

INT. STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT.

A newspaper clipping is illuminated by flashlight. It's a photo of a politician, MR. NOLSTOV (50), with his son Alexi (20, blonde) beaming for the camera. We pull in on Alexi's face, close enough to see how forced his gap toothed grin is.

INT. MUSEUM- NIGHT.

Match cut to grainy black and white footage of a woman. Two index fingers, someone else's, are hooked into her mouth, pulling back the skin. Forced into a smile, we can see the woman is missing all of her back teeth.

The woman's face shifts into that of an old man, then a young boy. The amount of teeth she has does not change.

MR. NOLSTOV (V.O.)
(overly rehearsed)
-the cleansing of Moldova's
Slipshin population was truly a
crime

We pull back to reveal the video is part of a display labeled "Slipshin Morphology".

Another is labeled "Identification Act". It contains a series of old photos of different bodies with the same 'S' carved into their cheek.

MR. NOLSTOV (V.O.)
-inflicted on our country by the
German and Soviet occupiers. But
now, thanks to our generous
allies, we can celebrate

Foreign dignitaries and journalists sip champagne and check their watches, waiting the speech out. Waiters in pressed white shirts carry around trays of finger food.

MR. NOLSTOV (V.O.)
-eight years of independence by
commemorating this unique and
peculiar culture that is sadly no

longer with us.

MR. NOLSTOV (55) stands before the crowd on a small platform.

2.

MR. NOLSTOV

Moldova would like to thank each
of your countries for the aid
that made this museum possible.
And personally, I would like to
thank my son Alexi for being
here.

Alexi (25) comes at his father's beckon. Mr. Nolstov put his
arm around Alexi and the two grin as cameras click.

MR. NOLSTOV

What a perfect smile! Believe it
or not, he's smart too. We got
this one working on the
reelection team.

Some politician signals for a waiter, a nondescript young
man, to take his glass. The waiter is too transfixed by the
action on stage to notice.

Mr. Nolstov gives a practiced chuckle and let's go of Alexi,
done with him. Alexi gets out of his father's limelight.

MR. NOLSTOV

(to the journalists)

And come reelection next month,
this grand museum is just one of
the many achievements my party
can boast of.

Alexi pushes through the crowd to a drinks bar set up in the
back of the space. He grabs an entire bottle of wine.

MR. NOLSTOV

We've spent this past term
bettering each and every one of
our citizens' lives! For example

Alexi passes a display as he stalks out. Inside is a black
and white photo of people, young, old, male, female, lined up

facing a river. The soldiers behind them aim their pistols.

INT. MUSEUM BATHROOM- CONT

As soon as he enters, Alexi's smile collapses into a look of utter disgust. He takes a swig of alcohol.

3.

The bathroom door opens and MALACHI (25, dark hair) enters, holding a small beat-up duffle bag and pulling a suit jacket over his white shirt. Malachi places his bag on the sink counter, takes out a tie and struggles to knot it.

MALACHI

(British accent)

Careful now. Liquor can stain
your smile.

ALEXI

Oh, no. Not my perfect smile!

Alexi downs another gulp, spilling some wine on his tie.

MALACHI

I didn't say perfect. You have a
gap between your upper incisors.

ALEXI

Well someone was watching me
closely tonight.

MALACHI

My apologies. I couldn't take my
eyes off you. Or your Full
Windsor.

ALEXI

Flattery will get you everywhere.

Alexi puts down the bottle and grasps the ends of the tie, where Malachi's exposed wrists are.

ALEXI

Tsk, tsk. A proper gentleman's
suit sleeve rests a quarter inch

above the wrists.

MALACHI

It must have shrunk. I suppose
I'll have to steal a new one.

Alexi knots the tie. He doesn't seem so surly anymore.

ALEXI

A foreigner and a thief. I ought
to make myself useful and turn
you in. Though I suppose if I'm
truly bidding my father's wishes,
I should accept bribes...

4.

He finishes and smooths the tie out, his fingers lingering.

