

Influence

an Instagram reel

In the style of an artisan/handmade influencer video (think woodworking, jewelry, baking). Tidy, clean, slightly muted cool colors. Face never shown. Silky ADR voiceover.

Looking down on wooden desk. A manilla folder, closed and taped shut, with some papers in it. A red highlighter. A pair of gloved hands enter the frame as VoiceOver begins.

V.O.

Probably the top request I get when my assassinations go viral is to make some kind of behind-the-scenes video, so today I thought I'd sort of show you how it all comes together, start to finish.

She opens the manilla folder. A picture of the target, a young woman.

V.O. (CONT'D)

So the first thing I do when I receive my target is make sure it isn't someone I know and value. A friend, family member, lover, or all of the above--because that does happen, more often than you'd think. In those cases the whole process is much simpler as you will have already have access and a sense of their routine.

She picks up the photo and runs her fingers across the face. Uses a highlighter as pointer to gesture while speaking.

V.O. (CONT'D)

Here though, I'm not seeing any features I recognize. The nose and eyes and mouth are not familiar and neither is their relation to each other, so I can be sure this is not someone I know. If that sounds confusing now, trust that you will develop a sense for it with time. Another trick that I wish I'd known when I was figuring all this out on my own is that usually they will give you a name--

She moves the paper up and points to a name and age at the bottom of the picture. It says GOLDEENA INNOCENTI. She highlights the name.

V.O. (CONT'D)

So for instance it seems like this target's name is Goldeena Innocenti and I don't know those names or their relation to each other so that confirms what we saw earlier with the face! Good.

She flips through to find another photo, a closeup of the face. She strokes it as she talks.

V.O. (CONT'D)

Since this is a stranger, what I'll do next is take a little while getting to know them. Think about a target like a new person you are in love with. Wouldn't it be rude to be in love with without introducing yourself first? So I'll say, like, "Hello Goldeena. You look beautiful today Goldeena, how is that? It's very nice to meet you." Okay? I hope that makes sense.

She draws hearts around the face.

V.O. (CONT'D)

And now I'll make a few notes to myself to avoid getting too confused ...

Crosses out face with red highlighter, writes KILL GOLDEENA on back of glove.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

View down at the folder in lap. A CCTV photo of Goldeena entering an industrial building labelled MILGO BUFKIN. Camera moves up to be looking out the window from across the street at the entrance to the MILGO BUFKIN building.

V.O.

So the next think I'll do is learn literally everything I can about Goldeena--where she lives, works, likes to do, *what* she likes to do, with whom, when, and even whether she does. Right now I'm outside of her workplace.

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT'D)
I saw her go in earlier but I
wasn't filming, so now I'm hoping
to see her as she leaves.

Goldeena walks into the building.

V.O. (CONT'D)
Here she is. Hmm. That's a little
odd. I thought I saw her go in
earlier. But that was definitely
her. She looked really good today.
Okay, no worries, I'll just make a
note ...

She looks down at the paper and makes a note with red
highlighter. Unintelligible. She looks back up just in time
to catch Goldeena entering again, wearing a different outfit.

V.O. (CONT'D)
Huh. I think that was ...

Looks down at the paper again, underlines face, looks up in
time to catch someone else going in.

V.O. (CONT'D)
What the--

This person isn't GOLDEENA. They drop something as they head
for the MILGO entrance.

V.O. (CONT'D)
Oh. They dropped something--

A new Goldeena trots into frame in a new outfit, picks up
what was dropped, calls to them. Amicable exchange, they head
in together.

V.O. (CONT'D)
What?

As they head in Goldeena litters, tossing a diet coke can
still mostly full over her shoulder. It spills on the ground.

V.O. (CONT'D)
Why would she--

Makes a new note on the sheet ("WASTER") and looks up to the
sound of someone yelling. Goldeena runs into frame pointing
at the can like "what the fuck?". She stands with her hands
on her hips disapprovingly, looking after where last Goldeena
went. Picks it up, pours it out, twist crushes it, and heads
inside shaking head.

