do in years...

KIM

Yes, sir.

GREGORY

Get the hell out of my office, both of you.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

James and Kim exit Gregory's office.

JAMES

I'm sorry, ma'am, but you weren't-

KIM

I want a full report on everything having vaguely to do with this.

JAMES

Yes ma'am. Right away.

Kim walks away.

EXT. SCHOOL PARK - DAY

Three gagged men are tied to the poles in the middle of the park. A dozen riflemen line up in front of them. A group of schoolchildren and their teachers stand nearby, watching the executions. The truth-teller addresses the schoolchildren without his megaphone. He frequently points and laughs at the gagged men.

James and Ellen sit on a blanket in the middle of the park.

Ellen is losing weight.

James pulls two sandwiches out of a small tin bucket.

Ellen's eyes widen.

James hands one to Ellen.

JAMES

The sandwiches are kind of thin,  
I'm sorry.

Ellen tears into her sandwich.

James eats his.

James. looks towards the executions.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I wish they wouldn't ruin such a  
nice day with all of that.

Ellen reaches into the bucket while James isn't looking.

She pulls out a small roll and puts it in her pocket.

ELLEN

It's not so nice a day for them.

James laughs.

JAMES

I guess that's true. How's the  
sandwich?

Ellen sheepishly holds up the remaining corner.

ELLEN

It's very good! Thank you.

JAMES

Don't worry about it. Do you want  
some of mine? You seem pretty  
hungry.

She glances at his sandwich longingly, but rips her eyes  
away.

ELLEN

No, I just... I just missed  
breakfast today. I, uh, slept in.

JAMES

I've been there!

They laugh.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You have a very beautiful laugh.

Ellen blushes and looks away. James blushes.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said  
that.

A flurry of REPORTS issue throughout the park as the three  
men are shot.

The children clap.

James clears his throat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Tell me about your family. You  
mentioned you have a brother?

ELLEN

Lyle Jr. We just call him Junior.

JAMES

What's he like?

ELLEN

I don't... he's not around much  
anymore.

JAMES

Oh.

The riflemen untie the executed men from the poles and put  
them in garbage bags.

The teachers lead the schoolchildren away.

ELLEN

I know I shouldn't worry about him;, he can take care of himself. But... I do worry. A lot.

JAMES

That's... that's reasonable.

ELLEN

After dad... died... I just don't know what I would do if anything happened to Junior.

Ellen tears up.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I wanted to tell you sooner, but, I just... I didn't want you to... I don't know what I was thinking. You've been nothing but good to me, and... and...

She cries.

James pats her on the back.

She shakes her head and stops crying.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Forget it, it's nothing. I should go.

She stands up. James follows suit.

JAMES

What? Are you okay?

Ellen folds up the blanket.

ELLEN

I'm fine.

James grabs the bucket.

JAMES

Let me walk you home. It's getting dark.

ELLEN

No! No, I'll be fine.

JAMES

Please, I insist.

ELLEN

O-okay. That'd be... that'd be nice.

They leave.

EXT. NICE APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

The apartment building is white, and relatively clean.

Ellen and James stand at the front entrance. They're the only people nearby.

ELLEN

This is me! Thanks for the walk.

She smiles at James. He cocks his head.

JAMES

This is... nicer than I expected.

ELLEN

Yeah, I know, I'll see you next week, bye!

She turns her back to him and walks haltingly towards the entrance.

James waits.

She stops and turns back to him.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I'm fine. You can go now, you don't have to wait for me.

JAMES

No, please. It'd be impolite for me to leave before you've gotten in. What if the door's locked?

Ellen retrieves a key from her pocket.

ELLEN

That's what the key's for! Bye!

She turns back to the building.

James doesn't move.

She turns back to him.

JAMES  
Go ahead, it's fine. I've got  
nothing left to do today.

ELLEN  
Oh... in that case, um, why don't  
we go do something else? Let's go  
see a movie!

She walks determinedly away.

James doesn't move.

She stops and walks back to him.

JAMES  
Ellen, it's okay.

ELLEN  
Okay then, not a movie. How about a  
walk?

JAMES  
Ellen. I know.

ELLEN  
(worried)  
You know what?

JAMES  
I know this isn't where you live.

ELLEN  
What do you mean? Of course this is  
where I live. Why would I lie about  
that?

JAMES  
I asked that same question. But  
Ellen...

He reaches for her hands.

She pulls back, but then slowly places her hands in his.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I don't care.

The door to the building opens, and they each whip their  
hands to their sides. An old woman exits and walks down the  
street.

ELLEN  
(softly)  
This way.

She leads James away.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary putters around the room aimlessly, muttering occasionally.

The door opens, and Ellen enters, followed by James. Mary doesn't seem to notice.

ELLEN  
Mother, we have company.

Mary blinks deliberately and looks around as though seeing the room for the first time.

She sees Ellen and smiles.

MARY  
Hello, dear!

Ellen gestures to James.

ELLEN  
Mother, this is James.

James bows his head.

JAMES  
Nice to meet you, ma'am.

Mary smiles absently at him.

ELLEN  
Is Junior not home?

Beat.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Mother, is Junior not home?

Mary blinks and turns to Ellen.

MARY  
No, he's not. He said he'd be home late again.

ELLEN  
It is late. Did he give any idea  
when?

Mary doesn't seem to hear her.

Ellen looks awkwardly at James. James smiles reassuringly.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Mother, did Junior say when he'd be  
back?

Mary shakes her head and begins pacing around again.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
She's been like that for a while  
now.

JAMES  
It must be hard for you.

James moves to close the door, but stops when Junior enters  
with his crate.

Junior sees James and freezes.

ELLEN  
There you are, Junior! I was  
worried sick.

JAMES  
Let me help you with that.

James takes the crate from Junior. Junior doesn't move.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It's nice to finally meet you.

JUNIOR  
...Finally meet me?

JAMES  
Where should I put this?

Junior gestures towards the kitchen. James disappears into  
the kitchen.

ELLEN  
Mother has already given a bad  
enough impression, Junior, and I  
promise you, if you don't behave-

James reappears without the crate.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Junior, this is James. We're...  
he's a friend.

James holds out his hand.

JAMES  
I've heard so much about you. It's  
a shame it's taken me this long to  
meet you.

James winks at him. Junior shakes his hand.

JUNIOR  
Yeah. It's good to, um, meet you.

ELLEN  
What was that you were carrying?

JAMES  
I'm sure it's nothing important,  
Ellen.

JUNIOR  
Are you thirsty, uh, James?

ELLEN  
I'm so sorry! What a host. Would  
you like some water?

JAMES  
Actually, do you have any orange  
juice?

Ellen and Junior look at him like he's crazy.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Um... water would be nice.

Ellen disappears into the kitchen.

JUNIOR  
Whatever I did wrong, you leave my  
sister out of it. She doesn't know  
anything-

JAMES  
It's not like that!

