

CRIMSON SNOW

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG — NIGHT (1916)

From the advantage point of the banks of the Neva River shines the Palace Bridge lights and the tall spire of the Fortress of Peter and Paul.

TSAR (V.O.)
I am not God. Neither am I man. I
am something in between. At least...
I used to be.

EXT. HOTEL EUROPE — NIGHT (1916)

Snow falls as yellow light sparkles off the grand hotel's ornate facade. In the distance, beyond the a park's leafless tress, stands the onion shaped domes of the Church of Spilled Blood.

INT. HOTEL EUROPE'S FOYER — SAME TIME

An arriving couple climbs the blood red steps of the luxury hotel. They bleed into the lush lobby bar a buzz with interesting people.

INT. HOTEL EUROPE'S LOBBY BAR — SAME TIME

PRINCE SERGE KONSTANTIN slices through the crowded bar. He carries a tray of vodka shots in one hand, Caviar in the other. The crowd clears, as he stops before a table of his friends.

The booth consists of poets, prostitutes, and one BARNABY JONES, a Brit. Serge's old college roommate from his days at Oxford, before the war.

The prostitute stares at the tuxedoed prince with a long, out of control beard.

PROSTITUTE
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
We were beginning to worry.

POET
Serge knows his way around a bar,
my dear.

The poet raises his glass to Serge.

POET (CONT'D)
 (speak Russian with
 subtitles)
 As do I. Cheers.

Serge delivers the tray to the table.

SERGE
 (speaks Russian with
 subtitles)
 Welcome to St. Petersburg, Mr.
 Jones. Where God is dead.

Jones raises his shot glass.

JONES
 (speaks Russian with
 subtitles)
 If there is no God, everything is
 permitted.

Serge raises his shot glass to meet Jones' glass.

SERGE
 (speaks Russian with
 subtitles)
 Dostoevsky.

JONES
 (speaks Russian with
 subtitles)
 If you must steal, steal from the
 best.

The two downs their vodka.

SERGE
 (speaks Russian with
 subtitles)
 Ahh! More!

The others at the table grab more drinks, as the gathering
 of friends gains steam.

We pan to the right of their table, to a close door.

EXT. MOIKA PALACE'S COURTYARD — NIGHT (1916)

Side door opens, a coatless FATHER RASPUTIN disheveled by a
 day of drinking stumbles out.

FATHER RASPUTIN
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
I must escape.

Blood smears his tunic.

As Rasputin staggers across the fresh snow toward the gate, Senator Purishkevich appears. He waves his revolver in the air.

SENATOR PURISHKEVICH
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Halt!

FATHER RASPUTIN
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Felix! I shall tell it all to the
Empress!

Father Rasputin hunches down lower and moves toward gate.

As his fingertips touch the cold metal latch, ALEXANDER PROTOPOPOV, Russia's Minister of Interior, appears behind it.

Protopopov places his gloved hand over Rasputin's that rests on the lever. The Minister smiles.

FATHER RASPUTIN (CONT'D)
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Thank God. Quickly now.

PROTOPOPOV
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Quickly, indeed.

Protopopov sees Grand Duke Dmitri emerge from the palace. The Duke wears the uniform of His Majesty's Imperial Guards. Dmitri takes aim.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Good-bye, dear father.

Orange flashes from Dmitri's revolver answers Rasputin's cry. The bullets find its target fast. Their sheer force spins the priest around and to his knees as he groans.

Now, Siberian faces the palace. As Protopopov hums Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture as he opens the gate and enters the courtyard.

Prince Felix exits his home. Rasputin sees him.

FATHER RASPUTIN
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Why?

Protopopov raises his own revolver to the Siberian's head.

PROTOPOPOV
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Your influence over the House of
Romanov has ended.

RASPUTIN
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
I made you.

PROTOPOPOV
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
No matter.

He hums the conclusion of 1812 Overture.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
Dade-dada-dade-da-da-da boom!

Protopopov pulls trigger.

The senator, the prince, and the duke circle the dead Siberian priest. Protopopov kneels. Rasputin eyes are wide open. He is still.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Sleep well, old friend.

The Minister closes Rasputin's eyelids.

PRINCE FELIX
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
What should we do?

Protopopov pops up.

PROTOPOPOV
 (speaks Russian with
 subtitles)
 Grab a leg, gentlemen. It's time
 to take out the trash.

EXT. PROTOPOPOV'S CAR - NIGHT (1916)

Protopopov enters the backseat. His driver eyes him via the
 rearview mirror. Next to him, is the BARONESS.

BARONESS
 Is he dead?

PROTOPOPOV
 Da. Drive.

The driver does so.

EXT. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR - DAY (1916)

Snow piles outside its entrance.

INT. PROTOPOPOV'S OFFICE - DAY (1916)

Minister Protopopov plays with the waxy tip of moustache.

PROTOPOPOV
 What a terrible thing.

BORIS
 The country does not trust the
 government.

PROTOPOPOV
 No one trusts the government. Ah!
 Not the right, or left.

BORIS
 The war. Inflation. Transportation
 breakdowns. Have led to severe
 food shortages in the capital.

PROTOPOPOV
 That I know.

BORIS
 If this continues, there will be
 bread riots in the streets.

The minister goes to his window and peers out.

PROTOPOPOV

Oh, I won't worry about that.
Machine gun nests from way up high
will scare the shit out of them.

BORIS

Sir. I am serious.

The minister wildly turns.

PROTOPOPOV

So am I. Relax, Boris. No one will
go out in weather like this.

BORIS

Spring will be too late. Every
passing hour, the hatred for the
Monarchy grows.

PROTOPOPOV

Yes. Yes. Yes. I shall have a word
with the Empress. She will know
what to do.

Boris leaves.

The Baroness enters through a closet door.

BARONESS

He seems efficient. You should
fire him.

PROTOPOPOV

Nothing can stop. What we have
created.

Baroness comes up to him, flirts as she encircles him.

BARONESS

And what have we created?

PROTOPOPOV

Chaos.

The minister savagely kisses her. She does not resist.

There is a knock on the door.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)

You better hide.

She returns to the closet. As he does, she smacks her own
ass with her hand. Before she enters the closet, she turns
and blows him a kiss.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)

Come in.

SECRETARY

Minister Protopopov. Her Majesty wishes an audience.

PROTOPOPOV

Inform Her Majesty. I shall be on the next train.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE — DAY (1916)

Beyond a frosty window frame, Protopopov paces the Mauve Room.

INT. ALEXANDER'S PALACE — DAY (1916)

He looks around the room as he paces and waits.

PROTOPOPOV

How dated.

Empress Alexandra barrels towards him as she storms in.

THE EMPRESS

Where is he?

The Minister bows.

PROTOPOPOV

We don't know yet, Your Majesty.

THE EMPRESS

Don't know? Weren't you in charge of his security?

PROTOPOPOV

I am using every available man.

THE EMPRESS

Find him. If he is gone, so are you!

PROTOPOPOV

Yes, Your Majesty.

He bows again. She has left the room.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)

Oh, yes. There appears to food shortages in the capital.

He stands. He sees himself in a nearby mirror.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)

Boris. I tried.

He passes a portrait of Tsar Nicholas playing with Alexei the heir apparent.

EXT.— WOODS OF MOGILEV - DAY (1916)

Near the Russian Front Lines, Tsar Nicholas plays with his son, Alexei.

TSAR

Only in Russia would we pick a town as lovely as this to house an army.

Nicholas stares down upon a picturesque village covered in a blanket of fresh new snow as his son runs up towards the crest of the hill.

ALEXEI

Catch me, papa!

TSAR

No one, is faster than you.

Nicholas removes Rasputin's letter from his pocket.

RASPUTIN (V.O)

I feel I shall leave life soon. If I am killed by peasants, you, Tsar of Russia, have nothing to fear. But if I am murdered by boyars, by nobles, if they shed my blood, their hands will remain soiled with blood. Brothers will kill brothers. You will know I am gone when a bell rings out.

Alexei returns from the hilltop.

ALEXEI

It is so beautiful today.

TSAR

This is Russia in the best and purest form. Simple and abundant.

Alexi sees Rasputin letter.

ALEXEI
Is Rasputin as bad as everyone
says?

TSAR
He saved you.

ALEXEI
He did. I almost forgot.

TSAR
We should head back.

Alexei starts to run down the hill.

ALEXEI
Wee!

The Tsar watches his son run down the hill in a zigzag
fashion.

TSAR
Ah. Life seems so much clearer in
the woods.

We focus on Nicholas' boots as they trek through the snow.

EXT. SENATE SQUARE - DAY (1916)

Soldier's boots. A column of Russian soldiers with rifles
strapped onto their shoulders march through the snowy
square.

In the distance bell chimes the noon hour ... dong, dong,
dong.

INT. WAR MINISTRY - SAME TIME

Through a frosty window overlooking the square we see the
same soldiers below.

GENERAL PLATON KONSTANTIN sits behind his paper-strewn
desk, wears a heavy starched general's uniform two sizes
too big. He stares into Colonel Renko's cool eyes.

He passes his boney fingertips through his heavy slate gray
hair, a nervous habit he had picked up from his father.

PLATON
Renko, is everything in order?

RENKO
Yes.

Platon moves some papers on his desk.

RENKO (CONT'D)
General, is it wise? Half the city
now knows about Burmin's release.

PLATON
That's what I'm counting on. He
gives the British someone to
chase. And my son?

RENKO
Not good, sir. He's drinking
himself to death. I've heard his
appearance resembles that of a
street beggar, not a prince.

PLATON
Pay him a visit. Make certain he's
on the Moscow train. South. He
will be safe.

The General hands Renko an envelope.

RENKO
He shouldn't find out like this.

PLATON
Just leave it in his compartment
when he is aboard the train. Also.
Make certain he was not involved
in Rasputin's disappearance?

RENKO
And the Empress' correspondence?

PLATON
Destroy it on sight.

RENKO
I believe Protopopov has them now.
His men ransacked Rasputin's
apartment this morning.

PLATON
Hmm. Interesting.

RENKO
Agreed. Rumor on the street is
that Rasputin was growing
increasing tired of him.

PLATON
Yes, in the end. We are all
exposable.

Renko rises.

PLATON (CONT'D)
Warn Serge. We are imploding. He
must leave the city.

RENKO
Yes, General.

Renko leaves room.

The general slowly rises from his desk. Then, he walks to
the mirror. His eyes move to the mantle above the fire.
Above it is a samurai sword on display. A sword he
liberated from a fellow warrior some time ago. With aching
hands, he reaches for his sword. He holds the cold steel in
his hands.

PLATON
This is the way a soldier should
die, in combat, not cancer.

With sword, in hand, he looks at the wall that captures so
many moments of his life—fellow soldiers, family, and
friends. His eyes stop on a photo of a young man in
uniform. It could have been him thirty years ago. It is his
son, Serge.

From behind the door swings open. He turns to see who it
is.

PLATON (CONT'D)
Sandro! What are you doing here?

The Grand Duke Alexander 'Sandro' Mikhailovich enters the
room. Sandro was the brother of his dead wife. The
dark-bearded duke is a tall, bald, lanky warrior with a
poet's heart.

Platon smiles, loves this man like a brother.

SANDRO
Reliving past glory, my friend?

PLATON
It was anything but glorious
(returns the sword to
its holder)
I am glad the war has not harmed
you.

Platon's gaunt figures come into view.

SANDRO
You're not looking well, brother.
Are you all right?

PLATON
No. The doctors say I have seen my
last spring.

The two warriors embrace. Sandro steps back as tears appear.

SANDRO
Spring is overrated.

INT. HOTEL EUROPE — DAY (1916)

At the very end of a long corridor lined with doors. A cloaked Renko beats and bangs on a door.

RENKO
Your Excellency! Wake up!

INT. HOTEL EUROPE'S PENTHOUSE SUITE — DAY (1916)

Party debris litters the room. Turned-over furniture, discarded drinks, and empty magnums of Champagne.

Scores of bottles are labeled in Russian.

SERGE (O.S.)
Leave!

In the bedroom, the room's sole occupant stirs.

The knocking continues.

SERGE
I'm sleeping!

As the pounding stops, Serge gives a heavy sigh.

Soon, there are footsteps from within his suite.

SERGE (CONT'D)
Who's there?

RENKO
It's Renko, Serge.

SERGE
Locks are useless around you.

Renko replaces a small tool in its leather case.

RENKO
I was growing tired of knocking,
Your Excellency.

SERGE
What time is it?

Colonel Viktor Renko of His Majesty's Secret Police clean
and polished exterior cloaks his true profession as the
royal family's trash man. Foregoes the pleasantries.

RENKO
Get up, Serge. We need to talk.

SERGE
I am yours for the moment.

RENKO
Good. Though, it tears at my heart
to see you like this. You, an
officer in His Majesty's Chevalier
Guards, bearer of our country's
greatest honor, the St. George
Cross.

SERGE
All meaningless to me.

RENKO
Look at yourself. You resemble
more a street beggar than a
prince.

A bare-chested Serge yawns as he scratches his shrub-like
beard and motions for a cigarette.

Renko fishes out one out from his case.

SERGE
I am a beggar. Begging for the
return of my soul.

He combs his fingertips through his unkempt hair.

SERGE (CONT'D)
But the demons I battle for
possession are stronger than I.

RENKO
You worry me, Serge.

SERGE
I worry myself.

RENKO
You have been drinking too much.

SERGE
I drink simply to forget.

RENKO
We are at war.

SERGE
I fought my war. I lost.

Renko looks around the trashed room.

RENKO
What were you celebrating last night?

SERGE
Celebrating? Ah. Life!

RENKO
Life? Or was it a dark celebration for someone's death?

SERGE
Dark? Death? What are you talking about?

RENKO
Who attended your party?

SERGE
No one of importance—the usual gang of poets, prostitutes, and other degenerates from the Caviar Bar.

Renko throws over a chair.

RENKO
I am a man accustomed to having my questions answered. Names!

SERGE
I can't even recall everyone. The party was spontaneous. A good friend from Oxford arrived on the Moscow train yesterday.

RENKO
Felix Yusupov there?

SERGE
No.

RENKO

Good.

SERGE

Are you through now?

RENKO

Maybe.

SERGE

Why the third degree?

RENKO

Rasputin was murdered last night
in the Moika Palace. Felix's home.

SERGE

Felix? Why?

