

## Part 1: Wednesday

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1. A man wakes up terrified. He does not know what has happened to scare him, but he feels as if he has been through some dreadful experience. It is like waking from a nightmare. He is cold, he aches everywhere, and he has some kind of hangover.

He opens his eyes. He is lying on the floor of a public restroom. He thinks: *What the hell am I doing here?* He sits up. He is fully dressed in dirty clothes. He looks around in bewilderment. He cannot remember how he got here.

Panic overwhelms him, a moment later, as he realises *he cannot remember anything at all.*

He opens his mouth and yells: "Who am I?"

Another man, lying nearby, rolls over and says: "You're a bum, Luke, pipe down."

"I've lost my memory!"

"Yeah, yeah. You're lucky you haven't lost your entire goddam mind, the amount you drank yesterday."

That explains the hangover. The man is dismayed. Obviously he is a drunken bum called Luke. But how did he get this way? He begins to question his companion, Pete, but Pete has another idea. He says he knows a place they can get free breakfast.

They stagger out of the restroom. It is 8am. They are in the main railway station in Washington, DC. It is winter. Pete takes Luke to a Salvation Army shelter where they get hot oatmeal and coffee.

Luke begins to feel better physically, and he starts asking questions again. How long has he been this way—a month, a year, longer? What was he before? Has he ever tried to dry out? Does he have a family who might help him? Pete does not know the answers.

Luke picks up a newspaper to check the date. It is Wednesday 29 January 1958. The main story, all over the front page, is that the US will launch its first space satellite today at 10:30pm.

Luke's interest is piqued, and he reads on.

It is International Geophysical Year (actually July 1957 to December 1958). Both the USA and the USSR announced some years ago that they would launch earth-orbiting satellites

*He might notice he has a neat haircut, well-cared-for hands – something to motivate him more strongly*

during the Year. Four months ago, on Friday 4 October 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, profoundly shocking the entire Free World, whose people had been taught to believe they must be superior to the communists. A month later, on Sunday 3 November, the Soviets launched Sputnik II, with a dog on board. Americans were dismayed. President Eisenhower said the satellite program "has never been conducted as a race with other nations," but no one believed him.

Ike promised an American satellite in December. On Friday 6 December the Vanguard rocket, developed by the Naval Research Laboratory, was launched in front of the world's press. It exploded, two seconds after ignition, still on the launch pad. American humiliation was complete.

Tonight's launch is America's last chance, the newspaper says. This rocket, named Explorer I, has been developed by a different group, the Army Ballistic Missile Agency, based at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, under the direction of the legendary German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun. The US does not have a third rocket project. If Explorer fails tonight, the Russians will dominate space for the foreseeable future. *How tragic would that be?  
(+ how does Luke feel about it?)*

*That's right,* Luke thinks. All this seems familiar. Maybe he had something to do with rockets, once upon a time. He suggests this to Pete, who thinks it hilarious.

Frustrated, Luke starts filling out the crossword. Five minutes later he has finished, except for one clue: "Small place in Denmark, 6 letters". A Salvation Army helper sees the filled-out grid, does a double-take, and says: "Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!" Luke immediately gets the clue, HAMLET, then he thinks: *How did I know that?* ?

He must find out who he is. He questions the Salvation Army helpers, who say they have not seen him here before. He wonders why. He asks Pete, who says: "What we need is a beer."

Luke realises that Pete does not want him to inquire about his identity—maybe because Pete fears he will lose a companion. But Luke is determined, and he tells Pete he wants to separate.

He walks the streets, thinking what to do next. The police have lists of missing persons, don't they? Maybe his description is on such a list. He begins to look for a precinct house.

Then he realises he is being followed. He runs a couple of checks (all the while

Anthony knows as Nik.

They almost never meet—it is too dangerous. They communicate by encrypted letter. But they have a series of coded messages for emergency meetings. This one is the most urgent, and means: "Whatever you are doing, drop it and meet me immediately."

Nik is a blocky, tough-looking man who has been wearing the same cheap suit for seventeen years. He despises everything American except candy, his weakness.