JUNIOR  
Oh, really? So you're not here to-

JAMES

No! Listen to me! Whatever you do,  
don't go-

Ellen reappears with a glass of water. She holds it out to James.

ELLEN

There you go!

JAMES

(quickly)  
It's getting late, I should really  
get going! See you Saturday! Nice  
to meet you, Junior!

ELLEN

Oh, goodbye-

James runs out the door.

Ellen glares at Junior.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

What did you say?

EXT. BANKS APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

James runs out of the building and leans against the wall.

JAMES

Stupid, James, stupid!

He hits himself and walks away.

INT. BLACK MARKET - DAY

The black market is busy, with dozens of people bartering and trading, Junior among them.

Junior sees movement outside. He peeks through a window and sees dozens of peacemen; they wear the military uniforms, and are all armed.

He frantically peels at the corner of the bottom of his crate to reveal a hidden badge.

He pockets the badge and throws his moonshine in the crate.

Peacemen break through all the doors at once.

Junior ducks behind a tarp next to the wall.

A woman and her two children run, and are shot several times.

Junior hides his crate in a hole in the wall.

One or two men try to fight the peacemen, but they're shot as well. Everyone else lies prostrate on the ground.

Junior climbs through the window, unseen.

EXT. FREIGHT STATION - DAY

As Junior climbs out the window, he's spotted by a peaceman.

The peaceman shouts.

Junior displays his badge and scowls at the peaceman. The peaceman nods apologetically.

Junior slips into the woods.

EXT. BEHIND CITY HALL - DAY

Junior exits the woods. He walks casually to the corner of city hall.

Gregory steps from around the corner. He has a gun.

Junior freezes.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

James paces in front of Gregory's office. Gregory enters and walks to his office.

JAMES

Sir! How did it go?

GREGORY

It was wonderful! Sometimes I wish I'd become a peaceman instead of an investigator; it would've been fun to participate, rather than just listen from outside.

JAMES

I know what you mean.

James shuffles his feet. Gregory tries to move past him into his office.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Wait, sir!

GREGORY

Yes?

JAMES

I have a request.

GREGORY

Now's a good time for it! We got them because of you. What is it?

JAMES

Please spare Lyle Banks Junior.

Gregory seems taken aback.

GREGORY

Pardon?

JAMES

The boy I followed to find the black market. He's my current assignment's brother, and she worries about him. I'm afraid that if something were to happen to him, she'd shut down emotionally and cease to be useful to us.

GREGORY

I know who he is, Cooper, I read your report thoroughly. It's a good thought, but I'm afraid there's nothing I can do to spare him. He wasn't there.

JAMES

...Sir?

GREGORY

I don't know who you thought you were following, but after interrogating some of the other recusants, I would say it's rather uncertain whether he was ever there at all.

James cocks his head and stares at Gregory.

He sees the top of one of Junior's bottles of moonshine peeking out of Gregory's pocket.

Gregory shifts to hide the bottle from view.

James straightens to attention.

JAMES  
That's all then, sir. Thank you  
sir.

GREGORY  
Good, uh, good job, Cooper.

Gregory pats James on the shoulder before entering his office.

James stares after him.

INT. BANKS KITCHEN - DAY

Ellen and Junior are both squeezed into the tiny kitchen.

Ellen grinds up some corn, cob and all.

JUNIOR  
So where'd you meet him?

ELLEN  
We bumped into each other on the  
street.

JUNIOR  
He's that guy?

ELLEN  
Yes, Junior, he's "that guy."

She stares at the paltry amount of ground corn.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Give me some sawdust.

JUNIOR  
What?

Ellen points to a small bag in the corner.

Junior scoops a small bowl into the bag and hands it to Ellen.

She pours it into the ground corn and mixes it up.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)  
Is that... edible?

ELLEN

It's filling, at least, and it's legal, unlike your little-

JUNIOR

I was trying to provide food for my family!

ELLEN

And what would your family do if the only man of their house was arrested?

JUNIOR

There wasn't any danger of that until your "friend" showed up! He's a lookout, Ellen! Probably a chaperone!

ELLEN

You don't know that!

JUNIOR

Oh, so they just happen to find us the day after he does? Come on!

ELLEN

If you don't do anything wrong, you've got nothing to fear from them!

JUNIOR

(volume rising)

That's not true, and you know it! What would they do if they knew about-

ELLEN

(sharply)

Stop. Yelling.

JUNIOR

What would they do to us if they knew about what dad said?

Ellen hangs her head.

ELLEN

I know.

JUNIOR

You need to stop seeing him.

ELLEN

You don't get it. That's... that's exactly why I'm seeing him. If we can get on his good side, maybe he can open some doors for us.

JUNIOR

You're lying.

Beat. Junior sighs.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

But it's a good idea. So fine, you keep this up. But what happens when it's time to go, Ellen? You know he's not coming with us.

Ellen looks away from him.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

James walks onto the campus. Kim stands by a corner.

The university shines modernity. Lights are everywhere, and they're all on, including a number of garishly large neon signs. The students are less malnourished than citizens elsewhere.

James walks towards a building marked as "DORMITORIES" by one of the neon signs.

Kim whistles to James.

He sees her, squints, and walks towards her.

She disappears around the corner. He follows.

JAMES

What's-

Kim throws a bag over James' head.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, GREGORY'S OFFICE - DAY

Kim rips the bag off of James' head. He's handcuffed in Gregory's office.

GREGORY

What's the meaning of this?

KIM

This scum almost cost us the raid!

JAMES

What?

GREGORY

The raid went perfectly! Explain yourself!

KIM

You're right, it did go perfectly. Except for the fact that one person, the person who led us to the black market, and the person who admitted to running a still and selling alcohol, just happened to not be present!

JAMES

Hang on, I thought-

KIM

And oh, what a coincidence! This person, this Lyle Banks Jr., just happens to be the brother of James' little love interest!

JAMES

She's my assignment!

KIM

You want to remind me why she's your assignment?

James looks down.

GREGORY

Cooper, is this true?

James gapes at Gregory, astonished.

Gregory glares at him and nods.

James nods slowly.

JAMES

Y-yes. I did tip him off.

KIM

You see? Sir, I recommend-

JAMES

Sir, the boy wasn't just participating in the black market, he was selling alcohol there, alcohol he made; clearly he's not afraid to get his hands dirty. As I'm going to be spending a significant amount of time following the family anyway, I thought it prudent to let him continue to lead us to new illicit activities and groups.

Gregory smiles at James.

GREGORY

There, you see? A perfectly reasonable explanation! Uncuff him!

KIM

You can't possibly-

GREGORY

(stern)  
Uncuff him.

Kim uncuffs him.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Given recent events, Fikes, I would think you'd spend much less time worrying about James, and much more time worrying about yourself. You're good, Kim, but you're not irreplaceable.

