

For A Brighter Tomorrow

by

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CHARACTERS

Dmitri (Dima) man, 30s (older than Yuri), cosmonaut
Yuri (Yura) man, 30s (younger than Dmitri), cosmonaut
Voices on the radio

SETTING

Secret Soviet space station

TIME

1974

PRODUCTION NOTES

Accuracy of the space station's equipment is not necessary, nor is it necessary to give the illusion of zero gravity.

Accents are also unnecessary.

Do not pre-record radio conversations (this does not apply to conversations the cosmonauts do not interact with). With doubling, only one additional actor is necessary for live performances. A fourth actor is needed for the radio play: this can be pre-recorded or live.

PUNCTUATION

— denotes an interruption, either by another character or by a character interrupting themselves

// denotes where an interruption occurs if it is not at the end of a line

... denotes a trailing off of thought

At rise:

Cosmonauts DMITRI and YURI are onboard a secret Soviet space station.

The air is stale and smells faintly of sweat. The capsule is suffocating; crammed full of equipment, supplies, and a few personal belongings. There are two windows: one on each side of the capsule. Pictures of Natasha (Dmitri's wife), Yuri Gagarin, Lenin, and Brezhnev are taped to the wall next to the Soviet flag.

Outside the capsule is oppressive darkness.

This is juxtaposed with the inside of the capsule. The harsh light of the sun moves quickly from one side to the other as the station travels seven and a half kilometers a second into day.

DMITRI is rummaging through pouches. YURI is working on a piece of equipment; cleaning parts, attaching wires, etc. He looks up from his work and gazes out the window, distracted.

YURI

I could pinch Moscow between my fingers.

DMITRI

And squash your mamushka?

YURI

It looks small, that's what I mean.

DMITRI finds a spray bottle. He spritzes YURI, startling him.

YURI (cont'd)

What the fuck!

DMITRI

I don't want my engineer distracted.

YURI

Well I don't want my *commander* getting water in the electronics. Save it for the wheat.

YURI picks up a small towel and wipes himself off. He holds it out to DMITRI, who takes it and puts it away. YURI continues working. DMITRI puts the spray bottle aside and picks up a terrarium.

DMITRI

It sprouted! (*catching himself*;) And of course it sprouted. I don't think any of those doubting scientists ever set one foot on a farm. The only thing that can kill wheat is a Soviet winter.

DMITRI shows the plants to YURI. YURI doesn't hide his excitement:

YURI

You made it grow.

He puts his hand into the terrarium and prods the plants.

YURI (cont'd)

Hello little fellows.

DMITRI

Stop it. You're going to crush the seedlings.

DMITRI pulls YURI's hand out of the terrarium. He continues to speak while he checks the wheat for damage, spritzes it, then stows the terrarium and the spray bottle. YURI continues his work.

DMITRI (cont'd)

Is this why nothing grows in Moscow? People just go around stepping on plants?

YURI

(with a hint of sarcasm)

Well nothing can compare to the quaint grandeur of Klushino's wheat fields.

DMITRI

Our farm probably produced three times more wheat than any American farm.

YURI

No thanks to little Dima, running through the fields, kissing every girl he met.

DMITRI

I certainly had more luck than little Yura in Moscow.

YURI

I don't consider it luck when Sasha gives you a black eye after she finds out you slept with her sister.

DMITRI

You always forget the part where I slept with both Sasha and her sister.

YURI

Get me the minus screwdriver. Once we land we'll both have all the luck we need. We're going to find something big, like a secret American city that trains spies, and they'll put our faces on the front page of every single newspaper.

DMITRI

Classified military intelligence doesn't make the front page. *(handing him the screwdriver)* Here.

YURI

Fine. Then what about: *(gesturing a headline:)* "Handsome Cosmonauts Bring Soviet Agriculture to Sky During Peaceful Science Mission." And there'd be a picture of you and me holding the wheat. And we'd be shirtless. We'll have a line of women waiting to fuck us when we land.

DMITRI

Natasha would stab me in the gut and watch me bleed out.

YURI

Maybe she'd have an affair of her own.

DMITRI

She wouldn't do that.

YURI

Of course she wouldn't. Ok, any women who want to fuck you, I'll fuck them for you.

DMITRI

You'd have to make love to every woman on the planet.

YURI

Even Patyushenka Nixon?

DMITRI

She needs a strong Soviet man.

YURI

I'd consider it my honor and my duty. I'll fly to America, put on some expensive cologne, take a taxi straight to the White House, march through the front door, and walk straight to comrade Patyushenka's bedroom. She'll throw herself at me—

A control box suddenly lights up. Blinking and beeping. YURI looks at a screen.

YURI (cont'd)

It's Vladivostok.

DMITRI

(checking his watch)

It's past zero-one-hundred there. What do they want in the middle of the night?

DMITRI flips a switch and picks up the radio handset. VLADIVOSTOK can hear DMITRI, but not YURI.

VLADIVOSTOK

(from the radio)

This is Vladivostok to Sokols, do you hear?

DMITRI

(into the radio handset)

This is Sokol One, I hear. I'm receiving.

VLADIVOSTOK

Sokol One, we just got a call from Havana that one of our ships near Florida—the Kavkaz—spotted some unusual activity at Canaveral.

YURI

Fuck.

DMITRI shoots YURI a look: shut up.

VLADIVOSTOK

America hasn't said anything about a launch, and those bastards always tell everyone everything.

DMITRI

Understood. When we were last over America we didn't pick up anything, but that was an hour ago, and we didn't check Canaveral. Stand by. *(he covers the handset, to YURI:)* You didn't notice anything unusual?

YURI

No.

DMITRI

(into the radio)

Sokol Two didn't notice anything unusual either. We'll look at Canaveral on our next flyover.

YURI

Ask if they know more about what the ship saw.

DMITRI

Sokol Two wants to know if you have any more information about what the Kavkaz saw.

As VLADIVOSTOK speaks, YURI starts tapping the screwdriver on the window. DMITRI shoots him a look: I told you to shut up. YURI stops.

VLADIVOSTOK

There's apparently a lot of activity on launch complex three-one, the one with the launch pad and the ICBM silo. But the Kavkaz couldn't tell what the Americans were actually doing.

DMITRI

Could the Kavkaz tell where the Americans were—the silo or the launch pad?

VLADIVOSTOK

No. They're still looking, but apparently it got cloudy so they don't even know if something launched or not.

DMITRI

They don't even know if something *launched*?

VLADIVOSTOK

That's what they said. I don't know if it's actually because of the weather or if they're just idiots. So we need you to check.

DMITRI

Understood. We'll look and relay what we see to Havana.

As VLADIVOSTOK speaks, YURI starts tapping the screwdriver again. DMITRI takes it from him.

VLADIVOSTOK

I've got to warn you, everyone's pretty riled up down here. And you know how our little Cuban space minister Igor Antonovich can be. He'll make an elephant out of a fucking fly. You could tell him you saw an American penny next to the Kremlin and he'd think it's World War Three.

DMITRI

It's probably the heat. We'll keep old Antonovich calm.

VLADIVOSTOK

One day, God willing, he'll finally die and be replaced by someone competent. I pray for it every time you're out of radio range of our noble motherland.

DMITRI

I'll start going to church. Does Brezhnev know about what the Kavkaz saw?

VLADIVOSTOK

No one's told him yet. We're waiting for you. Now, Antonovich might go on a tirade about what he saw on TV, so I want you to hear it from me first. The Americans got their panties in a bunch because the USSR tested some nuclear warhead they said had too many megatons or some bullshit.

YURI

How many megatons?

DMITRI

(to YURI; covering the handset)

Sh.

VLADIVOSTOK

So Nixon pulled out of anti-proliferation talks, and then Brezhnev went on television to rant about how the United States shouldn't fuck with the Soviet Union, and then Nixon went on television, and they've been yelling at each other all day.

DMITRI

(into the radio)

So the Americans are still bastards.

VLADIVOSTOK

So everyone's pretty riled up, and we need you to keep Antonovich from having a heart attack. Now, if you see anything truly suspicious, if that ship sees anything truly suspicious, make sure Antonovich tells Brezhnev directly.

DMITRI

Understood. Anything else?

VLADIVOSTOK

No, that's it. Goodnight Sokols.

DMITRI

Goodnight. Out.

VLADIVOSTOK

Out.

The radio clicks off.

YURI

What if it's a—?

DMITRI

We'll know when we get to Canaveral. *(checking his watch)* Right now it's lunch.

DMITRI looks through the rations.

YURI

You didn't know what I was going to ask.

DMITRI

Yes I did. You're just like Antonovich. He's going to think the Americans are attacking the Soviet Union too. What do you want to eat?

YURI

I'll eat after I finish fixing this. We need to think through the possibility.

DMITRI picks out a can. He starts opening it with a can opener.

DMITRI

You always want to think through the possibility. If you don't eat and get hungry later, don't complain to me.

YURI

I'm not the one who always complains about being hungry. Launch complex thirty-one is for missile tests and missiles, nothing else. The Titan Two ICBM at Canaveral could get to the Soviet Union in thirty-five minutes, which means that if it's already launched, then by the time we reach Havana it's already blown up—

DMITRI

Remember when some idiots on the Kavkaz thought a parade was a military drill? And old Antonovich was so startled he choked on an empanada and had to be rushed to the hospital. *(still struggling to open the can:)* Why won't this fucker open?

YURI finds a knife and hands it to DMITRI, facing the sharp edge towards himself and the handle towards DMITRI. DMITRI stows the can opener and starts opening the can with the knife.

YURI

We need to consider where they'd attack, and how many people they want to—to kill, so maybe they'd target Moscow, or maybe the middle of Siberia, just to prove a point, the point being, I don't know—

While trying to pry off the lid, DMITRI cuts his finger.

DMITRI

Fuck!

He sucks on his finger. YURI gets a plastic bandage from a first aid kit.

YURI

Get your finger out of your mouth.

DMITRI lets YURI bandage his finger. As they talk, YURI takes the can and knife from DMITRI. As before, DMITRI gives YURI the knife handle first. YURI opens the can and puts away the knife. He hands the can back to DMITRI. DMITRI finds a fork and starts eating.

DMITRI

The Americans are too chicken-shit to have actually done it.

YURI

They weren't too chicken-shit to bomb Japan.

DMITRI

In 1945, idiot.

YURI

I know that! They've finally done it. I knew they would. Everyone down there, my mamachka... She wouldn't even know, she wouldn't have time to— But time to do what? What could she do? Everything would be blown apart, everyone running through blasted windows of stores to steal irradiated milk—

DMITRI

Calm down. We're up here to spy on the Americans, not daydream about nuclear war.

YURI

And Natasha, radiation would fill her brain with tumors, and she'd be down there alone, vomiting up her lungs, hair falling out, her skin peeling off, while we're trapped up here. Watching her die. Watching everyone die. The wheat and the two of us will be the only living things left.

DMITRI

I'll worry about my own wife.

YURI

She's a friend.

DMITRI

Just because you don't have anyone to worry about besides your mamushka // doesn't mean—

YURI

I have other people to worry about.

DMITRI

Who? Your father?

YURI

Friends from flight school.

DMITRI

They're your friends because they're your colleagues.

YURI

I can have friends who are colleagues.

DMITRI

Maybe if you cared about people as much as you care about engineering you'd have an *actual* friend, or a goddamn girlfriend, and you wouldn't bother Natasha and me all the time.

YURI

Don't tell me that I don't have an *actual*— Because I've had— Fuck you.

DMITRI

(pointed)

Who?

YURI

Kolya, you bastard!

DMITRI

I didn't mean that you've *never* had a close friend.

YURI

If you can't even *remember* Kolya, then stop talking shit.

