

DON'T META ANY OF THIS OR I WILL LEAK YOUR FUCKING IP
YES I HAVE IT
YES ITS YOURS

<::AUTHORIZED VIEWING::>
<::UU OFFICIAL USE ONLY::>

The Recruiter

Moscow was gray.

It wasn't just the buildings or the sky—though both carried a dull, lifeless color—it was the people, the city itself. Everything felt like it had been drained of something vital, something warm.

Andrei Andreiovich Demisov understood that feeling well.

The plastic bag in his hand crinkled as he adjusted his grip. Inside, bread, canned meat, and some potatoes. It wasn't much, but it was what he could afford. His mother and Masha needed to eat.

His boots crunched against the cold pavement, his hood pulled over his head to ward off the biting wind. He didn't like being noticed. Didn't like standing out.

But today, someone noticed him anyway.

"You walk like a soldier."

Andrei stopped.

The voice was rough, but confident. A man stood near the entrance of an alley, leaning against the wall like he belonged there. He was older—mid-forties, maybe—but strong. The kind of strength that didn't fade with time. His jacket

was well-worn but military-cut, and though he wasn't in uniform, he might as well have been.

Andrei turned his head slightly but didn't answer.

The man stepped closer. Not aggressive, but deliberate.

"You're disciplined. You move with purpose. I've been watching."

Andrei didn't like that.

"You some kind of cop?" he muttered, his grip tightening on his bag.

The man grinned—a wolf's grin, one that said he enjoyed the game. "No. I'm something better."

Andrei said nothing, but he held his ground.

The man took out a pack of cigarettes, lit one, and exhaled slowly before speaking again.

"I'm looking for men like you."

Andrei already knew where this was going.

The army.

He glanced at the man's hands—scarred knuckles, a veteran of something brutal. Maybe Chechnya, like his father. Maybe somewhere else.

His father.

For a moment, he saw Volgin Demisov's face—not in photographs, but in the spaces between words, in the silence his mother never filled. A father who left to serve his country and never came back.

And now this man stood in front of him, talking about discipline and purpose like it was something worth chasing.

Andrei exhaled through his nose. "I'm not interested."
The recruiter didn't flinch. If anything, his grin widened.

"You don't even know what I'm offering."

"I don't need to." Andrei turned to leave.

The man's voice followed him. "You want to fight for something real? For your homeland? Or do you want to keep running scraps of food back to your mother like a dog?"

Andrei froze.

He should have walked away. He should have ignored it. But something about the words made his fists itch.

Slowly, he turned back. His gray eyes met the recruiter's, and this time, there was no amusement in them.

"Say that again."

The man took a slow drag from his cigarette, then flicked the ashes onto the ground. "I see strength in you, boy. But strength without purpose is wasted."

Andrei's jaw tightened.

Strength without purpose.

He wanted to laugh. Wasn't that what his father had?

Volgin Demisov had been strong. He had fought for his country. He had been a good soldier.

And then he had died in a place that didn't care about him, leaving behind a starving wife and two children fighting over scraps.

Andrei stepped closer, slow and deliberate. He saw the recruiter tense slightly—not fear, but awareness. A trained man recognizing another.

Andrei leaned in, his voice low, steady.

"My father was a soldier. He fought your wars. He died in the mountains. And what did this country give back?"

The recruiter didn't answer.

Andrei nodded, a bitter smirk tugging at his lips. "That's what I thought."

Then, he turned and walked away, leaving the man behind in the cold.

The weight of the food in his hands felt heavier now, like a reminder of where his fight really was.

The Road Home

By the time Andrei reached his apartment, the sun was dipping low, casting long shadows over the cracked sidewalks. He climbed the steps two at a time, his breath even despite the cold.

Inside, the air was warm but stale. The small apartment smelled of cheap tea and fatigue.

His mother sat by the window, her hands folded in her lap, eyes distant. She had never been the same after Volgin died.

Masha sat on the couch, her skinny legs tucked under her. She perked up when she saw Andrei. "You got food?"

Andrei dropped the bag onto the table. "Yeah."

Masha grinned and dug through it, pulling out the bread like it was some great prize. She was only thirteen. She shouldn't have to treat food like it was rare.

Andrei ran a hand through his hair and sat down.

His mother didn't ask where he'd been. She never did.

As Masha chewed on a piece of bread, Andrei stared at the wall, the recruiter's words echoing in his mind.

Strength without purpose.

He had spent his whole life fighting for something real—for his mother, for Masha, for survival.

Did that make him weak?

Would this be his life forever? Running food back home, keeping his head down, avoiding the future?

Maybe.

Maybe not.

All he knew was that he wouldn't be used. He wouldn't die in some distant war for men who didn't care whether he lived or died.

His fight was here.

And that was enough. For now.