Kim salutes Gregory and turns to exit.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

I think, Kim...

Kim stops.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

That you forgot to salute your superior.

KIM

But I...

Her eyes widen. She glares at James. Salutes him.

James' eyes widen. He slowly salutes back.

Kim leaves.

Gregory reaches under his desk and pulls out the moonshine and a glass.

He pours himself a drink.

GREGORY

Very smooth. Very smooth indeed.  
You're going to go far.

JAMES

(uncertain)  
Thank you, sir.

Gregory takes a drink. He sighs happily.

GREGORY

You've made yourself a powerful ally. But you watch yourself, boy. Don't get stupid. I won't throw you under the bus, but I won't risk myself to push you out of the way. Understand?

JAMES

Yes, sir.

GREGORY

Dismissed.

James salutes and leaves.

INT. JAMES' DORM - DAY

Roy and Peter press their ears up against the radio.

James enters.

Roy stands up quickly. Peter is less startled.

ROY

Hi James! How was your day? You want some water?

Roy hurries to the kitchen and fills a glass with water.

JAMES

No, I'm fine. What were you guys doing?

ROY

What? Oh, the radio!

PETER  
Your neighbors complained.

ROY  
They have a big test coming up and they wanted to study for it.

JAMES  
Whatever you say.

PETER  
I should get going. Do you have things under control?

ROY  
For the project? I sure do.

PETER  
Okay. See you in class.

Peter nods at James and leaves.

JAMES  
You two have been hanging out a lot.

ROY  
We have a project together. It's some nonsense about music, that's why we've been listening to the radio so much. Do you... mind if I continue?

JAMES  
Why would I mind? Just, keep on keeping it quiet. I've got a lot of homework, and I want to get it done; Ellen and I are going to see a movie tomorrow.

Roy nods and returns to the radio.

James cracks open a textbook.

INT. BLISSTOWN MOVIE THEATER - MIDWAY THROUGH THE MOVIE

James and Ellen watch a movie.

The power goes out.

James groans, but Ellen calmly gets up and leaves.

James follows.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Moviegoers exit the theater, James and Ellen among them.

JAMES

This is ridiculous! You're really not upset?

ELLEN

Really, it's fine, I'm used to it.

JAMES

What do you mean, used to it?

ELLEN

The Father needs the power for the war effort. I appreciate electricity when we have it, but I'd happily go entirely without, if that was what He thought was best. Wouldn't you?

JAMES

Of course! What, are you questioning my devotion?

ELLEN

Not at all! I'm just surprised that power outages still bother you. I'd assumed you were used to them.

JAMES

No, this is the first time it's happened to me. At the university, the lights never go out. It must really be awful to live down here.

ELLEN

So what, you're better than everyone else? You go to university, so you get more power, you get more food-

JAMES

That's not what I meant, and you know it. We need the electricity for our classes. And we only get as much food as everyone else!

Ellen stares at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(uncertain)

Don't we?

ELLEN  
Goodbye, James. I'll walk myself  
home.

Ellen walks away.

JAMES  
Ellen, wait!

Ellen keeps walking.

James sighs, and walks the other way.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

James walks down the main street, towards the grocers.

He pulls out a handful of ration cards and looks at them.

He enters the grocer.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - FIVE MINUTES LATER

James emerges from the grocer with a small bag.

He walks down the street.

As he passes the bookstore he stops, thinks for a moment, and enters.

INT. BLISSTOWN BOOKSTORE - DAY

Hal reads a book at the register. One of the blue books sits open on the counter.

The door opens.

Hal drops the book he's reading behind the counter and grabs the blue book.

James enters.

JAMES  
Hey, Hal.

HAL  
Good evening!

James sees Hal reading.

JAMES

Am I interrupting your study time?

HAL

No, not at... I mean, y-yes, actually. I just... didn't want to seem rude.

JAMES

Don't be ridiculous! I could never fault you for reading the words of our Father. Please, continue. I can wait.

Hal coughs and forces a grin.

He glances at a clock and begins reading.

Beat.

Hal looks up.

HAL

Th-there, that's an hour now. I don't think it'd be a problem to stop now.

JAMES

Please, I don't mind. I wouldn't want you to stop on my account.

Hal nods and continues reading. His forehead sweats.

Beat.

Hal looks at the clock, then at James. He smiles nervously at James and goes back to reading.

Beat.

James shifts awkwardly. Hal coughs. He looks up.

HAL

It's really fine for me to-

JAMES

If you'd still be reading if I weren't here, then I want you to keep reading. I really don't want to interrupt.

Hal smiles weakly and goes back to reading. James twiddles his thumbs.

Beat.

James looks at the books.

Beat.

James turns back to Hal.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
 Actually, if you're sure you're  
 good...

Hal sighs and drops the book on the counter.

He jumps at the SLAM the book makes as it hits.

He simpers at James.

HAL  
 What can I do for you?

JAMES  
 I need a favor.

James reaches into his pocket and holds up his book.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
 Do you have any more copies of the  
 first book? I want to give it to a  
 friend, but I'd like to keep mine.

HAL  
 They would need to come get it  
 themselves, James. It's foreign.  
 They need permission.

James leans in closer.

JAMES  
 That was the favor.

Hal sweats.

HAL  
 Hah. Um. Well.

JAMES  
 Please? You know me. I would never  
 do anything unscrupulous.

HAL  
 James, they come here every week to  
 count the stock. They'd notice if  
 anything was missing.

JAMES

Please, Hal. There has to be something you can do.

Hal takes a deep breath.

He walks up the staircase and returns with a book. He sets it on the counter.

HAL

That's from my personal library.

James pulls out a wad of cash and tries to hand it to Hal, but Hal refuses.

HAL (CONT'D)

Selling personal goods is a crime. I'm just... carelessly leaving my book here. Now I'm going to go in the back. If you choose steal it, the crime is entirely yours.

James nods knowingly.

JAMES

Thanks, buddy. I owe you one.

Hal waves a hand, and walks into the back room.

James grabs the book and exits.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Two groups of about three dozen students each shout at each other, separated by a line of peacemen. Roy is on the outskirts of the scene, watching dispassionately.

James arrives, observes the situation, and approaches Roy.

JAMES

What's going on?

Roy doesn't turn away to look at James.

ROY

They're making anyone with low grades eligible for the draft.

JAMES

What? But they swore...

ROY

Yeah. Thus this. One side says that if they're drafting people with a low GPA, people with a high GPA are next. The other side says that if students are going to waste the Father's gifts, they deserve to get drafted.

JAMES

What side are you on?

ROY

I just try not to be a target, James.

Ellen arrives, tears streaming down her face. She runs to James.

JAMES

Ellen! What's wrong?

ELLEN

They took Junior!

JAMES

Who? Who took Junior?

Ellen glances at the peacemen nearby.

ROY

Who else?

