

Dead Drop

by  
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1 OVER BLACK

1

MARK (V.O.)

Yes, I'd like to place an ad. Uh, psychics. Ad reads: "What happens next? I have your answers. See what I have to offer. Call Madame Lazarov, 940-2081."

(pause)

Right. This week's edition...

The voice trails off as:

CUT TO:

2 EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

2

The HANDS of an unseen man lift open a newspaper box and take out the local. Sits on a bench.

Flipping through it quickly. The classifieds. There. "What happens next?"

The paper goes into the trash, the man makes a quick mark on the bench itself with a piece of chalk, walks off.

CUT TO:

TITLE: "DEAD DROP"

WE HEAR a car driving across road and then gravel as it slows to a halt.

3 EXT. ABANDONED CAFE - DAY

3

The middle of nowhere. An abandoned café - graffiti'd and left to die - dominates the frame.

There's our car, parked in front of it. Minor two-lane highway, no traffic.

Our driver walks hurriedly to the side of the cafe: MARK, clean-cut but haggard, 30. Hard to pick out of a lineup.

A standpipe juts up out of the gravel. Mark checks for cars coming -- none -- and reaches down into the pipe, pulling out a metal tube attached to fishing line. Metal, maybe a foot long, a few inches around.

In his other hand, a USB thumbdrive. He unscrews the cap off the tube and reaches in, but... it's empty. He upends it. Nothing.

Mark weighing it in his hand, considering. Distraught.

He grabs a pen and a scrap of paper and writes. "WHERE'S THE PROOF?? WE NEED TO MEET." Drops it in the container along with the thumbdrive.

4 INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 4

Laying on his back, Mark can't sleep. Nervously worrying his wedding ring. Staring up at the ceiling fan. Slow rotations. Whoom. Whoom. Whoom.

5 EXT. CITY PARK - MORNING 5

Mark on a purposeful walk across the park. He looks terrible. Didn't sleep.

The bench. There's the chalk mark. Reassurance.

6 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY 6

The car barrels across the dusty highway. Punishing the pavement.

7 INT. MARK'S CAR - DAY 7

Mark sits in his car, observing the surroundings. Lifeless and quiet. Okay.

Before getting out, he tucks a little compact handgun in the small of his back.

8 EXT. ABANDONED CAFE - DAY 8

Mark pulls the container up out of the standpipe.

Car keys. Huh?

Jogging around the side of the building: it was parked right there. A BMW luxury sedan. Brand new, shiny and perfect.

He walks around it, peering in the windows. Nothing. He looks around. Is anyone watching? Apparently not.

He triggers the key fob, click, it's open. Hesitantly getting in the driver seat.

9 INT. LUXURY SEDAN - DAY 9

Mark slides into the car. There's a map sitting right there on the console. Hand-drawn, simple, obvious.

10 EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY 10

The sedan crosses the expanse of nothingness. Smaller road, maybe a lane and a half. Even more dead and silent.

11 INT. LUXURY SEDAN - DAY 11

Turning off on a small side road. It dead-ends after a short while. A man standing there. Mark kills the engine and gets out.

12 EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY 12

A putrid lake. Drying up from the shore. Sun going low.

The man standing here, TEAGUE. Corpulent. Sweaty. Everything about him unappealing. But there's that flash of genius in his eyes, a weird smack of charm. Dressed like a European tourist; Panama hat and a piece of straw in his mouth. Mark notices another set of tire tracks in the dirt.

TEAGUE

Ah, Madame Lazarov. We meet again.

Mark's having none of it.

MARK

Where is she? If you hurt her -

TEAGUE

Easy, tiger. She's fine.

He underhands something to Mark, quick.

Mark catches it. An iPod, video ready to play.

ON THE SCREEN

CELIA, young, beautiful, but exhausted and grungy. She holds a newspaper open -- we see the ad Mark placed -- she smiles weakly at the camera.

CELIA

They've been treating me well.  
They say they want to let me go.  
Mark, I'm so sorry, I just want to  
say -

TEAGUE (O.S.)

That's enough.

The camera goes all wobbly and then black.