V.O. (CONT'D)

Uhhh—

Looks down and hesitating crosses out "waster."

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY

The assassin is sitting in the grass, doodling knives and guns absently on a printout of an apartment layout. The fingers of the gloves are all stained dark with ink.

V.O.

Okay, I was getting a little overwhelmed back there. So I left, because I am in control. I want you to notice that I did not act out or freak out. I was attentive to how I was feelings without letting it control me at all. A lot of assassins struggle with emotions; learning how to dominate them is an important part of the job. Hit people hit people, but don't lash out. So I'm doing an exercise.

Takes a few more sheets out from the folder to show.

V.O. (CONT'D)

I also took some rubbings from grave markers here in the murdered section of the Catholic cemetery. When I'm down, I find that meditating on effacement helps to reset my sense of scale. Every crime, every murder we commit as assassins leaves traces, like these, and those imperfections contain the seeds of our downfall--as clues, fingerprints, DNA--and the only record of our time killing on earth. Being an assassin is hard. Sometimes it feels like anyone you kill was gonna die anyway. What's the point? But out here, with the numberless Catholic dead, I remember that our interventions are all we have. This, all this, this is the way I have of getting into things.

Flips through the charcoal rubbings.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

The assassin now waits in a car across from a school bus depot.

V.O.

I just decided on a murder weapon.
I will use a knife.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY

The assassin walks through the cemetery, making a call on speakerphone.

V.O.

I'm still a little apprehensive
about that situation I saw earlier,
so I called a friend from the
sheriff's office.

The phone is ringing. Someone picks up.

SHERIFF'S HUSBAND

Sheriff's husband, what can I do
you for?

ASSASSIN

Hey, it's me.

SHERIFF'S HUSBAND

I know, I got a smartphone now.
Junior put all my contacts in it as
a birthday gift.

ASSASSIN

Oh, happy belated.

SHERIFF'S HUSBAND

His birthday. Just loves using the
phone. And he's a whiz at it—

ASSASSIN

Whatever, great. Listen, what do
you know about Milgo Bufkin?

A few mourners walk by and give disapproving looks.

SHERIFF'S HUSBAND

Milgo? Not much. Owns something.
Very litigious. Why? What's up with
you?

ASSASSIN

Trying to get to someone on the
inside.

SHERIFF'S HUSBAND

To help them, yeah?

ASSASSIN

Yeah, to help, like normal. I'm,
uh, worried something might happen
to them.

SHERIFF'S HUSBAND

Great. Thanks about that. Let me
see ... A lot of Milgo people hang
out at Lou-Anne's late on weekdays.
You could try there.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR, LATER

The assassin sits alone in a quiet back room. The manilla
folder lies on the table with a newspaper on top. She is
trying to do a crossword with a highlighter. Unreadable. She
still wears the gloves. She looks around.

V.O.

I fucking hate Lou-Anne's. A lot of
the beer is poisoned and the
bathroom sink doesn't get hot
enough to really get clean down
there. It's never a very appealing
crowd either.

A young looking man, DEMETRI, comes into the back room, looks
around and spots the assassin. He smiles and waves, coming
over to take a seat. He has a bright, open look, friendly and
energetic. He places a tote bag full of textbooks on a spare
seat.

V.O. (CONT'D)

Oh, here he is. This is Demetri, a
student radical I met at the
Macedonian Library. I asked him to
come help out tonight.

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT'D)

Sure, he's a little *eager*, green behind the ears, but he's got looks and that's what counts. Besides, I need him as a buffer between me and the Milgo people.

DEMETRI

(finishing sentence)

... but I don't get sick anymore, so it must have done *something*. Hey. You're quiet tonight. Don't you want something to drink bitch?

CUT TO:

INT. BAR, MINUTES LATER

Demetri returns to the table leading a woman, NOVEMBER, the woman we saw go into Milgo with Goldeena in the morning. They sit at our table, setting down three beers. Immediately the assassin pours some kind of powder into all three drinks. Demetri and November don't notice.