JAMES

Alright, alright. Um. Roy, take her to our room.

ROY

What? We're not allowed to have women in the dorm.

JAMES

So hide her! I'm gonna go see what I can find out.

James hands Roy his bags and runs off.

ROY

Wait, James!

Roy sighs. He looks at Ellen.

ROY (CONT'D)

Let's go.

He leads her towards their dorm.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

James runs in, short of breath. Kim stands up from her desk.

KIM  
I figured I could expect you soon  
enough.

JAMES  
What did you do?

KIM  
You may be my superior, but I'm  
still your senior, and you will  
address me with the appropriate  
amount of respect as dictated by  
the Father's teachings.

Beat.

KIM (CONT'D)  
...Sir.

JAMES  
Yes ma'am. Sorry.

KIM  
If you're here for information  
about the recusant brother of that  
girl of yours, suffice it to say  
his past caught up with him.

Kim leans in close.

KIM (CONT'D)  
He should be arriving at the park  
very soon.

INT. JAMES' DORM - DAY

Roy reads on his bed. James' bed is upraised. Ellen is  
nowhere to be seen.

A KNOCK at the door.

Roy glances at the wall where James' bed is raised.

He gets up and unlocks the door. James enters.

JAMES  
Where is she?

Roy nods towards James' bed.

James lowers his bed, and Ellen falls out of the wall with the bed.

James helps her to her feet.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
We don't have much time.

James takes her hand and they run out of the room.

Roy watches them leave.

EXT. SCHOOL PARK - DAY

James and Ellen run towards the execution poles. Peacemen march Junior towards the poles, along with three other prisoners. Riflemen and a TRUTH-TELLER walk along with them.

Ellen sees him and screams. Junior sees her and tears up.

James and Ellen run to him, but a peaceman stops them.

JAMES  
That's her brother! Can't she at least say goodbye?

The peaceman looks back at the truth-teller. The truth-teller nods.

The peaceman steps aside to let Ellen run to Junior, but he still stops James.

Ellen hugs Junior, but another PEACEMAN immediately rips her off of him.

PEACEMAN  
No touching!

JUNIOR  
I'm so sorry, I wasn't doing anything, I swear, they just grabbed me, please don't be mad-

ELLEN  
I'm not mad!

Ellen sobs. Junior cries.

JUNIOR  
I'm scared.

Ellen opens her mouth to speak, but a peaceman pushes her aside.

He shoves a handful of rocks in Junior's mouth, then gags him; the same is done to the other prisoners.

Another peaceman pushes Ellen away from him.

Ellen screams. She tries to run to Junior, but peacemen stop her.

ELLEN  
(screaming)  
What did he do? What did he do? Why  
are you doing this?

James grabs her and pulls her back. She clings to James and wails.

Junior and the other men are tied to poles.

Junior and Ellen lock eyes.

Riflemen prepare their weapons.

The truth-teller grabs his megaphone.

A peaceman hands him a long list. The truth-teller's eyes widen, and he groans.

TRUTH-TELLER  
(bored)  
All glory be to our merciful  
Father, bringer of peace and  
justice. His court is now in  
session. The first defendant stands  
accused of... various treacheries  
against our beautiful nation. Their  
sentence is death.

He looks at the list. Drops it.

TRUTH-TELLER (CONT'D)  
The defendants stand accused of  
various treacheries against our  
beautiful nation. Their sentence is  
death.

ELLEN  
No! No! What did he do wrong? He  
didn't do anything!

The truth-teller scowls at Ellen and gestures to one of the peacemen.

James notices.

JAMES  
Ellen. Ellen.

ELLEN  
(ignoring James)  
He didn't do anything! Stop!

James covers her mouth.

JAMES  
Ellen, you need to be quiet.

The peaceman stops, watching.

Ellen notices the peaceman. She nods.

Ellen sobs. James removes his hand. She doesn't say anything.

The peaceman backs off.

The riflemen aim at the prisoners.

Junior shuts his eyes.

The riflemen fire.

Junior's body slackens, and slumps down.

Ellen buries her face in James' shoulder.

The riflemen fire two more times.

TRUTH-TELLER  
(bored)  
You have witnessed how miserable  
fools end up. Traitors who betray  
the Father and his nation end up  
like this.

Peacemen untie Junior and the others, put their bodies in garbage bags, and carry them off.

JAMES  
(to himself)  
What did you get him for...?

James walks over to the list the truth-teller dropped. He examines it.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Possession of alcohol? That's not  
a...

He shouts to the departing procession.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
That's not a capital offense!

They ignore him.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary sits at the table, unmoving.

James and Ellen enter. They sit at the table.

A long beat.

James pulls the book he got from Hal out of his pocket. He puts it on the table.

JAMES  
Here. I uh... I got this for you.

Ellen picks it up and looks at it.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It's... it's just some book.

ELLEN  
Isn't this...

She flips it over and looks at the back. Her eyes widen.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
This is foreign. How did you get  
this?

James shrugs.

JAMES  
It's nothing special. I just... get  
privileges. University. I got you  
some bread, too, but I left that at  
the dorm.

ELLEN  
You get foreign stuff because  
you're a student?

JAMES  
Sometimes, I guess. Why?

ELLEN  
You can help, can't you?

JAMES  
Help with what? I don't understand.

ELLEN  
(quiet)  
I need to get out.

JAMES  
Out of what?

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Get out of what?

ELLEN  
My dad's not... not entirely from here. Well, he is, but... his grandpapa was a war prisoner. He was foreign. When he died, he asked us... his dying wish was for us to go back to his homeland.

James shoots to his feet, knocking his chair over.

Mary startles at the BANG the chair makes, but otherwise remains motionless.

JAMES  
Ellen, you can't be serious. You don't know how bad it is out there!

ELLEN  
Don't you realize how bad it is here? We're starving, James!

JAMES  
It's worse out there! If you think you're hungry here, just imagine what it must be like outside!

ELLEN  
Please, James! It's something I have to do, but now that Junior... I can't do it alone. I just can't. I need your help.

James turns his back to her. Beat.

JAMES  
I'll... I'll feel around.

Ellen runs to him and hugs him.

EXT. JAMES' DORM - NIGHT

Peter exits James' dorm.

James arrives.

PETER  
Cooper.

JAMES  
Mr. Olson.

Peter walks away.

James enters his dorm.

INT. JAMES' DORM - NIGHT

Roy reads on his bed. The radio is nowhere to be seen.

James enters, looks around.

JAMES  
Where's the radio?

ROY  
What? Um, Peter took it.

JAMES  
No he didn't. I saw him leave.

James looks at Roy with a new understanding.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Roy, where's the radio?

ROY  
Peter took it earlier. Then he came  
back over.

James searches around the room.

Roy sits up.

ROY (CONT'D)  
It's not here! Peter has it!