Anthony's air of superiority disappears, and we see that he is frightened of Nik. Nik is superficially courteous, but beneath the calm exterior he is dedicated and ruthless.

This morning, Nik received a written report from Anthony, which they now discuss.

Luke is a rocket scientist with the Army Ballistic Missile Agency, von Braun's outfit, which is launching the satellite tonight. Three days ago, Luke was at Cape Canaveral, preparing for today's launch, when he uncovered evidence of a Soviet spy within the ABMA. (He did not discover the spy's identity.) He flew to Washington to inform the CIA of what he had found. He and Anthony were in OSS together during the war, so Luke naturally reported his discovery to his old friend Anthony.

Anthony and Nik already knew all about the spy, who is controlled by Anthony. The spy is planning to sabotage this rocket launch. The effect of another American rocket blowing up on the launch pad will be devastating. American prestige will suffer a dreadful blow, and outer space will become Soviet territory. All this was threatened by Luke's discovery.

But Anthony was able to intervene and protect the spy. He spiked Luke's coffee with a powerful sedative. Then he made use of a CIA-financed research program into memory. The research program has developed a technique of inducing total amnesia. Anthony was able to persuade one of the doctors in the research team to use the technique on Luke, and wipe his memory.

Nik is angry about this, which is why he has called an emergency meeting. Luke should have been killed immediately, he says.

Anthony argues that this way is better. A murdered rocket scientist is hard to explain away. But Luke has told no one within the ABMA of his suspicions—for fear of alerting the spy—and now everyone will assume that his blackout was the result of a drinking binge. Does Luke drink?

How does Anthony feel about this? Does he hate America, love Communism?  
What does he stand to gain or lose? Is Nik pressuring him?

*in our group of 5 or 6?*

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*Luke? Anthony?*

most of them are sympathetic to communism and some are party members.

One Saturday in December, the six friends spend a day together. They watch a football game, go to a movie, eat hamburgers, and finish up in a bar where they drink a lot of beer. This is the first time Luke has met Tara, and there is an instant attraction between them. Elspeth fears she could lose Luke, and Anthony is profoundly threatened and jealous.

These feelings are well-grounded. At one point, Luke and Tara find themselves alone. They fall into a passionate embrace. Both become inflamed very quickly. They are almost at the point of no return when they hear someone coming. They manage a hasty cover-up.

Later, the six split into couples. Anthony persuades Tara to come to his room—strictly against the rules, and sufficient to get both of them expelled from their colleges. They are kissing when Anthony's father barges in, paying an unexpected visit. He insults Tara and humiliates Anthony. Anthony is totally incapable of standing up to his father, and comes close to tears, which makes the Admiral even more scornful and wounding.

Unfortunately, the row is overheard, and the college president swiftly learns that there was a girl in the room. Next morning, Luke and Anthony receive notes summoning them to the president's office at 9am on Monday.

They all spend much of the day agonising over their plight. Anthony has a long talk with

- ✗ Elspeth. He vows revenge on his father for ruining his life. Elspeth suggests that the best way for him to oppose everything his father stands for would be to become a Soviet agent. She is already a communist party member, her convictions forged by the Depression and the experience of seeing how impotent her father's moderate union was to help its members. Anthony lights up at the prospect. It will give him a vent for his rage, but it is safe: his father will not know what he is doing. Elspeth tells him he will probably have to pretend to be a conventional Republican and try to get a job in the intelligence community.

Meanwhile, Luke and Tara have an equally agonised conversation. They have fallen in love, but their love will devastate their friends: Luke is engaged to Elspeth, and Anthony would be destroyed if Tara left him for Luke.

That afternoon, Sunday 7 December, they all learn that the Japanese have bombed the US Navy at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii (at 8am local time, 1pm EST).

*Is Elspeth master-minding this? Even sketching out A's future career?  
Might there not be someone behind her, calling the shots?  
(A Soviet recruiter for example).*

Now he needs somewhere to get cleaned up.