BACK TO SCENE

Mark is nonplussed.

MARK

If you had it the whole time, why  
the theatrics? You trying to make  
a point? No. No.

TEAGUE

We're moving up the timetable.

MARK

I've been doing what you want for  
two months! We have a deal -

TEAGUE

And the terms of that deal are  
stipulated by me. I only agreed to  
this meeting out of -- let's call  
it respect for the job you've done.

Switching gears.

TEAGUE (CONT'D)

Is the gun really necessary?

Mark caught off-balance again. Teague owns him.

MARK

(clearing his throat)  
You tell me.

Teague shrugs, permissive.

TEAGUE

I would have done the same.

Did he, is the question. Mark studies him. Inscrutable.  
Mark reaches behind his back and grabs the gun, holster and  
all, and tosses it to Teague.

For a brief moment, Teague does seem to have lost the initiative. But he regains his composure. Glances at it.

TEAGUE (CONT'D)  
(the gun)  
Not really my style.

He tosses it back.

TEAGUE (CONT'D)  
We need the Block II crypto routines. You know we can crack DES but this new stuff is something else. We need it in two weeks.

MARK  
Not possible.

TEAGUE  
You've done everything I've asked. I respect that. And Celia's been well cared for. She's eager to go home.

MARK  
So this is it? If I do this...

TEAGUE  
If you do this, you'll be together again. End of story.

Teague crosses to the sedan, opens the driver's door, pauses.

TEAGUE (CONT'D)  
You know what I like about you old soldier types? I like that you still follow protocol even when the situation switches up. Proof of life wasn't there, but you still left the data. That shows me you understand the rules. That's good.  
(beat)  
But sometimes the rules change.

Teague looks out across the lake.

TEAGUE (CONT'D)  
Look at that lake. The desert reclaims us all if we don't stay on top of it. If it was me, I'd rather be with my family.

He drops inelegantly into the seat and turns the engine over. Smooth as silk. Smiles at the feel of it.

TEAGUE (CONT'D)

But that's if you can do what I  
ask. Go ahead and take the walk  
back to come up with a plan.

He winks and pours on the gas. Mark left literally in the  
dust. And looking down at the pistol, still in his hand.

13 EXT. DESERT ROAD - DUSK 13

The sun setting. Mark walks back alone. Running the replay  
in his head. Gears turning. Determination.

DISSOLVE TO:

14 EXT. MILITARY BASE - SECURITY GATE - DAY 14

A four-lane gate, security booths, armed guards. The big  
sign reads: "NAVAL WEAPONS CENTER CHINA LAKE"

Mark's car clears the checkpoint and exits the gate.

15 INT. MARK'S CAR - DAY 15

He's pulled the car to the side of the road. Desert  
wasteland. He's on the phone. Face ashen.

MARK

Want to put an ad in this week.  
Yeah. Under "psychics." "What  
happens next? I have your answers.  
No games. Call Madame Lazarov..."

DISSOLVE TO:

16 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY 16

Mark's car glints in the sunlight as it tears down the  
pavement. One thing on his mind. Celia.

17 EXT. ABANDONED CAFE - DAY 17

The car off to the side of the road. The black BMW is  
sitting right there, just up the road. Looks empty.

He pulls the container out of the standpipe, opens it up.  
There's the keys. Glancing around, he drops the thumbdrive  
in.

18 EXT. LUXURY SEDAN - DAY

18

Mark approaches the car. Slows up. Muffled shouts coming from inside.

MUFFLED VOICE

Mawwk? Mawwwk!

Recognition, relief, panic all on Mark's face. He fumbles with the keys and gets the key in the trunk.

MUFFLED VOICE (CONT'D)

No mawwwwk waahht! Doohhn't -

The trunk flips open. There she is. CELIA, bound up.

And surrounded by explosives. A light turns green.

**BOOM.**

19 EXT. ABANDONED CAFE - DAY

19

The explosion echoes across the desert for miles. The dust cloud rising high in the sky. Pieces of the car everywhere.

Everything falls silent. Just smoke drifting in the wind.

And nothing but the desert.

CUT TO BLACK.  
END.