DMITRI

It's been three years. I forgot. And it doesn't help that you never talk about him. No KGB agent is hiding in the air vent. Kolya wouldn't've wanted his best friend to pretend he never existed. You can trust me.

YURI

I trust you with my life. But we're not talking about Kolya.

A silence.

DMITRI

You should eat something.

YURI

I told you, I have to finish fixing this.

DMITRI

Alright. So, when we're over America, I'm looking at Canaveral. At most they're setting up a missile test they didn't bother telling the Soviet Union about. The Americans aren't going to launch only *one* offensive missile.

YURI

Even one, if it landed in Moscow, or Leningrad, or— Or it could be the *first* one.

DMITRI

It's not a missile.

YURI

Maybe it's an accident. Maybe the silo's on fire and they're trying to put it out before the fuel ignites and launches the ICBM.

DMITRI

Nothing's on fire either.

YURI

Pretending everything's fine doesn't make it fine.

DMITRI

I'm not pretending. I'm disagreeing with you.

YURI

You can't disagree with legitimate possibilities. Where are we looking during our next flyover of America?

DMITRI

Why do you *never* check the schedule?

YURI

Because *you* check it and tell me what to do. (*with sincerity behind it:*) Like the proper commander you are.

DMITRI

I was going to take photos of southern airfields. But that can wait.

YURI

Then you should check the other global strike bases. If the Americans launch more ICBMs, I mean, *if* they launch a first one, which— You should check them. There's—(*he thinks for a split second*)—ten.

DMITRI

There's not going to be anything, but I'll check them. So there's Grand Forks, Minot...

YURI

Let me get the list. It should be Grand Forks, Minot, Malmstrom, Warren, Whiteman, Davis–Monthan, Ellsworth, McConnell, Little Rock, Canaveral. Found it. (*checking the list:*) Yes, those ten.

DMITRI

How do you always know shit like that, but without me you forget to eat?

YURI

I remember to eat eventually.

DMITRI

You remember because I put food into your hands and you eventually notice it's there.
(*checking his watch*)

I'll set an alarm for when we're over America. I don't want us distracted by your doomsday ramblings and miss half the country.

YURI

I wasn't ram— After starting with Davis–Monthan, you should look north to south, that's the quickest path. You'll have to move the telescope back west for—

DMITRI

I *do* know geography.

YURI

You'll have to be quick. Ten bases with up to two hundred missile silos each, all spread out. But scorch marks from a launch should be easy to see. Did the Americans have their silo blast doors open when you were taking pictures earlier?

DMITRI

Yes.

YURI

So you'll be able to look inside if you need to check an individual silo. See if the missile's still there.

DMITRI

I was with you during the three years of training.

YURI

Right. We've trained for this. Well, not *this*, exactly, but // this—

DMITRI

We've trained for this.

YURI nods and takes a breath.

YURI

Given that America and the USSR were having anti-proliferation talks this week, you'd think that the Americans would have enough sense to stop showing off all their missiles.

DMITRI

In nice weather they can't help it. They love giving their ICBMs a suntan. When we're over America you'll check the radio frequencies that spy leaked last week. The Americans probably changed the encryption, but—

YURI

But it's worth a try. Get me the minus screwdriver.

DMITRI

(giving YURI the screwdriver)

I wonder if that spy got a raise. Maybe Brezhnev bought him a Corvette.

YURI

Hopefully he didn't get shot.

DMITRI

(looking out the window)

Good luck, comrade.

YURI

(also looking out the window)

Keep fucking the Americans. *(back to DMITRI:)* We should consider what we tell Havana. Or Moscow, if necessary.

DMITRI

We tell them what we find.

YURI

Depending on what we find, and what we say, Brezhnev could do it. Launch the nukes. And maybe he *should*, if we find a missile, but then of course Nixon would retaliate, and all of humanity—

DMITRI

We have one option. We have a mission, and it's to spy on the Americans and report what we see. It's not our place to decide what Brezhnev does with the information.

YURI

(carefully)

But if we end up with incomplete information, and that's a possibility, then it would be up to us to decide *how* to tell Havana, to tell Moscow, to say if what we've found is actually important, or if—

DMITRI

We haven't even looked yet.

YURI

What happens if we don't find anything?

DMITRI

Then we tell them we found nothing.

YURI

If we can't prove a negative, they might assume a positive. For instance, if we don't find an ICBM, that doesn't mean that there *isn't* one. They'd want *proof* that there isn't one. Otherwise, just to be safe Brezhnev might bomb—

DMITRI

We will not lie. It is treason if we lie.

YURI

But *how* we tell them—

DMITRI

Yura, for your own good, shut up about this. You're an engineer, not a general. Remember your place. Understood?

YURI

(sincerely)

Understood, commander.

DMITRI

Good. Now stop pulling your hair out with worst case scenarios.

YURI

But everyone could die.

DMITRI

Stop fucking saying that, you shit!

YURI recoils.

DMITRI (cont'd)

I didn't— We can't panic. We have a job to do. But first, have a drink. I need a goddamn drink. Then you can finish fixing this.

DMITRI takes the screwdriver out of YURI's hands and stows it. Then DMITRI searches his belongings and pulls out a book.

YURI

You brought alcohol—you brought a book? They *let* you bring a book? With that many pages? I had to lose a kilogram just so they'd let me take a couple short ones, how were you able to—?

DMITRI opens the book and pulls out a pouch full of liquid. The pouch has a cap with a straw, which is clipped shut.

DMITRI

Good old dedushka Ararat.

YURI

You destroyed a book to smuggle cognac onboard?!

DMITRI

I didn't smuggle it. I requested it.

YURI

You hid it in a book!

DMITRI

I requested it be hidden in a book.

YURI

Did you destroy any other books?

*YURI starts going through DMITRI's belongings.
DMITRI pulls YURI away.*

DMITRI

Stop going through my things. This is the only book I took. So this is the only cognac. And since when did you care so much about *Visit to Minotaur*? You hate the Vayner Brothers. I wouldn't have cut open *Anna Karenina*, at least not *your* copy.

YURI

What if the books we have become the only books left? And you ruined one to hide *cognac*?

DMITRI

You wouldn't read *Visit to Minotaur* even if it was the last book in the universe. I did it a service by putting cognac in it.

YURI

We could've brought up *War and Peace* or *The Brothers Karamazov*— I didn't take any Chekhov, or Pushkin, and they'll all burn up. (*realizing:*) I hadn't finished *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Now I'll never know how it ends.

DMITRI

Stop worrying about some trash American book you smuggled into the country to “practice your English.” Have a drink.

DMITRI holds out the cognac to YURI, who doesn't take it.

YURI

That's why you became such good friends with Grisha. The man doesn't brush his teeth, but—

DMITRI

But he's in charge of rations. How else would I've gotten those scientists to can up pirozhki for you? They would've just blended it and put it in a tube if it wasn't for me. Have a drink. But don't drink too much. Like I said, it's the only cognac.

DMITRI puts the cognac in YURI's hands and waits expectantly. YURI unceremoniously raises the pouch.

YURI

Nazdarovya.

YURI drinks and gives the cognac to DMITRI. DMITRI, with more feeling, raises the cognac.

DMITRI

Nazdarovya.

DMITRI drinks, then stows the cognac and looks longingly at the rations.

YURI

Eat whatever you want. Except the wheat.

DMITRI

I don't need your permission to—

YURI

If they blow up all the mission controls and we can't land, we'll die of dehydration before starvation. Then you can eat all the wheat you want. There won't be any point pretending this was a scientific mission if our country doesn't exist.

DMITRI opens another can and starts eating. YURI returns to fixing what he'd been working on.

DMITRI

It's going to be a bitch doing everything in only one pass.

YURI

We better not fuck it up.

DMITRI

Then we won't.

They meet eyes and share a smile.

YURI

Socialist ingenuity...

YURI/DMITRI

For a brighter tomorrow.

DMITRI

Maybe they're just launching a weather balloon.

YURI

It's not a weather balloon.

DMITRI

It could be.

YURI

I'm not going to lie to you, even if you want me to. We can't test some stupidly big nuclear warhead and then expect the Americans not to give a shit. *(instantly regretting what he said:)* Nevermind.

DMITRI

Do you think that it's our fault if the Americans bomb us?

YURI

No. It's just... Nevermind. Pretend I didn't say anything.

DMITRI

Just *what?* (*no response*) Answer me.

YURI

The disarmament treaty talks were going well. And then they ended because we tested a stupidly big nuclear warhead. And now we're up here looking for a goddamn missile.

DMITRI

You want the Americans to fuck us.

YURI

I didn't say that.

DMITRI

Because that's all a treaty is. It's letting the other side fuck you.

YURI

Do you think that Brezhnev is letting Nixon fuck him, then?

DMITRI

No. Because we did the test. Nixon has to know who he's dealing with.

YURI

And that's the idiotic attitude that got us here in the first place.

DMITRI

Are you calling me an idiot?

YURI

No. But if you kept yourself informed you'd know better.

DMITRI

I read the news.

YURI

You read *Pravda* and believe it just because it's named "truth."

DMITRI

All *you* read are bullshit anti-Soviet contraband newspapers and trash American books. You read more fucking samizdat than good Russian literature.

YURI

I've already read all the classics. If I want to read anything else worthwhile, or know what's actually going on in our country, I have no choice but to read samizdat. I'd rather not have to struggle my way through a stack of blurry carbon copies so I can illegally read *The Master and Margarita*, but the KGB doesn't want us reading anything good. And half the intelligentsia reads samizdat. I'm not special. I'm informed.

DMITRI

Do you think you're smarter than me?

YURI

(matter-of-fact)

Yes. Because I am.

DMITRI

I had to work five times as hard as you just to get out of Klushino. And then I had to work ten times as hard to get to space. You spent your childhood living in luxury in Moscow going to all the best schools and spending lazy afternoons reading, while I was trying to learn *anything* after spending ten hours harvesting wheat on an empty stomach because Stalin had caused another famine that year. So stop being a snobbish asshole who blames all your problems on your country.

YURI

I'm not saying you didn't work hard. You're a good commander. All you need to do now is to love your country and not ask questions. It's a blessing that you failed out of engineering school and can do what you're good at.

DMITRI

You will stop questioning my authority. Understood?

YURI

I didn't say you weren't in charge.

DMITRI

Understood?

YURI

Understood, commander.

DMITRI

Good.

YURI

It wasn't as easy in Moscow as you think.

DMITRI

What, sometimes your caviar was stale?

YURI

For years I thought I'd get arrested just walking down the street. I'd see a KGB agent and hide in an alleyway, behind a dumpster, wherever. Stalin sent half my family to die in a gulag just because we were intelligentsia. And now it's my duty to make up for their un-lived lives, but it's never enough. My father still thinks I'm a failure because I'm the engineer and not the commander. Be happy you were away from all that on a farm.

DMITRI

Do you think a famine means that everyone's hungry for a couple weeks? Stalin killed half our goddamn country, so don't think a couple missing aunts and uncles means you're special. And you didn't have to *watch* your family die. You got to sit in Moscow pretending they'd just moved away. But I had to watch my family wear away into skeletons, bellies distended...

YURI

At least you got to be with them when they died.

DMITRI

Yes. I did. I held my little brother in my arms the day he finally starved to death. There was nothing I could do, because I also had nothing to eat. He was always so cold, so quiet; it took me an hour to realize he was dead. But I still don't hate my country, unlike you.

YURI

You had a brother?

DMITRI

Yes. And we're done talking about him.

YURI

Why didn't you tell me about him before?

DMITRI

Because it's none of your business.

YURI

What was his name? We should toast his memory.

DMITRI

You want me to forget you're an asshole.