5. Bernie Simons now lives in a suburb of Washington and writes a successful series of children's books called *The Terrible Twins*. Two days ago he had a brief, enigmatic conversation with his old friend Luke. Luke was calling from Huntsville, Alabama, but he was on his way to Washington to see Anthony Corel. He hinted that he was involved in some kind of skulduggery and said he wanted to see Bernie on the following day, Tuesday. But he did not turn up and Bernie has not heard from him.

Bernie starts calling around. He calls the ABMA in Huntsville and gets Luke's secretary, a maternal black woman called Marjorie. She gives Bernie the name of the hotel she booked for Luke. Bernie calls there and verifies that Luke checked in on Monday night. However, there is no reply from his room.

Bernie tries Anthony, who is out of his office, then Tara, who is not at the Washington hospital where she works. It seems there is nothing more he can do, except sit and worry.

6. Tara, now 37, is divorced with a seven-year-old son, Coltrane. She lives with her mother, who helps her take care of the child. Tara has achieved her ambition, and is one of the country's leading medical research scientists. She is a neuropsychologist. Her research, at a mental hospital, is funded indirectly by the CIA, as part of the Agency's ongoing research program into mind control.

Because of the CIA connection, Tara still sees her old boyfriend Anthony. Their romance is over. When they meet, they usually talk about the past and about Luke, the mutual friend they both still love.

Yesterday, Anthony called her and insisted on seeing her immediately. He told her that Luke's life was in danger. Luke has been working for Moscow all these years, Anthony said, and now the CIA has found out and is about to kill him. But Anthony had another solution. He wanted Tara to use the experimental techniques she is developing in her CIA-financed program to erase Luke's memory. This would render him harmless to the US. He could be kept out of the way until the missile is launched, then perhaps he can begin to rebuild some kind of life—but

\* would Tara buy this?

he need never know that once he was a spy. It is a hard fate, but better than death.

Tara consented, because it seemed the only way to save Luke's life, but she was deeply troubled, and now she is anxious to check up on Luke. She goes to see Anthony at CIA headquarters. He returns from a meeting (with Nik) to learn that his watchers have lost Luke. He is furious and Tara is desperately worried. But Anthony says to her: You have to trust me. You trusted me before, once, many years ago....

#### 7. We flash back to 1943.

Tara has graduated and won another scholarship to do a higher degree. However, she wants to join the war effort, and the committee has agreed that she can take up the scholarship at any time.

Soon after joining up, she was transferred to the Office of Strategic Service. OSS is autocratically run by the millionaire Wall Street lawyer General William "Wild Bill" Donovan. It is staffed by a quarrelsome mixture of Republican businessmen, communist academics, and well-connected youngsters who have pulled strings to get what is generally regarded as a glamorous assignment. The mission of OSS is to encourage sabotage and unrest behind enemy lines. The organisation is famous for its lavish budgets and its independence from the normal military hierarchy.

When Tara arrives at the Washington headquarters, she finds her old boyfriend Anthony already there. But he has changed. The awkward college boy is rapidly disappearing, and a smooth bureaucrat is taking his place. There is no trace left of rebellion: Anthony dresses conservatively, holds right-wing views, and never mentions his father.

He tells Tara that he used his father's influence to get assigned here then arranged for his old friends to get the same assignment. Elspeth is working for OSS in London, and Luke and Bernie are working with the Resistance in occupied France. Tara is to be part of a hush-hush research program on the use of drugs in interrogation. Anthony has seen some action in Tangier, but is now a desk man.

*so it's over?*  
He wants to resume his romance with Tara, but she rebuffs him. Nevertheless, they remain friendly. Tara speculates that Anthony is actually happier carrying a torch for someone

*Exactly how the Anthony / Tara relationship evolved since  
Luke's sacrifice p. II is not clear.*

me as soon as you get this. Call from the lobby—don't go to your room! I'm waiting by the phone."

16. Tara comes out of the school with her seven-year-old son and finds Luke waiting for her. She is shocked and scared. Has he learned the truth and come to accuse her?

As soon as he speaks to her, she realises that his amnesia is holding. She is relieved—but also horrified that his investigative talents have enabled him to uncover so much in a few hours.