James opens a cabinet hidden in the corner. He pulls the  
radio out of it.

Roy freezes.

James plugs the radio in and turns it on.

An upbeat pop song issues forth. Roy leaps up and turns the radio off.

ROY (CONT'D)

Are you crazy? Keep the volume down!

JAMES

That was... that was foreign. You've been listening to foreign radio!

Roy turns it back on and turns the volume down low.

He holds his ear near the speaker and fiddles with the dial.

ROY

When you smacked it, you jostled the inhibitor.

JAMES

You can't possibly blame me for this!

ROY

I don't. I thank you for it.

JAMES

But it's not my fault! I was just trying to fix it!

ROY

Here. Listen to this.

JAMES

No! It's illegal!

ROY

Yeah, like I'll tattletale on you. Come on, just thirty seconds.

James takes a deep breath and leans close.

RADIO VOICE #1

The report also states evidence that suicide rates have recently climbed as high as point-oh-five percent, nearly four times the global average...

James stands up.

JAMES  
See? Things are awful out there!

ROY  
They're talking about us, James.

James hesitates, then leans close again.

RADIO VOICE #1  
...along with the full details of  
the report, can be found at W-N-Y-N  
dot com backslash international.

RADIO VOICE #2  
Obesity rates have been climbing;  
are we facing an epidemic?

Roy laughs. James stands.

JAMES  
What? Obesity?

ROY  
Fat, James. They have too many fat  
people.

JAMES  
I don't... I don't understand.

ROY  
They have too much food. They've  
even tried to give some to us, but  
the Father keeps refusing.

JAMES  
If... if that's what, he thinks is  
best, then surely... surely...

James sits on Roy's bed.

Roy turns off the radio and sits next to him.

ROY  
I'm leaving, James. Come with me.

James laughs bitterly.

JAMES  
What about Peter? I assume he's  
leaving with you?

ROY

No, not yet. You think I should ask him to?

JAMES

No! That's good.

Roy raises an eyebrow. James thinks.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Does he know anything at all about you leaving?

ROY

No, nothing. Why? Is there something I should-

JAMES

Don't worry about it. I've got a favor to ask.

INT. BANKS KITCHEN - DAY

James, Ellen and Mary sit at the table. James and Ellen have empty bowls in front of them. Mary has a bowl with a small portion of corn mush.

She eats slowly and methodically.

JAMES

So far it's him and three or four other students, and they're willing to take you with them. It's not going to be a pleasant journey, but he swears to me that it'll be safe.

ELLEN

(excited)

When are they leaving?

JAMES

A week from tomorrow.

ELLEN

That's great! I figured it would take months!

James looks at Mary.

JAMES

What about...

ELLEN  
I don't know. She's...

Ellen turns to Mary.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Mother.

Mary is unresponsive.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
Mother! Look at me!

Mary is unresponsive.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
She's not really here anymore. I  
don't know what I'm going to do.

JAMES  
And you don't think that's  
something you need to figure out?

ELLEN  
Father will take care of her like  
he does everyone else. Right?

JAMES  
...Right.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, GREGORY'S OFFICE - DAY

Kim and Peter stand before Gregory. James enters.

KIM  
About time.

Gregory shoots a glare at Kim. James salutes.

JAMES  
You called for me, sir?

GREGORY  
Cooper, this is Peter Olson; I  
believe you've met.

JAMES  
Yes, sir.

GREGORY  
Olson's been infiltrating a group  
of university recusants who are  
planning to leave the country.

PETER

Just the other day they added another member to their group: a young woman named Ellen.

James' eyes widen, but he recovers quickly.

JAMES

So you've already infiltrated them. Good.

KIM

You were aware of her intentions to leave the country, and you didn't tell us? ...Sir?

JAMES

Is that an accusation?

KIM

Should it be?

GREGORY

Is it?

KIM

No sir.

GREGORY

Then I suggest you rephrase your question.

Kim fumes.

KIM

I assume, sir, that there's a reason you're only telling us now.

JAMES

I only just confirmed her intentions, not an hour ago. I was on my way here when you called for me.

GREGORY

Very good. Now, however, we have somewhat of a dilemma.

JAMES

Sir?

GREGORY

We need to discuss how we're going to proceed from here.

(MORE)

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Olson has expressed - and justifiably so - some concern over this overlap that's developing between his assignment and yours.

JAMES

Yes, sir.

GREGORY

Normally I would simply pull you from your assignment; Olson has rank, and is more deeply involved than you. Seeing that he's one of the best we have, though, I think working with him could be a valuable experience for you.

PETER

Thank you, sir.

GREGORY

You'll be answering to him, now. He's the head of this investigation. And while I intend for him to help you learn, if he wants you to sit in the corner and stay out of his way, that's his call. Understand? Dismissed.

James, Peter and Kim exit.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

Kim walks to her desk. James and Peter walk off to a side.

JAMES

Before you say anything, sir, please let me apologize for all of this. I wasn't trying to move in on your assignment; Roy told me you weren't involved in their plans.

PETER

So you thought the best course of action was to go behind my back?

JAMES

What?

PETER

Oh come on, Cooper. I had the room bugged weeks ago. I heard everything.

James' eyes widen.

JAMES  
I can explain...

PETER  
Save it. I'm used to being the guy  
everyone tries to prove they're  
better than. I just thought you  
were above that.

Peter walks away, then stops.

PETER (CONT'D)  
You heard Mr. Jakes. If I want you  
to stay out of my way, you will.  
And I do. I'll bust the cell  
without you.

JAMES  
No!

Peter leaves.

INT. BLISSTOWN MOVIE THEATER - DAY

James and Roy sit in the back of the theater, away from  
everyone else.

ROY  
So what's-

James holds up a hand.

The theater darkens, and the movie starts.

James leans over to Roy.

JAMES  
(quiet)  
The dorm is bugged.

ROY  
(quiet)  
What? But...

JAMES  
It's safe to assume everywhere else  
you meet is, too.

Roy reels.

ROY

I have to tell everyone. We have to stop meeting. Or find the bugs.

JAMES

No! Don't do that. They'll know you're on to them. You need to be subtle. Keep meeting as usual, but start meeting other places, too. Outside is best.

ROY

Right. Okay.

JAMES

They still know your plan, though. You need to move up the schedule. How soon can you be ready?

Roy thinks.

ROY

Two days... unless... no, two days. Three tops.

JAMES

Good! That's good. Do that. But you have to keep meeting, business as usual, until then.

James swears under his breath.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, GREGORY'S OFFICE - DAY

The door opens; James enters.

GREGORY

Good, you're here. Look, I'll be straight with it: we're closing the case.

JAMES

Closing it? Why?

GREGORY

One of the members of the group found the bug in their room.

James cringes.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Exactly. It's pretty bad.

JAMES

Y-yeah.

GREGORY

We have assume they'll run. We're moving on everyone now, before they have a chance.