RENKO

That's what troubles me. Your
cousin Felix is an odd one, but
this crime is too bizarre even for
the likes of him.

SERGE

Is Felix in custody?

RENKO

He's a prince, like you. What do
you think?

SERGE

This is insane.

RENKO

I agree. Madness. To kill the man
the empress believes saved her
son.

SERGE

What is she going to do?

RENKO

I don't know.

EXT. HOME MINISTRY — DAY (1916)

Two armed Imperial Guards protect the entrance.

INT. PROTOPOPOV'S OFFICE — DAY (1916)

Minister Protopopov as he half listens to a man who is standing before him.

MISHA
Rasputin was murdered last night.
In the Moika Palace.

PROTOPOPOV
Really.

MISHA
The assassins were all members of
high office. It is believed that
two were nobles, Prince Felix
Yusupov and Grand Duke Dmitri
Pavlovich.

PROTOPOPOV
Who was the third?

MISHA
Senator Purishkevich.

PROTOPOPOV
What do you make of this, Boris?

BORIS
Sir, it could be several things.
One, this information is false,
and Rasputin is still alive.

No one in the room appears to believe that.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Two, Rasputin is dead, and these
men of their own accord removed
what they believed to be an
embarrassment to the Tsar.

PROTOPOPOV
Three.

BORIS
This is the first act of a power
struggle and perhaps a civil war.

PROTOPOPOV
Good work. Keep me informed.

BORIS
What did the empress say?

PROTOPOPOV
 She thinks members of the Tsar's
 own cabinet are secretly
 negotiating with the Germans.

MISHA
 Does she know who?

PROTOPOPOV
 No. Do you?

MISHA
 Of course, not.

PROTOPOPOV
 Good.

BORIS
 The food shortage?

PROTOPOPOV
 I had a full plate of news today.
 Maybe tomorrow.

BORIS
 (rises to leave)
 Tomorrow, maybe too late, sir.

PROTOPOPOV
 Dutifully, noted.

Boris and Misha leaves.

Protopopov picks up the phone.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
 No, interruptions. Unless, it is
 Her Majesty.

The Baroness appears. Her bony fingers travel down the wall
 as she walks.

BARONESS
 Tsk. Tsk. I am depressed about the
 current situation here.

PROTOPPOPOV
 What situation is that?

Baroness begins to disrobe.

BARONESS
 The future of Anglo-Russian
 relations.

PROTOPOPOV

The Germans appear to have changed
their tactics.

Baroness gets down on her knees, unbuttons Protopopov's
trousers. She looks up.

BARONESS

You could say that.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — DAY (1916)

Empress Alexandra and her eldest daughter Olga talk as they
share some tea. Olga is dressed in a nurse's uniform.

OLGA

Mother. What does this mean for
Dmitri and I?

EMPRESS

If he is involved in Rasputin's
death, there will be no Dmitri.
Understand?

OLGA

But I love him.

EMPRESS

I know you do. Let's pray they
scared him away.

The Empress rings a porcelain bell. An attentive servant
appears.

EMPRESS (CONT'D)

I need to cable His Majesty at
once.

SERVANT

Of course, Your Majesty.

An aide enters her quarters.

EMPRESS

Any news from Protopopov?

AIDE

None, Your Majesty.

EMPRESS

Protopopov is a buffoon! Remind me
again, why I chose him as Minister
of Interior?

AIDE
Father Rasputin thought.

EMPRESS
That will be all!

EXT. NEVSKY PROSPECT — DAY (1916)

Renko drives. Then, he turns off Nevsky Prospect into an alleyway. Through his half-frozen over windshield, the car's headlights pierce through the darkness. Here and there, he sees and passes cuddled masses. Over open bonfires, misery shows on their long drawn faces. He mutters.

RENKO
Hmm. Poor bastards. They have sacrificed everything for the sake of the empire and this war. Their lands, their sons, and their pride.

EXT. NO. 14 FONTANKA — NIGHT (1916)

Renko's car stops at the infamous Firemen's Club, a small but profitable gambling establishment. Walks in.

INT. NO. 14 FONTANKA — NIGHT (1916)

The club is packed with tuxedoed men and fur-clad women. Renko walks through them and their smoke. Sees a woman he knows.

CIGARETTE GIRL
Can I interest you, in anything?

RENKO
No, Natasha. Not tonight. Where's your boss?

CIGARETTE GIRL
The bar.

RENKO
Thanks.

CIGARETTE GIRL
Hey Renko. Why did the richies kill Rasputin.

RENKO
We still have not found a body.

CIGARETTE GIRL

You will.

Renko heads to the bar where ARON SIMANOVICH, the club's owner sits with a half-emptied bottle. Aron was responsible for transforming a Siberian peasant into Russia's most powerful man.

RENKO

Your protégé is gone.

ARON

I know.

(pours Renko then
himself a drink)

We are all sinners here, Renko.
Today, the capital will rejoice.
The mirror that peered into their
filthy souls has been shattered.
But tomorrow, who will be blamed
for all their ugliness?

RENKO

When was the last time you spoke
to him?

ARON

I was with him last night until
midnight.

RENKO

That late?

ARON

We played cards.

RENKO

Did he tell you anything?

ARON

He told me he was going to see
'the youngster,' but he wouldn't
tell me who that was.

RENKO

What else?

ARON

He was nervous. More than usual.

RENKO

What for?

ARON

He has made many enemies, in a short amount of time.

RENKO

When he left last night, do you recall seeing any of Protopopov's men?

ARON

No, but it was cold last night. On cold nights, they stay in their cars.

Renko leaves the bar and strolls to the high-stakes tables.

PETER BURMIN sits at the high stakes table with mountain of blue chips in front of him. Peter's god is money. He likes to play rivals against one another, no matter the ideology. He serves hawks, doves, anarchists, loyalist, sympathizers, and or the secret police, long as they have deep pockets.

PETER

How much do you make in a month Renko?

RENKO

The trick with money is to live long enough to enjoy it.

PETER

Da.

RENKO

Good to see prison agreed with you.

PETER

A simple misunderstanding. Thankfully Rasputin convinced the empress to drop the charges.

Renko looks over Burmin's shoulder and suppresses a smile as a British intelligence officers hide their face behind newspapers.

PETER (CONT'D)

It appears. I have admirers.

RENKO

The Brits think you are a German spy. Are you?

PETER

Me? What are the odds?

RENKO

His Majesty has an important message he wishes to relay to your Kaiser.

EXT. GRAND DUKE DMITRI'S PALACE — DAY (1916)

Dmitri's palace stands at No. 41 Nevsky Prospect, a magnificent home built of blood-red brick. The red, Parisian-styled palace consumes the entire city block.

Huge Imperial standards and Red Cross flags drape down its stone façades.

INT. GRAND DUKE DMITRI'S PALACE — DAY (1916)

Doctor white lab coat escorts Serge through a spacious entrance hall.

SERGE

I'm impressed by the transformation.

DOCTOR

The Duke converted his palace into a hospital the first year of the war.

Serge walks passed bandaged men in wheelchairs playing cards.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(addresses table)

No cheating boys.

The table smiles as they pass.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

The Duke spared no expense. We could be in any premier facility in Petersburg except for a few tiny differences.

The doctor points up.

SERGE

Like the chandeliers hanging from the sky-colored ceiling.

DOCTOR

Exactly. Since the beginning, the duke wanted to show his support for the war and the Tsar. So, he personally financed all you see around you. The staff. The equipment. The medicine. And this 100-bed faculty. Here, caregivers can meet the wounded soldiers' every need.

SERGE

It must have been expensive.

DOCTOR

Terribly. This is our third winter.

A nurse incepts him. She whispers into the doctor's ear.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Oh. Prince Serge, I am afraid I must go. A nurse can escort you the rest of the way.

SERGE

I know the way.

Serge strolls into one of the wards. He could not help thinking that six short months ago he had been like this broken band of men. Dressed in a fine-fitting suit, he feels out of place. He could see the soldiers gazing up in

envy. He did not belong here, not anymore. When a nurse approached him, he was thankful for the reprieve.

Olga walks over, her dark curls bounce upon her narrow shoulders.

OLGA

May I help you?

SERGE

Olga?

The Empress' eldest daughter.

OLGA

Serge! What's with the beard?

SERGE

Shh. Hiding from my father.

OLGA

Your secret is safe.

SERGE
Is Dmitri around?

OLGA
He's in his room, passed the
ballroom.

SERGE
Thank you, Olga.

Olga gives Serge a big hug.

OLGA
Good to see you, Serge.

Serge enters the circular ballroom. The duke's silhouette
dances along the polished parquet floors. Just a few years
older than Serge, Dmitri wears an officer's uniform of His
Majesty's Horse Guards.

DMITRI
Serge!

Serge offers him a hug.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
(pulls at his beard)
What's this? And where is your
uniform ... and the Cross of St.
George?

SERGE
I—

DMITRI
No matter. Do you remember when we
were last here?

SERGE
Your winter gala before the war.

DMITRI
Exactly. An extraordinary night.
You and Catherine wore out the
floor. I miss her.

SERGE
Me too.

DMITRI
The war has stolen so much.

SERGE
What of Rasputin?

DMITRI
Traitor. He used the war to make money.

SERGE
Did you kill him?

DMITRI
Nyet. Merely freed Russia from his ill influence.

EXT. GRAND DUKE ALEXANDER'S PALACE — DAY (1916)

Seen from the street.

INT. GRAND DUKE ALEXANDER'S PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Serge naps before a roaring fire within a book lined library.

From the direction of the foyer, footsteps tap across the atrium's marble floor. Then, the French doors swing open, and snaps Serge awake.

It is Prince Felix Yusupov.

He is young, bright and good-looking. Once, he was Europe's most eligible bachelor before his recent marriage to Grand Duke Alexander's daughter.

FELIX
Serge. Are you here to see me off?

SERGE
What did you do?

FELIX
Only what had to be done.

SERGE
Why?

FELIX
I need not explain my actions to you.

SERGE
Are you so naïve that you believe you can escape the empress's reaction to all of this?

FELIX

I did what men like you lack the courage to do. I saved the monarchy, and the empress and her lackeys can go straight to hell.

SERGE

You say this now, but from a prison cell your tone might change.

FELIX

Please, I am the sole heir to one of the wealthiest families in Russia. Do you see a prison cell in store for me? Really?

Felix storms out as abruptly as he entered.

SERGE

God help us.

A rusty voice rings down from the library's second floor alcove.

SANDRO

The Lord wants nothing to do with our mess.

SERGE

Uncle Sandro!

(climbs spiral steps)

I thought you were still at the front!

SANDRO

And miss all of this? No. Someone needs to run this lunatic asylum that we once called Russia.

SERGE

True.

SANDRO

I'm thankful to see you are in one piece. I heard you were injured...

(hugs him hard)

something about charging a machine gun nest single handed. Not the brightest of ideas, son.

SERGE

I wasn't expecting to survive that charge. I...

SANDRO
I know. I heard what happened to
your wife and child too. They're
in a better place than this.

SERGE
I wish I had your faith.

SANDRO
Faith. Honor. Loyalty. Are more
than mere words. That is why I am
here. I need to warn the Tsar.

SERGE
About Rasputin?

SANDRO
No. His murder is but a prelude.
More sinister forces entangle us.
His own government is against him.

SERGE
What?

SANDRO
It is true. The unrest grows and
grows. The question is why?

SERGE
Do you think some group is
managing these events?

SANDRO
I believe manipulating.

SERGE
Who?

SANDRO
That is what we must find out?

SERGE
But who holds such power?

SANDRO
The only plausible answer, His
Majesty's own government.

SERGE
But how?

SANDRO
We are watching an unprecedented
spectacle.

(MORE)

SANDRO (CONT'D)
A revolution coming from above,
not below. It all stems from the
new ministers loyal to Rasputin.

SERGE
Protopopov.

SANDRO
A mere pawn in this play.

SERGE
Who's left to trust?

SANDRO
The Tsar. He must find the courage
to turn back this tide. Declare
his people free! And create a true
Constitution.

SERGE
Right now, the Tsar is being
advised to close the Duma's doors.

SANDRO
If he does that, we are as good as
dead.

INT. PROTOPOPOV'S APARTMENT — NIGHT (1916)

Protopopov enters his apartment. It is empty. He recalls
the parties from the past. As he does, the room transforms
and fills with interesting people. Men. Women.
Transgenders. Some wear masks. Others don't.

From a passing server, Protopopov grabs a flute of
Champagne and downs it.

PROTOPOPOV
Ah!

Three women eye him hard.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
Something more. That tickles.

He waves for them to follow him. They do into his bed
chamber. As he closes the door, their limbs entangle him.
To us, he winks.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
Night. Night.

And we are left facing a closed bedroom door.

INT. RUSSIAN HIGH COMMAND — NIGHT (1916)

Nicholas stifles a yawn as the battle of the military minds continues. Each of his general's egos extends the war debriefing. Every one of them is blaming another, and that is worrisome to the Tsar.

At that moment, GENERAL GOURKO, a short and serious fellow with a bushy white moustache, begins to read:

Romania's entry into the field did not take place under the circumstances we deemed best.

Gourko glares at Romanian general.

The Romanian general reaches for his water glass.

GOURKO

Only three short months ago,
Romania decided to enter the war.
All we asked of them was too
maintain pressure on the
already-beaten forces of Austria
and Hungary. Instead they decided
to merely loot the Austrians.

The Romanian general clears throat. His face radiates hate.

GOURKO (CONT'D)

As they pillaged, the Germans
introduced themselves. Instead of
a quick victory in the east, the
remains of the Romanian army were
barely able to return to the
protection of their own borders.
Right general?

ROMANIAN GENERAL

Come spring, we shall race you to
Berlin.

GOURKO

Then you may not want to listen to
this next part... gentlemen, we are
forced to recognize that the
military value of the Romanians
did not come up either to our
hopes or our expectations due to
her army's lack of training and
feeble powers of resistance.

Romanian general leaps up.

ROMANIAN GENERAL

Feeble.

The general's eyes burn into Gourko.

TSAR
Sit. Please.

The Romanian general bows, and sits.

TSAR (CONT'D)
General Gourko, let's focus our
attention on the spring offensive
please.

Suddenly, the chamber's doors open. The aide enters one of
His Majesty's trusted aides.

TSAR (CONT'D)
Krakovsky, can't you see that we
are in the middle of a meeting?