Malachi swats Alexi's hand away. He pulls a red tie out of
his bag and offers it to Alexi.

MALACHI

So the son of Sergei Nolstov
doesn't smell like a night club.

ALEXI

You're certainly generous Mr...?

MALACHI

Bross. Malachi Bross. And it's
not much use to me if I can't tie
it.

Alexi smirks, accept the tie and changes into it.

ALEXI

Bross, hmm? Last I checked, the
UK's ambassador was named
Downing.

Alexi throws his old tie on the sink counter. Malachi folds
it neatly and places it in his bag.

MALACHI

My father is replacing him soon.
I wouldn't mention it to Downing,

he's rather touchy about it.

A curious expression crosses Alexi's face.

ALEXI

I take it you've met the
politicians here then?

MALACHI

It's not my first soiree; we've
hosted. My mother is quite
skilled at entertaining powerful
men.

Alexi takes up the bottle again.

ALEXI

Then let's have her make the
speech next time. I can't tell
which would be more boring,
watching my father's posing or my
mother's decomposing.

5.

Alexi chuckles darkly and finishes the wine.

MALACHI

I'm sorry for your loss.

ALEXI

And I'm sorry the wine is gone.
Do you think they'll refill this?

Alexi starts to leave.

MALACHI

For your sake, I hope they don't.
I wasn't kidding when I said you
smelled like a club. It's
unbecoming.

Alexi stops. He comes back, gets close to Malachi, rests a
hand on Malachi's shoulder. Malachi removes it. Alexi rests
his other hand on Malachi's other shoulder.

ALEXI

Take this advice, from one political progeny to the next. There's nothing better to become. Step out of that door and you are a mouth. You can smile, and you can gag yourself on whatever hedonistic delights you desire. I suggest enjoying it. You never know when you'll be crushed in a car crash.

Alexi saunters out. Malachi tags after him.

INT. MUSEUM- CONT.

Alexi pushes towards the bar, Malachi at his heels. In the background, Mr. Nolstov drones on.

MALACHI

Or you can speak! I've seen you in the newspapers, a gap toothed photo next to your father's words. I would wonder what would happen if your lips were the ones that moved. What could happen then?

Alexi stops and faces Malachi.

6.

MALACHI

What could happen if people like you got to speak? If everyone got to write the body of the article and no one was just a body or an article? Can you even imagine what worlds we would release? The black of your mouth is a galaxy that can swell with stars, syllables, sentences! God, how could you possibly slur your worlds with alcohol? Your body is a clump of earth. But you could be cosmic.

Silence when Malachi finishes. As he'd been speaking, everyone else in the room stopped to listen.

Someone claps. Then the whole room bursts into applause.

No one regards Mr. Nolstov, still on stage with his speech.

INT. MUSEUM- LATER.

Malachi is surrounded by politicians, all trying to shake his hand and introduce themselves. He's overwhelmed and loves it.

Alexi leans against the bar, waiting as the bar tender makes his drink. Mr. Nolstov meets him.

As the bartender extends the drink to Alexi, Mr. Nolstov takes the glass.

MR. NOLSTOV

Your new friend is a silver
tongue.

He drinks Alexi's alcohol.

ALEXI

His name is Malachi Bross.

MR. NOLSTOV

Well it's Mr. Bross's lucky day.

Mr. Nolstov hands Alexi back the empty glass and leaves him.

The crowd parts for Mr. Nolstov as he approaches Malachi.

Alexi considers the empty glass. Then he slams it down on the counter and follows.

7.

Alexi squeezes through the politicians.

MR. NOLSTOV

-could use a speech writer like
you. It's a big job, but

ALEXI

-you'd be welcome to stay at our house until the election.

MR. NOLSTOV

Alexi, there is no need

MALACHI

That would be...I can't thank you enough! Are you sure-?

ALEXI

Of course! To take back an offer like that would be an insult to a foreign ally.

Alexi smiles at his father.

ALEXI

Oh! Malachi, there is someone I must introduce you to!