JAMES

Now? But sir, there's still more information I can get out of her!

Gregory approaches James and puts his arm around his shoulder.

GREGORY

It's okay, James; nobody's a expert sleuth when they first start. You think Peter started out busting entire recusant cells? He's been with us since he was twelve and his papa was producing and selling alcohol. In time, you'll be just as valuable as him.

JAMES

Yes, sir.

Gregory sits at his desk.

GREGORY

I've got paperwork if I want the seizure to happen today. Dismissed.

James' eyes widen at the word "Today," but he says nothing.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

Kim waits outside the gregory's office.

James exits the office.

As soon as the door closes, Kim clutches James' wrist.

She drags him to a corner and leans in close.

KIM

Mr. Jakes is too trusting for his own good, but I know better. I know you're too involved in this case, and I know even now your wheels are turning as you try to figure out some way to save the girl.

She grabs his collar.

KIM (CONT'D)

Mark my words: You. Will. Fail. So long as I'm here, you will never, ever succeed.

JAMES

Why? Why do you hate me so much? This is more than just suspicion, this is hope. You want me to be crooked. Is this about Ellen? Or the black market?

Kim laughs and releases James.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You're going to follow me when I leave, aren't you?

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Good. Just keep out of sight.

James exits.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

James exits an alley and walks down the street.

Kim exits slightly later and follows him.

EXT. BANKS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

James approaches and enters the building. Kim arrives and lurks around a corner.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary lies on a bed, emaciated and pale. Ellen sits next to her, trying and failing to feed her corn mash.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

Ellen sets the bowl down and answers the door to see James.

ELLEN

James! What are you doing here?

JAMES  
Do you trust me?

ELLEN  
What? Yes. Is everything okay?

JAMES  
You need to come with me. Let's go  
to the park.

ELLEN  
But my mother-

James holds out his hand.

JAMES  
Please. Trust me.

Ellen takes his hand. They exit.

EXT. SCHOOL PARK - DAY

James and Ellen walk to the middle of the park. Kim is  
nowhere to be seen.

JAMES  
Now we wait.

ELLEN  
Wait for what? What's happening?

JAMES  
You'll know it when you see it.

ELLEN  
Oh, come on! I don't like  
surprises! Just tell me!

Kim appears at a corner of the park.

James sees her. They lock eyes for a moment, then Kim  
disappears behind a tree.

Ellen looks, but doesn't see her.

James looks at Ellen and takes her hands.

A few peacemen appear. They walk towards James and Ellen.

JAMES  
Please trust me.

ELLEN  
I do. What's wrong?

The peacemen pick up the pace.

James watches them.

Ellen sees them.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
What's happening?

James takes a step back as the peacemen reach them.

They grab her.

She resists and screams.

Kim appears again.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
No! No! Help!

James watches, impassive.

Ellen breaks free of the peacemen's grip.

They grab her again. She screams louder.

James' eyes redden.

The peacemen continue to drag her away.

She breaks free of their grip again and runs towards James.

ELLEN (CONT'D)  
James! Help me!

They catch her again. One peaceman draws his nightstick and hits her in the stomach.

She collapses.

Tears dance around James' eyes.

Kim and James lock eyes.

Kim nods at him.

The peacemen carry Ellen off.

James walks away.

EXT. BANKS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

James shuffles to and into the building.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary sits at the table.

A KNOCK at the door. The door opens, and James walks in.

He sits at the table across from her. She doesn't acknowledge him.

He speaks mechanically, unenthusiastically.

JAMES

Your daughter was attempting to leave the country. She's been arrested, and will probably be reeducated.

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Given the severity of her crime, you're also culpable. She has your blood, and was raised under your tutelage. I'm here to inform you...

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Can you even hear me?

He stands, and walks out of the room. He doesn't close the door.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Go ahead.

Two peacemen enter the room.

PEACEMAN

Get up.

Mary doesn't acknowledge them.

PEACEMAN (CONT'D)

I said, get up!

They look at each other, and grab Mary by the arms. Her eyes widen.

EXT. BANKS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

James exits the building. Mary SCREAMS loud enough to be heard outside. James closes his eyes.

JAMES  
Don't resist them, Mary, please  
don't-

A GUNSHOT echoes from within the building. Mary's screams fade.

James takes a deep breath, and walks away.

INT. BLISSTOWN BOOKSTORE - DAY

Hal sits at the register reading a book.

James bursts in. Hal jumps.

JAMES  
What's with people, Hal? Junior was  
a drug dealer. Mr. Greg's crooked.  
Roy's trying to... oh, Roy, they've  
got you by now too.

HAL  
I-I-I don't know, what, I, um. How  
can I help you, James?

JAMES  
I feel like you're the only guy in  
the country that I can trust. But  
hell, that's probably just because  
I don't know you well enough yet.  
So how about it? What's your darker  
side? Why should I fear you?

Hal whimpers. His legs shake violently.

James stares at Hal.

James turns and walks slowly towards the door.

He turns back to Hal.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

He leaves.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, GREGORY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gregory sits at his desk. James enters.

JAMES

Sir?

GREGORY

Yes, Cooper?

JAMES

I just wanted to follow up on the operation. Everything seemed to go well.

GREGORY

It went splendidly! We got every one one of the bastards!

JAMES

I assume they've been detained, pending reeducation?

GREGORY

I wish that were the case. Most of them were, yes, but your girl and your roommate are set for execution.

JAMES

You can't do that!

GREGORY

I must have misheard you, James; it sounded just now like you were questioning my authority. A reasonable response to that would be to send you to the mines. However, I would hate to react that harshly over a simple miscommunication, so why don't you repeat what you just said?

JAMES

I, uh... I just asked if you were certain that Ellen's crimes were worthy of execution. She only wanted to leave the country so as to honor her papa's dying wish, and one of the Father's core tenants is the importance of obeying one's papa.

GREGORY

Dammit, Cooper, you think this is an easy call for me? But Kim thinks it's best for you to not have to worry about the attachments, and I'm sorry, James, but I agree with her. You're always too close to your first assignment; this should help you keep your distance in the future.

JAMES

I... I understand. Thank you, sir.

GREGORY

They'll be put down tomorrow. First rotation. I think it's best that you watch.

JAMES

Yes... yes sir.

GREGORY

If you can find Peter, he'll give you your next assignment.

James nods and salutes.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. But it's for the best.

He salutes James back. James exits.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

Kim sits at her desk.

James walks out of Gregory's office. Kim stands.

KIM

James... Mr. James. A moment.

James walks to her.

KIM (CONT'D)

When I first started here, I was... idealistic. I thought it was us, a bastion of justice and devotion, against the corrupt, immoral legions. The longer I was here, though, the more I realized...

She holds up her hand and starts counting fingers.