YURI

I want to toast. *(no response)* We can't just talk about his death and not toast his memory.

DMITRI takes out the cognac and hands it to YURI.

DMITRI

His name was Vanechka.

YURI

(raising the pouch)

To Vanechka. God rest his soul.

He drinks. He passes the cognac to DMITRI, who raises the pouch.

DMITRI

May the earth be soft for him.

He drinks and stows the cognac.

YURI

What was he like? Was he like your sisters?

DMITRI

We're not talking about him.

YURI

Alright. But if you ever want to—

DMITRI

I'm getting dessert. What do you want?

YURI

I'm not hungry.

DMITRI

Appetite comes with eating.

DMITRI picks out a can, opens it, and holds it out to YURI.

YURI

I told you I'm not hungry.

DMITRI puts the can into YURI's hands.

DMITRI

Pirozhki.

DMITRI hands YURI a fork, then picks out a can for himself. He eats quickly. YURI picks at his food.

YURI

Those scientists must've spent thousands of rubles figuring out how to can pirozhki. To keep it fresh.

DMITRI

And I had to spend a thousand hours smelling Grisha's breath. Don't say I've never done anything for you. The can is already open. Eat.

YURI forces himself to eat.

DMITRI (cont'd)

And when we land you can have all the pirozhki you want. My babushka will make you some. Unless they bomb Klushino.

YURI

They're not going to bomb your village. They'll bomb Moscow.

DMITRI

Not everything is about you!

YURI

I just meant that Klushino would be ok.

DMITRI

You don't care about Klushino.

YURI

Yes I do.

DMITRI

No one in Moscow cares about the farmers who grow your wheat and ship it off to you while starving ourselves. You've never even visited. When I go there for weekends and invite you, you never come.

YURI

We've been training nonstop.

DMITRI

And somehow I still found the time.

YURI

When the mission's over, we'll go to Klushino together.

DMITRI

Well it's too late now. Because the world's going to blow up.

YURI

Then let's pretend everything's fine. For a couple minutes. We'll plan.

DMITRI

We're not pretending the world's alright. We're pretending you actually want to go.

YURI

I have to eat your babushka's pirozhki when it's fresh.

DMITRI

Well there's nothing to plan except you getting in a fucking car.

YURI

Not true. We have to decide invitations. We'll invite Natasha. And friends from flight school. Except Oleg, because fuck Oleg.

DMITRI

Oleg would actually go.

YURI

But do you *want* to listen to him talk about economic reform all day?

DMITRI

No.

YURI

Exactly. Because fuck Oleg.

DMITRI

Fucking Oleg.

YURI

What a tedious son of a bitch. We'll make sure the ladies come too. Borko will drive his Volga and squeeze everyone in. It won't be so bad for three hours, we're all used to crushing ourselves into the Soyuz capsule anyway. We should go right after we land. The fresh air will be good for us. What do you think?

DMITRI

The wheat will be ready to harvest. Hectares and hectares of it.

YURI

Proper nature.

DMITRI

Once the dust from a tractor blows up your nose, that's when you've got proper nature. I'll take everyone to the fields.

YURI

We'll become farmers.

DMITRI

I'll teach you like we taught all the students from Moscow the government kept sending to supposedly help us, instead of supplying us with proper equipment. Then my babushka will feed you ten pirozhki, ten more after you finish those, and one more for good luck.

YURI

And after we're fed, we'll drive to my dacha and drink vodka all day. We'll have three bathtubs full of samogon. But if you want something nice, you're buying it yourself.

DMITRI

I'll get a bottle of Beluga. Just for us.

YURI

We'll row out onto the river and drink.

DMITRI

And crash ourselves into the shore.

YURI

That's the fun. I'll be a drunk idiot. And you can be a drunk idiot with me. Then you can steer us back.

DMITRI

I'll carry you inside and tuck you into bed.

YURI

Just make sure none of the ladies see that. It would ruin my reputation. I promise not to vomit on you.

DMITRI

If they see you stumbling into bed I'll tell them that you were injured from fighting off a bear.

YURI

A bear?

DMITRI

As commander, it's my duty to protect my engineer's honor. I must ensure that he is ready and able to fuck as many women as he wants.

YURI

A true comrade.

DMITRI

I'm holding you to all that. You better hope the world doesn't end so we can go.

YURI

The Americans wouldn't actually do it, would they? It's 1974, for fuck's sake. Things are different now, it's not the goddam 50's, Stalin's dead, and—

DMITRI

(more for himself than for YURI)

The world's better than when we were little. We're just up here to keep it that way.

YURI

A hundred years from now, do you think two people will still be up here making sure nuclear war doesn't start?

DMITRI

If the Americans are still assholes in a hundred years we won't have a choice.

YURI

I hope not. I hope the world keeps getting better.

DMITRI

Well that's up to the Americans.

YURI

It's not just up to them. I'm sure part of Brezhnev is itching to show the world our hoard of ICBMs. Unveil the brighter tomorrow socialist ingenuity's built.

DMITRI

For fuck's sake, will you stop saying shit like that?

YURI

All I'm saying is that Brezhnev isn't perfect.

DMITRI

There's nothing wrong with Brezhnev.

YURI

He's not a bad person. But he's just a person.

DMITRI

There's nothing wrong with Brezhnev.

YURI

So everything he's done is perfect? Our country still has famines. If Vanechka was alive today, he still might not survive.

DMITRI grabs YURI and pulls him in close.

DMITRI

My brother is not a pawn in your argument. Brezhnev doesn't let four-year-olds starve to death. Apologize for talking shit.

YURI

I'm sorry.

DMITRI lets YURI go.

DMITRI

I shouldn't have told you about him. I should've known you'd say shit like that.

YURI

But it's good you told me. "Unable are the loved to die, for love // is immortality."

DMITRI

Don't quote Tolstoy at me.

YURI

It's Emily Dickinson.

DMITRI

You quoted a bastard American to try to honor Vanechka's memory?

YURI

I like how she said it.

DMITRI

You can't even stop hating your country—

YURI

I don't hate—

DMITRI

—long enough to properly honor Vanechka. Because all you want to be is a goddamn American who wears jeans and drinks Coke and jerks off to Barbra Stressand.

YURI

(unable to help himself)

Streisand.

DMITRI

Fucking *what?*

YURI

It's Barbra Streisand.

DMITRI

I don't give a shit. But you do. *(realizing:)* Are you an American spy? Did they give you instructions?

DMITRI starts going through YURI's belongings.

YURI

I'm not a spy. Stop going through my things.

Continuing his search, DMITRI picks up a book and flips through it. He stops on a page with a photo nestled into the crease. He takes the photo out of the book.

YURI (cont'd)

That's private.

YURI tries to grab the picture, but DMITRI holds it away from him.

DMITRI

Did you take this in your dorm room at flight school?

YURI

Put it back. I don't want you to get your fingerprints all over it.

DMITRI

Why was Natasha in your dorm room without me?

YURI

Kolya was there too. It's the only picture I have of him. So put it back before you ruin it.

DMITRI

Your arm is around Natasha's waist.

YURI

And my other is around Kolya's. It doesn't mean anything. The picture's three years old. I don't know if you and Natasha were even dating yet.

DMITRI

We were. She cut her hair like that right after we started dating.

YURI

Fine. But she's her own person and can do what she wants.

DMITRI looks closer at the photo.

DMITRI

What record is Kolya holding like it's a fucking Nobel Prize?

YURI

Honky Tonk Women. It'd taken him three months to smuggle it in. He was ecstatic the whole week and played it nonstop.

DMITRI

(with the weight of all the "oh fucks" in the world)

Are those protest signs?

YURI

No.

DMITRI

One of them says “Fuck Brezhnev.”

YURI

Alright, yes, they’re protest signs.

DMITRI

They sent me up here with a fucking traitor.

YURI

I’m not a traitor.

DMITRI

You walked around with a sign saying “Fuck Brezhnev.”

DMITRI starts to go through YURI’s belongings again.

YURI

Stop going through my things.

DMITRI

The Americans probably gave you poison to kill me in my sleep.

YURI

I’m not going to kill you in your sleep. And I’m not a traitor for going to a protest. I was naive and a little stupid. I shouldn’t have done it, because of how dangerous it was, but I needed to. That sign’s from a protest against the jailing of a writer. I can love my country and be angry at Brezhnev at the same time.

DMITRI

Writers commit crimes just like the rest of us.

YURI

Don’t play dumb. Now stop going through my things.

DMITRI

And apparently even cosmonauts can be anti-Soviet agitators.

YURI

Like Kolya was? I'm not a fucking agitator. I wanted to accomplish what half my family couldn't because Stalin killed them. I wanted to make our country more free.

DMITRI

Our country's already free. Don't make up traitor shit about what your family would've wanted.

YURI

Just because you *say* our country— Besides, it doesn't matter what I think. I'm an engineer. I can't radicalize an electronic.

DMITRI stops going through YURI's belongings.

DMITRI

It matters when you're on a mission to protect your country at all costs.

YURI

And I will. If I hated my country I wouldn't care if the Americans blew it up. But instead I'm up here exceeding my duties as engineer because I don't want everyone I love to die. I don't want *any* Soviet to die. And I keep out of politics now. After Kolya was arrested we stopped going to protests. It was three years ago. It's in the past.

DMITRI

We?

YURI

Natasha and me.

DMITRI

Natasha went to protests? You tricked her.

YURI

I didn't trick Natasha. Protesting was her idea.

DMITRI

Don't make up shit about my wife.

YURI

You don't know her as well as you think you do. When we land you can ask her about it. She doesn't like hiding that part of her life from you, but she's afraid you'll turn her in to the KGB. So don't.

DMITRI

I'm not going to.

YURI

Good. Because if Natasha doesn't die from nuclear war, I don't want you to get her killed by the government.

DMITRI

When I tell the KGB I'll leave her out of it.

YURI

You're going to turn me in?

DMITRI

If you're still doing this shit, I don't have a choice.

YURI

I'm not. Neither of us are. I promise.

DMITRI hands the photo to YURI.

DMITRI

If you've really left all that bullshit behind you, rip it up.

YURI

That won't prove anything.

DMITRI

Do you want to remember the happy times committing treason?

YURI

I want to remember *Kolya*. I told you, it's my only picture of him.

DMITRI

I don't care. This is an order. If anyone finds this, the KGB will shoot you. And then Natasha. And then me for good measure.

YURI

I'll tear off the part with the signs so the picture's just Kolya and Natasha and me.

DMITRI

You're ripping up the whole thing.

YURI

Just Kolya and me.

DMITRI

No.

YURI

Just Kolya.

DMITRI goes to grab the photo.

DMITRI

I'll do it for you.

YURI

No! *(he holds the photo close)* Please. It really might be the only picture of Kolya left. When the KGB searched our room after they arrested Kolya, they took every photo of him they could find. The less evidence he ever existed the better. Natasha gave me this one later. I don't know if anyone else kept pictures of him. I assume you didn't.

DMITRI

(quietly to himself:) Natasha gave you... *(to YURI:)* Just you and Kolya. Keep Natasha out of this. And you should use scissors so you can properly cut out Natasha and the signs. And the Honey Talk Woman record Kolya's holding.

YURI

Honky Tonk Women.

DMITRI

Whatever the fuck it's called. You're cutting it out. Let me hold the picture while you find the scissors.

YURI hands DMITRI the photo. DMITRI rips it up and puts the pieces in his pocket.

YURI

Stop!

DMITRI

This is for your own good.

YURI

Why did you...?

DMITRI

If the KGB doesn't want you to have photos of Kolya, you shouldn't have photos of Kolya.

YURI reaches for the pieces. DMITRI easily keeps him away.

YURI

Give me the pieces so I can tape them back together.