Before Mr. Nolstov can respond, Alexi puts his arm around Malachi's shoulder and guides him away.

MALACHI

Really, you have no idea how much this means to me.

ALEXI

I figured you might need a place to stay.

MALACHI

Pardon?

They approach a woman in a suit jacket.

ALEXI

Malachi, this is Ms. Eleanor Downing.

Alexi pats a red cheeked Malachi on the shoulder.

8.

ALEXI

I'll leave you two to get
aquainted. The chauffeur comes
at ten.

EXT. NOLSTOV HOUSE- CONT.

A car pulls up outside a house that could be the Monticello
on the back of Family Money.

A security guard opens the car door and Malachi steps out
clutching his bag, eyes wide.

INT. NOLSTOV HOUSE FOYER- CONT.

Alexi leads Malachi up a grand staircase. They pass a
portrait of ten year old Alexi with Mr. Nolstov and a woman
with a distinct blonde bob cut. Mrs. Nolstov.

MALACHI

The security guard, will he need
my ID? My passport is not on me
at the moment.

ALEXI

Are you going to attack anyone?

MALACHI

I don't plan on it.

ALEXI

Then I'll make sure your fine.

INT. MALACHI'S ROOM- CONT.

Alexi shows Malachi into a richly designed room.

ALEXI

Mine's down the hall, should you
feel the sudden urge to visit.

Malachi enters the space as if in a dream. Takes it all in.

He turns back to Alexi, his face alight with incredulous

joy. Alexi can't help but grin back.

9.

INT. ALEXI'S ROOM- MORNING.

Alexi blinks awake to the sound of rustling. It's coming from his walk-in closet.

He opens the door to find Malachi half hidden behind the clothing, running his fingers through the fabrics.

Alexi pulls aside the garments obscuring Malachi.

ALEXI

What are you doing?

MALACHI

Forgive me. I was returning your tie and couldn't help myself. Your wardrobe is magnificent.

ALEXI

Take what you want.

Alexi extends his hand.

ALEXI

Just please come out of the closet.

INT. MR. NOLSTOV'S OFFICE- DAY.

The security guard opens the door and Malachi steps in.

Mr. Nolstov is seated at a mahogany desk. In the back corner of the room is small replica of Bernini's Apollo and Daphne.

Mr. Nolstov motions to a leather armchair across from him.

MR. NOLSTOV

Sit.

Malachi obliges.

MALACHI

Sir, I wanted to thank you again

MR. NOLSTOV

Yeah. Now the speech has gotta be something loud. New. Some piping hot promise for the people to eat up. What do you got?

10.

MALACHI

Well sir, I would advocate campaigning on the removal of the Identification Act.

Mr. Nolstov chuckles.

MR. NOLSTOV

The museum is enough. I don't need anyone thinking I'm some skinstealer sweetheart.

MALACHI

But they're all dead. A law like that just keeps us leashed to history. To a time when the streets were filled with Germans or Slipshins. Getting rid of it would be affirming Moldova is for Moldovans.

MR. NOLSTOV

What if they're not all dead?

MALACHI

Is that a possibility?

MR. NOLSTOV

No. Of course not.

Begin MONTAGE

INT. NOLSTOV HOUSE LIBRARY- DAY.

Alexi eats a candy bar, watching Malachi select books.

EXT. PUBLIC SQUARE- DAY.

Malachi covers an advertising poster of a scantily clad woman with one for the campaign. He has his duffle bag with him.

Alexi grabs Malachi's hand and leads him to a photo booth. Malachi twists out of his grasp, but still follows Alexi.

INT. NOLSTOV KITCHEN- NIGHT.

Malachi is hunched over a table scattered with books, pens and papers, writing.

11.

Alexi joins with two cups of coffee. He offers Malachi one.

MALACHI

No thank you.

Alexi takes both for himself.

INT. MR. NOLSTOV'S OFFICE- DAY.

Malachi listens attentively as Mr. Nolstov reads the speech.

MR. NOLSTOV

-to affirm a future by letting go
of the past.