KRAKOVSKY
I apologize, Your Grace.
(bows, as hands over a
dispatch)
This cable is marked most urgent.
From Her Majesty.

TSAR
Oh. Thank you.

The emperor reads the cable.

EMPRESS (V.O)
Our Friend has disappeared. Last
night a great scandal at Yusupov's
house, a great gathering, Dmitri,
Purishkevich, Felix. All drunk.
Police heard shots. Purishkevich
ran screaming to the police that
our Friend was killed. Felix
pretends that He never came to the
house, he never invited Him. It
was, apparently, a trap. I shall
still trust in God's mercy that
one has only driven Him away
somewhere. Protopopov is doing all
he can. I can't and won't believe
that He was killed. God have
mercy. Come quickly. Kisses.
Sunny.

The dispatch falls from the Tsar's hands.

GOURKO
Your Grace, is everything all
right?

TSAR
Rasputin has apparently been
murdered.

The men around the table eye one another. Uncertain how to react to the news.

TSAR (CONT'D)
Prepare my train.

SOUND: steam whistle.

EXT. NICHOLAS' TRAIN STATION — NIGHT (1916)

Big steam cloud and a long, loud whistle.

At the Nicholas Station's station, the Moscow train prepares to depart.

Serge accompanies Felix through the crowd to the first-class coaches. Waiting for them is a group of imperial soldiers. Their leader recognizes them, and approaches.

COMMANDER OF THE GUARDS
Prince Felix, by order of Her
Majesty the Empress, you are
forbidden to leave the city.

Armed soldier encircles Felix and Serge.

Then, the train whistle blows again, longer and harder.

FELIX
What? Speak up.

COMMANDER OF THE GUARDS
I said, by order of Her Majesty,
you are forbidden to leave.

FELIX
I think not.

He walks through them.

The commander pulls out his pistol.

COMMANDER OF THE GUARDS
Halt. Or I will have my men drag
you off this platform.

FELIX
What did you just say?

The commander cocks his pistol.

COMMANDER OF THE GUARDS
You heard me.

Hate radiates off Felix's face.

COMMANDER OF THE GUARDS (CONT'D)
You are free to return to your
palace.

Felix inches closer to the commander's face.

FELIX
That doesn't suit me at all.

The commander lowers his firearm.

COMMANDER OF THE GUARDS
Take it up with the Empress. Until
then, you cannot leave.

Train whistle blows once more. People hurry to board the train.

FELIX
Perfect.

Together they watch the Moscow train pull out of the station in a cloud of white smoke.

The soldiers smirk at the prince.

FELIX (CONT'D)
Let's go.

SERGE
I need a drink.

INT. VLADIMIRS PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Two brothers sat in their comfortable chairs in front of the fire and discuss Russia's problems over drinks.

GRAND DUKE VLADIMIR, known simply as VLAD, wears an all-black regimental uniform and tall matching riding boots:

Twenty years ago, on his deathbed, Tsar Alexander passed the Crown down to Nicholas.

ANDREI VLADIMIR
(bookish sort of man)
What a terrible mistake that was.

VLAD

Alexander skipped over our father,
his own brother.

ANDREI

And entrusted the fate of the
empire to a fool.

VLAD, big, powerfully built, is a mountain of a man. A professional soldier, near 50 years of age, he bears an uncanny resemblance to Nicholas' father, Tsar Alexander. He rises from his seat. Then, he approaches the mantelpiece. The fires whipping flames dance across his bearded face.

VLAD

Nicholas has sat in my throne long
enough.

ANDREI

We need a new supreme leader
worthy to the task.

VLAD

Agreed, my brother. In the
beginning of the war, we begged
the Tsar to avoid the Prussian
lines. Our fight was with the
Austrians regarding the position
of the Balkan Straits.

ANDREI

Did the idiot listen?

VLAD

No. He told his generals to come
to the aid of our allies.

ANDREI

Allies? We Russians have one ally
in this world, our Army.

VLAD

We have lost three million men,
protecting Paris.

ANDREI

This butchery must end.

VLAD

A decade ago, we watched Nicholas
and his admirals destroy our
Pacific fleet.

(MORE)

VLAD (CONT'D)

We must ask ourselves, here and now, in the last hours of '16, are we going to sit back and watch Nicholas destroy the mightiest army in all the world?

ANDREI

We are not!

VLAD

We must claim.

ANDREI

What is rightfully ours.

VLAD

For there was once a time.

ANDREI

This empire was feared.

VLAD

And so was its emperor.

At that point, two of the duke's dogs as black as a moonless night enters the room.

VLAD (CONT'D)

My sources say Nicholas is on his way home.

ANDREI

Now, all we must do is wait.

VLAD

Da. I knew killing Rasputin would bring him straight home.

INT. HOTEL EUROPE — NIGHT (1916)

In the posh Caviar Bar, Serge reaches for the nearly empty bottle in front of him and pours another shot of vodka into Felix's glass.

SERGE

(hands shot glass over)

Here.

FELIX

Spasibo.

SERGE

Why are you such an ass at times?

FELIX
Truth?

SERGE
(nods)

FELIX
The more uncomfortable I am. The
bigger a dick I become.

SERGE
Really?

FELIX
Really.

SERGE
What about Rasputin?

FELIX
It's complicated. And I'm not
drunk enough to speak about him.

SERGE
What do you think the Tsar is
going to do with you?

FELIX
The Tsar? He is unworthy of that
title.

SERGE
Treasonous talk.

FELIX
I am a loyalist, not to Nicholas.
To the monarchy.

SERGE
So, you think a revolution is
coming?

FELIX
(stands, tosses a wad of
colorful cash on the
table)
I am most certain of it.

Jones storms in as Felix leaves. The two exchange glances.

JONES
Here you are.

SERGE
What's left of me.

JONES
(takes seat)
What was Felix doing here?

SERGE
He aims on saving us all.

JONES
Is that why he murdered Rasputin?

SERGE
I guess.

JONES
Where have you been all day?

SERGE
Around. Why?

JONES
I need your help.

SERGE
It appears to be the theme of the day.

JONES
Members of your government have created this chaos that engulfs us.

SERGE
Us?

JONES
They are laying out the terms of a separate peace.

SERGE
The Tsar will never accept a treaty. Long as Germans stand on Russian soil.

JONES
The monarchy is in jeopardy.

SERGE
Who's monarchy? Mine or yours?

JONES
Does it matter?

SERGE
No. I suppose it don't.

JONES
Sir George wishes a meeting with
your father.

SERGE
You know what you're asking of me,
don't you?

JONES
I know. I wish there was another
way.

Jones rises and leaves.

Serge grabs bottle with a shaky hand. He pours what's left
into his glass. Then, he downs it.

SERGE
Ahh!
(bangs hand on bar)
I need another bottle.

The bartender brings him another fifth.

SERGE (CONT'D)
(opens his wallet)
I will be taking that upstairs.

As he hands over the cash a wilted flower falls from it.
The petal lands in a puddle of booze.

SERGE (CONT'D)
How ironic.

INT. SERGE'S HOME — SPRING DAY (1916)

Last spring, during the last moments of Serge's leave from
the war, he watches his wife Catherine dress in their
bedroom. Her belly shows the outline of their first child.

Serge is in uniform.

SERGE
You are so beautiful.

CATHERINE
I'm fat as a cow.

SERGE
No, you're not.

CATHERINE
Wise answer.

SERGE

What?

CATHERINE

Your leave went by so quickly.

SERGE

I know. I will be home before you know it.

CATHERINE

You better. I need help with the nursery.

The two embrace.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Is it mad of us to bring a child into a world like this?

SERGE

(carcasses her)

It's the only thing that makes sense to me.

Catherine turns, tugs a flower out from a bouquet of flowers on her vanity.

CATHERINE

Keep this close your heart.

INT. CAVIAR BAR — NIGHT (1916)

Bartender's voice rips him back to the present.

BARTENDER

Here's your change, Your Excellency. Do you need anything else?

SERGE

Yes. Forgiveness.

BARTENDER

I only serve drinks. For forgiveness, try the church.

Serge rises, room spins. Falls back, and is saved by the most unlikely person.

OLGA

(her dark eyes glisten,
bear a hint of sadness)

Why do you do this to yourself?

SERGE
Because I can.

OLGA
Not anymore. Let's get you
upstairs.

EXT. PROTOPOPOV'S APARTMENT — NEXT DAY (1916)

As Protopopov passes a darken window that overlooks a small courtyard filled with unbroken snow, he sees his aging reflection. His glassy eyes registered a much older man.

PROTOPOPOV
Good morning.

Facial twitch. Protopopov leans closer to his image, the advanced stages of syphilis prey daily on his mind. His muscle tremors and hallucinations are increasing at an alarming rate. Soon, he would not be able to hide it anymore.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
Before, I was a puppet in the
imperial parliament. Now, as the
Minister of the Interior of All
Russia. Who's holds the strings
now?

He smiles at his own twisted image.

INT. SERGE'S PENTHOUSE SUITE — DAY (1916)

The phone rings as Serge sleeps. Reaches for it, and moans.

SERGE
Hello.

PLATON (O.S.)
Good God... it's time to rise from
the ashes, son.

SERGE
Father.

PLATON (O.S.)
You missed the Moscow train.

SERGE
I.

PLATON (O.S.)
Save it. Meet me downstairs.
Twenty minutes.

Before he could respond, the other end of the line goes dead. Serge falls back in his bed. Remembers he is not alone.

Olga sits in an armchair, where she had slept.

OLGA
He lives.

SERGE
I.

OLGA
Who was that?

SERGE
My father.

OLGA
You should have given Platon my
regards.

SERGE
Thank you for last night.

OLGA
We all think we are immortal, at
least for a time.

SERGE
I need to change.

OLGA
You need a shower.
(adds)
And a shave.

Serge heads to the bathroom.

OLGA (CONT'D)
How is Dmitri entangled in all
this?

SERGE
You should ask him?

OLGA
Believe me. I have.

Olga notices on the corner of the night table was Russia's highest honor, the Cross of St. George. She picks it up. Inspects it. Then, reads its inscription.

OLGA (CONT'D)

For Valor.

She places it in her pocket.

Serge from the bathroom, calls out.

SERGE

Have dinner with me tonight?

OLGA

Why?

Serge stays in the bathroom doorway, his face covered in shaving cream. Purplish-blue welts dot his chest. Scar tissue from countless bullet wounds.

OLGA (CONT'D)

You are lucky to be alive.

The prince returns to the bathroom, does not answer her.

Cloud of steam as the shower starts.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE — 10 MINUTES LATER

Serge feels like a new man as he emerges from the bathroom.

SERGE

Dinner?

OLGA

My, I forgot how handsome you are.

SERGE

Is that a yes?

OLGA

That's a yes.

SERGE

Good.

He wipes his face with his towel.

SERGE (CONT'D)

I was getting a little tired of the beard.

OLGA
(joins him)
You look good.

She stops before him. And combs away a stray hair from his face with her finger.

OLGA (CONT'D)
I think it is time for you to once again feel good.

SERGE
I don't know if I am ready for this.

OLGA
Ready for what? Serge, I am not here to seduce you, though the thought has crossed my mind. Like a moment ago. No, I am here to tell you not to give up on life.

SERGE
I see.

OLGA
That accomplishment alone will be sufficient for now. So, allow me to choose appropriate attire for a young gentleman returning from another world.

She holds up his officer's uniform.

OLGA (CONT'D)
How about this?

SERGE
I no longer have any right to wear that.

OLGA
That is where I think you are wrong. A man who was awarded the Order of St. George wears what he wishes.

She throws his uniform tunic over him.

OLGA (CONT'D)
Wear it for Catherine. Wear it for your unborn child.

In silence Serge puts on his officer's uniform of Her Majesty's Chevalier Guards. As he does so, he catches his reflection in a nearby mirror.

Olga embraces him from behind.

OLGA (CONT'D)
You forget, Catherine and I were
dear friends. One more thing.

She slips on his medal for valor.

A clean-shaven Serge now feels like a new man, one with a possible future. As he thinks, how long would that last, he asks.

SERGE
Dinner?

He straightens his collar.

SERGE (CONT'D)
I know a perfect place. A bit
quiet. But it will do.

OLGA
The Fireman Club?

SERGE
No. No. 22 Fontanka.

OLGA
I'm unaware of that restaurant.

SERGE
You will know it, when you see it.

Serge leaves. Olga is now alone.

Olga turns towards the mirror, as she catches her own reflection.

OLGA
Catherine. You had good taste.

INT. HOTEL EUROPE — DAY (1916)

The elevator doors open to the lobby. An amber beam of sunlight blinds Serge. It is Sunday morning.

Serge uniform grounds him. As if it's stiff fabric and firm texture holds him together.

Across the lobby, COLONEL ZURIN approaches him with a swagger. He wears a tunic of amazing blue and fiery red britches. Battle badges line his massive chest.

ZURIN
Good morning, young Konstantin.
Each day you look more and more
like your father.

Zurin pivots and marches at a fast pace through the fashionable entrance of the Hotel Europe's Grillroom.

Serge sees Renko as Zurin leads him to a secluded alcove.

RENKO
I see you missed you train.

Renko steps aside, to allow Zurin and Serge to pass.

Serge walks behind Zurin to a back table. As the Zurin turns, he sees eyes so much like his gazes up at him.

SERGE
Father?

PLATON
(rises)
Son.
(embraces him)
It's so good to see you again, in
your uniform.

SERGE
You don't look well.

Platon nods to the others to leave. He lights a cigarette, as he eyes his son.

PLATON
I'm dying. Lung cancer.

SERGE
Why didn't you tell me?

PLATON
I'm telling you now.

SERGE
D-a-d. I have been in the city for
months.

PLATON
I didn't want to add to your
troubles.

The general coughs hard.

PLATON (CONT'D)
I'm fine with it. I have had a wonderful life, son. Better than I deserved.

SERGE
Can't the doctors do anything?

PLATON
Besides providing me with a comfortable bed, no.
(studies his son)
Renko told me you looked like the devil.

SERGE
I.

PLATON
He could not be more wrong. You look like a survivor.

SERGE
The war has changed me. And not for the better.

PLATON
I know. I was less of a man after each conflict. Perhaps that's why I was always away. I never wanted your mother or you to see what I had become.

SERGE
I understand now.

PLATON
I'm sure you do. Since you're staying in the city, I could use your help.

SERGE
Of course.

PLATON
Good. In two days, the Tsar will sign an armistice to end the war with Germany.