DMITRI

No. Get off me.

YURI

Give them back.

DMITRI

I order you to get off me.

YURI

(mimicking)

"I order you—"

DMITRI roughly pushes YURI away.

DMITRI

Don't backtalk.

YURI

You're just as bad as the KGB. Worse even. Because I thought you were my friend.

DMITRI

I *am* your friend, asshole. That's why I couldn't let you keep that. I'm not letting you get shot over a picture.

YURI

Now I'll forget what he looked like because you're the state's bitch.

DMITRI slaps YURI. A stillness.

DMITRI

(not knowing what else to say)

Understood?

YURI

Don't hit me again.

DMITRI

I didn't hit you. I slapped you.

YURI

Then don't slap me again.

DMITRI

Don't tell me what to do.

YURI

Do you think you can do whatever you want because you're my commander?

DMITRI

I didn't mean to slap you.

YURI

If you do it again I'll tell Vavara Romanovna.

DMITRI

So she won't put me on any more missions because I slapped you for insubordination?

YURI

Just don't do it again.

DMITRI

Then don't make me. *(he checks his watch)* We have to set up for America. Get on the radio.

YURI

I have to finish fixing this.

DMITRI

Are we going to crash if you don't?

YURI

No.

DMITRI

Then get on the radio.

YURI stares down DMITRI, but DMITRI doesn't break the gaze. YURI gives up and silently starts to work at the radio, leaving behind his previous maintenance work. DMITRI takes out the maps of the bases and flips through them. They work in silence, then:

DMITRI (cont'd)

Fuck there are so many silos. Evidence of a launch will be easy to see, right? Big scorch marks? *(no response)* I won't have to check each silo individually? *(no response)* Yura.

YURI

(without looking up from his work)

You were with me during our three years of training.

DMITRI

I want to be sure I'm doing it right.

YURI

You can look at a wide area.

DMITRI

What order should I look at the bases?

YURI

You'll figure it out.

DMITRI

It'll take you thirty seconds.

YURI

So it'll take you a minute. I'm busy.

DMITRI

I'm sorry I hit you. I won't do it again.

A pause.

YURI

Give me the maps of the bases and I'll put them in the order you should look at them.

DMITRI gives YURI the maps. YURI starts to work.

DMITRI

I'll make sure you remember what Kolya looked like.

YURI

I don't need your help. Besides, you haven't seen him in three years except for a quick glance at a picture you ripped up.

DMITRI

He was stupidly pale. His hair was always messy and at least once a day you'd give him the comb you keep in your pocket and make him fix it. He had bright blue eyes, and if he met your gaze he'd stare into your soul.

YURI

How do you remember all that?

DMITRI

I don't know. I remember people well.

YURI

You think about him a lot.

DMITRI

He was my friend too.

YURI hands DMITRI the maps.

YURI

With the number of silos you'll have to move quickly, but it should be doable. You should draw a grid over the maps so you can keep track of where you looked.

DMITRI

Alright. Get me a pen and clipboard.

YURI does, then goes back to the radio. DMITRI starts drawing grids on top of the maps. They work in silence. DMITRI unconsciously hums Oiy moroz, moroz (Oiy, it's freezing, it's freezing). A quiet moment as YURI listens to a few bars of the song.

YURI

It's hard to ignore your imagination in the quiet.

DMITRI, slightly startled, cuts off his humming.

DMITRI

You don't know what I'm thinking about.

YURI

You're thinking about the whole world blown to shit.

DMITRI

That's what *you're* thinking about.

YURI

You only hum that when you're worried. You don't have to pretend to be ok. It's just me.

DMITRI

I'm fucking fine. The Americans are probably preparing for an air show.

YURI

It's not an air show. Planes don't take off from launch pads. Or missile silos.

DMITRI

Maybe Nixon's down there with all his officials, having a party and setting off fireworks.

YURI

For fuck's sake, Nixon's not—

DMITRI

I bet they'd give Natasha and me a big apartment if I was some important official.

DMITRI finishes drawing grids. He looks out the window.

DMITRI (cont'd)

I could be the Minister of Agriculture. When they don't let me go to space anymore.

In DMITRI's moment of distraction, YURI reaches for the photo pieces in DMITRI's pocket. DMITRI grabs YURI's wrist.

YURI

I was reaching for the plus screwdriver.

DMITRI

You don't need a screwdriver to set up a radio.

YURI

A wire's loose.

DMITRI

I want you to have a future when we land. That photo is how you ruin that future.

DMITRI lets go of YURI's wrist.

DMITRI (cont'd)

The screwdriver's right in front of you.

*YURI picks up the screwdriver, pretends to use it,
and puts it back.*

YURI

Am I supposed to have a bright future like you? Be the next Minister of Agriculture? Do you even know what the Minister of Agriculture does?

DMITRI

I don't know, visits farms. It'd be nice to be around dirt again.

YURI

If you want dirt, then you should go back to Klushino and retire.

DMITRI

Well what'll *you* do?

YURI

I don't know.

DMITRI

Yes you do.

YURI

I don't want to tell you.

DMITRI

Why not?

YURI

You'll laugh.

DMITRI

No I won't.

YURI

I want to be a father.

DMITRI laughs, but his laughter is friendly.

DMITRI

You'll make a good father.

YURI

Really?

DMITRI

You just need a girlfriend first. You can have a boy and build little model airplanes with him and read him Dostoyevsky until he falls asleep.

YURI

I'd like to have a girl. I'd teach her all the constellations, and tell her that I knew the first woman in space, and that she could go to space too.

DMITRI

When we land I'll set you up with Vanya's sister.

YURI

Natasha said the same thing. And that I'd be a good father. I told her she'd be a good mother. If you two ever have kids, she's hoping for a girl too. We talked about what names—

DMITRI

When did you talk to her about that?

YURI

I don't know, a couple weeks ago. She invited me over to your apartment.

DMITRI

Where was I?

YURI

Out somewhere. We didn't talk about politics. I swear.

DMITRI

Does she frequently invite you over to have heartfelt conversations without me there?
And without telling me?

YURI

She doesn't have to tell you everything she does.

DMITRI

You two don't just talk.

YURI

(with a hint of sarcasm)

Sometimes we eat blini and drink vodka.

DMITRI

You two fuck.

DMITRI grabs YURI, pushes him against the wall, and presses his arm against YURI's collarbone, a wrong word away from his neck. YURI tries to push DMITRI's arm away, but DMITRI is stronger.

DMITRI (cont'd)

How many times?

YURI

Don't, please. She said no.

DMITRI

She wouldn't've *said* no. She'd've kicked you in the balls and shoved you out the door.

YURI

Well, she said she'd think about it, and an hour later—I'm sorry.

DMITRI

How many times?

YURI

I don't know, ten.

DMITRI

You don't know?!

YURI

Eleven. I'll never sleep with her again. I promise.

DMITRI

Did you cum inside her?

YURI

What does it matter?

DMITRI

You did.

YURI

I— Yes. But we were careful.

DMITRI

Did she cum?

YURI

I don't know, I think so, yes. What more do you need to know? Natasha would ask me over and we'd sleep together.

DMITRI

So you fucked in my apartment? In my bed?

YURI

Yes.

DMITRI

On my pillow?

YURI

Your pillow is on your bed. You need me to run the station. You can't make it back to Earth without me.

DMITRI

I can replace you with a manual.

YURI

Natasha doesn't love me.

DMITRI

But you love her.

YURI

Yes. But she only loves *you*.

DMITRI

Don't make up shit hoping I won't shove you out the airlock.

YURI

It's the truth. Whenever we were...when we were done, she made me leave. Even if you weren't coming back for hours, even if it was the middle of the night. Half the time we had sex Natasha called out *your* name.

DMITRI lets YURI go.

DMITRI

You pathetic piece of shit. I trusted you. You couldn't find some whore to fuck? Or were you too cheap to pay for one?

YURI

Natasha needed... She knew you were sleeping with Anya. She'd call me when you went because I always showed up. Because I had no one else. We'd always had easy conversations, ever since we met. At first she just wanted the company, then... We only met when you were gone, so you wouldn't find out.

DMITRI

I wasn't sleeping with Anya.

YURI

Yes you were. You weren't subtle. Fuck, if Anya was in the room, you didn't care if lunch was late.

DMITRI's watch alarm goes off.

DMITRI

We've got ten minutes before Canaveral. Get on the radio.

YURI

Start at Davis–Monthan. It should be the top map.

YURI puts on headphones; he only covers one ear so he can also hear DMITRI. DMITRI takes out the silo maps and looks through the viewfinder.

Whenever DMITRI or YURI look through the viewfinder, they frequently look up during conversations.

Their work also involves making notes, flipping switches and turning knobs, checking computers, etc.

DMITRI

So what if I was fucking Anya. I can't help it if a woman wants to sleep with me.

YURI

You shouldn't have done that to Natasha.

DMITRI

So you decided to help by having sex with her?

YURI

If I had a wife who loved me I wouldn't sleep around.

DMITRI

It doesn't matter that Natasha loves me. She doesn't love *you*, but she fucked you anyway. *You*. Even though my dick is bigger than yours. Does she think you're a better fuck?

YURI

All she cared about was that I'd show up at two in the morning.

DMITRI

But does she think you're a better fuck?

YURI

I don't know. I didn't get any compliments. But she likes when you tell her that her hair smells nice. You should tell her that.

DMITRI

How I have sex with my wife is none of your business.

YURI

You don't have to be having sex to tell her that her hair smells nice.

DMITRI

I've looked at all the silos. Nothing special. Going to Malmstrom. I already tell her that her hair smells nice.

YURI

Malmstrom's got one hundred sixty-five silos.

DMITRI

(gesturing to the map)

I can see the goddamn dots.

YURI

I thought you'd like to know the exact number.

DMITRI

The exact number is "too many." Does Natasha say I don't compliment her?

YURI

I told her that her hair smelled nice once and she liked it. That's it. *(cautiously:)* Can I look at the Grand Canyon before you look at Malmstrom?

DMITRI

You think *now* is a good time to ask? Are you a fucking child?

YURI

I have to ask now because we're over it now.

DMITRI

You're not looking at the Grand Canyon.

YURI

But it might be my last chance to see it if we bomb it.

DMITRI

I don't give a shit. You're not looking at the fucking Grand Canyon. Natasha didn't need anyone but me. Even if I slept with Anya.

YURI

She *did* need someone, because you were off having sex with Anya.

DMITRI

There's nothing at Malmstrom. Looking at Minot next. I'm not home for a few nights so she decides to sleep with you?

YURI

Those nights were some of the few that we had proper time off from training. You decided to fuck Anya, so Natasha decided to want company, so I decided to give her company. If you're going to fuck around, why can't she? Do you think she's *yours*?

DMITRI pulls out YURI's headphone cord from the radio.

YURI (cont'd)

What the fuck!

DMITRI

She shouldn't have done it with *you*.

YURI

What, did you want her to have sex with Oleg?

DMITRI

She should've slept with someone I don't have to see every day. There's nothing at Minot. Looking at Grand Forks next.

YURI

(as he plugs in his headphones)

You better fucking hope I didn't miss anything important.

DMITRI

Well you've found fuck all so far, so I doubt it. Why didn't Natasha say she knew about Anya? Before she went off and fucked you. Are you still having sex with her?

YURI

Well, right now we're in space.

DMITRI

Then when was the last time?

YURI

A week before we left. Remember the Friday night you cancelled dinner plans with Natasha to go fuck Anya? But Natasha knows that if she says anything, everything might go to shit. So she hasn't. Because she still loves you. If the world doesn't explode, you'll have to ask her why.