V.O.

Perfect.

DEMETRI

This is November. She works at *Milgo*.

ASSASSIN

(nasty and dismissive)

Milgo? What's that.

NOVEMBER

Milgo Bufkin. It's a ... *company*, really, is the right word. We own something.

ASSASSIN

Whatever.

DEMETRI

What sort of things do you own?

NOVEMBER

I don't really remember. I work mostly on the administrative structure.

DEMETRI

What sort of class are you in, socially?

November and Demetri have drunk a lot of their beers already. The assassin is looking back and forth between their glasses and her full one.

V.O.

Shit, I gotta ...

She covertly grabs Demetri's bookbag and pours beer slowly but clumsily into it. The books are soaked; it's fairly loud.

V.O. (CONT'D)

No matter how much planning you do ahead of time, you *will* run into situations where thinking on your feet? Is bae.

NOVEMBER

What's that noise?

DEMETRI

Sounds like a leak--

The assassin slams her beer glass, now about half empty, up onto the table.

ASSASSIN

Ahhh. So nice. Sometimes I can see why people become alcoholic!

NOVEMBER

Whoa, ew, my socks are wet! There's something on the floor.

DEMETRI

Yeah, why *aren't* you wearing shoes?

ASSASSIN

That's pee, sorry. Okay? Get over it. You never had to pee before, asshole?

NOVEMBER

What?? It's so sticky...where is it--

ASSASSIN

(aggressive)

I'm sorry, are we good?

November starts to scoot her chair back and bend down to look under the table, but the assassin quickly yells and points over her shoulder at the empty corner of the room.

ASSASSIN (CONT'D)
WOW What the fuck kinda celebrity
is that!

Demetri and November whirl around to look.

DEMETRI
Where?!

ASSASSIN
(*really fast*)
I think I'll have another drink.

Assassin picks up the rest of her beer and dumps it on her own crotch. She slams glass back on table as they turn to look.

ASSASSIN (CONT'D)
I couldn't stop myself. So nice.

The assassin stands and gestures at her soaked crotch.

ASSASSIN (CONT'D)
Listen, I kinda soiled myself.
Would you mind continuing this
conversation in the bathroom? Just
finish up your drinks first,
slowpokes.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM

The assassin stands at the sink, putting her finger under the tap to see if it hot enough yet. Nope. Nope. She looks around. Demetri stands by the hair dryer trying to dry his books. November sits on the toilet fully clothed. She's on her phone.

V.O.
When you are out in the field, a
lot of the game is--getting them to
go where you want, do what you
want, eat the grass and not get
caught in the fencing. With people,
it's similar but easier since you
can talk to them. It is a delicate
craft. Manipulate, yes, but without
losing trust, arousing suspicion,
or coming off too cringe or try-
hard.

ASSASSIN

Demetri, stop. It's too loud. I
need to be able to hear the water.

Demetri sighs and stops. He starts wringing out the books manually, leaning sadly against the door and facing into the corner.

ASSASSIN (CONT'D)

*(as if offhand, looking at
November in mirror)*
So you came here with Milgo people?

NOVEMBER

Yeah.

ASSASSIN

Cool, whatever.
*(Splashes water on crotch,
sucks air through teeth.
With voice affected by
bracing cold)*
And did you ever meet Goldeena?

November looks up, lowering her phone.

NOVEMBER

You know Goldeena?

ASSASSIN

Not really. Kinda. Just thought I'd
ask.
*(splashes water, grunts
again)*
You?

NOVEMBER:

Of course. Everyone knows Goldeena.
You should get to know her, if you
get the chance. She is *wonderful*.

ASSASSIN

She's very beautiful.

NOVEMBER

She is.

There is a loud knock on the door. Demetri jumps (as he was leaned with his ear against it) and throws his books in the air involuntarily. They land in the trash can.

DEMETRI

Ah man.

ASSASSIN

(loud)

Hi! Just a minute, thanks.

