

**EYES ONLY**



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This is a work of fiction. All characters, names, places, and events are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons or situations is purely coincidental.

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# Foreword

*“EYES ONLY”*

Some truths are never meant to see the light of day.

Behind the closed doors of government offices, in hallways where footsteps echo hollowly against marble floors, files lead a life of their own. They breathe in silence, hidden in metal filing cabinets, encrypted servers, and forgotten windowless rooms. There, deep within the bowels of power, lies a world hidden from view—a world of shadows, silence, and state secrets.

Milan knew this better than anyone.

As an IT specialist at the Ministry of Defense, he was an invisible cog in a machine that never stopped. His days passed amid firewalls, security protocols, and anonymous databases. He asked no questions. He had long since unlearned that habit. In his line of work, curiosity was not a virtue, but a risk.

Until that one day.

A seemingly routine incident—a (deliberate) malfunction in a secure server environment—led him by chance to a folder not meant for his eyes. A file with no name, no origin, hidden behind layers of encryption that should have been inaccessible even at his access level. What he found there changed everything.

Secret arms deals. Unofficial agreements between the government and foreign powers. Lists of missing

persons. Reports on military experiments conducted far beyond any legal framework. Tests on technologies that should never have existed. Human lives reduced to numbers, notes, and red stamps bearing a single chilling word: **eliminate**.

From that moment on, Milan was no longer the man behind the scenes.

He became a target.

Because in a world where power protects itself through manipulation, the truth is the most dangerous weapon of all. Every step he takes, every name he reads, draws the attention of a system far larger than he ever imagined. National security is no longer an abstract concept from official statements, but a menacing presence that follows him through dark streets, in the reflections of shop windows, in unfamiliar voices on the phone.

The city around him slowly transforms into a film noir setting: rain glistening on asphalt, streetlights that hide more than they reveal, faces that smile while they lie. No one seems trustworthy anymore. Not his colleagues. Not the people who claim to want to help him. Perhaps not even himself anymore.

Because what if the truth is even more horrific than the case file suggests?

What if the incident wasn't a coincidence?

And what if Milan never stumbled upon anything by accident, but was carefully led to this point?

*Eyes Only* is a story about power and paranoia, about loyalty and betrayal, about the fine line between protection and control. It is a journey into the darkest chambers of the state, where secrets cost lives and silence is the highest form of obedience.

Some files are better left closed.

But once opened, there is no turning back

**Wolf Goldmund**



## Prologue

He ran.

His shoes pounded on the shiny asphalt.

Water splashed up against his legs, rain lashed across his face, mixed with sweat that stung his eyes. Every breath cut through his lungs like a knife, but stopping was not an option.

Footsteps echoed behind him—steady, tight, like the ticking second hand of a clock counting down to its end.

He darted into a side street. Narrow, dark, smelling of rotten food scraps and oil. His coat snagged briefly on a protruding metal pipe, but he pulled free and ran on.

He clutched the envelope in his inner pocket against his chest with one hand, as if he had to protect his own heart. He didn't even know why he was still holding onto it. Burning it would have been safer. But something inside him refused to let go.

A car screeched around the corner, headlights sweeping the street. Milan pressed himself flat against the wall; he could feel the cold stones through his clothes.

The light slid past him, paused for a moment, and then vanished again. His heart was pounding in his throat. There were more of them than he'd thought.

He continued on his way, faster now, his muscles protesting, but his fear stronger than the pain.

He heard a voice behind him, distorted by the rain. He couldn't make out the words, but the tone was clearly commanding, merciless.

Suddenly he was standing in front of a fence. Tall, with sharp points at the top. His breath caught in his throat. No way through. He looked back. Two shadows were approaching, silhouettes in the wet glow of a streetlight. Milan grabbed the fence and felt the cold iron against his palms.

He knew he would cut himself, perhaps drawing blood from his hands, but standing still was not an option.

With a cry of desperation, he pulled himself up, shuffled, climbed, struggled. His coat tore; a sharp point bit into the fabric. He tore himself free, falling with a hard thud onto the ground on the other side.

The pain shot through his shoulder, but he got to his feet and limped on.

He thought he had won, that he could catch his breath for a moment. Until he saw that someone was waiting for him.

Under the dim light of a broken streetlamp stood a man. He wore a black suit, his hands in his pockets, as if he didn't even have to make an effort to stop him.

His face was hidden in the shadows, but his voice was clear and controlled.

“You shouldn't have seen that, Milan.”

His blood ran cold. He recognized that voice.

## A week earlier

The key creaked briefly in the lock before the door opened with a soft click. Milan stepped inside, his shoulders still a little tense from the day. The scent of something warm and spicy filled the hallway and immediately caught his attention.