DMITRI

If she didn't know, then everything would've been fine. She didn't need to know. *I* didn't need to know. There's nothing at Grand Forks. (*looking at the next map*) We passed Ellsworth! What order did you put these maps in?

YURI

It's faster to point the telescope back west for Ellsworth and Warren, instead of jumping it south to north to south. I tried to tell you that a half hour ago, but you told me you knew geography.

DMITRI

Well we don't have a choice now. I'll look at Ellsworth.

YURI

I'm not wrong.

DMITRI

Why do they make all their farms square?! It's like they think God will play chess with their farmers. But unlucky for them, God doesn't exist. There's nothing at Ellsworth.

YURI

Warren's next.

DMITRI

(looking at the next map)

Fucking shitting hell.

YURI

Two hundred twenty silos.

DMITRI

I can fucking see that. I should've been enough. I give her flowers for her birthday, *every birthday*, I never forget, and I spent a month's salary on a motherfucking dishwasher.

YURI

You think a dishwasher's enough?

DMITRI

It's a nice dishwasher. And I do more than buy her things. The week the stores ran out of her favorite biscuits, I secretly drove to Klushino to pick up some my babushka made. And when her mother died, I held her for hours, wiping away her tears. And when I come home exhausted, she wraps her arms around me and kiss— I don't need to prove myself to you. This is all your fucking fault.

YURI

All of that wasn't enough for you?

DMITRI

It wasn't enough for *her* either. *(struggling to look at all the silos)* Why do the Americans need two hundred fucking twenty silos on one *single base*?

YURI

They've got to put their twenty eight thousand ICBMs somewhere.

DMITRI

Fucking assholes. Do you and Natasha still talk politics? Discuss whatever bullshit samizdat you're reading that week?

YURI

No. Sometimes.

DMITRI

Well you're never talking to her again. There's nothing at Warren. These goddamn farms.

YURI

They're just little squares. Don't get upset over little squares.

DMITRI

They shouldn't have done that to the land.

YURI

Can I look at the Rocky Mountains?

DMITRI

No. And if you ask me to look at one more goddamn place I'll lock you in the bathroom. Looking at McConnell. (*seeing the map*) Thank motherfucking God. Only eighteen silos.

YURI

I thought God didn't exist.

DMITRI

He doesn't. If God existed, America wouldn't. There's nothing at McConnell. Going to Whiteman. If you sleep with Natasha again I'll blind you with a lit cigarette.

YURI

I'm not going to. Are you going to sleep with Anya again?

DMITRI

That's none of your business.

YURI

You shouldn't.

DMITRI

Shit. It's cloudy over Whiteman.

YURI

Can I look at the arch in Saint Louis?

DMITRI

Do you ever listen to *anything* I say?

YURI

You can't look at Whiteman so we have the time.

DMITRI

I swear to fucking—

YURI

Think of it as a last request if you decide to kill me. Please.

DMITRI

Fine. One look.

YURI

Thank you.

DMITRI lets YURI look through the viewfinder.

YURI (cont'd)

(to himself)

All they had to do was stack triangles and they got *that*.

YURI stays a beat too long and DMITRI pulls him away.

DMITRI

Go back to the radio. Have you found anything yet?

YURI

No. I'm still trying to get past any encryption, but I can't— *(to himself, frustrated:)* "You have to apply yourself, Yura."

DMITRI

You are applying yourself. You better be applying yourself.

YURI

My father would tell me that I should be ashamed of myself and then not talk to me for a week.

DMITRI

Stop distracting yourself with bullshit. I'm going to Little Rock. Last one before Canaveral.

YURI

Don't get too mad at Natasha.

DMITRI

I didn't ask for advice. Nothing at Little Rock. Going to Canaveral.

YURI knocks on part of the station three times, then spits over his left shoulder three times.

YURI

You knock on wood too.

DMITRI

That's not wood.

YURI

It's not my fault this whole thing is made of metal.

DMITRI

I let you look at your stupid arch. I'm not doing any more bullshit. Besides, we can't avoid what's already happened.

YURI

There's no harm in—

DMITRI

Fuck. There was a launch at the silo. Look at the scorch marks.

YURI looks through the viewfinder.

YURI

It's because you didn't knock!

DMITRI

What the fuck are you talking about?

YURI

Shit shit fucking son of a motherfucking—

YURI moves away from the viewfinder and forces himself to take a breath.

YURI (cont'd)

The scorch marks are recent, at most five minutes old. The wind hasn't blown much away yet. That's good.

DMITRI

That's *good*?

YURI

It means that whatever launched is still in flight. And if it's still in flight, then it hasn't reached the USSR, so our country still exists.

DMITRI

So they actually did it?

YURI

I don't know.

DMITRI

You don't know? But you just said—

YURI

They could've launched anything. A test, an accident, an actual— All I know is that we need Igor Antonovich to tell us everything the Kavkaz saw. Anything anyone in Havana saw. Especially trajectory data. Because of the amount of magnification we'll need to use with the telescope, we'll need to know exactly where to look. And if we find it, then the Soviet Union can shoot it down, so everyone won't die. At least not to *that* missile. Because if it's just the first missile, if there are // more—

DMITRI

This is the problem with you fucking engineers. You build missiles and then you launch them just to watch the explosions.

YURI

I didn't build any missiles.

DMITRI

You would if you'd've gotten the chance.

YURI

We flew up here on top of a goddamn missile. And don't act like some righteous pacifist, *commander*.

DMITRI starts picking up the radio handset. YURI stops him.

YURI (cont'd)

How're you going to tell Antonovich?

DMITRI

The fucking launch evidence we just saw. Let go.

YURI

Not *what, how*. How're you going to tell him? You have to keep him calm. Make sure he knows that it might not be an offensive missile.

DMITRI

I kept you from having a nervous breakdown. And so far I've kept myself from murdering you. I can keep Antonovich calm. Let go.

YURI lets go. DMITRI flips a switch. As before, HAVANA can hear DMITRI, but not YURI.

DMITRI (cont'd)

This is Sokol One, do you hear? I'm // receiving—

HAVANA

(over a din of commotion)

This is Igor Antonovich, I hear. Did the Americans finally do it?!

(not to DMITRI)

Shut the fuck up! I'm talking to them!

The commotion dies down.

HAVANA (cont'd)

(to DMITRI)

The Kavkaz just saw a fucking launch over Florida with their naked fucking eyes. Is that bullshit, or do we launch the nukes?

DMITRI

(to YURI; covering the handset)

What's the probability that the Americans are listening to Antonovich rant about nuking them?

YURI

Almost zero. We updated our encryption yesterday.

DMITRI

(into the radio)

We saw evidence of a launch from the silo, but that doesn't mean // that—

HAVANA

So they fucking did it?!

(not to DMITRI)

They know more than you assholes do!

YURI

Ask him for the exact time of launch.

DMITRI

What was the exact time of launch?

HAVANA

Right now!

DMITRI

It's not taking off *right now*. When did it launch?

HAVANA

I don't know, fucking two minutes ago.

DMITRI

You don't know for sure?

HAVANA

All I know is that we're about to be bombed.

DMITRI

Keep calm. It could've been a test.

HAVANA

The bastard Americans would've said something if it was a goddamn test.

DMITRI

It's possible they'd wait to tell the Soviet Union after the fact. They might be about to contact Brezhnev. Or there might've been a miscommunication.

HAVANA

Miscommunication my fucking ass.

(not to DMITRI)

Nixon would lie to us, idiot!

YURI

Ask him about the trajectory.

DMITRI

What was the launch trajectory?

HAVANA

Fucking *northeast*. To the fucking *Soviet Union*.

YURI

Almost everything launches east.

DMITRI

(to YURI; covering the handset)

Northeast?

YURI

Without exact data it's hard to say how unusual it was. Tell him we have time.

DMITRI

(into the radio)

If it *is* a missile headed for the USSR, which we don't know for sure, we'll be in radio range of Moscow before it reaches the Soviet Union. There's time for us to give a full report, so Brezhnev can make an informed decision.

HAVANA

How much goddamn time?

YURI

(checking his watch)

Between radio contact with Moscow and when a missile would hit, five minutes.

DMITRI

(to YURI; covering the handset)

Five minutes?

YURI

Yes.

DMITRI

(to himself)

Motherfucking hell.

(into the radio)

It would hit five minutes after we're in radio range of Moscow.

HAVANA

Five minutes?! Go suck your grandpa's dick. We're not going to wait for them to nuke us while you sit up there with your heads up your ass. We don't have anti-ballistic missiles blanketing the Soviet Union. If it *is* World War fucking Three, then we need time to ready the ICBMs. Which takes more than five minutes, assholes.

DMITRI

Alright. First, tell Brezhnev to go to Moscow Mission Control so he can talk to us when we're overhead. And if he asks you what our opinion on the situation is, tell him that we suggest readying the missiles, so when we get to Moscow they're ready to launch.

YURI

(whispering)

Dima!

DMITRI

(to YURI; covering the handset)

Antonovich is right. Five minutes isn't enough time.

HAVANA

You want me to tell Brezhnev to nuke the Americans?

DMITRI

(into the radio)

No. If there *is* an ICBM headed for the USSR, we'll know where it is by the time we get to Moscow. So the Soviet Union can shoot it down. Readyng the missiles is just a precaution. Tell all that to Brezhnev.

YURI

(whispering)

We might not find it!

DMITRI

(to YURI; covering the handset)

If they don't think we can find it, they have no reason to wait.

(into the radio)

You'll tell him all that?

HAVANA

Yes.

DMITRI

Good—

HAVANA

Out.

The radio clicks off.

DMITRI

Out.

DMITRI sets down the handset.

DMITRI (cont'd)

We're going to actually talk to Brezhnev. I wonder if he sounds like he does on TV.

YURI

Why the fuck did you say to ready the missiles?!

DMITRI

I'm keeping the Soviet Union from *firing* the missiles before we get there.

YURI

You lied. We might not find what launched. Antonovich told us fuck all.

DMITRI

I didn't lie. If it's going to the USSR, we'll find it, because that's what we're up here to do. And if we don't find it, it fell into the Atlantic.

YURI

Brezhnev is going to want *proof* that it's not—

DMITRI

(looking at his watch)

And right now, we have at most five more minutes in radio range of America. Five more minutes to get anything else. Get on the radio. I'll take pictures.

YURI

We could contact the Americans. If they're bombing us they'd know.

DMITRI

We're not contacting the Americans!

YURI

They know we're up here. You can't hide a space station. We're just two cosmonauts who saw something unusual. We wouldn't tell them everything.

DMITRI

We have five minutes. I don't want to spend them making sure you don't commit treason.

YURI

But we have to do everything we can. Natasha needs us to—

DMITRI

Shut up about Natasha. Get on the fucking radio and do your fucking job. Understood?

YURI

Understood, commander.

YURI puts on headphones and starts scanning the radio. DMITRI looks through the viewfinder.

YURI (cont'd)

Do you see any American ships gathered off the coast? If it's a test, they'd be there to pick up the pieces of the missile they crashed into the ocean.

DMITRI

There are ships, but nothing looks unusual. It looks like they might've cleared the launch area, but I can't tell for sure—

YURI

Oh!

DMITRI

(worried)

What?

YURI

West Germany won the World Cup two to one against the Netherlands.

DMITRI

You're listening to civilian radio!?

YURI

I thought you'd like to know the score. You hate the Netherlands. I tried every military channel and got nothing.

DMITRI

Then turn it off.

YURI

Just give me—oh fuck. Listen.

YURI flips a switch. Static replaces words in brackets. Neither the cosmonauts nor the audience understands them.

THERESA ON THE RADIO

Are we [still on] countdown?

CONTROL ON THE RADIO

(static) T minus fifty-five and counting—

YURI

What's counting—?

DMITRI

Shut up. It's still going.