SERGE
What?

PLATON

It's true. It has all been arranged. On Christmas Day, the war ends for us. I have been ordered to orchestrate a peace settlement with Germany. As a soldier, I have been ordered to do much worse.

EXT. NO. 41 NEVSKY PROSPECT — DAY (1916)

Dmitri Palace's Drawing Room.

Sitting alone by a fire, Dmitri scans the Sunday paper, finds an article on Father Rasputin's mysterious disappearance.

DMITRI

Let us pray the Neva holds dearly all that succumb to her.

He turns the pages, one by one.

A draft of cold air enters the drawing room. Plays with the ends of Dmitri's paper. Then, both doors fling wide open.

Felix bursts in.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Felix! You should be halfway to the Crimea by now.

The two embrace.

FELIX

It seems the empress wants me to stay here for a little while longer.

INT. PROTOPOPOV'S APARTMENT — DAY (1916)

Protopopov pages through the biography he on Tsar Alexander I, who defeated Napoleon over a hundred years ago.

He starts to read aloud to the Baroness.

PROTOPOPOV

Bonaparte and his Grand Army believed their war with Russia was over when they seized Moscow.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE, MOSCOW — NIGHT (1812)

Napoleon and his generals celebrate in one of Tsar Alexander's palace.

PROTOPOPOV (V.O.)
 Instead of giving in, Alexander
 knew the wisdom of sacrificing a
 city to save an entire land.
 Without hesitation, the Tsar
 orders his subjects to burn the
 capital to the ground.

EXT. KERMLIN, MOSCOW — NIGHT (1812)

Set ablaze.

PROTOPOPOV
 Everything is put to the torch.
 The capital ignites into a fiery
 inferno.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE, MOSCOW — NIGHT (1812)

Napoleon flees his captured city. With his army in full retreat, legions of Cossacks charge his lines. Their attacks were no more than a cattle prod to keep the French herd moving into the dead of winter.

PROTOPOPOV
 Bonaparte and his legions were
 formally introduced to the Russian
 winter.

EXT. FROZEN TUNDRA — DAY (1812)

Frozen French troops.

PROTOPOPOV (V.O.)
 The Grand Army was decimated.

Baroness gets up and sits on the edge of Protopopov's armchair.

BARONESS
 That. I like.

Protopopov looks up. He sees a man dressed as Napoleon wander by.

PROTOPOPOV
 I fear. I am losing my mind, dear.

Baroness caresses him.

BARONESS
So. Madness and me, are old
friends.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — DAY (1916)

SANDRO
Yesterday, I reached out to Paul.

SERGE
I don't think I ever met Dmitri's
father.

SANDRO
His wife too died in child birth.
Delivering Dmitri.

SERGE
I didn't know that.

SANDRO
I know you understand Paul's pain,
more than anyone.

INT. GERMAN HIGH COMMAND — DAY (1916)

Outstretched map blankets table. A man hunches over it. His
troops stand on French soil.

KAISER
Paris. My great tormentor.

There is a knock at the door.

KAISER (CONT'D)
Enter.

The Kaiser's eyes never leave the map.

GENERAL PAUL VON HINDENBURG, the Kaiser's Chief of Staff
comes in, salutes, then he stands at attention.

VON HINDENBURG
Your Majesty. I have just received
the revised Russian terms.

The Kaiser walks from the table to a nearby window. The
window captures snow-peppered pines and a fine winter's
day.

KAISER

Let me guess. They want
Constantinople and the Balkan
Straits.

VON HINDENBURG

And, Poland.

KAISER

As expected.

HINDENBURG

Your Majesty, these terms are far
too favorable. Their citizens are
near rebellion.

KAISER

You forget who is financing this
so-called rebellion. No, by spring
our troops will be marching
through Paris. Not Moscow.

The Kaiser turns to face Von Hindenburg.

KAISER (CONT'D)

If Niki wants to liberate
Constantinople, so be it. The city
is irrelevant. We have wasted
enough men and time fighting the
Russians. We need our divisions in
the west, to make a break through.
This stalemate must end.

VON HINDENBURG

Before the Americans get a chance
to enter the war.

KAISER

With the Russians, out, France
will fall. It's a mathematical
certainty.

VON HINDENBURG

And while the Tsar's army masses
in the south...

KAISER

After Paris falls, we will turn
our backs and storm straight
through Russia.

VON HINDENBURG

Lunch in Paris.

KAISER
Dinner in St. Petersburg.

EXT. FINANCIAL DISTRICT — DAY (1916)

Burmin emerges from his apartment building. As he does, two men flank him on either side. Startled, he looks up. They were not his bodyguards.

JONES
It is a pleasant day for a drive,
Herr Burmin. Ja.

PETER
What is this?

JONES
They're not dead, yet.

ROBERT
It's you we want.

The agents escort Peter into a waiting car. Sir George is inside. As soon as the door closes, it moves.

PETER
Where to? The Heritage? The
Theatre?

SIR GEORGE
Shut-up, and listen.

PETER
Who do you think you are? I am a
Russian citizen, living in Peters...

SIR GEORGE
(eyes Jones)

Jones punches peter as hard as he could in the stomach.

Peter doubles over.

SIR GEORGE (CONT'D)
I'm afraid I have overstayed my
welcome here. I'm starting to pick
up bad habits.

PETER
You will pay for that.

SIR GEORGE
That's what we are here to talk
about. How much are the Germans
paying you? We will match it.

PETER
Scared?

SIR GEORGE
Name your price, and we shall
honor it.

PETER
Let me out. And I will think
about.

SIR GEORGE
You now work for us.

He bangs his cane on the floor. The car stops.

SIR GEORGE (CONT'D)
Or no one.

In one smooth action, Jones leaps out, and allows Peter his
freedom.

PETER
I appreciate the talk, Sir George.
I will think about your offer.

SIR GEORGE
Be thankful you still can.

PETER
A separate peace... what would be
the odds?

SIR GEORGE
I wouldn't bet on it.

PETER
Really? Why?

SIR GEORGE
Bad bet.

He signals his driver to leave.

As the British Ambassador's car pulls out into traffic,
Peter watches it travel down the Nevsky Prospect.

EXT. RURAL STATION - DAY (1916)

Chaos engulfs a sleepy railroad station as the Tsar's train prepares to depart.

The Tsar walks along the narrow platform dusted with snow. His trek is interrupted by an aide.

AIDE

Rasputin's death is the last thing we need.

TSAR

What disturbs me most is young Dmitri's apparent involvement. I can't understand what he was thinking.

AIDE

If he was involved, your daughter can never marry him.

Tsar steps aboard his train.

TSAR

We have bigger problems than finding Olga a suitable husband. I feel the fabric of the old world is being torn apart.

AIDE

Your Majesty, I fear, you are right.

INT. WAR MINISTRY - NIGHT (1916)

Platon's Office.

The general and Renko are in mid-conversation.

PLATON

Anything else?

RENKO

The French Ambassador paid a visit to Vladimir Palace today. They're acting like a court in waiting.

PLATON

Well, let us make certain that it is a long wait. Hmm, sounds like the word of the armistice is hitting the streets.

RENKO
And the British?

PLATON
If there is one certainty in international affairs, you can always count on the French and British to preserve their own interests.

RENKO
Sir George is getting bold. They picked up Burmin. Roughed him up.

PLATON
Hmm. They are desperate.

RENKO
Yes, is it wise to leave Burmin out there?

PLATON
No. Burmin's luck has run out.

RENKO
Very well.

INT. THE TSAR'S SALON CAR — NIGHT (1916)

Tsar brightens as he sees his son sprawled-out on the floor, playing with his toy soldiers.

ALEXEI
Bang! Take that, Kaiser.

TSAR
Are we winning or losing?

ALEXEI
Dad, we always win. For it is our duty.

TSAR
Oh, yes, I forgot.

Nicholas pats his son on the head.

TSAR (CONT'D)
We will be home soon.

INT. WAR MINISTRY — NIGHT (1916)

Platon works as Colonel Zurin walks in.

ZURIN
General Konstantin, you wished to
see me?

PLATON
Yes, take a seat.

ZURIN
(moves to the fire)
General, do you mind if I stand by
the fire? I walked here, and I
feel half frozen.

PLATON
You miss the jungle?

They served together in the Russo-Japanese War.

PLATON (CONT'D)
The heat. The humidity?

ZURIN
No. Not even on cold days like
this, sir.

PLATON
Me either.

Platon moves to join Zurin.

PLATON (CONT'D)
Us Russians, are not made for the
heat.

ZURIN
Our mission to Port Arthur.

PLATON
The conditions caused more
casualties than the enemy.
Speaking of which. What news do
you bring me on Vlad?

ZURIN
He is gathering support. More
troops are aligning with him.

PLATON
Are we making a mistake by not
arresting him?

ZURIN
I hope not.

Platon moves to the mantel.

PLATON
It's time for me to give you an
early Christmas present.

Platon removes the samurai sword from its holder.

PLATON (CONT'D)
For Faith. Honor. And Loyalty.
This sword is now yours.

ZURIN
Thank you, General. I shall
cherish it. As I cherish you.

PLATON
Da. Use it wisely.

INT. PROTOPOPOV'S APARTMENT — DAY (1916)

The phone rings. Protopopov answers it.

PROTOPOPOV
Da.

BORIS (O.S)
Her Majesty, wishes for immediate
update on Rasputin.

PROTOPOPOV
What more is there to say?

BORIS (O.S)
What should I tell the palace?

PROTOPOPOV
I shall report my findings in the
morning.

BORIS (O.S)
But, sir. The palace insists.

PROTOPOPOV
Good night, Boris. Get some sleep.

Protopopov hangs up the phone.

The Baroness appears in a sheer nightie.

BARONESS
Who was that?

PROTOPOPOV
No one.

BARONESS
Are you keeping something from me?

PROTOPOPOV
Are you?

The Baroness laughs.

BARONESS
What should I tell the Kaiser?

PROTOPOPOV
Everything is in order.

EXT. NO. 22 FONTANKA — NIGHT (1916)

As Olga's cab approaches her destination, she looks again at the piece of paper in her hands.

No. 22 is a shuttered townhouse, neglected by time.

CAB DRIVER
You certain it's No. 22, miss?

OLGA
That's what I was told.

At that moment, Serge appears by the street. He helps Olga out of the cab, and hands the driver some money.

SERGE
This was where I grew up. My father closed it after my mother's death.

OLGA
Too many memories, I suppose.

SERGE
I guess. It is a mere shadow of what it once was.

They enter the home. Within its foyer brilliantly colored stained glass covers the inner doors. The room is full of rich, warm candlelight and wide white roses cascading down to the floor.

OLGA
They're beautiful.
(bends over to smell one)
(MORE)

OLGA (CONT'D)
I haven't seen so many flowers
since the winter galas before the
war.

SERGE
Well, they are in appreciation of
last night.

Olga pauses, to looks down at a table filled with dusty
photographs. She picks up one of his mother, and a young
Nicholas before he became the Tsar.

OLGA
She was lovely.

SERGE
She was.

The prince walks to a large piano covered by a sheet.

SERGE (CONT'D)
Do you mind? For my mother.

Olga sits on the floor besides him.

Serge begins to plays. He is quite good.

OLGA
You play well.

Serge his hands traveled up and down the keyboard.

OLGA (CONT'D)
Play me something to dance to.

SERGE
Let's see. Oh, yes.

An enchanting melody sneaks into the room.

Olga rises, and begins to dance. She moves as graceful as
an angel dancing across a cloud.

As Serge plays, she continues to dance as if her feet were
fed by each delicious note. At this moment in time, no
other world exists, just music. Just dance.

INT. BURMIN'S APPARTMENT — NIGHT (1916)

A key, inserts itself into a lock.

Inside, Renko waits in the dark as Burmin enters with two
of Renko's agents.

BURMIN
Renko, what are you doing here?

RENKO
(to his men)
Leave us.

His agents do so.

BURMIN
What's going on? I thought we were
meeting tomorrow?

RENKO
Plans have changed.

BURMIN
The Tsar hasn't changed his mind?

RENKO
No. There will be a treaty.

BURMIN
Good. You scared me for a moment.

RENKO
Part of my nature. Grab your
things. You are no longer safe
here.

Burmin walks to his safe and opens it. He stuffs money in a
briefcase.

BURMIN
I wish I could see Sir George's
smug face when he learns...

Burmin notices Renko's raised revolver.

RENKO
Quite impossible.

Renko fires two shots into Peter's chest. The force throws
Peter hard against the wall. Then, he slides to the floor.

The agents outside come through the door with their
firearms in hand. They see Burmin dead on the floor. They
aren't surprised or sad.

OVENCHKIN
Colonel. You all right?

Renko walks over to where Peter lies. He grabs Burmin's bag
of money.

RENKO
Make certain no one ever finds
him.

Renko carries Burmin's briefcase as he wanders out the front door of Peter's apartment.

Across the street he notices Jones and two other men sitting in a parked car.

INT. SEDAN - SAME TIME (1916)

JONES
(to other agents)
Who's that?

ROBERT
(passenger seat)
Renko. He's a member of the Tsar's
secret police.

BRUCE
(backseat)
Damn, he knows we are here.

The agent pushes his hat over his face. Jones rolls down his window.

JONES
(speaks Russian with
subtitles)
Why is a member of His Majesty's
Secret Police protecting a known
German spy?

RENKO
(speaks in English)
Perhaps you have not noticed. This
is not London, Mr. Jones.
Petersburg is a cold place.
Especially for tourists.

He nods with hat.

RENKO (CONT'D)
Good day.

After Renko disappears around a corner.

BRUCE
(backseat)
Splendid. Renko handles all
General Konstantin's dirty work.
(MORE)

BRUCE (CONT'D)
If we see Burmin again, it would
be a bloody miracle.

INT. VLADIMIR'S PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Game room of fur and feathers. Early morning.

At the billiard table, Vlad stands amongst other uniformed men of different regimental colors. Their attention is focused on paper spread out on the billiard table. It is a detailed map of Tsarskoe Selo that includes a layout of the Alexander Palace.

Vlad laughs out as he slaps the back of one of his colonels dressed in all black.

VLAD
Soon, we strike.

FEDOROV
And demand the Tsar's abdication.

KOZLOV
And if Nicholas resists?

VLAD
He dies.

Zurin is at the map table amongst them. Platon's sword hangs from his belt.

ZURIN
Another obstacle is the empress.