INT. PHOTO BOOTH- DAY.

Alexi and Malachi try to position themselves for the camera.

MALACHI

What are we doing?

ALEXI

You're supposed to smile!

Malachi gives a small grin.

ALEXI

Come on, wider! You're a
politician now you can do better
than

The flash goes off.

ALEXI

Wait, we're not-!

MALACHI

Just do whatever you

The next flash goes off.

INT. EVENT HALL-NIGHT.

Mr. Nolstov eats with members of his party at a fundraising
dinner. The other politicians have their families with them.
The chair next to Mr. Nolstov is empty.

12.

INT. MALACHI'S ROOM- NIGHT.

Malachi is tucked under his bed, looking at the photo-booth
pictures. He and Alexi are mid conversation in every shot.

ALEXI (O.S.)

You didn't even need me there!

MR. NOLSTOV (O.S.)

When I tell you to come, you
listen!

INT. MR. NOLSTOV'S OFFICE- DAY.

Malachi listens and takes notes as Mr. Nolstov reads.

MR. NOLSTOV

-to forge a future by progressing
the past.

INT. NOLSTOV KITCHEN- NIGHT.

Alexi is fast asleep between a stack of mugs.

Malachi drinks more coffee and keeps working.

EXT. RIVER PATH- DAY.

The boys walk beside the river, posters under their arms.

Malachi slows to a stop by a plaque. It's in the spot where the museum photo was taken.

Alexi brushes his fingers against Malachi's. A question. Malachi holds his hand. They watch the waves together.

INT. NOLSTOV KITCHEN- MORNING.

Mr. Nolstov lumbers in wearing pajamas and a robe to find both boys asleep at the table.

He drapes his robe over Malachi's shoulders like a blanket.

INT. AUDITORIUM- DAY.

Mr. Nolstov stands at a podium.

13.

MR. NOLSTOV

-to birth a future by burying the
past!

Backstage, Malachi whispers along.

End montage

INT. NOLSTOV LIVING ROOM- NIGHT.

The room is packed with members of Mr. Nolstov's party. Malachi and Alexi, wearing the red tie Malachi gave him, are at the back of the crowd. Everyone is gathered around a television, fixated on the screen.

Except for Alexi, who's fixated on Malachi.

On the screen, a news reporter cuts to a bar graph. One bar

is clearly higher than the others.

The room erupts into cheers!

Malachi is electric with happiness. He throws his arms around Alexi, beaming so wide we can almost see

Alexi grabs Malachi's face and kisses him.

Malachi shoves Alexi off!

A stunned silence as the rest of the room celebrates.

Before either can speak, Mr. Nolstov makes his way between them.

MR. NOLSTOV

C'mon boys! It's time we reward
that hard work.

INT. CAR- NIGHT.

Alexi and Malachi sit behind Mr. Nolstov and his top party members, ROSCA, MARCOVEI and COLESNIC. Malachi has his bag.

The politicians talk boisterously. Alexi and Malachi are silent. The car comes to a stop.

ALEXI

So then what's your secret? Why
act so strange if you're not
queer?

14.

As the chauffeur opens the door for the politicians, Malachi sees the nondescript building they are in front of. His eyes go wide.

MALACHI

I should go back now.

MR. NOLSTOV

Trust me, it's more fun on the
inside.

EXT. CLUB- CONT.

Mr. Nolstov says some words to a broad man standing beside the door. The man lets their group in.

Malachi is buffeted in with the other politicians. He clutches his bag tightly.

INT. CLUB- CONT.

Thumping music, pulsing red lights, well dressed men and barely dressed women.

One such woman shows Mr. Nolstov's group to a semicircular banquette with a round table in the middle. Alexi ends up at the left end with Malachi beside him.

The woman passes out drinks. She puts one in front of Malachi. He's doesn't refuse. He's not even looking at her.

Alexi declines his drink.

ALEXI

(Quietly to Malachi)

Are you alright?

ROSCA

(to the woman)

And get your top shelf for the table!

The woman smiles and leaves.