She takes him home. He tells her his story. Her heart goes out to him as he speaks of his bewilderment and fear. She longs to tell him the truth, but keeps reminding herself that the truth could kill him.

He is looking at her as if he has never seen her before. It is the way he stared at her on that Saturday in 1941. She realises they are falling in love for the third time. Impulsively, she embraces him. They kiss passionately. She tells him about their past together.

Still believing that Anthony has Luke's best interests at heart, Tara suggests Luke should call Anthony. Luke agrees, but then he kisses her again. Breathless, he says: "Why did we break up?"

She bursts into tears and says: "You got so mad at me, you didn't speak to me for ten years!"

17. We flash back to 1945.

It is August. The five friends—Anthony, Luke, Bernie, Tara and Elspeth—meet up again on Long Island, where Anthony's family have a summer home. The Japanese surrender on Thursday 16 August, and there are parties all weekend.

The war has changed them all. They are weary, cynical, mistrustful, hardened.

Luke and Tara are happy, and Anthony is jealous. He still wants Tara for himself. He tells his father that Luke is probably going to throw himself away on "that Jewess". The Admiral predictably lectures Luke, saying he should not marry so far beneath him. Luke defends Tara and says the Admiral does not know what he is talking about. The Admiral then tells him about Tara's abortion. (The Admiral believes the baby was Anthony's, but Luke knows better.)

*what has he  
done to further this  
end since the abortion?*

Driving back to the hotel, he decides he must talk to Elspeth before he does anything else. He stops and calls her from a pay phone. He asks her to catch a plane tomorrow morning and come to Washington to help him figure things out.

She refuses. "We're about to launch a satellite!" she says. "I'm not going to miss this because you've started behaving like a lunatic!"

"I'm in trouble and I need your help," he says.

He detects a tremor of emotion in her voice, but she is adamant that she will not come. Puzzled, he asks her when they got married.

20. We flash back to 1950.

Luke has completed his doctorate and is about to start working for the ABMA. He still longs to marry and have children.

*x*  
He gets an invitation to the wedding of Tara and Bernie. There he meets Elspeth again.

Elspeth is in the CIA, but still working for the Russians. She is ordered to quit her job and marry Luke, so as to develop inside information on the missile program. She is also ordered to make sure she does not have children, for fear they would divide her loyalty.

Luke is feeling down because Tara is marrying Bernie, and it is not difficult for Elspeth to get him to take her home. That night, they make love for the first time. Next day, Luke proposes, and Elspeth accepts.

Before the wedding, she has a hysterectomy, so that she will never be tempted to have children.

21. Bernie calls Tara soon after Luke has left. He accuses her of wiping Luke's memory. She admits it, but tells him Luke is a Soviet agent. Is he hell, says Bernie. He knows that cannot possibly be true. Bernie himself was a Soviet agent in the war—and it was Luke who put an end to his career.

We flash back to 1944. Luke and Bernie are in occupied France. There are two main Resistance groups: the Gaullists and the Communists. Luke and Bernie and a small group of Gaullists daringly blow up a railway bridge and capture a German supply train. In the fracas,

Is A.  
there? How  
did he fail  
to keep T.  
for himself?

He changes course and heads for his home.

32. Anthony and Pete soon discovered, when they arrived at Cape Canaveral, that they had been deceived. Checking flights, which they should have done earlier instead of believing Tara, they learned that Luke flew to Nashville and deduced he must be in Huntsville.

Now they search his office and find nothing.

33. Tara warns Luke that Nik is in his house.

Luke knows that Bernie is in there. He and Tara sneak in. Silently, Luke moves through the house, stalking Nik. They meet and fight, and Luke kills Nik. But he is too late to save X Bernie, who is dead.

Luke makes the call to Cape Canaveral in time. But he learns that the launch has been X postponed yet again. However, this will be the last time: if the jet stream remains where it is tomorrow, they will take a chance.

Von Braun changes the radio signal for the self-destruct mechanism. But the spy still has 24 hours in which to find a way to sabotage the launch.

