

The Wasteland
Episode 3 'The Historian'

By

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INT. ROOM

ANNA reading a book. GUSTAV writing in a journal.

There is a knock at the door. Gustav looks up, motions towards Anna. She places her book out of sight.

Gustav crosses to the door and opens it.

A Military Detective, STEFAN DIETRICH (30s), and two accompanying ARMED SOLDIERS (20s)

GUSTAV
Detective?

STEFAN
Hello Gustav. May we come in?

GUSTAV
Of course. Please.

The Soldiers enter first.

The two guards immediately search the rooms. It's unsettling but treated as a normal part of this process.

SOLDIER ONE
Room is secure.

SOLDIER TWO perform a RETINAL SCAN on both Gustav and Anna.

SOLDIER TWO
Identification Clear.

The Two Soldiers take position near the front door.

GUSTAV
You remember my wife, Anna.

STEFAN
Of course, lovely to see you again.

ANNA
May I offer you some tea?

STEFAN
Yes that would be lovely, with
honey if it's no bother.

She nods.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

Of course.

She begins to prepare the tea.

STEFAN

Do you mind if I sit.

GUSTAV

Make yourself at home.

STEFAN

Undoubtedly you're curious as to why I'm here, so I will not keep you in suspense. Items were stolen from the institute and it's been put in my charge to find them.

GUSTAV

Stolen?

STEFAN

Yes. Several things have been taken over the course of the past few months.

GUSTAV

Are you looking for the items or the person who stole them?

STEFAN

At this point, just the items. We already know who took them.

Stefan waves his hand and SOLDIER ONE produces a FILE FOLDER. Stefan hands it to Gustav.

As Gustav opens the file, Anna delivers the TEA.

Gustav Reads: The file indicates GUSTAV and ANNA under investigation for the missing items.

Stefan smiles. He turns to the two guards and speaks Latin.

STEFAN

Foris
(wait outside)

The guards hesitate. It's an uncommon order.

STEFAN CON'T

Nunc!
(now)

(CONTINUED)

They go outside. Stefan politely waits till they are gone.

STEFAN

Did you know that there are several members of the State who believe that your work as a Historian is extremely dangerous?

Of course there are others who believe you are an asset, But before we get too far, Let me ask, did you choose to be a historian or was it assigned to you?

GUSTAV

Assigned.

STEFAN

Do you like it?

GUSTAV

I always thought it was important.

STEFAN

Elaborate. Please.

GUSTAV

Being a historian is like being a guardian of society's memory. And since those memories tend to be selective, remembering what mostly serves our government's purpose, the burden of the historian, in part, is to restore and retain what is purposefully erased.

Stefan is intrigued by the answer.

STEFAN

Give me an example.

GUSTAV

There once was a time in this country where the right to disagree or have a dissenting opinion was built into the very fabric of the society in which our forefathers lived. Citizens were active participants in government.

Stefan ponders this.

GUSTAV CON'T
You don't believe me.

Stefan shrugs.

STEFAN
It doesn't matter if I believe you,
what's your motive for telling me?

GUSTAV
My motive? Learn the truth about
our history and pass on what I have
learned. That is my job. Whether or
not you believe me is exceedingly
important, because it is the
individual not the State who has
the power to make a difference. If
truth spreads to many individuals
and they choose to believe then you
have...

STEFAN
... you have an army. Hence the
reason you are a liability.

GUSTAV
I was going to say you have
freedom.

Stefan gives a condescending smile.

STEFAN CON'T
I suppose assigning a certain
amount of significance to our work
is imperative to feel we are making
a difference.

I became a detective by choice. I
was always drawn to puzzles and
riddles as a child. I like solving
problems. I suppose being a
historian is similar. For each of
us there is a mystery in our work.

GUSTAV
Yes, I suppose.

STEFAN
So, 'citizens were active
participants in government' yet you
have no proof and if I were to
solve this riddle, I would not
favor your version of history
simply because you have no proof.

Gustav considers this.

GUSTAV

Anna, please, would you retrieve
the items.

Anna hesitates.

GUSTAV CON'T

It's okay. Let us help Stefan make
his decision.

Anna begins to move but is stopped by Stefan who puts his
hand on his SIDE ARM.

