

THE
SPIRITUALIST

BY ALEX TANG

L O G L I N E

Set in a world where crimes can be investigated by communing with the dead; Eliza is a consulting medium for the Metropolitan Police. When a Russian diplomat is murdered, she and her mentor are sent to investigate.

FADE IN FROM WHITE:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

ALEXANDER GODMAN, Russian Diplomat, 30s, wakes up on a sofa with a headache. He keeps his hands over his eyes.

WOMAN
Are you okay?

Godman
Huh?

Godman notices the woman sat in the middle of the room, he has blurred vision and can't quite see her clearly. He keeps one hand on his forehead, further obscuring his vision.

Godman
(stuttering)
Y-yes. I'm sorry - I've got a splitting headache.

Woman
That's okay, Mr. Godman.

Godman
Are - are you Maria?

Woman
(a bit exasperated, as if speaking to a child)
No, Mr. Godman. I am not.

Godman
No?

He sits up to face her.

Godman
(politely, with a hint of flirtation)
What's your name?

Woman
(curtly)
Honestly it doesn't matter, Mr. Godman.

Godman
Who - who are you?

He stands up, the head rush hits him and combined with his headache he bends over with his head in his hands to steady himself.

Woman

If you need to know, my name is Eliza Lee and I consult for Scotland Yard. Please, sit down.

Godman

Wh - What? Why is the police doing here?

Eliza

They're not here - well, they were, it's just me at the moment.
Focus on me.

Godman

Wh - is the police looking for me?

Eliza

Yes. I'll explain. Please, sit down.

Godman

Why? This is my home. You don't have a warrant.

Eliza

We didn't need one.

Godman

How - how did you get in? And where's Maria?

Eliza:

Who's Maria?

Godman

None of your business! Get out of my house.

Eliza

Why?

Godman

Why? It's my house!

Eliza

It's not your house, is it?

Godman

What? What do you mean?

Eliza

Your house is in Holland Park. This house is owned by a shell company based in Monaco. What were you doing here?

Godman

How do you know all this? Where's Maria?

Eliza

What's Maria's last name?

Godman

What?

Eliza

What's Maria's last name?

Godman

I - I don't know.

Eliza

We need her last name, Mr Godman.

Godman

Who's "we"?

Eliza

As I said before, I consult for the Metropolitan Police, this is a murder investigation, Mr. Godman. Please, her full name.

Godman

What? What murder?

Eliza

Your murder, Mr. Godman.

There is a pause, the penny drops.

In THE REAL WORLD, Mr. Godman is lying dead on the couch as Eliza is sitting in a trance whilst her partner, ROMAN, 30s, is next to her facing the other way, working on his laptop. There is police tape around the crime scene.

CUT TO:

PURGATORY

Godman

What the hell are you talking about?

Elizabeth

(sounding bored now)

Please, we don't have much time. What's Maria's last name?

Godman

Who are you? This is a prank, isn't it, did Ellison send you as well?

Eliza

(her interest temporarily piqued by the new information)

Who's Ellison?

Godman

I'm going to kill him.

Eliza

Is Ellison related to Maria?

Godman

He's a dead man.

Eliza chuckles.

Eliza

(under her breath)

The irony.

Godman:

What?

Eliza

Nothing.

Godman

Who are you?

Eliza

Mr. Godman, how many times do we have to do this? I'm a consultant medium assisting the Metropolitan Police in this murder investigation.

Godman
WHAT MURDER INVESTIGATION?!?

Eliza
Yours.

Godman
Are you mental?

Eliza
You're dead. We suspect you were assassinated.

Godman
You're a nut job.

Eliza
How did you get here?

Godman
I'm not doing this anymore.

He stands up and goes towards the door

Eliza
You don't remember, do you? You can't what time of day it is.

Godman
I'm out of here.

Eliza
You can't leave.

Godman
Watch me.

He tries to open the door. He can't open it.