34. Elspeth calls Anthony and tells him there is a new radio signal. He tells her: "Get the details of the new signal—at all costs!"

35. Luke and Tara learn there is a late night MATS flight to Florida. They drive to the airport in the hope of getting on it. But, when they arrive, they spot Anthony and Pete getting on the plane.

They find there is a train from Atlanta that goes to Savannah then along the Florida coast to Cape Canaveral (and beyond). They set out to drive to Atlanta.

It is midnight.

These postponements (for technical reasons beyond the characters' control) deflate the tension.  
Somehow, Luke should be responsible for them. (Time-gaining victories on the road to the final battle...)

This Luke/Nik confrontation might better take place on the rocket site at Cape C.  
Nik cd. kill Bernie + escape.  
Bernie's murder wd. motivate Luke all the more strongly.

Starting over with a new document lowers the tension  
and gives an unfortunate feeling of "here we go again". ✓

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### Part 3: Friday

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36. Luke and Tara get a sleeping compartment and make love on the train.

37. Von Braun reports to the CIA what Luke has told him. The Agency orders Anthony to return to Washington immediately. He ignores the order. Pete, who for so long has been doggedly loyal, now realises his boss has gone rogue, and tries to arrest Anthony. Anthony kills him.

38. One way to avoid catastrophe now would be to postpone the launch. This is the recommendation of Carl Hobart, Anthony's boss. But it is vetoed by President Eisenhower. An indefinite postponement would be a political disaster. The launch must go ahead.

39. Elspeth establishes that only two people have details of the new radio signal: the engineer who recalibrated the machinery, and the head of security, Col. Hyde.

She learns that Hyde has the details on a sheet of paper in a locked drawer. She watches, *We've already had a document* ... but Hyde does not leave his room. She racks her brains as to how to get a look at the document.

40. Luke and Tara arrive at Cape Canaveral as the countdown begins. They have a conference with Col. Hyde. Hyde says the photocopied documents, which Luke now has, bear a code which will reveal who made the copies. But when he checks, he finds the code is that of von Braun. Someone else must have used von Braun's code. (It does not occur to them that that person might be von Braun's secretary, Luke's wife, Elspeth.)

All they can do now is hope to keep the new radio signal secret for another two hours.

41. With two hours to go until launch, Elspeth is ready to try anything to get the new radio signal. She enters Col. Hyde's office. Hyde has never made any secret of his lust for Elspeth and he cannot believe his luck when she starts kissing him. She slides his keys out of his pants pocket. Then she tells him to go to a particular storeroom and wait for her—she will be there in two minutes.

*and this too!* ✓

When he has gone, she opens the drawer and copies details of the radio signal.

42. Luke and Elspeth have a domestic confrontation. He shows her the adoption letters. She tells him she did not want children but, knowing how much he wanted them, she lacked the courage to tell him the truth; so she deceived him. Sobbing, she says this deception has undermined their marriage (which is not far from the truth), and she tells him they should divorce. You should marry Tara, she says; you have always loved her. But then Elspeth says she has always loved Luke and she always will.

Luke is left as bewildered as ever.

*But, beyond his sense of duty, don't his feelings show through? (i.e. he really loves Tara, not Elspeth...)*

43. Elspeth leaves the base with only 30 minutes left to ignition. Listening to the countdown on her car radio, she races to her rendezvous with Anthony.

Luke, suspicious, notices her leaving, and follows her.

She meets Anthony on the beach, where the world's media are gathered to watch the take-off. Anthony has a powerful radio transmitter in the trunk of his car.

Frantically, Anthony resets the transmitter to the new signal. He gets it done with a minute to spare.

Then Luke appears. He shoots and kills Anthony.

Elspeth confesses everything to Luke. The only thing she truly regrets, she says, is not giving him children. She begs him to let her catch a plane to Moscow. He agrees.

The countdown reaches zero. Elspeth makes a lunge for the switch. Luke shoots her.

As she lies dying in his arms, they both watch the rocket rise into the sky on its pillar of fire.

When it is at last out of sight, Luke sees that Elspeth is dead.

*Where's Tara?*

The end.