VLAD
She will fall in line. Or die. It
makes no difference to me.

One of the commanders fetches a crystal decanter of brandy. Another secures some glasses. And a third distributes cigars from a box.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Our plan is flawless and in
motion. So, let's celebrate.

KOZLOV
We control all but one of the
garrisons.

ZURIN
The Cossacks will never turn.

VLAD
We shall see.

Vlad eyes Zurin's sword.

VLAD (CONT'D)
I admire your new sword. War
souvenir?

Zurin removes it from its sleeve and inspects it.

ZURIN
Yes. In remembrance of Port
Arthur.

VLAD
Another sad example of Niki's
mismanagement.

Zurin returns his sword to its sleeve.

INT. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR — NIGHT (1916)

Protopopov walks down a long corridor. The building is
deserted.

Out of nowhere, a large figure appears. Cloaked by a dark
shroud, the man runs ahead of him and disappears.

Protopopov removes a revolver from his jacket and rushes
after it. He searches his outer office, he finds no one.

With gun drawn, Protopopov slowly enters his office. When
he switches on the light, he sees the cloaked figure. He
sits behind his desk.

PROTOPOPOV
I am Protopopov! What right do you
have here?

RASPUTIN
All the right in the world.

A light on the desk switches on. Then, the figure removes
his hood. This reveals a bruised and battered face.

PROTOPOPOV
Rasputin.

The minister stumbles backwards.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
You're . . . dead.

RASPUTIN

Am I?

Rasputin turns off the desktop lamp, and disappears.

RASPUTIN (O.S)

You better hope so.

INT. VLADIMIR'S PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Zurin is halfway down a winding staircase, as he prepares to leave.

Vlad stands at the top of the steps.

VLAD

Colonel Zurin, may I have a word with you? I need your opinion on tonight's timetable.

Zurin eyes the front door. Though, he turns and climbs up the steps.

ZURIN

Certainly.

Vlad enters his study. Zurin follows him. A man locks the door behind him as he enters.

VLAD

Neither am I fond of surprises.
So, I need your input.

ZURIN

I am at your service.

Colonel Kozlov and another officer flank Zurin as he enters. Two others across the room have their pistols out and point at Zurin.

VLAD

I'm beginning to have my doubts.

Zurin reaches for his revolver.

Vlad's men fire off shots and a desk lamp explodes.

Zurin crouches and fires back at them as he dives behind a massive desk.

Both of Vlad's men fall to the floor.

Vlad liberates a deer rifle off the wall. He checks that it's fully loaded.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Come out, Zurin.

Zurin unsheathes his sword.

VLAD (CONT'D)
I have seen that sword before.

ZURIN
Well, you're going to see it soon
in use.

Vlad motions Kozlov to flank the desk, and rises his rifle.

Men bang on the locked door.

VLAD
I knew you would never betray
Platon.

As they inch closer towards the desk, Kozlov and Vlad let out a cry of surprise as the Zurin leaps onto the desk.

ZURIN
You want me. Come and get me.

Shotgun blasts door from the other side. Two soldiers charge into the room. They are greeted by gunfire.

Behind a chair, Kozlov fires a few rounds at the desk but Zurin is too quick.

Zurin jumps off the desk, fires his last shot at Kozlov, then tosses his emptied revolver at Vlad's head. He makes it to the door.

ZURIN (CONT'D)
Traitors!

VLAD
Don't let him get away!

AS Zurin flees, he runs into more men. He levels them with his sword.

Kozlov continues to fire from the second-story. The bullets come close to Zurin's head.

With bullets bouncing off the walls, Zurin crosses the foyer with one last man left in his path. It is Andrei.

ZURIN
Out of the way.

Zurin thinks about using his sword but resists.

Andrei slows Zurin down.

ZURIN (CONT'D)
What in the hell is going on?

From the second floor, Vlad levels his deer rifle. Squeezes the trigger. Click. Zurin's body slams hard into Andrei.

VLAD
That's a kill.

He lowers his weapon.

Zurin lands atop of Andrei. His blood is everywhere.

Andrei stares into Zurin's eyes.

ANDREI
It was not supposed to be like
this.

ZURIN
Traitor.

Andrei tries and fails to push Zurin's body off.

Vlad arrives. Kicks Zurin off his brother. Then, he grabs Zurin's sword.

VLAD
Did you honestly believe I would
not recognize Platon's sword?

Andrei checks for pulse.

ANDREI
He's dead.

Men of mixed uniforms surround Zurin's body.

FEDOROV
What are we do?

EXT. NO. 41 NEVSKY PROSPECT — DAY (1916)

Through the frosty windows we pan to the bed.

INT. DMITRI'S BED CHAMBER — DAY (1916)

There is movement outside his room.

DMITRI
Is someone there?

No one answers.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

Hmm.

He rolls over to go back to sleep.

PAUL

Get up.

A lamp ignites the room.

DIMITRI

Father!

PAUL

Get up, son. What have you done?

Paul drags Dmitri down the hall. They stop when they reach his mother's desk. The general digs into its drawers. Yanks out a black leather bound Bible.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Mother's Bible.

Dmitri stares at his mother's portrait on the wall.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Place your hand on her Bible.

Dmitri does.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Now swear. Swear that you are innocent.

DMITRI

I am innocent.

PAUL

On your honor?

DMITRI

Yes.

PAUL

Good.

He embraces his son.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I knew it couldn't be true, not my Dmitri.

DMITRI
You have been misinformed.

PAUL
I need to speak to the Emperor.

EXT. ROAD TO TSARSKOE — DAY (1916)

Platon's car slips along the snow-covered road.

PLATON
These roads are bad enough in the summertime.

Platon gets out and begins to walk down road. He sees a sea of white dusted fir trees. Above them, in the distance, is a tall thin cloud of smoke coming from his family's dacha.

PLATON (CONT'D)
So much for secrecy, Ernie.

EXT. DACHA — DAY (1916)

Dacha's front door swings open when Platon arrives. There stands the Duke of Hesse. The German face radiates hope and his eyes still gleam as a child.

ERNIE
Platon! You devil. It's been too long!

The German hurries down the steps, and embraces his dear friend.

PLATON
Welcome to St. Petersburg.

INT. PROTOPOPOV'S BEDROOM — DAY (1916)

Protopopov is in bed with the Baroness. She is under the sheets.

PROTOPOPOV
Yes. Don't stop.

A naked Baroness comes up.

BARONESS
You talk too much in bed.

PROTOPOPOV
Don't stop. Please.

Baroness returns underneath the sheets.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)

That's it. Yes. Yes. Yes. Ah. Yes.

Rasputin's face comes up from out of the sheets.

RASPUTIN

You like that.

PROTOPOPOV

Dear god!

Rasputin rests next to him in bed.

RASPUTIN

God wants nothing to do with you,
crazy man.

Protopopov starts mumbling incoherent words.

EXT. BLUE BRIDGE — DAY (1916)

Directly below the bridge, atop the ice, Renko shouts to the policemen who encircles the body.

RENKO

Back away, vultures! This is a
crime scene.

The police men do look like bundled-up vultures with cigarettes dripping from your beaks.

OVECHKIN

They are here. For souvenirs.

RENKO

Use the blankets to wrap him.

POLICE CAPTAIN

Renko, what would it hurt to have
a few pictures taken?

RENKO

Take all the pictures you want,
Captain. Five minutes. Then, I'm
leaving. And so is the corpse. It
appears the Siberian put up quite
a fight.

Rasputin's corpse is heavy bruised and bloody.

OVECHKIN

It's a homicide.

RENKO

Da.

As the police pick up and wrap the corpse, a freak wind catches the blanket, reveals Rasputin's torso and face. His face screams out a tale of agony worthy of a Greek tragedy.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE — DAY (1916)

The woods outside York Cottage. The sound from the hounds ravaging through the wetlands lessen as an old sailor, who looks identical to Tsar Nicholas, lays down his shotgun against the stump of a fallen tree. He needs a moment's rest to catch his breath.

STEVENS

Your Majesty, are you all right?

KING GEORGE

Yes, of course. It's just this damn hip of mine.

STEVENS

Would you prefer to return to the car?

KING GEORGE

Damn waste, but I can barely keep up.

The two began their journey back.

KING GEORGE (CONT'D)

Stevens, what do you think of this American note?

A little over a week ago, the British government had received a letter from the American president, Woodrow Wilson, regarding a possible conference to broker out peace between the warring nations. He had sent the same letter to all the countries engaged in battle. It received a lukewarm welcome in England.

STEVENS

He's living up to his campaign promises of keeping them out of the war.

KING GEORGE

German submarines are sinking our ships full of American goods, and he does nothing. Typical academic.

STEVENS

He's no fool. He will wait until a time of his own choosing to enter this war.

KING GEORGE

Yes. When the outcome is already decided. We have invested too much in this war.

As they reach their sedan parked in the clearing, General Wilcox of the War Ministry steps out of a car.

KING GEORGE (CONT'D)

General Wilcox.

STEVENS

You're late if you were planning on the hunt.

WILCOX

Perhaps not. Your Majesty, may I have a moment of your time, alone?

KING GEORGE

(hands Stevens his
shotgun)

What is it? My leg is killing me.

WILCOX

(hands the king a note)

My men intercepted this from Berlin this morning. It was sent to the German Embassy in Istanbul.

KING GEORGE (V.O)

(eyes Wilcox, reads)

German High Command. High importance. Before the first of January, we intend to sign a separate peace agreement with Russia.

KING GEORGE

Damn it. It's true.

WILCOX

Keep reading.

KING GEORGE (V.O.)

Despite this, it is our intention to stay loyal to our alliance on with the Sultan of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire.

(MORE)

KING GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We make war together and together
we shall make peace.

King George looks back up at Wilcox.

KING GEORGE
Those little double-crossers.

WILCOX
Poor Russia. I almost feel sorry
for them.

KING GEORGE
That's what happens when you make
a deal with the devil. Make
certain the Kaiser's greed is
known to my cousin Niki. Will you.

WILCOX
I shall. This information will be
in Sir George's hands as soon as
possible.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE GROUNDS — DAY (1916)

White tower in view of the palace.

Vlad stands atop a tall, whitewashed tower that overlooks
the palace. He has a somewhat imperfect view. Fog engulfs
much of the park though it spares the sight of the palace.

VLAD
Like a present wrapped up in paper
and bows.

KOZLOV
Power. The ideal gift.

At that moment, a motorcar races from the direction of the
Arsenal toward the palace. The car's speed alarms the men
surrounding Vlad.

FEDOROV
Who's that?

Vlad and the four men peer over the edge to get a better
view of the driver. The vehicle slams to a halt as a cloud
of exhaust and dirt engulfs the imperial guards that stand
before the palace's main entrance.

Grand Duke Paul, emerges from the car. He is the only
living brother of Nicholas's father, Tsar Alexander. They
all exhaled at once.

VLAD
 Poor old Paul, noble as ever,
 protecting his son's valor.

One of Vlad's men wears the unforgettable green uniforms of his majesty's Preobrazhenski Guards.

PREOBRAZHENSKI OFFICER
 I hate to see the grand duke get
 all worked up for nothing. Dmitri
 shall be freed by morning.

FEDOROV
 Indeed. There needs to be a place
 in the new order for young men
 like him, and Felix.

VLAD
 Releasing him from protective
 custody shall be my first official
 act.

His eyes look towards the Arsenal, an octagonal fortress housing the Tsar's personal collection of weaponry.

VLAD (CONT'D)
 Ten o'clock.

IN UNISON
 Ten o'clock. Mass at the Arsenal.
 Then, we move on the palace.

FEDOROV
 General. What of reinforcements
 from the north and south? The
 Horse Guards are quartered just
 beyond the palace.

VLAD
 Zurin is dead. They will do
 nothing.

FEDOROV
 Our flanks shall be exposed by
 regiments of the Horse guards and
 His Imperial

Majesty's personal Escort, the Cossacks. Both shall fight us to the death.

The officers grow silent at the mention of the Cossacks.

VLAD
Relax, Major Fedorov. I have
handled that matter personally.
They deserve a Christmas party.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE — DAY (1916)

At the palace's main entrance, Grand Duke Paul leaps from his motorcar like a man half his age. The two soldiers approach.

FIRST SOLDIER
Your Imp—

PAUL
Out of my way!

SECOND SOLDIER
Yes, sir!

Paul enters the palace.

The inner bodyguards patrol with rifles ready.

HOUSE GUARD CAPTAIN
Your Imperial Highness, we cannot
allow you into the palace without
a permit from Minister Protopopov.

Paul does not stop.

HOUSE GUARD CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
It's for Their Majesties'
security.

Paul keeps walking.

HOUSE GUARD CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Halt! General, those are our
orders!

Paul removes his service pistol.

PAUL
This is the only permit I have on
my person.

The other House Guards look towards their leader. They all lower their weapons.

Paul enters the empress's chamber.

EMPRESS
How did you get here?

Paul flamboyantly bows.

PAUL
Madame, truly your servants are
faithful, but a loaded revolver is
like a bewitching feminine beauty.
It has great powers of persuasion.

Tsar Nicholas sits smoking in a winged back chair in the
corner. Sees his uncle, and stands to greet him.

TSAR
If only my father were alive to
see this. He would have rolled
with laughter.

Nicholas hugs his uncle.

TSAR (CONT'D)
It is good to see you.

PAUL
Why was my son arrested?

TSAR
For his involvement in the
disappearance of our spiritual
advisor.

PAUL
Dmitri is innocent.

TSAR
How are you so sure?

PAUL
He is my son.

TSAR
I understand.

EMPRESS
Your hospitality to the elements
that are plotting against us
indicates ill of you.

PAUL
My father.

Paul points to Niki.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Your grandfather was assassinated
as he fought to improve Russia.

TSAR
He was a great reformer.

PAUL
Release my son. Please.

TSAR
Uncle, the investigation is not yet complete. For that reason alone, I am unable to grant your request.

Nicholas walks Paul out.

PAUL
But...?

TSAR
Dmitri will be accorded special considerations. Though, from initial reports, Dmitri was involved. The only question that remains is to what degree.

PAUL
Are you certain?

TSAR
I pray to God that Dmitri will be found innocent. I truly do.

Paul leaves.

As the door closes, the empress begins to say something.

TSAR (CONT'D)
Don't.

EMPRESS
What?

TSAR
I just broke a good man's heart.