Godman
Where's the keys?

Eliza
It's not locked.

He realises the door isn't locked.

Godman

You've done something to it - open it!

Eliza
I can't.

He turns and looks up the stairs.

Eliza
There's no point - it's not your time. Not again.

He goes up the stairs and is suddenly hit with an intense headache and faints.

CUT TO:

THE REAL WORLD

Roman
Sorry, it's taking a bit longer than usual. We're still stuck at the acceptance phase. I know. I'm hoping to get you some good news soon.

CUT TO:

PURGATORY

Alexander Godman wakes up back on the sofa, sits up and sees Eliza.

Godman
What the hell is going on?

Eliza
We've already been through this.

Godman
The stairs.

Eliza
Yes, the stairs. How many more times do we have to go through this?
It's not your time.

Godman
Not my time?

Eliza
With all due respect to your tragic circumstances, Mr. Godman, we do not have much time.

Godman
What's going on?

Eliza
Mr. Godman, officers discovered your body in this apartment at ten-o-four this morning after your wife phoned the police for the hundredth time saying that you didn't go home yesterday and that you haven't been replying to your texts; but of course, you wouldn't have answered anyway, because you were using an encrypted burner, am I right?

Godman
Y-yes.

Eliza
Whe?

He sits shaking his head.

Godman
You said this is a murder investigation?

Eliza
We believe that to be the case, and we need your help.

Godman
How is this happening?

Eliza
You were pronounced dead on the scene, poisoned. There was no sign of a break in so we suspect that whoever did this was someone close to you or someone you were expecting. We need to move fast if we are to catch your killer. You've mentioned that you were expecting Maria?

Gordon
(in denial
You're lying.

Eliza
I understand that it's difficult to accept, but I need your cooperation, so please, think.

Gordon
(whimpering)

It's not possible.

Eliza

It doesn't matter, please just answer the question, were you expecting a Maria?

Godman

Yes.

Eliza

And what is her last name?

Godman

(hesitantly)

I - don't know.

Eliza

How do you know her?

Gordon

Ellison recommended her.

Eliza

What is her relationship to you?

Godman

She, she's...

He pauses, looks away from her almost like he's embarrassed.

Eliza

Is she an escort?

Pause.

Godman

Y-yes.

(reluctantly)

Yes.

Eliza

Was she with you at any point yesterday?

Godman

No.

Eliza
Was anyone else here?

Godman
She didn't come. I was waiting here alone.

Eliza
You were found collapsed on the sofa. Do you know how you got there?

Godman
I remember this splitting headache and I came to lie down, and...

Eliza
And?

Godman
And I remember my heart beating - really, really quickly, and then -

Eliza
And then?

Godman
This sharp pain, it went through my whole body.

Eliza
What do you remember after that?

Godman
Is this really happening?

Eliza
Your heart was beating quickly - You collapsed on the couch, and -

Godman
Oh God, am I really dead?

Eliza
Yes. Mr. Godman, this is helping, we're getting closer to working out how you were poisoned.

Godman
How is this happening? What is this?

Eliza

This is purgatory, Mr. Godman. Whilst you're still with us, it is better for us to ask you these questions directly so we're not wasting time with forensics.

Godman
How can this...

Eliza
This is what happens when a high profile diplomat such as yourself is murdered and we need to find the killer before they leave the country. Do you remember the precise point when you started having these palpitations?

Godman
As soon as I got in... it took me some time to open the door and I was starting to get this headache.

THE REAL WORLD CUT TO:

Roman
The door. Ask about the door.

PURGATORY CUT TO:

Eliza
Did you notice anything wrong with the door?

Godman
Yh, the key didn't want to go in, I was fumbling with it for a while.

THE REAL WORLD CUT TO:

Roman
(on the phone)
We've had a breakthrough.
I think they used a nerve agent.

Eliza
Thank you. Mr. Godman.

Godman

Maria had the keys.