THERESA ON THE RADIO

—Roger [read you] loud and clear. *(static)* Coming [up on] two minutes.

CONTROL ON THE RADIO

Twenty-five degrees your flight path [looks very] good. *(static)* velocity?

THERESA ON THE RADIO

Twenty-five thousand six hundred sixty-eight feet per second.

YURI

Something going that fast, it has to be— They're launching another missile.

DMITRI

I said *shut up*.

CONTROL ON THE RADIO

(static) we'll [give] you coordinates for *(static)* And if you [don't?]

THERESA ON THE RADIO

We head for Skylab, [is that] so terrible?

CONTROL ON THE RADIO

(static) That [would] mean that...

THERESA ON THE RADIO

Thanks to me, the first woman, the jinx, we're lost. We're lost in space!

Dramatic music from the radio.

THE RADIO ANNOUNCER

(static) when I return with Act Two. *(static)* sponsored *(static)* brewers of Budweiser and True Value hardware *(static)*—

DMITRI

You're a fucking idiot.

THE RADIO ANNOUNCER

—What [will a] penny buy besides [a] gumball and a one cent stamp—?

YURI

How was I supposed to know?

THE RADIO ANNOUNCER

—It'll buy [you a] six foot Lufkin tape measure.

DMITRI turns off the radio.

DMITRI

I shouldn't've let you waste all this time. Now we have *nothing*, because you—

YURI quickly reads a chart, changes settings on the radio, and speaks into the handset:

YURI

I am cosmonaut onboard space station.

DMITRI

Who are you radio—?

YURI

Canaveral, do you hear? I am receiving.

DMITRI

Are you contacting the Americans?!

DMITRI attempts to pull YURI away from the radio, while also trying to turn it off. They violently struggle; throughout the conversation YURI defends the radio controls. CANAVERAL can hear YURI, but not DMITRI.

CANAVERAL

This is Canaveral, I hear. Stand by. *(not to YURI)* I don't know why he radioed us. I'll transfer him to the flight director.

DMITRI

Get off the fucking radio!

CANAVERAL

(to YURI)

Transferring you to the flight director.

YURI

(to DMITRI; covering the handset with his body)

We need to know what it is.

CANAVERAL FLIGHT DIRECTOR

This is the Canaveral flight director, do you read?

DMITRI

You're going to get us both shot.

YURI

(into the radio)

I read. I saw facts of launch from three-one-B.

CANAVERAL FLIGHT DIRECTOR

Who is this?

DMITRI

If you tell him your name, I'll—

YURI

I require to know what you launched.

CANAVERAL FLIGHT DIRECTOR

First tell me your name, and then we can—

DMITRI finally manages to turn off the radio. He grabs YURI and hits him. And hits him again. And again.

YURI

Stop! God, stop!

DMITRI

God doesn't exist!

YURI

Let me go!

DMITRI

What the motherfucking hell is wrong with you that you contacted the fucking Americans?

YURI

We needed to—

DMITRI

And you made everything worse! Who knows what those bastards will do now!

YURI

If you hadn't cut the connection, we could've explained ourselves.

DMITRI

Explained ourselves? We've been tasked with protecting our country, and I will not let a traitor—

YURI

I'm not—!

DMITRI

—destroy this mission. My allegiance is to my country, not to you.

DMITRI silently finds a zip tie.

YURI (cont'd)

I promise I'll never do anything like that again.

DMITRI

Put your wrists on the grab bar.

YURI

You're going to tie me up and strangle me.

DMITRI

This is an order.

YURI

Or slit my throat, or hit me on the head with—

DMITRI

This is an order.

YURI puts his wrists on the bar. DMITRI ties them to the bar with the zip tie.

YURI

What if there's an emergency? (*realizing:*) We're in the middle of an emergency!

DMITRI

Right now *you* are the emergency. Anyone else would think you're a spy, but my current guess is that you're just a motherfucking idiot. What the hell happened in your goddamn little brain that made you think that you should radio the fucking Americans? Maybe those bastards *weren't* attacking the Soviet Union, but now that you've told them we're suspicious, they'll think that the USSR's going to retaliate. So America will preemptively bomb the shit out of the Soviet Union. And they won't stop until our whole country is ash, and everyone we ever knew is dead.

YURI

I didn't tell them we're suspicious. I requested information.

DMITRI

You requested suspicious information. Because we *are* suspicious. So if everyone dies it's your fault.

YURI

It wouldn't be— Don't say that.

DMITRI

It's true.

A moment of quiet as YURI watches DMITRI look through the viewfinder.

YURI

(unable to help himself)

Are you looking at Earth?

DMITRI

Shut up. I'm trying to focus.

YURI

You're not going to find a missile looking at Earth. We'd be *under* it. The thing would be ten times higher. You have to look out into space.

DMITRI

(to himself)

Fuck.

(to YURI)

Yura?

YURI

What is it?

DMITRI

If you fuck us again, I'll cut off your dick. Understood?

YURI

Understood, commander.

DMITRI

Good. I need you to tell me when we'd be under the missile so I know where to look.

YURI

I don't know.

DMITRI

Why do you *never* listen to what I say?

YURI

I'm not trying to— Antonovich was useless. We don't know when the thing launched. Or how fast it's going. Or where. They could've accidentally bombed New York. We don't know. It's a needle in a haystack.

DMITRI

We're going to find it. For Brezhnev. And so Natasha doesn't die. So figure it out.

YURI

We could, I don't know... I don't know.

DMITRI

Think of something.

YURI

We could pick a few possible targets and sketch out intersections on a map.

DMITRI

You want to get estimates by *doodling* on a map?

YURI

You told me to think of something. I can probably get estimates within a radius of two hundred kilometers.

DMITRI

Two hundred kilometers? How am I supposed to find a little missile staring into space in an area that big?

YURI

Unless you have a better idea, there's no way to get more accurate. Get me a pen and a world map. And put the map on a clipboard so I can write on it.

DMITRI

Fucking fine.

DMITRI gives YURI a pen and map.

YURI

Untie me so I can draw the trajectories.

DMITRI

You'll make do.

YURI awkwardly draws a curved line on the map.

YURI

This is our station's path.

YURI circles cities as he talks:

YURI (cont'd)

The most likely target is Moscow, if it's just the one missile, or if it's the *first* missile...
The Americans might also target Leningrad, Kyiv—

DMITRI

Star City.

YURI

A little city of cosmonauts and their families isn't a major military target. We'll have time to look at one more, so let's say Kharkiv.

YURI draws curved paths from Canaveral to each city:

YURI (cont'd)

These are the paths an ICBM would take to each city.

He circles intersections.

YURI (cont'd)

So four possible intersections with our station for when to look.

He writes a time by each intersection.

YURI (cont'd)

And these are the times we'll be at each intersection. The first one—Moscow—will be in six minutes. Look for anything reflecting the sun. You should set an alarm. (*holding out the map*) Here.

DMITRI

(taking the map)

This is the best you can do?

YURI

It's the best that can be done at all. I promise.

YURI hands DMITRI the pen. DMITRI stows the pen and map, then sets an alarm.

YURI (cont'd)

I'm not trying to ruin our mission.

DMITRI

You already did. Just be grateful all I did was tie your wrists. You could kick something important. And everything in here is important.

DMITRI makes a sweeping gesture, hitting the control board hard. A very bad sound.

DMITRI (cont'd)

You broke the control board!

YURI

You just hit it!

DMITRI immediately starts checking the extent of the damage.

DMITRI

It was already broken. What the fuck did you break?

YURI

How am I supposed to know what's wrong with it? I can't tell just by looking. Untie me and I can—

DMITRI

I'm not untying you. (*professional:*) There aren't any emergency alarms.

YURI

Maybe the alarms are what's broken. You should fix it before we both die.

DMITRI continues to study the board, testing switches and dials.

DMITRI

(to himself)

What the hell did you do? *(finishing his testing)* You broke the radio controls. Of all goddamn fucking things. We have less than thirty minutes until Moscow and now we can't even— Where the hell's the manual?

DMITRI unsuccessfully searches. He looks to YURI.

YURI

Did you forget where the manual is? *How* did you—?

DMITRI

It's not my responsibility.

YURI

(tilting his head)

It's in there.

DMITRI finds the manual. On the way, he takes a drink of cognac, then stows it. He finds the manual and starts paging through it, flipping backwards and forwards.

YURI (cont'd)

(unable to help himself)

The board diagram is on page twenty-seven, and the tools and spare parts are in the repair kit with the green stripe.

DMITRI stops flipping through the manual. He takes a breath. He flips to page twenty-seven, and finds the kit. He starts to work. It's slow going; he's competent, but unlike YURI, he has to rely on the manual.

YURI (cont'd)

You'll need the plus // screwdriver.

DMITRI

Do you ever shut up!

YURI stays quiet. DMITRI pretends to consult the manual, then with a glance at YURI, finds the screwdriver. He returns to his work. It goes well until he gets stuck: he reads the manual, rereads the manual. He grows more and more frustrated. He holds up a piece of equipment.

DMITRI (cont'd)

This isn't fitting into the circuit board.

He waits for YURI to chime in, but YURI doesn't.

DMITRI (cont'd)

Isn't it a key stabilizer? *(no response)* That was a question. *(no response)* For you to fucking answer.

YURI

That's a staple.

DMITRI

Then why the hell is it in the kit?

YURI

The kit has spare parts for the whole board. The key stabilizers are yellow.

DMITRI searches through the kit and finds a yellow part. He holds it up to YURI.

DMITRI

This one?

YURI

Yes.

DMITRI

It looks just like the staple.

YURI

The staples aren't yellow.

DMITRI

You engineers make this shit complicated just so you can jerk off about how smart you are.

YURI

It's not complicated, you're just bad at it.

DMITRI

If you question my competency again, I'm telling the KGB you're a spy.

YURI

They'd shoot me and call it a suicide.

DMITRI

They might not even care if you're actually a spy. Because even if you're *not* a spy, you still fucked our country by contacting the Americans. So if the KGB decides to shoot you, I'll do it myself.

YURI

Dima.

DMITRI

You're my responsibility.

YURI

I'll do anything.

DMITRI

And that's your fucking problem.

YURI

There'll be questions if you say anything. Like you said, I'm your responsibility. The Americans might not tell anyone that we contacted them, so if *you* tell anyone that—

DMITRI

Are you threatening me?

YURI

It's just that, if you divulge that you let your subordinate radio—

DMITRI

I'll divulge that my subordinate choked on a sausage and I had to launch him into space before he decomposed.

YURI

I just meant that it would be a hassle. You'd have to explain—

DMITRI

Yura, it would be in your best interest to shut the fuck up.

Quiet as DMITRI works on the radio. DMITRI's watch alarm beeps and he turns it off. He picks up the map and shows it to YURI.

DMITRI (cont'd)

This intersection?

YURI

Yes. The one assuming Moscow is the target. Set your watch for Leningrad.

DMITRI moves the repair kit aside, sets his watch, and looks through the viewfinder.

YURI (cont'd)

But we still need to fix the radio. Untie me, and I can—

DMITRI

I'm not untying you. It's almost fixed anyway.

YURI

You don't know that. You thought a staple was a key stabilizer.

DMITRI

Telling the KGB you're a spy isn't an idle threat.

YURI

I'm not questioning your competency to *eventually* fix the radio. *(checking his watch)*
But we only have fifteen minutes.

DMITRI

How do you want to start your suicide note?

YURI

Please let me do my job.

DMITRI

I decide what is and isn't your job.

YURI

My *job* is being the fucking engineer.

DMITRI

And *my* job is to decide if you can be trusted. And right now you can't be. Understood?

YURI

Understood, commander.

DMITRI

Good.