INT. DMITRI'S PALACE - DAY (1916)

Sandro enters. He sees Felix at the top of the stairs.

SANDRO
Shouldn't you be at your own palace?

FELIX
Father. What a pleasant surprise.

SANDRO
Save your play-acting for my
daughter.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE - DAY (1916)

The Empress' bedchamber. She sits before her vanity. Alexei is behind her.

ALEXEI
Momma. Why are you crying?

EMPRESS
Oh, dear child. I did not know you
were there.

ALEXEI
I am.

EMPRESS
Sometimes I feel the entire royal
family is against us.

ALEXEI
Why?

EMPRESS
I don't know.

EXT. OLD SERVICE ROAD - DAY (1916)

Trees and shrubbery borders path leads to the Ruins, two towers, separates a long narrow stone bridge.

On horseback, Platon and Ernie ride. This is when they both notice that they are no longer alone.

From both flanks, riders approach. Their horses hit up the snow. A ghostly mist cloud escapes from the beasts' nostrils. They encircle them.

CAPTAIN OF GUARDS
Halt!

Platon and Ernie pull back their horse's reigns and stop.

PLATON
Where's Zurin?

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS
Never showed at the barracks.

PLATON

What?

INT. VETERANS HOSPITAL — DAY (1916)

At the morgue, NURSE SAKULINA stands before Rasputin's corpse, as it thaws.

His arms aim upward. She tries to move them down, but they are frozen. She takes a wet cloth and attempts to sponge his face. The blood is as thick as dried mud, and river debris engulfs in his unruly hair and beard.

NURSE SAKULINA

Who do they think they are? Gods?

A doctor comes in.

DOCTOR

In Russia, they are gods.

He examines the corpse.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

We are wasting our time. The body needs at least a day to thaw before the autopsy. Let's worry about the ones we can save.

The doctor leaves.

Protopopov fiddles with the tips of his moustache as he enters the room.

NURSE SAKULINA

I am sorry. No one is allowed back here.

PROTOPOPOV

I know. Leave us.

NURSE SAKULINA

But.

PROTOPOPOV

Leave us!

EXT. COSSACK'S BARRACKS — DAY (1916)

A caravan of truckloads stop before the gates of the Cossack's barracks.

COSSACK GUARD

Halt!

A man big fur coated man escapes from the lead truck. As he does he claps his hands. Big, bosom women roll out from the back of the truck. Along with musicians and men carrying cases of imperial vodka.

COSSACK GUARD (CONT'D)

What is all this?

FUR COATED MAN

Compliments, of His Majesty.

Two women fondle the Cossack guard. The fur coated man offers him his flask.

COSSACK GUARD

Raise the gate!

INT. SANDRO'S STUDY — NIGHT (1916)

Sandro enters his study. Serge is by the fire.

SERGE

I liberated a fine brandy from your cellar. Join me.

SANDRO

What is mine. Is yours, Serge.

Sandro rolls up a parchment document.

SANDRO (CONT'D)

Enjoy the brandy and your evening. Now I must go speak with the Tsar.

SERGE

He's back?

SANDRO

He arrived earlier today.

SERGE

I see. Can I come?

SANDRO

Of course, but bring the brandy. I may need it.

INT. ALEXANDER'S PALACE — DAY (1916)

Outside the mauve room, Their Majesties speak.

EMPRESS
They killed him.

TSAR
Did you love him?

EMPRESS
I did.

TSAR
Hmm.

EMPRESS
He saved our son. Everyone thought
Alexei would not survive the
night.

TSAR
The best doctors could do nothing
to ease his pain.

EMPRESS
Remember what Alexei asked us?

TSAR
Yes.

EMPRESS
What?

TSAR
When I'm dead. Will there be no
more pain?

EMPRESS
That night broke me. I love
Rasputin because he saved my son.
Nothing more.

TSAR
Gratitude.

EMPRESS
For over twenty years, I have been
a stranger here. A German. The
only love I found in this cold,
dreary place is yours, and the
family we made.

TSAR
I miss our quiet life.

EMPRESS
The war has robbed it from us. But
we shall steal it back.

INT. ALEXANDER'S PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Olga stares two from the second story window as Sandro and Serge arrives.

OLGA
What are they doing here?

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — SAME TIME

Sandro and Serge enter the foyer.

The Captain of the Guard approaches.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD
Grand Duke Alexander. Only those with permission from Protopopov may have an audience with Their Majesties this evening.

Sandro walks pass. Serge follows.

SANDRO
Save it. Tell, Niki we will be in the billiards room.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

The dining room is too quiet as the Tsar enters.

TSAR
Where are the children?

EMPRESS
They have already eaten.

The Tsar notices the table is set for three.

TSAR
Who's our mystery guest? My mother?

The Empress' brother appears. The Grand Duke of Hesse gives Their Majesties a formal bow.

ERNIE
Your Majesties. I am afraid you are going to have to settle for me tonight.

TSAR
Ernie, what in God's name, are you doing here?

ERNIE

I am on a diplomatic mission of incredible importance. The Kaiser offers you a separate peace.

TSAR

What?

EMPRESS

It is a way out of this mess. And we can return to our quiet life before the war.

TSAR

Terms?

ERNIE

All occupied land returns to Russia.

TSAR

Poland?

ERNIE

And the Balkans, are yours. The battle for Europe was never meant to concern you.

TSAR

And when does my cousin plan this armistice to take effect?

ERNIE

Christmas Day.

TSAR

Before the Americans can enter. Peace with us, frees up a million of your men.

ERNIE

True. Plus. This will give you a reprieve. Time to get your house in order.

TSAR

Your terms are generous. You shall have my answer in the morning.

Ernie rises and bows as he makes his exit.

EMPRESS

Dear.

TSAR
Who knows of this? Protopopov?!?

EMPRESS
No. Just General Konstantin. He
arranged everything.

TSAR
Konstantin? He is a man of honor.
He would never orchestrate a
separate peace, unless the order
came directly from me.

EMPRESS
I.

TSAR
Sunny. What have you done?

The Captain of the Guard enters. He whispers into the
Tsar's ear.

TSAR (CONT'D)
Ah. It's going to be one of those
nights.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

As Platon emerges from his staff car, he notices someone
moving to the far left of him, near the palace's west wing.
He follows him.

Platon gains on the cloaked figure who stops to light a
cigarette. As the match ignites Ernie's face. Platon
materialize from the fog.

PLATON
Enjoying your stay?

ERNIE
Platon?

PLATON
Have you met with the Tsar?

ERNIE
Yep. The separate peace was my
sister's idea. Not his.

PLATON
What? No. All documents have His
Majesty's signature.

ERNIE

Forged.

PLATON

Your sister has much to explain.

ERNIE

I know. It's horrible. But peace is still possible. The Kaiser's terms are genuine. I assure you. Reason with Niki. End this war.

EXT. TRACKS NORTH OF ALEXANDER PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

A conductor pulls a lever and applies the brakes to a southbound train. Plowing through the new fallen snow, it grinds to a halt just outside the town of Tsarskoe Selo.

Aboard the iron beast are two companies of Vlad's cavalry from the Preobrazhenski Regiment, His Majesty's Elite Guard.

As steam pours out from underneath the train, the doors of three cars swing open. Men jump out. Others lower wooden planks from the cars to the forest's floor.

Each man makes certain the planks are secure before calling out.

THE MEN

All clear!

From the darkened hollows soldiers on horseback thunders out into the night. Their mounts' frozen breath mixes with the fog and cold night air.

CAPTAIN OF THE GREEN GUARD

Men, to the tower! For tonight we ride.

INT. PLATON'S OFFICE — NIGHT (1916)

Ovechkin barges into Platon's outer office.

OVECHKIN

Where's General Konstantin?

SECRETARY

Out.

OVECHKIN

Renko?

Renko emerges from his office.

RENKO

What?

OVECHKIN

The Petersburg police just found
Colonel Zurin's body near the
embankment.

RENKO

Shit. When?

OVECHKIN

Half an hour ago.

RENKO

Call the palace at once. Tell the
Household Guards to be on high
alert.

The commotion draws other officers.

RENKO (CONT'D)

Alert the guards! I want Smirnov's
men ready to move in twenty
minutes!

Renko looks down at the secretary.

RENKO (CONT'D)

Have you reached the palace?

SECRETARY

I am being told, the line is being
checked?

They all look to one another. Then, to Renko.

RENKO

Contact the Pavlovski Palace. Ask
for General Dubrovsky. We need
him.

INT. DMITRI'S PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Dmitri and Felix sit in the parlor. Felix rises and stares
out the window.

DMITRI

Why do you keep looking outside?

FELIX
No reason.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Within the billiards room, Sandro and Serge play a game.

Serge stands with a stick in his hands and watches Sandro make a trick shot.

Ernie walks into the room.

ERNIE
Nice shot, Sandro. Care to play
for money.

Sandro looks up from the table.

SANDRO
Ernie. What the hell are you doing
here?

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — SAME TIME

With Nicholas's study, Sir George meets with the Tsar.

SIR GEORGE
Your Majesty, thank you for seeing
at such short notice.

TSAR
Did I have a choice?

SIR GEORGE
There is always a choice.

TSAR
Hmm. Go on.

SIR GEORGE
If I may be permitted to say so,
you have but one safe course open,
namely, to break down the barrier
that separates you from your
people and to regain their
confidence.

TSAR
Do you mean that I am to regain
the confidence of my people, or
that they are to regain my
confidence?

SIR GEORGE

Your Majesty, I call your attention to the attempts being made by the Germans not only to create dissension between the allies, but to estrange you from your people. Their agents are everywhere at work. Advising Your Majesty as to the choice of ministers. They are indirectly influencing the empress through her entourage, with the result that, instead of being loved as she ought to be, Her Majesty is discredited and is accused of working in German interests.

TSAR

While addressing my wife, tread most softly. Your blood wouldn't be the first foreign blood spilled upon these marble floors.

SIR GEORGE

My apologies. My boldness is because of my feelings of devotion for Your Majesty and the Empress. If I were to see a friend walking through the woods on a dark night along a path which I knew ended in a precipice, would it not be my duty, sir, to warn Your Majesty of the abyss that lay ahead of you? You have, sir, come to the parting of the ways. One path will lead you to victory and a glorious peace, the other to revolution and disaster. Let me implore Your Majesty to choose the former.

TSAR

Hmm. I choose my ministers myself and do not allow anyone to influence my choice.

SIR GEORGE

There is, for example, Protopopov, who, if Your Majesty will forgive my saying, is bringing Russia to the verge of ruin. So long as he remains Minister of the Interior there cannot be that collaboration between the government and the Duma that is essential for victory.

TSAR

I chose Protopopov from the very ranks of the Duma to be agreeable to them. And this is my reward!

PROTOPOPOV

But, sir, the Duma can hardly place confidence in a man who has betrayed his honor for office and who is suspected of working for an armistice based on Germany's evacuation of Poland and Russia's acquisition of Constantinople.

TSAR

No such offer would carry any weight.

SIR GEORGE

Your Majesty, England only wants to protect her current allies. You may be interested in this.

The ambassador tosses the Zimmerman telegraph on his desk.

TSAR

My, Sir George, aren't you growing desperate?

The Tsar picks up the paper and reads it quickly. He knows it is genuine.

SIR GEORGE

Your Majesty, if you want peace, you must stay with us.

TSAR

How did you get this?

SIR GEORGE

Does it matter?

Nicholas brushes his beard with the back of his hand. Everyone had lied to him, today.

SIR GEORGE (CONT'D)

Your Majesty must realize that in the event of revolution, only a small portion of the army can be counted on to defend the dynasty.

TSAR

Tell my cousin, us Russians will still be killing Germans come spring.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — SAME TIME

In the anteroom, as Sandro waits in the vestibule for Niki besides Platon, and Serge.

Sir George smirks as he pops out of Nicholas' study.

SANDRO

All Sir George needs is an umbrella to complete the stereotype.

PLATON

Sir George. What are you doing here?

SIR GEORGE

I was just having a word with the Tsar. He assures me that the Russian Army remains firm and faithful. I assume that includes his generals.

Sandro holds a scroll and a tiny wrapped box under his arm.

PLATON

Your government could care less who's in charge, long as they fight the Germans.

SIR GEORGE

True.

PLATON

Tsar Alexander would have thrown an ambassador of your species out of Russia without even the ceremony of handing you back your credentials.

SIR GEORGE

Too bad he is not here today. He was not one to back down from a fight.

SANDRO

We will see, Ambassador. Perhaps our troops should not stop at Berlin?

SIR GEORGE

First you must get there.

TSAR
Gentlemen, gentlemen. I'm getting
too old to separate fights.

The Ambassador places on his black brim hat.

SIR GEORGE
Good night.

TSAR
We say, spokoynoy nochi.

They watch Sir George's exit.

TSAR (CONT'D)
Platon, you have never forgiven
them for Manchuria, have you?

PLATON
Never.

TSAR
Me either.

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG STATION — SAME TIME

At Petersburg station, Renko attempts to contact the
palace.

RENKO
Yes. Yes. The line is being
checked. I will be at the exchange
in twenty minutes. To check,
myself.

The line goes dead.

RENKO (CONT'D)
We have no communication with the
palace!

SMIRNOV
We've to assume the palace is
surrounded.

RENKO
Tell the conductor we are leaving
now!

SMIRNOV
Colonel, we need a few more
minutes to board all the men.

RENKO

No. We are leaving now. They will need to walk.

SMIRNOV

Move! Move! Get this thing moving!

With the release of the brakes, the train chugs ahead. Soldiers scramble aboard, abandoning some of their equipment. Others run to catch it.

The last one to board is Colonel Renko. The train hurries down the tracks and quickly is consumed in a syrupy fog.

RENKO

I pray we are not too late.

EXT. TRACKS TO TSARSKOE — SAME TIME

Renko's train comes to a screeching halt. Men fell upon each other. The colonel gets up and moves toward the engine.

RENKO

What is it?

ENGINEER

There's an unscheduled train blocking the tracks.

RENKO

What would happen if we just rammed it?

ENGINEER

Ram, it? I'm paid to avoid such situations.

RENKO

Every second counts.

ENGINEER

Well, technically, we could attach ourselves to it and push it back to Tsarskoe. We have sufficient power.

RENKO

Then make it so.

ENGINEER

Just one problem, Colonel. If we ram it and the brakes are locked, it would derail us. It would be like us trying to plow through a brick wall if we were riding a bike.