“You’re late,” Lisa’s voice called from the kitchen, not reproachfully, but rather cheerfully, as if she knew he was about to offer an apology.

Milan smiled as he took off his coat and hung it on the coat rack in the entryway.

“The meeting ran late. As often happens.”

He kicked off his shoes and felt the fatigue slowly drain from his legs. The house had that effect on him: as if the walls were weaving a kind of calm around him.

He walked into the kitchen, where Lisa, her hair down and sleeves rolled up, was standing over a pot.

“Chili,” she said triumphantly as she kissed him on the cheek. “And yes, way too spicy, but that’s what you like.”

“I love it because you make it.”

He grabbed a spoon from the counter and dipped it into the pot to taste it, as if that were a logical reaction. Lisa playfully tapped his hand. “Hey, wait until we’re at the table, sweetheart.”

Milan chuckled and sat down at the kitchen table, where a messy stack of letters and a half-unfolded newspaper lay. “How was your day?” he asked.

Lisa pulled out a chair and sat down across from him, her elbows on the table. “Busy—the new intern accidentally deleted all of Saturday’s reservations from the system. Just... gone.”

She made a sweeping gesture with her hands.

“It took us an hour to reconstruct everything. I needed three cups of coffee.”

“Three?” Milan raised his eyebrows. “That’s your equivalent of a crisis.”

“Exactly.” She smiled. “But other than that, it was okay.”

He looked at her, a little longer than necessary.

Sometimes he wondered how it was possible that, after all these years, she still evoked exactly the same warmth as in the beginning. Lisa noticed his gaze

“What?” she asked, slightly amused.

“Nothing. Just... glad to be home.”

She rolled her eyes playfully, but her smile lingered.

“Come eat. Before it gets cold.”

They sat down at the table where the chili was waiting, steaming in two bowls. Outside, dusk was slowly falling; the streetlights came on one by one, as if someone were lighting them by hand.

Inside, the only sounds were their spoons clinking against the pottery and the occasional satisfied sigh.

“Too spicy?” Lisa asked with a crooked grin.

“Perfect,” Milan replied, though his nose was starting to tingle slightly.

They ate, chatted a bit about their day, and the silence that fell between them was never awkward. Rather, it felt familiar, like a warm blanket. When they were done, Milan pushed his chair back and began clearing the table.

“Don’t worry about it,” said Lisa. “I’ll do that later.”

“No,” he replied as he carried the bowls to the sink, “if I do it now, it’ll be done by then. At least we’ll still have a little bit of the evening left.”

She watched him go with a look that told him she wanted to thank him without saying it out loud.

After cleaning up, they flopped down on the couch together. The TV was on, but neither of them paid much attention to it. Lisa leaned against him, her head on his shoulder, and Milan put an arm around her. With his other hand, he picked up a small blanket lying next to the couch and spread it over them.

“Here,” he said softly, “this is what I’ve been waiting for all day.”

She didn't answer right away. She ran her fingers along the edge of his sweater and sighed contentedly, "Me too."

And so they sat there, warm and peaceful, while outside night had fully fallen. No special moment, no grand events. But that was exactly what made it an evening that suited them both perfectly.

## Cozy plans

As they sat together on the couch with the television playing softly in the background, Milan felt his phone vibrate in his pocket. He pulled it out and saw David's name appear on the screen.

"He's texting late," Milan muttered as he opened the message.

"David?" Lisa asked without looking up, her head still resting quietly against his shoulder.

"Yeah. He's asking when we can meet up again. Apparently he has 'important news.' With two exclamation points."

Milan chuckled. "That usually means he has a new project that's going to fail completely, but he's really excited about it at first."

Lisa laughed. "Or he has a new date. That would be news."

"That too," Milan admitted. "Should I suggest we do something on Saturday?"

Lisa sat up a little straighter. "Saturday works. I finally have a free evening then."

She tapped his knee with her fingers in approval.

"Maybe we should eat here first? You cook; David's going to think everything I make is too 'hip' anyway," Lisa said.

“That’s because you see couscous as an emotionally charged art form,” Milan said teasingly.

She gave him a little nudge. “That’s not true. And besides... he always finishes it.”

Milan quickly typed a reply. *“Over at our place on Saturday? Dinner and a catch-up?”*

Within seconds, he saw that David was already typing. *“Great! I’ll be there around six. And you guys won’t believe what I have to tell you.”*

Milan showed it to her. “See? Drama.”

Lisa smiled, visibly happy at the thought of a fun evening. She’d always liked David—he brought life to every room, sometimes to the point of hysteria. But he meant well, and they usually doubled over with laughter at his wild, funny stories.