Quiet at DMITRI looks, then:

DMITRI (cont'd)

You said Star City wasn't a target, but it's only thirty kilometers outside of Moscow.

YURI

If Natasha's inside she'd be ok.

DMITRI

And if she's not inside?

YURI

Then she'd die of lethal burns.

DMITRI

You're remembering the Titan Two's damage radius wrong.

YURI

You're right, I'm remembering it wrong.

DMITRI

No you're not.

YURI

No I'm not.

DMITRI

What if she's down there fucking someone else? What if she dies fucking someone else?

YURI

Usually people fuck inside.

DMITRI

She better not be fucking anyone else. But she probably is. She does all this shit behind my back, like you two going to goddamn *protests* and fucking afterwards and reading *The Champion's Breakfast* to each other in bed.

YURI

(unable to help himself)

Breakfast of Champions.

DMITRI

What?

YURI

The book's called *Breakfast of Champions*.

DMITRI

I don't give a shit what some American trash is called.

YURI

She's down there worried about you. A week before our launch, she told me that she was scared imagining you up here, hurtling through the dark. She wasn't scared for me.

DMITRI

She told *me* that. Why did she need to tell *you*?

YURI

She wanted to check if the flight map of our station was real. The one you gave her. That's how I know you love her. Because you gave her a top secret military document so whenever she's scared or lonely she can look up and see you.

DMITRI

Don't tell anyone I did that.

YURI

I won't. I think it's nice.

DMITRI

But she looks up to see *you*. And so what? I'm still scared for her, dying of burns, her skin peeling off, whatever bullshit you said. I'd worry about her even if she fucked everyone I knew. If the world becomes a wasteland, would she shoot herself? I would. I'd put a bullet in my brain.

YURI

It's good to stop pretending you're ok, isn't it?

DMITRI

Fuck off.

As DMITRI continues to look, he becomes increasingly frustrated.

DMITRI (cont'd)

There's nothing here!

YURI

Maybe there isn't anything to find. Which is *good*.

DMITRI stops looking.

DMITRI

This map's bullshit, isn't it? You don't want the Soviet Union to shoot the missile down. I should've turned in both of you when I had the chance. Then you could've been fucking Kolya in prison instead fucking my wife, and you wouldn't be up here making sure our country gets blown up.

YURI

(slowly realizing)

Turned in *both of us*? Did you turn in Kolya?

DMITRI

I informed Vavara Romanovna that Kolya had anti-Soviet contraband.

YURI

You killed him.

DMITRI

I didn't kill him. He's in prison somewhere.

YURI

He's not in prison, he's dead. Son of a motherfucking // bitch—

DMITRI

He was going to get himself into trouble eventually.

YURI begins to twist and writhe in the zip tie, ostensibly trying to get free, but without a rational plan.

YURI

He wasn't in *trouble*, you *killed him*. And now you're going to kill me, fuck fuck fuck—

DMITRI

You're going to hurt yourself, asshole. Or break something.

DMITRI grabs YURI to stop him from writhing. YURI shoves him off.

YURI

Don't touch me! Kolya *liked* you. He didn't deserve—

DMITRI

I didn't want him arrested.

YURI

Then why did you turn him in?

DMITRI

I wanted to teach him a lesson.

YURI stops writhing.

DMITRI (cont'd)

He wasn't careful. He couldn't hide his enthusiasm for dangerous ideas. If I'd known that you and Natasha... At least you were careful. Kolya never listened to me, but I figured he'd listen to the head of the space program. So I could stop worrying about him.

YURI

You thought the best way to teach Kolya a lesson was to get him arrested by the KGB?

DMITRI

I thought Vavara Romanovna would just give him a talking to, and that the worst that could happen would be that he'd get expelled from flight school. But when the KGB—

YURI

You're not that stupid. Obviously he'd get arrested.

DMITRI

I didn't think it was *certain*. You're not the only one who misses him.

YURI

(realizing)

There's an even worse reason.

DMITRI

There's not.

YURI

If you don't tell me, I'll kick everything I can reach until you slit my throat.

DMITRI hesitates. YURI lifts up his foot to start a kick. DMITRI catches it.

DMITRI

I was failing the propulsion course. I always fucked up the unit conversions. On every assignment. On every exam. So I told Vavara Romanovna, if I can't be an engineer, make me a commander.

YURI drops his foot and DMITRI lets go.

DMITRI (cont'd)

I had to prove that I deserved it, or she would've found someone else. We're all so easily replaceable. So I brought her a couple pamphlets I found in Kolya's bag and embellished a few details. She made me a commander for protecting the Soviet people.

YURI

You got Kolya killed because you were failing a class?

DMITRI

I didn't kill him. We can't all be as smart as you. It was the only way I could get to space.

YURI

You selfish son of a— It was that week. She made you a commander *that same week*. I'm a goddamn idiot who can't put two and fucking two together you motherfucking— They made me suck your dick for three years *because* you murdered Kolya.

DMITRI

Stop saying I killed him.

DMITRI's watch alarm goes off.

YURI

Leningrad.

DMITRI looks through the viewfinder.

YURI (cont'd)

Kolya and I were going to go there that weekend. Did you proudly lead the way for the KGB that day? A little fucking parade? When they pulled him out of bed, he was so scared. And you and fucking everyone else in that goddamn dorm out in the hall to watch them drag him off in handcuffs, march *me* off, and you, did you want us both shot right there in the hall?

DMITRI

I didn't want anyone shot. There's nothing here. I'll set my alarm for Kharkiv.

YURI

You let me think it was my fault. For three years. That interrogation room reeking of disinfectant, the pool of dried blood in the corner. The agent dumped out all the samizdat—my mistake, the “anti-Soviet contraband”—on a table. All the “illegal” books they’d found in our dorm room. The agent didn’t have to... He didn’t even have to threaten to... It took less than thirty seconds. I told them the samizdat was all Kolya’s.

DMITRI

You did what you had to do.

YURI

I did what *you* made me do.

DMITRI

I’m not the fucking KGB.

YURI

It wasn’t my fault. There’s nothing I could’ve said. And Kolya, he— Even while they were, God fucking knows, probably beating him, putting out cigarettes on his skin, breaking his fingers one by one... But he didn’t say anything, because they let me go. They could’ve shot me, shot *Natasha*. Kolya should’ve gotten a fucking medal, but instead he’s buried as a traitor in some unmarked shallow grave.

DMITRI

I didn’t want that.

YURI

But you didn’t care if it happened. I wish they’d’ve at least given me his body, so I could bury him. Visit his grave and bring flowers. But no one I love has ever gotten a grave. I hope the Americans did it. Our country deserves to be destroyed. We’ll tell Brezhnev there isn’t a missile, so we can’t defend ourselves. And once every Soviet city is rubble, the Americans can come shoot any survivors. And when we land, the Americans will pick us up and give us a medal and then hang us.

DMITRI

You want revenge on your whole country for Kolya?

YURI

It’s not revenge. It’s a kinder death than the one our country gives its own people.

DMITRI

You need to get your shit together.

YURI

The KGB made me shred everything they'd taken. And it wasn't just samizdat. Textbooks, classic literature, photo albums. I told them they'd taken those by mistake. They didn't care. Memories of friends and family gone. *War and Peace* jammed the shredder. You wanted to prove a point to Kolya. You proved it to me. And what were *you* doing for those five hours? Fucking Anya?

DMITRI

I was helping everyone clean your room after the KGB searched it. Then I bought the toffees for you, and Alyosha bought chocolate for Kolya. Sveta bought vodka for everyone. Alyosha kept the chocolate until rats ate it.

YURI

Those fucking toffees. You murdered him and gave me fucking toffees.

DMITRI

Stop saying I— I went back to Vavara Romanovna.

YURI

Did you apply for a position in the KGB?

DMITRI

I asked her why Kolya had been arrested. She told me that it wasn't fitting for a commander to question any measures taken to stop anti-Soviet activity. And then I was dismissed. So I left. And then I fucked Anya because she never liked Kolya. I could fuck her and forget.

YURI

You should be glad your brother's dead so he can't know what you grew up to be.

DMITRI

Don't bring Vanechka into this.

YURI

Why not? You watched Stalin starve your little brother to death and somehow came away from that loving your country *more*.

DMITRI

Stalin was never my country.

YURI

Then what *is* your country? Killing off your friends to get ahead? At Vanechka's funeral, did you think, "When I grow up I want to be just like Stalin, so when he dies *I'll* be the one killing people"?

DMITRI

I'm not motherfucking Stalin.

YURI

But you want to be. Do it again, asshole. You've already killed once for your country. Slit my fucking throat.

DMITRI retrieves the knife and moves towards YURI. YURI recoils. DMITRI cuts YURI free. YURI grabs the knife from DMITRI and puts it to DMITRI's throat. DMITRI tries to pry the knife away, but this time, YURI is stronger.

YURI (cont'd)

Admit you murdered Kolya.

DMITRI

I'm sorry.

YURI

Not that. Don't say *that*, it's too fucking late.

DMITRI

I'm sorry he's dead.

YURI

Say "I killed him." (*no response*) Now, you motherfucking bastard.

DMITRI

I killed him.

YURI
Yes you did.

YURI takes the knife away from DMITRI's throat.

DMITRI
(mostly to himself)
I killed him. I'm so sorry.

YURI
I hope it was quick. I hope they shot him. When the KGB finds out that I contacted the Americans, do you think they'll shoot me? Make it easy?

DMITRI
I'm not going to tell them.

YURI studies the knife.

YURI
They'll find out somehow. I wonder if Natasha will come to my funeral. I know *you* won't.

DMITRI
They're not going to shoot you.

YURI
If they don't shoot me, it'll have to be a closed casket. They'll have mangled my body.

DMITRI
Put away the knife.

YURI
But they can't torture me to death if I'm already dead.

YURI turns the knife on himself.

DMITRI
Shit.

DMITRI grabs the knife. He's unable to pull it from YURI's hand, but he keeps YURI from hurting himself. They struggle.

YURI

Let me do it!

DMITRI

Give me the knife.

YURI

You were going to kill me!

DMITRI

Well I...I *didn't* kill you. So you don't get to kill yourself. Let go.

YURI

You can replace me with a manual.

DMITRI

No I can't. I need you to get back to Earth.

YURI

You can do it alone. You know what a staple is now. Once I'm dead, when you land you'll get a medal for protecting the motherland from a dangerous bourgeoisie parasite. Then you can turn in Natasha and suck Lenin's rotting cock.

DMITRI's watch beeps. He awkwardly turns off the alarm while still holding onto the knife.

YURI (cont'd)

Kharkiv. I've never been. If it's as nice as the propaganda says it is, you can bury me there.

DMITRI

Let go of the knife. I have to look. And set the alarm for Kyiv.

YURI

I trusted you.

DMITRI

I'm not going to let you stab yourself while I'm distracted.

YURI

Why did I trust you?

DMITRI

Fine. Don't let go.

DMITRI, still holding onto the knife that YURI will not let go of, awkwardly sets his alarm. Then he awkwardly looks through the viewfinder; he ends up slightly contorted. By now, YURI is no longer actively trying to hurt himself.

DMITRI (cont'd)

I thought the world was better. I didn't think they'd arrest him. Not for sure.

YURI

You *pretended* the world was better. That our country was better.

DMITRI

So what if I did? That's the only way to live in the Soviet Union if you don't want to go crazy or get shot. Let go of the knife. I can't look properly.

YURI

All I've been pretending for the past three years is that my murdered best friend never existed. I was too scared to even say Kolya's name, because what could I say after that? I'd catch myself wondering if he *had* existed, if *that's* what I was pretending.

DMITRI

I didn't want him forgotten.

YURI

You ripped up the only photo of him left.