RENKO

Then we are going to have to make certain the brakes are no longer applied. Get as close as you can.

Renko returns to the coach car.

RENKO (CONT'D)

Men, terrorists have blocked our path to Tsarskoe. They stand between our worthy sovereign and us. Show no mercy!

TROOPS

Yes, sir! Faith, Honor, and Loyalty!

As their train slows, Renko sees the blocking train is deserted.

RENKO

We're too late.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Sandro enters the Tsar's private study as a giant Cossack shadows him.

Tsar walks behind his desk, notices the scroll and packages.

TSAR

A little early to exchange presents.

Nicholas motions his brother-in-law to take a seat.

Sandro gives a formal bow. Sandro's formality surprises the Tsar.

SANDRO

Your Majesty, I prefer to stand.

TSAR

As you wish. It appears I have been at the front too long.

SANDRO

I too, Your Majesty. We are going through the most dangerous moment in the history of Russia. The question is, shall Russia be a great state, free and capable of developing and growing strong, or shall she submit to the iron German fist?

TSAR

Sandro, please.

SANDRO

Everyone feels this, and this is the reason everyone, except for the cowards and the enemies of this country, offers up their lives and all their possessions.

The Tsar sits back.

SANDRO (CONT'D)

And at this solemn time, when we are being tested as men, in the highest sense—as Christians—certain forces within Russia are leading you, and, consequently, Russia, to inevitable ruin. I say you and Russia, because Russia cannot exist without a Tsar, but the Tsar alone cannot govern a country like Russia. It is indispensable that the ministries and the legislative chambers work together. The existing situation, with the whole responsibility resting on you and you alone, is untenable.

TSAR

(listens)

SANDRO

Disaffection is spreading very fast and the gulf between you and your people is growing wider. They need assurances.

TSAR

We all need assurance, Sandro. A man is dead. You dare come here to lecture me on mortality!

SANDRO

Niki, our problem is bigger than my son-in-law's involvement in Rasputin's death. And if you want to talk about murder, what about the millions of young men who shall never return from the front? Uh?

TSAR

I think about those boys every waking moment. Inspecting a line one day, and the next, it is half the damn size. And me on my white charger. Polished and clean. Their young faces radiating hate, because they know they are next.

SANDRO

Admittedly, you have a difficult job, Your Grace.

TSAR

Made more difficult by my own family.

SANDRO

Now is the time. You must take the initiative and grant your people a constitution.

TSAR

A constitution, in due time.

SANDRO

You have no time left. A dishonorable escape from the war will not save you. Too much has already been lost to just walk away.

TSAR

Opinions. Opinions. Opinions. I am always surrounded by them.

SANDRO

Please, I beg of you.

TSAR

Sandro, Tolstoy once shared with me. The land is God's. It should not and cannot belong to anyone.

(MORE)

TSAR (CONT'D)

All people have an equal right to it and the only concern is how to distribute it. ... Ahh... he wrote such wonderful hate letters.

SANDRO

There is still time.

TSAR

And destroy three hundred years of Romanov rule with a stroke of a pen?

SANDRO

Not destroy. Save. You could give the country what she wants. A ministry of confidence. If you were to do that, the Duma would become your ally, and this war would be won.

TSAR

And what then would become of me?

SANDRO

You would die old and full of days. You would be Nicholas the Liberator, the Tsar who gave Russia her true freedom.

TSAR

Freedom? I am not so certain.

SANDRO

Niki, long ago you asked me for help. Do you remember?

TSAR

When my father died. I told you that I was not ready to be a Tsar.

SANDRO

Over twenty years have passed since that moment. This evening, you can lead Russia forward or return to the past. The decision is yours alone. Here. I brought you two Christmas presents.

(lays flat the constitution prepared for Alexander II before his assassination)

Your grandfather was to sign this.

(MORE)

SANDRO (CONT'D)
This brings new hope to Russia and
liberates an empire.

TSAR
(eyes the document)

SANDRO
(unwraps a tiny cup of
gold and blue, holds in
in his hand)
This reminds us of the errors of
our past.

The Tsar instantly recognizes the coronation cups given out
to the masses in Moscow before the great stampede.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
(sets the cup on the
Tsar's desk)
We must not go back.

The Tsar knocks the cup off his desk with the back of his
hand. It smashes.

SANDRO (CONT'D)
Niki, you have an inner strength
your father never possessed. Trust
your subjects, and offer them
their freedom based on the model
written down here, a
constitutional monarchy.

TSAR
(stands)
Sandro, I am the Tsar, the
autocrat, and I am in full
control!

Before the duke could respond, the lights flicker. Then go
immediately out. From the dark, the duke snickers.

SANDRO
You were saying, Your Majesty?

TSAR
Do shut up.

EXT. VETERANS HOSPITAL'S ROOFTOP — SAME TIME

The hospital borders palace grounds. And the rooftop has a
splendid vantage point.

PROTOPOPOV
Soon, it would be over.

In the distance, through the lifting fog, the palace lights flicker and go, out. Where the palace should be all he saw now was darkness.

Rasputin appears.

PROTOPOPOV (CONT'D)
You're not real.

RASPUTIN
Just because my body lays three floors below. Doesn't mean that I no longer exist.

PROTOPOPOV
I prefer the baroness, if it's not a bother.

RASPUTIN
As you wish.

Rasputin transforms into the Baroness in a fur coat.

PROTOPOPOV
Ah. Much better.

BARONESS
Miss me?

Protopopov nods. He now knows his mind is lost.

EXT. ARSENAL — SAME TIME

Vlad sits high on his mount as he sees thousands of handheld torches ignite the horseback regiments.

Vlad looks down at his pocket watch. One by one, the lights leading to the palace extinguish.

VLAD
Right, on time.

Vlad's horse paces before his men.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Tonight, we fight so tomorrow
Imperial Russia shall not die!

His removes their sabers from their sheaths, and cheer.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Let us seize what is ours. Glory!

Vlad spurs his heels into his horse and rides off.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — SAME TIME

Study door flies open. In comes lantern light, along with Platon, Ernie, soldiers carrying gas lamps.

CHEKHOV
Your Majesty, are you all right?

TSAR
What has happened?

CHEKHOV
The power has been cut and there are reports of enemy forces within the palace gates.

PLATON
It's Vlad. Captain, have your men bar all the doors.

The general removes a shotgun from a nearby cabinet.

PLATON (CONT'D)
If they want us, they've to come and get us.

SANDRO
We have no idea what's out there.

Platon loads his shotgun.

PLATON
It's most likely a small number from the Preobrazhenski Regiment mixed with Vlad's own men. The Cossacks shall soon wipe them out.

Then another officer of the Guard entered the room. He nervously reports.

GUARDSMAN
I have sent riders to the Cossacks' barracks, but no one has yet returned.

SANDRO
Anything else?

GUARDSMAN

Yes. Their lights are still on.

Platon looks at Serge.

PLATON

Go.

Serge snaps to attention.

SERGE

Yes, father.

Serge leaves. Like a closing fist, silence chokes the room.

TSAR

Well, then. If they want a fight,
then that is what they're going to
get.

Nicholas removes a revolver from his desk, then checks to
make certain it is loaded.

TSAR (CONT'D)

Captain, get my horse!

Sandro and Platon look at one another. Perhaps there was a
little bit of his father in Nicholas after all.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE GROUNDS — SAME TIME

Serge rides like hell to the Cossack's barracks. As he
slices across a field three riders approach with sabers in
hand.

Serge un-sleeves his saber and spurs his horse.

SERGE

Ah!

One by one, stroke by stroke, Serge levels Vlad's horsemen.

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE — SAME TIME

The study.

SANDRO

Your Grace, we respect your
bravery, but we mustn't jeopardize
the regime. And you are the
regime.

The Tsar fastens his sword.

TSAR

Sandro. For two and a half years I have been forced to watch as too many of my subjects perished. Not tonight.

Another officer marches into the study, surrounded by sentries.

OFFICER

Your Majesty, there is a great force north of us near the old Arsenal. I saw them with my own eyes less than five minutes ago.

PLATON

How large?

OFFICER

One, perhaps two, regiments. All on horseback.

SANDRO

Two thousand men, within the palace grounds? How?

EXT. WOODS NEAR COSSACK BARRACKS — SAME TIME

Serge dismounts his horse. His tunic is covered in blood.

SERGE

Take me to your commander at once.

INT. WOOD-FRAMED BARRACKS — NIGHT

Through a cloud of gritty smoke, circle-dancers move and clap as gypsies sing and musicians play their instruments to a feverish beat. Awaits Serge as the front door swings open to the barracks of His Majesty's Personal Guard, The Cossacks.

Folk dancers' flamboyant kicks cease and the music and noise dies out as they all turned to look at Serge and his blood-covered tunic.

Serge snakes through the crowd. Some tall bald men cling on to big bosom women.

SERGE

Captain, the palace is under siege.

COSSACK CAPTAIN
What do you mean? Under siege, by whom?

SERGE
Look.

The captain moves to a window. Darkness is where the palace lights should be.

COSSACK CAPTAIN
What's going on?

SERGE
That's why I'm here. The Tsar is in danger.

COSSACK CAPTAIN
(to an aide)
Call!

AIDE
(grabs the phone, does so)
The line is dead.

COSSACK CAPTAIN
Prepare the horses!

Another soldier brings him his jacket and hat.

SERGE
Captain, General Vladimir is attempting to storm the palace and take control. He may already have two or three regiments in the woods northwest of the palace.

COSSACK CAPTAIN
They shall all be dead by morning.

More men pour out of the Cossack barracks.

COSSACK CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Guards and brothers! The Great Don life's is in jeopardy. Ride!

Cossack Captain climbs up on his mount, Serge does the same.

COSSACK CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Tonight, we will drink glory or death! Annihilate, all who stand between us and our Tsar!

INT. ALEXANDER PALACE - SAME TIME

As the Tsar exits, Olga wanders down the stairs.

OLGA
Father. Are you leaving?

TSAR
Olga, get your brother and sisters
and join your mother in the
cellar.

OLGA
Why?

TSAR
Commander. You are now in charge
of my family's safety.

Commander grabs Olga's hand.

COMMANDER
We must hurry.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE - SAME TIME

The Tsar walks out of the house through the colonnade, and
down the steps.

PLATON
What of the east?

TSAR
Vlad is no fool. All roads out are
guarded. He knows that if I escape
his trap, he is dead.

Through the fog, the sound of a large mass moves.

PLATON
They are coming.

They all mount their horses.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - SAME TIME

From his vantage point from a hilltop high above the
palace, all looked in order. The combined ranks of
Vladimir's Regiment and the Preobrazhenski Guards should
already be mounted. In twenty minutes, the palace would be
theirs.

Major Fedorov smokes a cigarette to calm his nerves.

SECOND IN COMMAND
The fog is beginning to lift.

MAJOR FEDOROV
Ensures our battery a splendid
view of the field. By tomorrow, he
will both be generals.

Fedorov walks in front of his big guns. They all point
towards the woods.

Something is cutting through them.

MAJOR FEDOROV (CONT'D)
Commander?

SECOND IN COMMAND
I heard it too.

From the woods emerges a sick howl.

Fedorov's men stare at one another.

The dark refuge hints at nothing but the swelling noise of
men on horseback traveling fast through the undergrowth.

Below and across the frozen marsh, another cry comes from
the woods, this one closer.

MAJOR FEDOROV
Align guns. Prepare a volley.

SECOND IN COMMAND
Yes, sir.

MAJOR FEDOROV
Don Cossacks. Our guns will make
short order of them. See to it.

The Cossacks explode through the woods at full gallop. Like
black ants fleeing a trampled anthill, they emerge from the
dark woods and devour the white meadow. It is a ghostly
image made real when the riders scream out their fiery
rallying cry:

To the death!

The cannons boom down the line one by one, each puffy cloud
obscures the Fedorov's view a wee bit more.

MAJOR FEDOROV (CONT'D)
Fire at will!

The artillery sails over the Cossacks' heads and land in
the woods behind them. Timber explodes, causes a glorious

fire show. The Cossacks, unaffected from the first few rounds of volley, press on.

The next salvos are better aimed by Fedorov's men. This time, several horseback riders fall.

With precision, the Cossacks separate into two groups. One rides in the direction of the palace, and the other head directly uphill, undaunted, towards Fedorov's battery of guns. As the Cossacks charge, they lower their lances.

MAJOR FEDOROV (CONT'D)
Steady, men, steady.

Some of his men begin to turn and run.

MAJOR FEDOROV (CONT'D)
Fire at will! Vlad, I told you we
needed machine guns.

As his men scattered down the hill, Fedorov runs for his horse. Turns back, sees the hilltop littered with men.

From their horses, the Cossacks with their long sabers chop at anything that moves.

One Cossack lines-up Fedorov with his lance and rides straight toward him.

Fedorov feebly fires of one shot and misses.

FEDOROV
Damn you, Coss, ugh!

A Cossack's lance pierces through his lungs.

EXT. GROUNDS SOUTH OF THE ARSENAL — SAME TIME

Vlad's men stop, as the cannon fire ceases. They all know the Cossacks are coming.

KOZLOV
General, our flank is exposed.

VLAD
Move forward!
(prods)
Come on! Move. Our prize lies just
ahead of us.

EXT. THE FIELD — NIGHT (1916)

Serge eyes one another in silent thought.

SERGE

How did we get here?

They had been under fire since breaking the tree line. As they pause to collect themselves, they see the lancers closing in on the heavy guns. At that moment, the field in front of them explodes into a dark murky cloud.

Serge braces himself for the worst, but as he rides through the falling snow and dirt, he sees the captain's horse.

COSSACK CAPTAIN

Hell, of a night! You okay?

SERGE

Never better!

He tightens his reins.

SERGE (CONT'D)

Tally-ho!

Serge "tally" is much more convincing than his "ho," for as he reaches the hill's crest, he witnesses the size and strength of the enemy.

SERGE (CONT'D)

Oh, my god.

Vlad's army is in motion, two thousand strong. Elite soldiers, all on horseback appear invincible.

Nonetheless, the Cossack Captain wastes no time. Like a moth to a hot flame, he leads his four hundred men straight toward them.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE — SAME TIME

Vlad, within his Army, looks over his shoulder and sees cavalry approaching.

VLAD

Cossacks.

KOZLOV

General, would you like me to lead a charge?

VLAD
Why bother? There numbers are
small. We must hurry!