KIM (CONT'D)

Kennings keeps a private garden.  
Wright practically begs for bribes.  
Morton has more mistresses than  
anyone can be bothered to keep  
track of. And of course, you  
already know about Mr. Jakes.

She stops counting.

KIM (CONT'D)

It's not us against them, James.  
It's us against us and them. We can  
stop the bad ones, sure, but even  
the ones who aren't explicitly  
corrupt are more interested in  
advancing themselves than stopping  
crime. And when you went behind my  
back over the black market, I  
thought you were the same way.

JAMES

Ma'am...

KIM

I suppose it didn't help that you  
also pointed out some of my  
failings in the process, and try as  
I might, I'm still a self-  
interested creature.

JAMES

Ma'am, please-

KIM

I'm almost finished. My point is  
this: I had you pegged wrong. I see  
now that your heart's in the right  
place. And I'm sorry. That's...  
that's all. You can say what you  
wanted to say now.

JAMES

You were right to keep an eye on  
me, I was too close to the case.  
There were times... times I had  
trouble telling what the right  
thing to do was. I still do. But  
you have to believe that I always  
put the Father and His teachings  
first.

KIM

I know.

Kim salutes, and James salutes back.

INT. JAMES' DORM - DAY

James enters.

Lowers his bed.

Sits on it.

Lies on it.

Stares at the ceiling.

JAMES  
Father help me.

He rises and grabs a bookbag.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, EVIDENCE STORAGE - DAY

WRIGHT, a bored looking chaperone, sits at a desk, reading a foreign novel. Behind him are shelves and shelves of all manner of contraband.

James enters with the backpack.

JAMES  
Hey, Wright.

WRIGHT  
Cooper.

JAMES  
Look, I was hoping I could... I mean, I don't want to imply...

WRIGHT  
I accept books, and alcohol. Especially alcohol.

James reaches into his backpack and pulls out his book.

WRIGHT (CONT'D)  
Hah! Bad luck for you. I just read it.

JAMES  
I have the earlier books in the series...

WRIGHT

Read them too.

JAMES

What about food? I've got sandwiches, vegetables...

WRIGHT

You see those refrigerators? I've got more food than the mayor.

James sighs, looks around carefully. Leans close.

JAMES

I have this radio...

WRIGHT

Broken inhibitor?

James nods.

Wright chuckles, points to one wall. It's full of old radios and televisions.

WRIGHT (CONT'D)

Look, Cooper, The only things that don't show up here are books, and alcohol's scarce since they shut down all the stills. Now bring me something I haven't read, or stop wasting my time.

James nods, leaves.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

James stands in front of the bookstore.

A long beat.

JAMES

There has to be another way.

He walks away.

INT. BANKS LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room is completely empty; everything but the portrait of the Father is gone. The floor and one of the walls bear bloodstains.

James kicks the door in. He cringes as he sees the stains.

JAMES  
Okay, Junior, please have kept  
something here.

He looks around, but the room is too spartan to have any  
hiding places.

INT. BANKS KITCHEN - DAY

James enters and looks around. The kitchen is also empty,  
save for the bag of sawdust.

James sees the bag.

JAMES  
I thought they didn't have much  
food. This is...

He looks closer. Touches it.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Sawdust?

He stares at it, baffled.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Why on earth...?

He dumps the bag on the floor.

He shakes his head. Keeps looking. Finds nothing.

He leans against the wall.

Beat.

EXT. BLISSTOWN MAIN STREET - DAY

James walks to the bookstore.

He reaches for the handle. Stops halfway.

Grimaces.

Scowls.

Stalks away.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ, EVIDENCE STORAGE - DAY

Wright sits reading, his feet propped up on the desk. James storms in.

WRIGHT

You're back. What'd you get me?

James walks to the radios.

JAMES

I'm not going to threaten an innocent old man to appease a corrupt piece of filth.

WRIGHT

What? What are you talking about?

James turns the biggest radio on. Fiddles with the dial.

WRIGHT (CONT'D)

Hey, Cooper! This isn't a charity.

James finds a station playing the national anthem.

Takes a deep breath.

Beat.

WRIGHT (CONT'D)

Cooper!

James turns the radio on full blast.

Wright yells, but he's hard to hear over the noise.

WRIGHT (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

James runs over and kicks Wright's desk, sliding it forward and flipping Wright over. The desk hits the wall, and traps Wright beneath it.

Wright struggles and starts to push the desk off of himself.

James kicks the desk again, hurting Wright.

James grabs a few heavy televisions and sets them on the desk. The weight is too much for Wright to move.

WRIGHT (CONT'D)

What? Help! Help me!

James hastily peruses the shelves of evidence. Wright continues yelling for help, but he can hardly be heard at all.

He grabs a few stacks of foreign money, wirecutters, and a map, and puts them all in his bookbag.

He heads towards the exit, but passes a handgun on the way.

He stops.

He picks up the gun.

He puts it back down, and walks away.

He walks back, grabs it, and shoves it in his bookbag.

INT. PRISON - DAY

A PEACEMAN sits at a front desk. A few other peacemen stand nearby.

James enters and approaches the desk.

JAMES

I'm here to take prisoner Ellen Banks.

PEACEMAN

Under whose orders?

JAMES

(pompous)

I'm sorry, I must have misheard you. It sounded to me like you were questioning my authority. However, I don't want to send anyone to the mines over a simple miscommunication, so why don't we try this again?

The peaceman swallows. The other peacemen share nervous glances.

James leans on the desk.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm here for Ellen Banks.

PEACEMAN

Yes sir. Let me help you, sir.

James smiles.

INT. PRISON CELL

Ellen and Roy sit in a windowless, featureless concrete room, along with a half dozen other prisoners. The only fixture in the room is a small bulb jutting from the ceiling.

Ellen sobs quietly in the corner. Roy paces.

The door swings open, revealing James and the peaceman.

The peaceman holds a nightstick to James.

JAMES

That won't be necessary. She's not going to give me any trouble.

ROY

James?

JAMES

Roy?

ELLEN

James?

James blanches, then recovers.

JAMES

Ellen, come with me.

Ellen stands.

ELLEN

What's going on?

ROY

Yeah, James, what's going on?

JAMES

Let's go, Ellen.

James grabs Ellen's hand and moves to leave.

Roy runs forward and grabs James.

The peaceman grabs his baton, but James holds up a hand and stops him.

ROY

(whispering)

You're not going to take her and leave me.

JAMES  
 (whispering)  
 I can't, Roy.

ROY  
 (whispering)  
 I'll tell them about the radio,  
 James. I'll tell them it was you that  
 broke the inhibitor.

James glares, thinks.

JAMES  
 I'm taking him with me, too.

PEACEMAN  
 But... yes, sir.

JAMES  
 Cuff him.

The peaceman puts Roy in handcuffs.

PEACEMAN  
 And the girl, sir?

JAMES  
 No, she won't give me any trouble.