Eliza

I thought you've never met her before.

Godman

No, Ellison always gave them the keys. This is his place, well not his, it was bought with a shell company of his.

Eliza

And you're sure that is her name?

Godman

Yes, I'm sure, he's mentioned her before.... it's Va - Valeryevna.

Eliza

Can you spell it for me?

CUT TO:

THE REAL WORLD

Eliza

V-A-L-E-R-Y-E-V...

Roman

(working on his laptop whilst on the phone)

Found her. She's on the system. Maria Valeryevna.

He stops working on his laptop and focuses on his phone call to Scotland Yard.

Roman

(on the phone)

It's a Maria Valeryevna. Yes, we're fairly sure he was exposed to Novichok. Yes. Yes. I'm sending it over now. How are we doing with the encryption? Do you still need the code? Got it. Will do. Keep an eye on Ellison, he may not have known that she's a spy, but he might have more information about her.

CUT TO:

PURGATORY

Godman

Am I really dead?

There is a long pause.

Eliza
(reluctantly)
I'm sorry.

Godman
Oh God.

He has his hand over his mouth, he starts shaking.

Godman
Jessica... Michael.

CUT TO:

THE REAL WORLD

Roman
We're done here. Let's go.

CUT TO:

PURGATORY

Eliza
Thank you for your help, Mr. Godman.

She gets up to leave.

Eliza
We'll should be able to catch your killer before she leaves the
country.

Godman
Tell my family I love them.

Eliza
It's too late for that, isn't it?

Godman
What?

Eliza
You have two kids and you were waiting here for a prostitute whilst
your wife was at home worrying about you.

Godman
Tell them I'm sorry.

Eliza
Someday, you'll be able to tell them yourself.

Godman
Wait!

She opens the door and walks out, leaving him behind.

CUT TO:

THE REAL WORLD

Roman and Eliza are packing up.

Roman
That took too long. Remember, we don't need their acceptance to get
the answers.

Eliza
I know.

Roman
You also gave away your name.

Eliza
I know, I know.

Roman
What would happen if he doesn't move on?
What would happen if he just sticks around?

Eliza
I was pushed into a corner.

Roman
You weren't.

Eliza
He kept -

Roman
They give up after a while.

Remember, the soul does not have the same persistence as flesh and
blood. Without a heartbeat, it has no concept of time, and without
time, it does not persist with anything.

Eliza
He did.

Roman
The soul is a manifestation of the past, it's not taking in any new information. Instead of getting the subject to accept new variables, all you need is to be specific with your line of questioning.

Eliza
I was.

Roman
You have to keep it short.

Eliza
What do you think I was trying to do?

Roman
Also, you were sympathising with the subject.

Eliza
Trust me, I was not sympathetic.

Roman
And you got emotional.

Eliza
That's such a sexist thing to say.

Roman
It's not, I would have said the same thing to Charles, he's just like you.

You said more than you needed to, and you were responding to the subject.

Eliza
How can you not?

Roman
We're meant to be professional.

Eliza
The guy has a family and he was sleeping around with prostitutes. No wonder he didn't want to say anything.

Roman

It doesn't matter what he was doing. Did you notice how he forgot her name precisely because he felt judged.

Eliza

Yes, but -

Roman

You made him defensive; if you had maintained a neutral tone, he would have divulged it sooner.

Eliza

Look, he was hiding her name because he didn't want his family to know.

Roman

Yes, of course he was, and?

Eliza

So...

Roman

So what? What matters is that a Russian citizen was assassinated on British soil. Do I care what or whom he was doing before he died?

Eliza

No.

Roman

You're gifted, Elizabeth, but you have to be more professional.

She's not listening to him anymore. He walks them towards the door.

Roman

Let's go.

They exit the door, Roman is out first, Eliza turns to look behind her, she sees Mr. Godman, on the stairs, silently mouthing the words: Tell them I'm sorry. We see Eliza's face as the door slams shut.