The palace gets closer. Then Vlad notices a small squadron
of men riding toward him.

KOZLOV
(sees them too)
Palace guards. Not a threat.

VLAD
Kill them all.

The fog is gone now, and the night has become crystal
clear. Now, the only uncertainty that lies before them is
the outcome.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE — SAME TIME

The Tsar and his small entourage charges towards Vlad's
men.

Platon with a shotgun still in his hand, shouts to Sandro.

PLATON
Just like out times, ay, Sandro?

Sandro smiles and rises his revolver. Then, he sees the
Tsar's white charger. The animal bolts ahead of the pack.

SANDRO
No!

VLAD'S POV.

As the distance closes, Vlad realizes it is no ordinary
squad approaches. It is the Tsar himself. He rushes to
intercept.

KOZLOV
General, I believe...

VLAD
He approaches. Your orders are the
same. Form a line. Finish him!

THE CONVERGENCE.

Vlad's men are within a hundred yards when the Tsar brings
his horse to a halt. His Majesty's Life Guard slow down
their horses and moves to surround him.

The Tsar's bodyguard, Chekhov, urges his horse closer to

the sovereign, holds his saber in his hand as he eyes the traitors.

Vlad and Kozlov arrive shortly before the Cossacks, are dumbfounded by this odd sight. All, lower their lances and reach for their sabers.

Sandro and Platon both reach Nicholas and his bodyguard.

Friends and foe encircles the remaining palace guards. As the Tsar speaks as his steed snorts, causes an eerie cloud of vapor. He looks magnificent on top of his mount.

TSAR

I say, what fool brought you all
out on a night like this?

Troops from both sides snicker.

TSAR (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, I am before you. What
is it you wish to declare to your
Tsar?

Only silence greets him.

TSAR (CONT'D)

Come now. Before we all freeze to
death. Ask me anything.

Vlad arrives. His horse closer to the Tsar's mount. Then the Cossacks arrive. They stop as they see the Tsar signals them.

VLAD

Abdicate. Or die!

Platon rises his shotgun to Vlad's head.

TSAR

General Konstantin, please lower
your gun.

Platon reluctantly obeys.

TSAR (CONT'D)

Don Cossacks, please lower your
weapons. You too, Chekhov.

VLAD

You don't understand, Niki. You
are no longer giving the orders.

TSAR

Really? Is that true, my brave men? Am I no longer worthy of your trust?

VLAD'S MAN

Your Majesty. The war has turned the world upside down. Grand Duke Vladimir is a better choice for restoring our ranks to proper order.

TSAR

I see.

VLAD

Niki, you have two choices. Abdicate or die. Your decision.

The ground begins to shake as four thousand regimental riders approach. They all look to the south, where the combined regiments of the Horse Guards and the Dragoons from Pavlovski Palace emerge.

TSAR

There appears to one more choice not yet mentioned.

The Tsar unsheathes his sword.

TSAR (CONT'D)

For you to die!

VLAD

So be it.

He frees his own sword and moves toward the Tsar.

Platon raises his shotgun again and fires. Boom! Kozlov places his mount before Vlad's. The blast decapitates him in a red cloud of blood.

The Cossacks gives out another war cry. They swing their sabers to reach their Tsar.

Vlad sees a headless Kozlov still in his mount, an enormous cavalry charge approaching from the south, and his thinning army scatters like thieves into the nearby woods.

PLATON

It's over, Vlad. Surrender.

Platon tosses down his empty shotgun, and grabs his saber.

PLATON (CONT'D)
You must realize it by now.

VLAD
I have lost a battle, but not the war.

Vlad charges Platon.

VLAD (CONT'D)
By tomorrow, I will have another army under me!

PLATON
By tomorrow you will be dead!

Platon's saber falls upon Vlad's sword.

Vlad's retaliates. Blows crash down on Konstantin. Platon is barely able to protect himself.

Sandro, from a distance, aims his pistol at Vlad as he attacks Platon. Through luck or misfortune, Vlad turns just in the nick of time. The bullet grazes his shoulder.

That is when Serge first sees his father from the other end of the field engaged with Vlad.

Platon has trouble holding up his saber.

Vlad swings his sword down hard.

The dragoons start to arrive.

VLAD
Give up, old man. Do you want me to kill you?

PLATON
You're surrounded.

VLAD
Enough!

Vlad sword crashes down upon Platon. Cuts into him again and again. Platon falls from his horse.

Serge sees his father fall. He gallops toward him.

SERGE
No!

VLAD
It should not have ended like this.

Vlad gallops off.

SERGE
(reins in horse)
Father!

He quickly dismounts, as he reaches his father. He is dying.

PLATON
Go get him.

Sandro arrives.

SANDRO
Finish him.

Serge mounts his horse. He brings his saber's blade to his face, to salute his father, then rides off.

From across the frozen meadow, Vlad's large horse moves towards the protection of the nearby woods, and the Ruins.

Nicholas arrives and sees the fallen Platon. He dismounts.

TSAR
How is he?

Sandro tunic is covered with the general's blood states the obvious.

SANDRO
He's going to die.

The Tsar moves closer and cradles his general's head. Tears fill his eyes.

TSAR
Platon. Please believe me, I
didn't know.

Sandro mounts his horse and gallops toward the Ruins.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE GROUNDS — SAME TIME

Vlad rides to the Ruins, at full gallop he eludes crazed Cossacks.

VLAD
We need more men.

Cries of pain and death fill the night. He looks down at his sword.

VLAD (CONT'D)
Konstantin deserved a better end.

Vlad regroups with a few of his men.

VLAD'S MAN
The battle is not over yet,
General. Our men can still fight
on.

VLAD
I wish that fog would return.

He and the others are chased by a small group of Cossacks.
The Cossacks close in on them.

PREOBRAZHENSKI OFFICER
General, we must split up if we
are to have any chance of
surviving.

VLAD
Good luck, son.

Vlad's man turns his horse.

PREOBRAZHENSKI OFFICER
I will try to buy you some time,
general. See you in hell!

VLAD
Save me a seat, son.

When Vlad reaches the security of the trees.

PREOBRAZHENSKI OFFICER (O.S.)
Long live Tsar Vladimir! Long live
Russia!

Then he hears a horse in the woods above him near the
ridge. He hurries down the hill, but his horse stumbles and
throws him. The animal runs off.

EXT. THE RUINS — SAME TIME

Vlad grabs his revolver and sword. He walks out of the
woods into the brightness of the moonlight. Nearby are the
Ruins, an old fort made up of two towers connected by an
arched bridge.

He's purser slices through the woods.

VLAD
 Let's finish it. Give me your
 horse. I will make certain you
 live.

Serge comes into the light.

SERGE
 As far as I am concerned, we are
 both already dead.

PLATON
 You want me, boy. Then come and
 get me.

SERGE
 You killed my father.

Serge leaps from his horse and unsheathed his sword.

SERGE (CONT'D)
 And now I am going to kill you.

VLAD
 (tests his new sword)
 Do what you must, Serge. I need a
 horse. And yours will do.

SERGE
 Here she is... your freedom. Now,
 all you must do is get past me.

Vlad raises his sword in a salute.

VLAD
 Your last chance, Serge. Join me
 or die.

SERGE
 (strikes his first blow)
 Never!

EXT. THE RUINS — SAME TIME

From the distance, their silhouettes dance across the
 slivery moon. It is a timeless struggle of pain and pride.

Back and forth, creeping over the bridge, the two men
 exchanges blow after blow. It appears to be a stalemate.
 Vlad is twice as big, but Serge is fierce and fighting for
 revenge.

VLAD
 You're quite a swordsman.

Serge replies with one more powerful blow, one that lands clean and draws blood.

VLAD (CONT'D)

Ahh.

Vlad brings his sword up one last time and salutes the younger man.

VLAD (CONT'D)

The day is yours. But I am afraid
your horse is mine.

Serge rushes at him.

SERGE

Not quite.

VLAD

Quite.

Vlad raises his revolver, pulls the trigger. He aims low, at Serge's leg. The bullet sends Serge off the bridge. He falls hard. but he does not scream. He is too mad to scream.

VLAD (CONT'D)

(from above, looks down)

You, my boy, are worthy of the
Konstantin name. Remember that.

(runs to Serge's horse)

You're a good fighter. But
sometimes that is not enough.

SERGE

(holds his leg)

You can't escape, Vlad! Now, you
can never escape.

VLAD

(mounts)

We will see. I am certain our
paths shall cross again.

Just then, like some medieval knight, Sandro emerges from the tree line. He holds a lance, raises it. Charges directly at Vlad.

SANDRO

Traitor!

VLAD

(raises sword)

Long live Russia!

Sandro lance finds its mark. Vlad falls in one pass. Then, Sandro jumps off his horse to reach Serge.

SANDRO
You okay?

SERGE
(gets up)
Let's finish this.

They return to the spot where Vlad fell off his horse, Serge half-expects Vlad's body to be gone. But it isn't.

Vlad is near death.

Serge grabs his father's sword.

SANDRO
You came close, Vlad. But Nicholas is Tsar.

VLAD
Not for long.

Vlad spits blood.

VLAD (CONT'D)
If I die, so does Imperial Russia.

SANDRO
We will take our chances.

Vlad grows still.

EXT. ALEXANDER PALACE — NIGHT (1916)

Sandro and Serge dismount beneath the colonnade aglow in torchlight.

Serge sees the Tsar. His tunic is covered in blood.

SERGE
Father?

TSAR
He's gone, son. I'm sorry. He passed away in my arms five minutes ago.

SANDRO
Died, fighting for us.

Behind them, thousands of men with torches search for Vladimir's remaining men. Those hidden in the woods are

doomed. There would be no mercy for them tonight. Bursts of gunfire and cries of pain are muffled by the passing wind.

TSAR

Let's go in.

As His Majesty enters the palace, the others string in behind. Then, in the backdrop, the lights that line the palace's long driveway come on, one by one.

A GUARD

We have power.

SANDRO

Yes, but for how long?

EXT. CEMETERY OF THE LADY OF KAZAN — DAY (1916)

The Cathedral looms in the background, as a bandaged-up Serge peers down upon his father's casket.

An imperial flag drapes it. Then, his attention is drawn to the large concrete vault that bears his family's name, KONSTANTIN.

As the old Orthodox priest continues his prayer, Serge's eyes move to Sandro.

Grand Duke Alexander manages to give Serge a half-hearted smile as the clergyman concludes with words from the book of Isaiah.

ORTHODOX PRIEST

Though your sins are like scarlet,
I will make them white as snow,
though as red as crimson, I will
make them as white as wool. Oh,
Lord, receive this righteous
soldier back into your glorious
fold. Amen.

One by one, Serge watches the people depart. Olga approaches him.

OLGA

It is a shame my father could not
be here... But Rasputin's burial is
today.

In some way, it makes sense to Serge that the Tsar had made this decision. He looks out into the park-like setting filled with snow-covered gravestones.

OLGA (CONT'D)
Your father now rests beside his
beloved.

SERGE
Somehow, that fact alone makes it
somewhat bearable.

Olga gives him a peck on the cheek and leaves too.

Jones comes over.

JONES
He was a good man.

Jones pats Serge on the back and returns to his car.

Sandro remains.

SANDRO
Good sermon. Your father would
have liked it.

SERGE
How so?

SANDRO
It was short.

Serge laughs.

SERGE
Yes. I suppose so.

SANDRO
Let's get out of here.

SERGE
What's next, Sandro?

Serge walks with the aid of a cane.

SANDRO
I don't know.

In the distance, nearly shielded by headstones, is Renko,
alone and mysterious as usual.

Sandro and Renko share a professional nod as they pass one
another.

They walk through an area of waist-high headstones. The
high stone pillars of Cathedral of the Lady of Kazan loom
behind them.

Serge stops, leans on his cane.

SANDRO (CONT'D)

Tuesday, the Tsar officially severed communication with the Kaiser. There will no longer be a separate peace brokered by the hands of the empress. The British are pleased.

SERGE

And the others?

SANDRO

I think His Majesty wants this all to be swept under the rug. Ernie left empty-handed and Felix was ordered to his country estate.

SERGE

I have heard. But why did he send Dmitri all the way to Persia?

SANDRO

Who knows? Nicholas gave me his word that it was only for the time being. I am sure it was a compromise he had to make with the empress.

SERGE

I haven't heard a word about the coup.

SANDRO

And you won't. It never happened. The papers fell in and reported that Vlad died in his sleep of apparent heart attack. This weekend, his name is to be added to the honored dead.

SERGE

Hmm. Will there be a constitution?

SANDRO

I hope so. Nicholas sees the logic of it, but would rather wait until spring and declare it from a position of power.

SERGE

The spring is a long way off.

SANDRO

I know. But he does not want it to appear that he's being forced into it.

SERGE

I see.

As the wind picks up, Sandro throws his arm across Serge's shoulder and begins a story.

SANDRO

Serge, have I ever told you about the time your father and I...

The wind cuts in.

EXT. TRAIN STATION — DAY (1917)

On the platform, two weeks later Serge climbs aboard a train preparing to depart. As he enters his compartment, he finds an envelope lying flat atop Burmin's briefcase.

Serge fans his fingertips through his hair. Mustering his courage, Serge takes his seat. He grabs the manila envelope.

With one glance, Serge knows it is from Renko.

Serge breaches the envelope. At that exact moment, a piece of paper frees itself and floats to the floor. He picks it up.

RENKO (V.O)

Serge, all the beautiful words are from others. I can offer you these. FAITH, HONOR, and LOYALTY. Your father was molded by these three words. What else is there to say? He asked me to give this letter to you before you left the city. When you didn't leave, I decided to hold on to it for safekeeping. I am thankful I did. I don't know what he wrote. Regardless, never doubt the fact that he truly loved you. He did. So, take care, and live your life. And don't let the war work the good out of you. Renko.

Serge's hands feel numb as he gazes upon his father's handwriting.

PLATON (V.O)
 You, are the legacy of the love
 your Mother and I shared...

Serge weeps as he reads.

As the train pulls away from the station, he sees Renko standing at the end of the platform, bundled up against the cold.

SERGE
 (waves at him, mouths)
 Thank you.

RENKO
 (waves back)
 You're welcome.

Then, Renko is gone, replaced by the sight of weathered warehouses. A war poster covers one. It catches Serge's eye. Reminds him that he is now beginning his journey from who he was, to who he wants to be.

THE END