MR. NOLSTOV

You sure about that? We're not all party members here.

15.

MARCOVEI

We are now! Your skinstealer sweetheart is gunna love it.

MR. NOLSTOV

He's no skinsweet! He's smart.

ROSCA

Sure, sure. At least it worked!

Another woman slides up to the table. She is magazine ad beautiful, taut and tan in lingerie with an airbrushed, incomplete smile. Scarred into her left cheek is the letter 'S'. This is ARDEBYA.

ALEXI

Dad? What the f*ck is this?

Mr. Nolstov motions for Ardebya to get on the table. She complies. She cycles through a routine of bodies, each woman more gorgeous than the next. Her scar never disappears, nor her half empty smile. She preforms her flirting for the men, letting them touch what they can reach.

MR. NOLSTOV

You're a big boy now. You know the occupiers weren't stupid. They couldn't have a bunch of these ones running around, but a body like that's got value.

Malachi holds his bag in front of him so the slipshin can see it. Something passes between them. She leaves him alone.

MR. NOLSTOV

Especially if there are only a few. So if you've got a way behind closed doors...

She caresses Mr. Nolstov's cheek. He points her to Alexi.

COLESNIC

Whatever you want kid! Anyone she's seen, in person or photo.

With the attention on Alexi, Malachi ducks under the table and disappears into the club.

Alexi catches a glimpse of Malachi slipping though an unmarked door. Before he can follow, Ardebya has her hand on his shoulder. Alexi knocks it off.

ALEXI

Can you grow a penis?

Alexi gets out of his seat and faces the shocked politicians.

ALEXI

You're all disgusting!

He storms off in Malachi's direction.

ROSCA

Sergei, you're son is a-?

MR. NOLSTOV

No!

He starts after Alexi, but Ardebya wraps her arms around him. She shifts into a familiar face with a blonde bob.

INT. STORAGE ROOM- CONT.

As the heavy door thuds shut behind Alexi, all of the light and sound of the club cuts out.

Across the room is a faint white light shining through slats. Alexi moves closer. A broken bed is propped up against the wall like a lean-to. There is a flashlight shining behind it.

ALEXI

Malachi?

Alexi ducks under the bed. There is a little nest of pillows and blankets. Malachi's bag is there too, with the flashlight sitting on top. Alexi picks up the light.

ALEXI

Are you in here?

No response.

Alexi's light falls on the bag. He hesitates. Then he unzips it. The sound is startling amidst the silence.

The bag is full of clothing. Alexi takes out his tie from the museum. Then Malachi's suit jacket. Then a XXL sweatshirt. Then a little girl's dress.

He doesn't notice the shadow's shifting on the other side of the bed.

17.

Alexi's light falls on the wall behind him. On newspaper text. His beam creeps along the wall. The entire thing is covered in newspaper clippings. Alexi gets closer. They are interviews with politicians, speeches, some photos.

And right in the center is a full spread picture of Mr. Nolstov and Alexi, smiling his gap toothed smile.

Alexi is yanked onto his back!

Malachi pins him down!

Alexi cries out! Malachi muffles him with the suit jacket.

MALACHI

You can't say anything! You can't say anything!

As he speaks, Malachi's body transforms into something heavier, scarier.

Alexi swings the flashlight at his face! Malachi ducks into a child's body and Alexi throws him off!

Alexi scrambles up, away, but Malachi, now lanky, snatches his ankle. Thud as Alexi hits the ground!

MALACHI

You can't say anything!

Alexi twists his leg out of Malachi's grip, stands, he could make a run for it

MALACHI

Please! You can't say anything!

Malachi, back in his previous body, is on hands and knees,

the tears in his eyes cold lit by flashlight.

MALACHI

You can't say anything! Please,
you can't say anything!

His British accent unravels into Moldovan.

MALACHI

Please. Please!

Alexi sits down next to him.

ALEXI

I'm not going tell.

18.

MALACHI

You can't say anything.

ALEXI

I'm not going to.

MALACHI

You can't say anything.

ALEXI

I won't.