STEFAN

Careful Anna. Move slowly and keep
your hands where I can see them.

She does so. After retrieving a large box, she returns and
sets it down. Gustav takes out several very old but well
preserved BOOKS.

GUSTAV

If you wont take my word for it,
read the words of the people who
lived here long before us. Long
before the State.

Stefan takes one of the books and looks it over.

STEFAN

Beautiful.

GUSTAV

They are authentic artifacts.

STEFAN

Yes but also propaganda.

GUSTAV

It's our history.

STEFAN

These books are forbidden.

GUSTAV

They are the proof you're looking
for.

STEFAN

Yes. Yes they are.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEFAN (cont'd)

You see, I didn't have proof that you were the traitor. I didn't know for sure. It was only a guess.

He picks up the file folder.

STEFAN CON'T

I was bluffing. So thank you for bringing me proof.

Gustav pleads with Stefan.

GUSTAV

Please, Stefan, let Anna go, she knows nothing.

Stefan quickly SLAMS his hand down on the table, then slowly raises a finger silencing Gustav with fear.

Stefan gathers himself

STEFAN CON'T

I have been doing this job for many years. In the beginning I was very brutal and efficient, without any interest in the people I was investigating. These days I am patient. Curious. A student of human behavior. For example, you were assigned to be a historian because your aptitude tests scored very high in that category. So it makes sense that you would take the job seriously and, moreover, you might even like it. That part I understand. But what astonishes me. What I find marvelous is the point you decide transgression over obedience. Insolence over caution. You willingly break the law, knowing you put yourself, your wife and your family in jeopardy. Why? It's a fascinating contradiction. On the one hand I respect a man who takes his job seriously and does it well, which you do, I congratulate you. But on the other hand I despise a subversive traitor. Because a citizen who puts himself above the law becomes a danger to those that enforce it.

Stefan considers his next question.

(CONTINUED)

STEFAN CON'T

So tell me. Why did you do it? Is it worth dying for? If you don't mind sharing, of course, but it will be the last time you get an opportunity. Your prerogative.

Gustav considers.

GUSTAV

Is it worth dying for?

Stefan nods.

GUSTAV

When you die in the name of something, it is most likely not on purpose. It means you've probably failed. Maybe an accident or something went wrong or maybe even you were found out. You didn't mean to die. So the fallacy is in your question because it's the wrong question. The greater sacrifice and more honorable thing is that you lived for something. Death is quick and inevitable, but life is long, and when you die what will be most important is not how you died or why, but rather how you lived and what you devoted yourself to.

Stefan smiles. He likes this. He thinks about it for a few moments before he laughs out-loud.

STEFAN

Well done, yes... Bravo. Well said indeed. Thank you.

A moment passes.

Now, I must apologize. I'm going to order my guards back into the room, we will take you into custody and back to the institute.

Stefan lifts the cup of tea to his lips, tilting his head back to gulp down the last drop.

When he lowers his head Anna is Holding a GUN.

Stefan freezes.

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

You will not take us.

Stefan slowly lowers the cup to the table.

ANNA CON'T

Slowly put both your hands on the table.

Stefan doesn't.

STEFAN

What do you think is going to happen here? My guards are right outside. All I have to do is yell.

She pulls the hammer back on the gun.

Stefan places his hands on the table.

Gustav takes Stephan's GUN, blocks the front door, packs a bag.

Anna holds the gun on Stefan. Neither of them break their stare.

When Gustav finishes he goes to the window.

GUSTAV

Anna, Lets go.

Anna doesn't move.

Anna!

Anna is terrified but speaks with confidence.

ANNA

Do you have any idea how tyrants fear the people they oppress? All of them realize that one day amongst their many victims, there is sure to be one who rises against them and strikes back.

GUSTAV

Anna!

Anna places a book on the table in front of Stefan.

ANNA

Read it.

Stefan doesn't take his eyes off of Anna.

GUSTAV
Anna, lets go.

Anna crosses to the window. Just before Anna goes out

STEFAN
Anna.

She turns back to Stephan.

STEFAN CON'T
Good luck.

Anna disappears out the window.

Stefan looks down and the book.

TITLE OF THE BOOK.

END