

The nurse shoots Walsh an alarmed look from the hallway.

Sparta turns to the nurse.

SPARTA

Could you call back Dr. Matthews?

WALSH

I'm afraid I can't allow that.

He turns to the nurse.

WALSH (CONT'D)

Remove the tube and get her dressed.

The nurse hesitates, but Walsh is firm.

WALSH (CONT'D)

That's an order.

The nurse leaps into action as a silver TEAR rolls down Sparta's cheek. She doesn't resist as the nurse pulls the tube out of Sparta's nostril.

SPARTA

(voice dull)

Where are we going?

WALSH

Outside. It's a beautiful day.

He feigns a smile, tries to convince himself. Gestures to the blue sky visible through the window.

# START

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**EXT. THE INSTITUTION - GROUNDS - DAY**

12

Bundled for the cold, Walsh and Sparta exit the building, they walk side by side.

She wears an asylum-issued thin brown COAT, brown leggings, plain boots. Walsh wears his heavy, navy coat, with his red scarf looped around his neck.

There's a sophisticated grace to Sparta's steps, almost like a dancer. Walsh's steps are agitated.

Their boots crunch in the snow as they walk to a large, snow-covered field. In the distance, a FOREST blocks the highway.

Sparta, silent, gazes on the line of trees.

In the very far distance, a HARE leaps from the snow as a FOX pounces. Sparta startles.

Walsh steadies her elbow, almost as if to steady himself--

WALSH  
Are you all right?

SPARTA  
I just saw a bunny. A rabbit, I mean.

She points. Her MACROSCOPIC VISION narrows on the hare as it races across the snow, the fox, a red streak behind. They disappear into the woods.

Walsh, distracted, observes her face as she tracks the hunt.

She falls silent again.

Sparta visibly relaxes.

SPARTA (CONT'D)  
In our game last week, you opened with your favorite move-- the Ruy Lopez: 1. e4, e5; 2. Nf3, Nc6; and 3. Bb5. I used the Berlin defense.

WALSH  
You won.

A small smile from Sparta.

SPARTA  
Of course, I did.

The sun is slowly dying. Shadows spread along the field.

Sparta shivers.

SPARTA (CONT'D)  
Why won't you let me have the procedure?

He unties his scarf and loops it around Sparta's neck.

SPARTA (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
Are my classmates all dead?

She burrows her chin into the folds of Dr. Walsh's scarf. He gets lost in the horizon.

WALSH

There's a philosopher who once said, "Whoever fights monsters--"

SPARTA

--should see to it that he not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into the abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you."

She throws him a look.

SPARTA (CONT'D)

Am I the monster? --All of us?

Walsh turns to face Sparta.

WALSH

Sparta, there's something you need to know.

Sparta throws him a look. Crosses her arms.

SPARTA

I already know too much. What I want is to forget. And that's something you've refused.

WALSH

It's in your best interest --

SPARTA

(heatedly)

It's in my best interest to forget, Dr. Walsh! When I forget, I have no pain.

She turns and stalks across the field back toward the asylum.

Walsh hurries after her. Grabs her arm --

WALSH

I want to end your suffering, Sparta. But you must listen to me.

He glances over his shoulder. She glares at him.

SPARTA

Why? So you can convince me to have more nightmares?

WALSH  
 (softly)  
 Sometimes... the only way out... is  
 through.

SPARTA  
 "I am in blood stepped in so far  
 that, should I wade no more..."

WALSH  
 Precisely...

Dr. Walsh looks over his shoulders. Sees the nurse through a  
 distant window watch them, then leaves.

WALSH (CONT'D)  
 We don't have a lot of time.

Sparta closes her eyes. When she opens them, she looks like  
 the scared girl of the night before.

WALSH (CONT'D) SPARTA  
 We don't have a lot of time. I was playing Clair d--

She stops. Shakes her head to stop the tears. Her eyes  
 glisten with a silver sheen in the winter light. She has  
 never looked more vulnerable, or more untouchable.

SPARTA (CONT'D)  
 -- I was playing...

She trails off. Sparta closes her eyes.

WALSH  
 You were playing Clair de Lune the  
 night your parents arrived at the  
 school. The night you think they  
 died.

Her eyes fly open.

SPARTA  
 "Think"? ...When we get back to my  
 room, you need to wipe my memory.

WALSH  
 You can't go back to your room. Not  
 now. Not ever.

SPARTA  
 You promised!

WALSH

I need you to listen to me. They're going to come for you.

SPARTA

I've heard enough.

WALSH

Sparta, please. We don't have long.

She starts to take off. He grasps for her, fails. She is getting away, so he uses his words.

WALSH (CONT'D)

You didn't kill them, Sparta -Your parents. It wasn't you.

She stops. Turns to face him. Her gaze searches his. First with disbelief. Then suspicion. Finally, pain as she recognizes he's telling the truth.

SPARTA

(whispers)

I know. But I'm still the reason they're dead.

WALSH

No. No one killed them.

Walsh glances over his shoulders again.

SPARTA

I saw it crash! Their dead bodies --

It's all too much. She SOBS. Covers her face. Leans her head against his shoulder.

WALSH

(whispers)

They -We -made up that memory. Imprinted in your chip.

She staggers back, out of his embrace. Shock on her face.

Her hand creeps up her temple. Touches a BUMP at her hairline. It's almost imperceptible.

She drops her hand --

SPARTA

(angrily)

I don't believe you. You weren't even there.

Walsh gives her a small smile.

WALSH  
It's all in your file.

She gives him a look of loathing, the kind of look only the deepest betrayal of trust can engender.

WALSH (CONT'D)  
We don't have long. I'll tell you everything.

She backs away--

WALSH (CONT'D)  
It's back in my office. I'll give you everything. But then you need to leave.

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He watches her break into a sprint. She races away and across the field, his scarf flows behind her, a stream of red against the backdrop of the twilight-tinged forest.

In the distance, beneath the fluid line of the scarf, the hare leaps into the air, as graceful as Sparta.

But it's too late. As it lands, the fox snatches it in its mouth.

The fox drags the limp, bloody hare into the forest.

~~END OF ACT ONE~~