James leads them all away.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

Kim sits at a desk. The national anthem can be heard quietly,  
 as if it's playing in the other room.

Her phone rings. She answers it.

KIM  
 Kim Fikes.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

James leads Roy and Ellen to some bushes along the side of  
 the building.

He reaches behind the bushes and pulls out the bookbag.

INT. PRISON - DAY

The peaceman at the desk is on the phone.

PEACEMAN

H-hello, ma'am, this is prison one-one-seven-one. You wanted us to keep you informed about prisoner... Ellen Banks?

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

KIM

Yes?

Kim darkens.

KIM (CONT'D)

Would you like to elaborate a bit on the word "left?"

INT. PRISON - DAY

The peaceman shudders.

PEACEMAN

We-we-we assumed it was, he was, we thought he was supposed to take them!

The tinny sound of Kim's yelling can be heard.

PEACEMAN (CONT'D)

Y-yes ma'am.

He slowly hangs up the phone.

INT. CHAPERONE HQ - DAY

Kim slams the door as she leaves.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train station is littered with garbage, debris, and people, most of them lying on the floor, dead. Children in tattered clothes beg from anyone who's still standing. The only people who seem to be really conscious are the peacemen positioned around the station.

James, Roy and Ellen enter. Children immediately swarm towards them, but are beaten back by the peacemen. Roy cringes at the sight; James and Ellen try not to look.

One PEACEMAN approaches them.

PEACEMAN

I need to see your tickets, work  
leave authorizations, and-

JAMES

You'll speak when spoken to! We're  
operating under the direct  
authority of the Mayor.

The peaceman looks taken aback.

PEACEMAN

Yes, sir, sorry sir! I'll only need  
your writs of permission.

James falters.

JAMES

Of... of course. They're just... in  
my bag...

James takes off his bookbag, starts rummaging through it.

Roy leans down.

ROY

(whispering)  
What's the plan?

JAMES

(whispering)  
Give me a minute!

JAMES (CONT'D)

(to the peaceman)  
They've gotta be in here somewhere.  
Hang on.

PEACEMAN

If you don't have your writs, I'm  
going to need to ask you to leave.

The train's horn blows once.

ELLEN

James, the train...

James takes a deep breath. He stands and twirls to face the  
guard.

JAMES

Are you happy now? The train is  
leaving, with the recusants on  
board, and there's nothing we can

JAMES (CONT'D)  
do to stop them! For what? For  
paperwork!

The peaceman looks uncertain.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
What's your name? I'll need to let  
the Mayor know who's responsible  
for this absurdity.

The train starts moving.

PEACEMAN  
Th-that won't be necessary. Right  
this way.

The peaceman gestures, but they all run past him.

He shudders.

Kim enters. The peaceman approaches her.

PEACEMAN (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, but-

KIM  
I'm in pursuit of three recusants,  
two men and a woman.

The color leaves the peaceman's face. He points wordlessly at  
the almost-gone train.

Kim runs for the train. She jumps onto the back just as it  
leaves the station.

INT. FRONT TRAIN CAR - DAY

The train car is empty except for James, Roy, and Ellen. The  
decor, once gaudy and ostentatious, is now faded and torn.

ELLEN  
What comes next?

JAMES  
We jump the train in about ten  
minutes, then we head north until  
we reach the border.

She nods.

INT. REAR TRAIN CAR - DAY

Kim enters through the rear door and moves up the train.

She reaches under her shirt and draws a handgun from a hidden holster.

INT. FRONT TRAIN CAR - DAY

James stands.

JAMES

It's just about time. You ready?

Ellen and Roy stand.

INT./EXT. FRONT TRAIN CAR - DAY

James opens the back door of the car and stands between the car and one behind it.

JAMES

(yelling over the wind)

Come on! Roy, you first!

Roy comes out, takes a breath, and jumps onto the grassy hillside.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Roy rolls to a stop.

INT./EXT. FRONT TRAIN CAR - DAY

JAMES

It'll be okay, Ellen! Trust me!

Ellen walks between the cars and hesitates.

James squeezes her hand.

She nods and jumps.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Ellen rolls to a stop a bit past Roy. Roy runs towards her.

INT./EXT. FRONT TRAIN CAR - DAY

James takes a deep breath, then jumps.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

James rolls to a stop. Roy and Ellen run towards him. He gets to his feet.

JAMES  
Everyone okay?

Ellen and Roy nod.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Good. This way.

He leads them to the woods at the base of the hill.

A mile down the tracks, Kim jumps out of the train and rolls onto the hillside.

EXT. BORDER - DAY

James, Ellen and Roy walk through the woods, and come to a large chain-link fence with barbed wire at the top.

James reaches into his backpack and pulls out the wirecutters.

He cuts a big slit in the fence.

JAMES  
Is that big enough for you, Ellen?

ELLEN  
I think so.

Ellen climbs through.

JAMES  
You next, Roy.

James reaches into the bookbag.

Kim arrives nearby. She approaches the three of them, gun drawn. They don't notice her.

Roy climbs halfway through the fence.

James pulls out the handgun.

Kim notices James' gun. She ducks behind a tree and listens.

James tucks the gun into Roy's back. Roy freezes.

Ellen gasps.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Roy. I'm so sorry.

ROY

James? What's going on?

James tears up.

JAMES

Ellen's just doing her duty to her papa. She'd stay if she could. But you... I can't let you leave, Roy. That's treason.

ROY

James, think about this. Think about what you're doing. I'm your friend. You don't want to shoot me.

JAMES

Of course I don't want to shoot you! What kind of monster do you think I am?

ELLEN

James, let him go! You were going to let him help me escape, weren't you?

James looks at Ellen, then back to Roy.

JAMES

If you just come with me, everything will be okay.

ROY

James, they're not going to just re-educate me after this.

Roy slides through the fence.

JAMES

No! Stop!

Roy turns to face James.

ELLEN

James, please! What are you doing?

JAMES  
Please, Ellen...

ROY  
(voice breaking)  
If it's a choice between dying now  
or dying later? Just... just do it  
now.

JAMES  
I'll talk to someone. If you come  
back willingly, they won't...  
you'll go to the mines for a while,  
or...

ROY  
Let's go, Ellen.

Roy turns and walks away.

Ellen freezes, uncertain, crying.

JAMES  
Roy! Roy! Stop!

James takes aim.

Lowers the gun.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
(quiet)  
Please, Roy...

Kim approaches.

KIM  
It's okay, James.

JAMES  
Kim?

KIM  
I've got him.

She shoots Roy. Roy falls.

Ellen screams.

James startles, wheels around, and shoots Kim.

JAMES  
No!

Kim falls.

JAMES (CONT'D)

No...

James clutches the fence.

He looks at his gun.

Drops it.

Ellen collapses, crying.

James looks at Kim.

Looks at Roy.

Collapses.

ROLL CREDITS THE END