MALACHI

You can't.

ALEXI

I won't.

Alexi stays at his side holding the light as Malachi snuffles
into calm.

Then Alexi rises and extends his hand.

ALEXI

I'll grill you later, when you
can talk. Let's get out of this
closet. It's unbecoming.

Malachi accepts.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM- NIGHT.

On one side of the bed, Mr. Nolstov dresses. On the other, Ardebya, still embodying Mrs. Nolstov, just sits.

MR. NOLSTOV

He gets it from you. The selfishness. I told you not to drive. You're a terrible driver. It was raining. But you couldn't f*cking listen. Selfish. And now he's gunna crash and burn just so he can run me over first.

ARDEBYA

I can change, if you want.

Mr. Nolstov migrates over to her side of the bed and she hands him a fashion magazine from the bedside table. A selection of women.

19.

The name on the magazine's mailing address catches Mr. Nolstov's eye. "Ardebya Brosnikov".

Mr. Nolstov chucks it on the floor and sits right next to her. He traces her scar with his finger.

MR. NOLSTOV

You are perfect. You know, I've been thinking about you a lot lately. My new speech writer's real into saving the slips. Can even make me look good saying it.

ARDEBYA

Maybe Alexi can learn that from him, now that they're close.

Mr. Nolstov holds her chin, turns her to him.

MR. NOLSTOV

How did you know that?

ARDEBYA

I don't. I misspoke.

He slaps her across the face!

MR. NOLSTOV

Don't lie to me, Ms. Brosnikov.
What do you know about Malachi?

INT. ALEXI'S ROOM- NIGHT.

The boys sit on the floor. Malachi cradles an empty coffee mug. Alexi's red tie is loose around his neck.

ALEXI

Wow. That's...

MALACHI

(Moldovan accent)

Yeah. Anything else?

ALEXI

Why British?

Malachi chuckles.

The door opens and Mr. Nolstov's security guard enters.

20.

INT. MR. NOLSTOV'S OFFICE- CONT.

The guard lets Malachi in.

Mr. Nolstov is putting down the phone receiver.

MR. NOLSTOV

(to the guard)

Keep the door shut.

The guard leaves and closes the door behind him. Malachi takes a seat.

MR. NOLSTOV

I didn't say you could sit.

Malachi stands back up. Before he can speak

MR. NOLSTOV

The thing with campaign promises
is that they're all just that.
Promises. Words. I could make 'em
real. Or not.

Mr. Nolstov gets up and examines his statue.

MR. NOLSTOV

Like all your little words about
the Identification Act. I could
repeal it. But right now, if a
slipshin was discovered without a
scar, I'd have to call the police
and have them arrested. Along
with any lovely women who'd been
helping them out.

Malachi bolts for the door. It won't open.

MR. NOLSTOV

But I don't need to do that.
Thing is, right now, I also don't
need a speech writer.

Mr. Nolstov stalks over to Malachi.

MR. NOLSTOV

What I need is a son who can
smile when I say so. Alexi can't
do that anymore. You can't do
that either. Yet.

21.

INT. KITCHEN- CONT.

Malachi stumbles into the kitchen. Panic. He steadies himself
against the counter, gulping down air. Composes himself.

Sitting on the counter is knife block.

In the distance, a police siren wails.

Malachi takes a knife.

INT. UPSTAIRS FOYER- CONT.

Malachi gently pushes open the door to Alexi's room. Alexi is there waiting for him.

ALEXI

Malachi? Are you alright?

Malachi wraps his fingers around Alexi's tie.

MALACHI

Shh...

He shuts the door.

We just hear the sounds. Thuds. Cracks. Screams. The siren grows louder, louder, louder until it's all consuming.

INT. CONGRESS- DAY.

A shell shocked Alexi stands behind Mr. Nolstov as he finishes swearing in.

The cameras click. Mr. Nolstov slaps his arm around Alexi.

Alexi snaps out of it. He shifts into a wide, gapless smile.

The boy's mouth is filled with teeth and blood.