(to November)

Do you know if she lives with anyone? Goldeena?

NOVEMBER

It's more complicated than that. Goldeena ... she isn't really like you or me. Are you a lawyer at all?

ASSASSIN

No.

Assassin starts stuffing paper towels down pants to dry from the inside.

NOVEMBER

What do you know about corporate personhood?

DEMETRI

Like Citizen's United?

NOVEMBER

Maybe. I don't know the history, I'm not from this place originally anymore. What they told us at Milgo was that having a corporate person would make a lot of legal things easier.

Another knock. The handle rattles.

ASSASSIN

Hi! Minute!

NOVEMBER

It's pretty awesome. All of our taxes, lawsuits, operations, donations—all of it can be treated very naturally as Goldeena's. She is Milgo Bufkin. She is everything we do. Or she does everything we do.

DEMETRI

In a legal sense.

NOVEMBER

Yeah. But literally too.

DEMETRI

That's impossible. That's so impossible and unethical.

NOVEMBER

Why?

DEMETRI

Setting aside the legal loopholes you could exploit, what about her? What about her life?

NOVEMBER

Her life is good. It's better than yours. She is hands down amazing. I know you'd understand if you met her. She is so ... *powerful*. And unusual. Ah ... I wonder where she is tonight.

DEMETRI

We should beckon--

The door slams open. Demetri goes flying. Goldeena stands in the doorway.

ASSASSIN AND V.O.

Goldeena ...

Goldeena smiles. There is a twinkle in her eye.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLDEENA'S APARTMENT, STOOP

Demetri and November, drunk, sit on the lower levels looking up adoringly at Goldeena at the top of the stairs. The assassin sit in the middle and on the other side, manilla folder on lap with newspaper and highlighter on top.

V.O.

Sometimes it pays to get close to your subjects, if you can afford to do so without making them nervous. With Goldeena here, for example, it's fine. There's no real rush with these things.

DEMETRI

Goldeena, aren't you afraid to die?

NOVEMBER

Goldeena, do you ever get worried?

Goldeena laughs a magnanimous laugh. She looks over toward camera, still smiling, and cocks her head.

GOLDEENA

What are you working on? Are you a journalist? Or a blackout poet?

ASSASSIN

No. What?

DEMETRI

I'd miss you if you died, Goldeena.

GOLDEENA

(to assassin)

Why are you reading the news with a highlighter?

ASSASSIN

Oh. Just ... searching for patterns. It's so stupid.

GOLDEENA

What sort of patterns? That sounds interesting.

DEMETRI

I didn't know you--

ASSASSIN

Sometimes the spaces between the words will line up vertically or on a diagonal or something.

GOLDEENA

Oh? Really?

ASSASSIN

Yeah.

November is on her phone again.

NOVEMBER

Goldeena do you know how to play double dutch?

GOLDEENA

Aw, not really, sweetheart. I'm a lot younger than you.

NOVEMBER

I just saw a cool video is all.

GOLDEENA
 (making grabbing motion)
 Show?

While Goldeena watches the video Assassin takes out her phone and opens it. There is a text from Demetri. "I think I am in love with Goldeena :/" Sbe looks up from her phone at Demetri who returns the look with a desperate lovesick expression. Another text. "But my politics forbid it." Look up at Demetri, who has a resolute, serious expression all of a sudden. After a second it wavers and returns to a swoon. Another text. "I also feel quite ill nfs!" Look up at Demetri again, who now appears to be passing out. Slumps onto November, who has also passed out, presumably from the poisoned beer.

The assassin looks up at Goldeena, who is scrolling on November's phone with mild interest.

VO
 Manipulate, without appearing to.
 When it comes off correctly, you'll
 know. It's like luck, only you made
 it. "All the stars a line."

Goldeena puts phone down, looks down at us. Tilts head to side again.

GOLDEENA
 You ... want to come up for a
 drink?

CUT TO:

INT. GOLDEENA'S APARTMENT, IN THE KITCHEN.