“So, Saturday,” she said as she snuggled up close to him again. “Sounds fun.”

Milan kissed her on the forehead.

“Nice,” he repeated softly.

They sat there for a moment in that cozy bubble of the evening, where only the dim light and the ticking of the clock filled the silence. Their little plans felt big enough tonight.

## Saturday night

Saturday slipped by slowly, as if the day itself knew it had to end on a cozy note.

Milan had been in the kitchen since late afternoon. He'd set his mind on serving something impressive—something that would force David to admit that Milan could cook without Lisa's help.

"You're taking this way too seriously," Lisa said from the doorway, her arms crossed. She watched as Milan stirred the sauce in a pan with intense concentration.

"Otherwise he'll say it's fast-food level, food for food stalls," Milan replied without looking up. "I want to avoid that this time."

"You know David, he likes to tease you," Lisa added with a smile.

She stepped into the kitchen and looked into the pan.

"It smells good. But you still have twenty minutes. And you know David: even if it's fantastic, he's going to ask where the fries are."

Milan sighed. "You're right."

Just as he was about to set the table, the doorbell rang. A short, impatient ping—typical David.

Lisa walked to the door while Milan quickly wiped a drop of sauce that had landed on the counter with a cloth.

“Here I am!” he called out before the door was even fully open. David stepped inside with the confidence of someone who felt every room missed him the moment he stepped outside.

He had a bottle of wine in his hand, a broad smile on his face, and a coat that he immediately tossed on the coat rack as if he were at home. “I’ve got news.”

Lisa laughed as she gave him a hug. “Let me guess first: a promotion? A new motorcycle? Or... a new girlfriend?”

David waved his hand dramatically. “Hold off on the guessing! Dinner first. I’ll tell you after. It’s too good to rush.”

Milan rolled his eyes. “You clearly need attention.”

“Always,” David said proudly as he kicked off his shoes. “Where’s the food? I smell ambition.”

A moment later, the three of them were sitting at the table. The atmosphere was instantly familiar—funny remarks, a dash of David’s exaggeration, and Lisa keeping everything in balance with her down-to-earth demeanor.

“Okay,” David said after he’d finished his plate and leaned back. “You’re ready.”

Milan crossed his arms. “Tell us.”

David looked from one to the other, as if building suspense in a theater show. “I’ve decided... to start my own business.”

Lisa looked genuinely surprised. “Really? What kind of business?”

David raised a triumphant finger in the air.  
“A coffee shop!”

Thomas laughed. “You?” You drink three coffees a day and the rest of the time you complain that your hands are shaking.”

“Exactly,” said David, “that makes me an expert by experience. I know the highs and the lows.”

Lisa looked curious. “But... are you serious? A real coffee shop?”

“Yes,” said David, now a little softer and more sincerely. “I’ve wanted something of my own for so long. Something I can build up. And last month I thought: why not, actually? I have a location in mind and have the chance to take it over.”

Milan felt a warm glow of pride.

Behind all his bravado, David had always harbored a quiet ambition that he rarely let show. “Wow,” he said. “That’s actually really amazing.”

David smiled broadly, almost relieved. “I knew you guys would understand. And no, I’m not going to go bankrupt in the first six months. Maybe not until the seventh.”

Lisa stood up and poured three glasses of wine. “To your coffee shop,” she said as she raised her glass.

Milan gently tapped his glass against hers. “And to the man who never has normal news.”

David grinned. “Normal news is boring.”

They drank, talked, and laughed late into the evening. And somewhere, amidst all the conversations and jokes, Milan sensed that this Saturday night was one he would remember often in the future—not because of what happened, but because of how it felt.

Home. Warm. With people he loved. And plans that might turn out to be grand or might fail, but that, in any case, began at this table.

## The Letter

The week after that cozy Saturday night drifted by quietly. Milan found David's enthusiasm contagious. He caught himself daydreaming on his way to work about what the coffee shop would look like, as if he were secretly part of the project himself.

But on Thursday morning, everything changed.

It started innocently. Milan came downstairs, but Lisa had already left for an early shift and had left only a quick note on the counter—a heart, a kiss, nothing out of the ordinary.

Milan made coffee and walked to the mailbox. Among the junk mail, one envelope stood out. No return address. His name, handwritten.

He frowned. The paper felt thick and sturdy. He tore the envelope open, expecting something like an insurance form or some administrative paperwork that always comes in strange envelopes.

But it wasn't a business letter.  
It was a single sentence.

**“You know less about her than you think.”**

No signature. No explanation. Just that one sentence, in the middle of the page, in a calm, neat handwriting.