Person of Interest (tentative title)

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Notes From the Literary Agent Hypothesis

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Draft 1

Overall Story Flow & Scene Construction

- **What works:** The progression from "Childhood/Innocence" to "War Crimes/Trauma" to "Dissolution/Nihilism" is a classic, effective arc. The use of the "hanging" as a pivot point for his entire life works exceptionally well to explain why he is the man we see later in FFXII.
- **What needs improvement:** The "middle" of the story the time between the hanging and the Client's offer feels like a montage. We skip from his mother's illness to her death to him being a sex worker to him being a master saboteur very quickly.
- **Why it matters:** Because this is a "scenic route longfic," readers want to see the *incremental* erosion of Noah's soul. If he goes from "traumatized boy" to "competent assassin" in two paragraphs, we miss the "realpolitik" of how the Empire actually breaks and rebuilds a person.
- **Specific suggestion:** Break the "dens of vice" and "The Client" into two distinct beats. In the first, focus on his physical degradation. In the second, show the *first* time he was asked to do something other than sell his body perhaps a small act of theft that he did with soldierly precision, which caught the Client's eye.
- **What to keep:** The concept of the "hanging" as his initiation. It's the strongest narrative anchor in the piece.

Character Voice & Development

- **What works:** Noah's voice is distinctively "hollow." The way he labels things—"A" for Archadia, "The Other One" for Basch shows a man who uses language to distance himself from his own pain. The "spits" parenthetical is a great touch of bitter, reflexive resentment.
- **What needs improvement:** The "Literary Agent" persona occasionally bleeds into the narrative prose in a way that feels modern/slangy (e.g., "peas-in-a-pod," "layabout," "hole in the wall").

- **Why it matters:** FFXII is famous for its Shakespearean, elevated tone. While this is an AU, if the narrator sounds too much like a contemporary "Florida Woman," it can pull the reader out of the gritty, medieval-industrial setting of Archades.
- **Specific suggestion:** Reserve the snark for the footnotes or the "Agent" notes. In the prose, let Noah's bitterness be colder and more formal. Instead of "peas-in-a-pod," perhaps "mirror-images that Landis could not tell apart."
- **What to keep:** The nihilistic internal logic: "He had lost the right to refuse anyone anything the moment he said yes to murdering his own fellow countrymen." This is the psychological heart of Gabranth.

Pacing & Emotional Impact

- **What works:** The hanging scene is paced perfectly. You slow down the narrative to describe the rope, the weight, and the "eternity it took for the boy to die." The emotional impact here is high. it's genuinely uncomfortable to read.
- **What needs improvement:** Matka's (Mother's) death is handled very quickly. For a "longfic," this feels like a missed opportunity for a major emotional beat.
- **Why it matters:** Noah's mother is his last link to Landis and his last reason to stay "Noah." Her death is what allows him to fully become the tool of the Empire.
- **Specific suggestion:** Give the "ultimatum" from the Gabranths more space. Let us see the specific moment he looks at his mother's fresh grave and realizes he has absolutely nothing left to lose. This makes his transition to "The Client's" work feel like a choice of suicide-by-employment.
- **What to keep:** The "slow agonizing" description of the hanging. Do not shorten this; it is the visceral core of the chapter.

Dialogue & Worldbuilding Consistency

- **What works:** The Judge's dialogue is excellent. "You do it to someone else, or they do it to you" is a perfect encapsulation of Archadian imperial logic. The use of Czech for Landisi is a brilliant worldbuilding choice that gives the culture a specific "Earth-analog" weight.

- **What needs improvement:** The "Client" dialogue at the end. The Client asking if Basch is a "conflict of interest" feels a bit too direct for a high-level intelligence handler.
- **Why it matters:** In "Realpolitik," handlers rarely ask questions they don't already know the answer to. They usually manipulate the answer out of the asset.
- **Specific suggestion:** Have the Client mention Basch's success in Dalmasca as a *taunt* or a *test* rather than a polite question. "Your brother is a hero in the desert while you are a ghost in the gutter. Does that bother you?"
- **What to keep:** The bilingual call-and-response ("Kdo je to?"). It establishes the "mother-tongue" vs "father-tongue" conflict beautifully.

Clarity, Grammar, & Wording

- **What works:** The sentence "The eternity it took for the boy to die haunted Noah's nightmares for years afterward, years that he spent in a haze" is very strong.
- **What needs improvement:**

The Parentheticals: You use parentheses a lot (Archadia. The Empire..), (spits), (The Other One). While stylistic, they can make the text feel "stuttery."

Tense/Mood: "Noah repeated the words of his parents like a mantra. He is your own blood." should probably be in past tense to match the rest: "He *was* your own blood." or put in italics to indicate it's a direct quote of the mantra.

Why it matters: Too many parentheticals can make a serious scene feel like a "commentary track" rather than an immersive experience.

Specific suggestion: Use italics for internal thoughts/labels instead of parentheses.

Example: "..not after her relatives the Gabranths he mentally spat at the name took pity on her.

Word Choice: "Identické dvojče" is great. "Peas-in-a-pod" is very Western/Modern. Consider "twinned souls" or "shadow-selves.

Specific Critique of the "Deep Cover" Transition

The Logic: You mention he didn't need to be told how to infiltrate/sabotage.

Critique: Military training teaches you how to march and shoot, but it doesn't teach you how to be a "whorehouse spy."

Correction: Mention that his time in the "dens of vice" wasn't just about drugs/sex; it was where he learned the "under-language" of the city. He learned how to listen through thin walls and which palms to grease. This bridges the gap between "Landis Soldier" and "Imperial Spy."

Summary of Feedback

What Works:

The visceral horror of the Landis capitulation.

The "A" and "(spits)" naming conventions for trauma.

The cold, bureaucratic cruelty of the Archadian military.

What Needs Improvement:

The "time-skip" feel of his mid-teens.

The modern/informal idioms that clash with the dark tone.

The speed at which he becomes a "Master Spy."

Why it Matters:

To make this a "Game of Thrones" style political epic, the "how" of his survival is just as important as the "what."

Specific Suggestions:

Slow down the scene where he enters the "dens of vice."

Replace "peas-in-a-pod" with something more era-appropriate.

Flesh out the "The Client" interaction to show more of the power dynamic.

What to Keep:

- **The Czech.** It is your best worldbuilding tool.
- **The Hanging.** It is the strongest piece of writing in the draft.
- **The Ending Line.** Noah's blank expression and his "It'll only be a problem if..." line is a perfect "curtain drop" for the chapter.