Goldeena is now wearing fashionable smart glasses. She stands at the counter, holding one of the graveyard rubbings up in the light. The reverse side of each has a picture of her or other information from the file printed on it, but she hasn't noticed. The other rubbings are stacked on top of the manilla folder next to her on the kitchen counter.

GOLDEENA
 These are extraordinary.

She puts one down, picks up another.

GOLDEENA (CONT'D)
 Where did you say you took these
 again?

As she looks the assassin starts to wander, behind her back, over to the knife block.

ASSASSIN

Headstones.

The assassin examines the knives, not daring yet to remove one from the block.

GOLDEENA

I know that. I'm not stupid or anything. I mean where were the headstones.

The assassins draws a knife out. Not sharp enough. Puts it back.

V.O.

I should really invest in my own knife.

ASSASSIN

Oh, I don't know. Just by the side of the road somewhere.

GOLDEENA

(reading)

"Woodward Wilson, Loving husband and so on." Do you think that's a typo? Loving husband and soon. Soon what?

ASSASSIN

Is there a date?

GOLDEENA

No date. Maybe he's still alive then.

The assassin has chosen a knife.

ASSASSIN

Yeah, maybe.

GOLDEENA

Maybe it wasn't a cemetery at all—maybe it was some kind of...life-etary. Like, the part of the cemetery where people have already bought their plots and stones but haven't actually died yet.

The assassin runs a finger along the blade.

ASSASSIN
Graves in waiting.

V.O.
This is it.

The assassin turns to watch her. She examines the rubbing, leaning more into the light coming from over the sink. She accidentally somehow turns the sink on, soaking the paper.

GOLDEENA
Oh no...

ASSASSIN
That's okay.

GOLDEENA
God, it's ruined. I'm so sorry.

She holds it up by a corner. The assassin raises the knife, preparing to strike.

ASSASSIN
Don't worry about it Goldeena.
Nothing perfect *LASTS!*

That last word is emphasized as if lunging to attack but actually the assassin just moves a little closer. Goldeena has just turned the paper over and is looking at a picture of herself in this kitchen. She turns around as the assassin starts to pounce.

GOLDEENA
What--

Suddenly the door slams open and Demetri, barely able to stand, raises a pistol, screaming.

DEMETRI
Noooooooooooo!

Twenty shots ring out. Cut to black after the first two or three.

EXT. CEMETERY

November and Demetri are laying flowers down on a fresh looking grave.

DEMETRI

(somber)

You know, when Antifa issued me that gun, they told me to do whatever I wanted with it. But I'd always hoped ... god, maybe I'm a spineless optimist, but I hoped I'd never have to use it.

November rubs his back in consolation.

DEMETRI (CONT'D)

(choking down a sob)

Because its trade-in value tanks after first discharge!

NOVEMBER

You had no choice. You saved her from that brute.

DEMETRI

That brute was my friend.

Goldeena walks over and lays a flower down. She consoles them both, standing in the middle. Both rest their heads against her. The camera, still in POV, walks toward them.

GOLDEENA

Thank you for coming today. It's peaceful out here.

(sigh)

Sometimes I wish I was able die. To have some of this peace.

NOVEMBER

(shaking head)

No Goldeena. It's better like this.

DEMETRI

It's no good to die.

GOLDEENA

I know. I know. I'm glad to be eternal and take the forms I do.

Goldeena hugs them close. The grave says GOLDEENA INNOCENTI, BELOVED COMPANY, 2007-. The camera begins to float upwards.

GOLDEENA (CONT'D)

It really is a nice spot. Okay, c'mon, let's get out of here. You guys wanna hotbox my room and kiss each other for me?

They walk away, voices getting quieter.

NOVEMBER
Aren't the police still there?

GOLDEENA
Not in my room.

DEMETRI
Can I ask an embarrassing question?

NOVEMBER
To me or to Goldeena?

DEMETRI
To Goldeena.

NOVEMBER
Mm.

[inaudible]

END.