DMITRI stops looking through the viewfinder. He takes the pieces of the photo out of his pocket. He holds them out to YURI.

DMITRI

Let go of the knife. I'll find the tape.

YURI takes the pieces and holds them gently. A moment. YURI lets go of the knife. DMITRI quickly stows it far away from YURI.

DMITRI (cont'd)

Do I need to zip tie you again?

YURI moves his wrists to the grab bar. DMITRI pulls them away.

DMITRI (cont'd)

I don't *want* to zip tie you again.

YURI

Then why did you ask?

DMITRI

Because I thought you'd say no. Don't try to stab yourself again. Understood? (*no response*) You won't?

YURI

I won't.

DMITRI

Good.

Quiet as DMITRI hands YURI one piece of tape at a time and YURI carefully and deftly tapes the photo back together.

DMITRI (cont'd)

You can barely tell it was ever ripped. (*no response*) If I was taping it—

YURI

When I'm done I'll cut out the protest signs. And Natasha.

DMITRI

You don't have to do it now. Just before we land.

When the photo is repaired, DMITRI holds out another piece of tape.

YURI

I don't need any more tape.

DMITRI

It's so you can put it on the wall.

A silence as YURI processes what DMITRI said.

DMITRI (cont'd)

You decide where to put it.

DMITRI folds the piece of tape to make it double-sided and hands it to YURI. YURI puts the tape on the back of the photo, but does nothing else. DMITRI points to a place on the wall.

DMITRI (cont'd)

What about here?

YURI puts the photo on the wall.

DMITRI (cont'd)

It looks nice there.

YURI

It's too late to feel guilty.

DMITRI

I know.

YURI

Everything's too late.

DMITRI

It's not. There's still time. We can probably figure out how to save at least some part of humanity.

DMITRI's alarm goes off.

YURI

Kyiv. It's the last one. If you don't find anything, then... Then we've found nothing.

DMITRI looks through the viewfinder. YURI gazes at the photo on the wall.

YURI (cont'd)

Don't tell anyone I tried to kill myself.

DMITRI

I won't. We shouldn't tell anyone anything. We'd be so fucked. If the Americans tell anyone you contacted them, we can't hide that, but maybe we can just say that the Americans are liars who'll do anything to fuck with us. There's nothing here.

YURI

So we found nothing.

DMITRI

There must be somewhere else to look.

YURI

There's nowhere else.

DMITRI

No. There's no reason to stop looking. We only picked four places, and the estimates were rough, so if I keep looking I might see—

YURI

We're too far past to see anything.

DMITRI

But maybe, I don't know—

YURI

We didn't find anything. Hopefully that means there's nothing to find.

DMITRI

What're we going to tell Brezhnev?

YURI

I thought we didn't have a choice. We have to— How far away are we from Moscow?

They check their watches. Simultaneously:

DMITRI

About ten minutes.

YURI

Eight minutes.

YURI

Don't round *up*! It's eight min— The radio. You didn't fix the control board.

DMITRI

Motherfucking shit.

YURI

Shit shit shit shit. I'll set an alarm for Moscow. Get me the minus screwdriver.

YURI sets his watch and starts working on the control board. DMITRI finds the screwdriver and hands it to YURI.

DMITRI

How long will it take // you to—?

YURI

I don't know. We wouldn't be in a rush if you hadn't tied me to the fucking wall.

DMITRI

I tied you to the wall because you sabotaged the mission.

YURI points to a place in the manual.

YURI

Find this. I didn't sabotage the mission. I was trying to find out what the hell launched so we could tell Brezhnev, but you tried to kill me instead.

DMITRI

(while looking for the piece)

You tried to kill me too.

YURI

I tried to kill myself.

DMITRI

After trying to kill me. *(he holds up a piece)* This one?

YURI

Yes. *(he takes it)* We did *everything* we could and all we know is that *something* launched. There was nothing over America, nothing from Havana, nothing over the Atlantic. There's nothing we can tell Brezhnev that he doesn't already know. And without proof that there's *not* an ICBM headed for the Soviet Union, Brezhnev might bomb all of America just in case. And then Nixon will nuke the entire Soviet Union. *(with slight acidity:)* But we can only tell Brezhnev that we don't know shit, because it's not our place to say anything else.

DMITRI

We lie.

A moment as YURI realizes what DMITRI said.

YURI

You want us to *lie*?

DMITRI

Yes. We tell Brezhnev it's not a missile.

YURI

You want to *lie* to *Brezhnev*?

DMITRI

Yes.

YURI

And you call *me* a traitor.

DMITRI

I'm saving the Soviet people from World War Three.

YURI

I was trying to save the fucking Soviet people when I contacted the Americans. All you do is lie. Like you lied to Vavara Romanovna about Kolya.

DMITRI

You lied about Natasha.

YURI

Natasha's still alive.

DMITRI takes YURI by the shoulders.

DMITRI

Do you think the Americans actually did it?

YURI

I don't know. Let me go. I have to finish fixing the radio controls.

DMITRI

Deep down, do you think they did it?

YURI

I don't think they're *intentionally* bombing the Soviet Union.

DMITRI

But there might be a missile headed to the USSR.

YURI

I don't know.

DMITRI

What do you *think*?

YURI

I think it crashed into the Atlantic. Whatever it is, a test, an accident, I don't think it made it more than a hundred kilometers outside the United States.

DMITRI

I don't think it did either.

DMITRI lets go of YURI, who goes back to work on the control board.

YURI

There's no reason to believe that, but I do anyway. Probably because if the Soviet Union's being bombed, everyone we love is dead and there's nothing we can do. So there's no point in believing that. And if we pretend everything's fine, like we always fucking do, if we *decide* that everything's fine, then maybe we'd at least save...

DMITRI

Save Americans.

YURI

Yes.

DMITRI

That's why we have to tell Brezhnev it's not a missile.

YURI

That's why it's not up to me. Because I believe shit like that. Besides, I'm an engineer, not a general. Remember? And you're not a general either.

DMITRI

We're as Soviet as any general. And in our Soviet opinion Brezhnev shouldn't start World War Three. Kolya would lie.

YURI

You don't know what the fuck he'd've done.

DMITRI

Yes I do. And you do too. If Kolya thought he could save *anyone*, he'd lie.

YURI

Fucking fine. Kolya would lie. But he's dead. That's what happens when you fuck with your country. If Brezhnev finds out I contacted the Americans, maybe I'll just get hard labor. If I *lie to my country*, Brezhnev will shoot me as soon as we land. And then his mother will shoot my corpse. If I'm lucky.

DMITRI

We don't have any other choice. You can't get hard labor if the Soviet Union doesn't exist anymore.

YURI

We don't have to outright lie. It's *how* we tell him.

DMITRI

How exactly are we supposed to tell Brezhnev that we don't know shit? Like you said, he'll want proof. If we're wrong, hell, even if we stop nuclear war, Brezhnev's gun might have *two* bullets.

YURI starts to pull electronics off the radio.

DMITRI grabs him and stops him. YURI struggles but DMITRI's grasp is firm.

DMITRI (cont'd)

What the fuck are you doing?

YURI

We didn't fix the radio in time so nothing was our fault. We didn't lie *or* tell the truth. We're not responsible.

DMITRI

It's our mission to be responsible. We can't *not* be responsible.

YURI

They're not going to shoot us. They're going to torture us to death, just like they tortured Kolya to death. You should've let me kill myself. They'll hold us responsible for *whatever* happens and arrest us and strip us naked in prison and—

DMITRI

So what if they do. You're not a coward.

YURI

Yes I am.

DMITRI

We're lying to Brezhnev to stop nuclear war. You're brave enough to stop nuclear war.

YURI

No I'm not. I wasn't even brave enough to save Kolya.

DMITRI

There was nothing you could've done. But right now there *is* something you can do, which is to fix the radio and help me lie to Brezhnev. We'll be fucked together.

YURI

I'm going to throw up.

DMITRI

So throw up *and* stop nuclear war. *(no response)* Please.

A pause.

YURI

Alright. Let's lie to Brezhnev.

DMITRI

(letting go of YURI)

Thank you. Are you really going to throw up?

YURI

I don't know. I don't think so.

DMITRI

Good. Now fix the radio.

YURI

Ok.

YURI continues to fix the radio.

DMITRI

I don't know a good lie.

YURI

We tell Brezhnev that we have proof of a test. That we have audio from NASA radio communications. And photos. But we don't have time to send the audio and we haven't developed the photos yet.

DMITRI

We can't fake photos. We can't even fake audio. Brezhnev isn't going to believe that NASA is full of men with Russian accents.

YURI

By the time he realizes we lied, we've stopped nuclear war. Or he'll be dead. Get me a zip tie.

*DMITRI finds a zip tie and holds it out to YURI.
Their eyes meet for a moment.*

DMITRI

Ok. We'll tell him it's a test.

YURI takes the zip tie and bundles cables together.

YURI

Done.

*They begin testing the radio, making sure buttons
and switches function.*

DMITRI

Everything seems functional. Fixed with good old socialist ingenuity.

YURI

Making brighter tomorrows. *(he checks his watch)* We'll be in radio range of Moscow in about two minutes.

DMITRI takes out the cognac and raises it.

Nazdarovya.
DMITRI

*DMITRI drinks, then hands the cognac to YURI.
YURI raises it.*

Nazdarovya.
YURI

*YURI drinks. He finishes the cognac and stows the
empty pouch.*

We're so fucked.
YURI (cont'd)

Everything's fucked.
DMITRI

YURI
If it's a missile aimed at Moscow, we're going to be over the middle of the Soviet Union
when it hits. So when we reach Baikonur we can radio to see if Moscow still exists.

DMITRI
We wouldn't see the city being destroyed.

YURI
No.

They look out the windows.

DMITRI
All those people down there. Having beautiful sunsets. And maybe Natasha's looking up
at us.

YURI
I want to look at Moscow through the telescope. It might be our last chance to see it
before... But we'll be over Klushino first. You should look.

DMITRI
I'll set it up.

DMITRI sets up the viewfinder and looks.

DMITRI (cont'd)

Now those are proper farms. Soviets know how to care for the land. No fucked up square American bullshit.

YURI

Can you see Klushino?

DMITRI

Yes. Look.

YURI looks through the viewfinder.

DMITRI (cont'd)

Do you see all those little buildings?

YURI

Which one is your house?

DMITRI

They've built a lot of new ones. I'm not sure anymore.

YURI

Alright then, which wheatfield did you fuck Sasha in?

DMITRI

We fucked in a barn. I'll point it towards Moscow. Do you want to look at Red Square? Or find your old apartment?

YURI

I want to watch the boats on the river.

DMITRI

(a hint of teasing:) Of course you do. First I'm going to look at Red Square. *(he looks)* I can almost see the people walking, at least their long shadows. The square looks like it's shimmering. You should at least look at the cathedral. Then you can go down a block to the river.

DMITRI moves aside so YURI can look.

YURI

Those towers are so stupid.

DMITRI

That's why I like them. *(looking out the window)* Look at the rest of the Soviet Union. It's like an abyss. All those farmers sleeping.

YURI

(also looking out the window)

They're not bombing the rest of the USSR, anyway.

DMITRI

Not yet.

YURI's alarm goes off. The two meet eyes.

DMITRI (cont'd)

We're not wrong.

YURI

Even if we're wrong.

YURI turns on the radio and sets dials. DMITRI speaks into the handset:

DMITRI

This is Sokol One. Moscow, do you hear? I'm receiving.

MOSCOW

This is Moscow, I hear. I'm transferring you to Brezhnev. Stand by.

A long pause. They look out the windows.

YURI

Earth's so small.

DMITRI

I could crush it between my fingertips.

End of play.